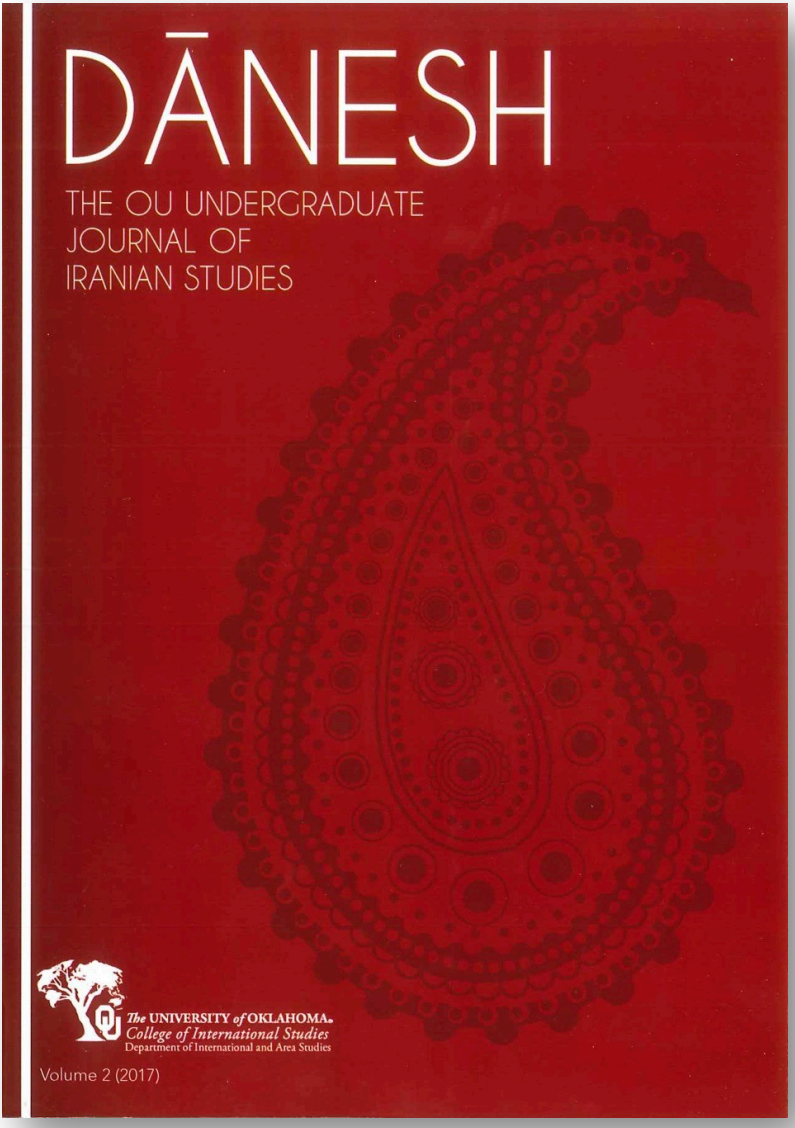
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The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
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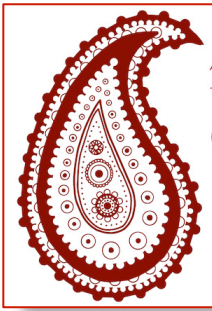

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
FARZANEH FAMILY CENTER
for IRANIAN and PERSIAN GULF STUDIES

DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies

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DĀNESH: The OU Undergraduate Journal of Iranian Studies
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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 it's 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

Bending without Breaking: Zoroastrianism Through the Centuries

Daniel Holland

The Sassanian Empire had existed for over 400 years when a confluence of political instability, economic recession, and military decay brought on by decades of conflict with its Byzantine neighbors to the west left it vulnerable to the newly arriving soldiers of Islam.[1] The fall of the Sassanids to Muslim forces could have marked the death knell for Zoroastrianism, the beginning of a slow absorption of the faith and its adherents into the *ummah*.[2] However, despite the rise of Islam and the influence of Christian missionaries, Zoroastrianism has survived, amalgamating many concepts of Abrahamic monotheism with its unique blend of dualistic monotheism that made it the historic trailblazer of the monotheistic transition.

The History of Zoroastrianism

In order to examine the remarkable resilience of Zoroastrianism as an institution, it is first necessary to contextualize the religion that would grow to affect all the various parts of life in Iran. To speak of Zoroastrianism is to discuss one of the oldest religions in the entire world, with religious texts that predate the Quran, the New Testament, and possibly even the Torah, although it is hard to speak with certainty about texts that were already centuries old by the time Jesus of Nazareth was born. The earliest portion of the *Avesta*, the single most important and most sacred

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[1] Richard Foltz, *Religions of Iran: From Prehistory to the Present* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), 103.
[2] The *ummah* is, in this context, the general Muslim religious community.

Zoroastrian text, is the *Gathas*, a collection of seventeen hymns attributed to the prophet Zoroaster himself.[3]

Zoroaster, considered the founder of the religion named after him, was actually most likely named *Zarathushtra* in his native Avestan tongue. The anglicized version of his name was taken from a fifth century BCE Greek transcription and is thought to be roughly translatable as "undiluted star," while the original Avestan is thought to mean "he who can manage camels," though there is a lively debate over this.[4] While discussing the etymology of the creator's name, it is perhaps pertinent to also mention that the Avestan name for the religion is *Mazdayasna*. This is a portmanteau of two words, "Mazda", meaning "god" or "mind", and "Yasna" meaning, "worship". The former is also seen in *Ahura Mazda*, the name for the transcendent god of Zoroastrianism, and the latter is also the name for the principal text of the *Avesta*, the religion's liturgical canon, which includes the *Gathas*. Put together, the term means something close to "worship of god."[5]

Unlike myriad mythological founders of ancient religions, Zoroaster was a real historical figure traditionally thought to have lived in the sixth or fifth century BCE, though he is now dated as far back as the 17th century BCE (on the extreme end) in modern scholarship.[6] The discrepancy between the two sets of dates is due to a difference in the methodology classical and modern scholars used to determine their preferred centuries. As pure speculation, it is perhaps possible that both claims are correct, but this would seemingly imply that Zoroaster was not the original author of the *Gathas*, which has not been an idea put forth in the mainstream study of the religion.

The claim of Zoroaster as a sixth century figure is founded upon actual Zoroastrian sources, which recorded him as living "258 years before Alexander," who was born to King Phillip II of Macedon in 356 BCE. The

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[3] Irach Taraporewala, *Divine Songs of Zarathushtra: A Philological Study of the Gathas of Zarathushtra* (Bombay, 1951), 22.

[4] This debate stems from a disagreement over the original form of the name- efforts at reconstructing the name from later languages have yielded two possibilities as the original form: "Zarantustra" and "Zaratustra"

[5] Taraporewala, *Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, 34.

[6] Mary Boyce, *The History of Zoroastrianism Volume 1* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 47.

unusual dating method arose out of a dispute between the Zoroastrian priesthood, known as the Magi, and the kings of the Seleucid Empire that arose after the death of Alexander the Great.[7] In response to the "Age of Alexander," the kings developed as the new calendrical epoch, the priesthood tried to establish the "Age of Zoroaster," counting back successive generations to determine that Zoroaster must have lived 258 years before Alexander.[8]

In contrast, modern scholarship has used linguistic and socio-cultural evidence to determine that the *Gathas,* authored by Zoroaster, must have been written relatively near the time that the *Rigveda* of Hinduism was written.[9] Interestingly, if true, this would mean that Zoroastrianism may be able to challenge Hinduism for the title of oldest known surviving religion, in addition to almost certainly being the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religion— although the claim of Zoroastrianism as a monotheistic religion is nuanced and will be explored later on. These scholars point to similarities between the Old Avestan of the *Gathas* and the Sanskrit of the *Rigveda*, as well as a general alignment of the customs described in the *Gathas,* with common social norms of the time period specified, to claim that both texts have a common Indo-Iranian origin. As the *Rigveda* is commonly thought to have been composed circa 1500-1200 BCE, the modern scholastic community speculates that the *Gathas* were most likely written circa 1100-1000 BCE, placing the life of Zoroaster in the same time frame.[10]

The Incompatibility of Dualistic Monotheism in Zoroastrianism

It is likely that the exact date the seventeen hymns of the *Gathas* were composed will never be known, so suffice it to say that the hymns, and the religion they started, are exceptionally old. This ancient status makes Zoroastrianism all the more intriguing when contextualized within religious history. At a time when polytheism ruled the day, Zoroastrianism was "combining a cosmogonic dualism and eschatological monotheism in

[7] Solomon Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith: Tradition and Modern Research* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 86.
[8] The convention of dating events "Before Christ/Before Common Era" and "After Death/Common Era" is an example of a modern calendrical epoch
[9] Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism,* 47.
[10] Ibid.*,* 49.

a manner unique... among the major religions of the world."[11] In layman's terms, there is nothing like it. Zoroastrianism preaches that the cosmos was created from the interplay of two separate and distinct forces, while simultaneously maintaining that the ultimate destiny of mankind is to acknowledge *Ahura Mazda* as the one true god.

If there seems to be a certain level of tension between those two ideas, that is because there is. There are an estimated 2.6 million modern day followers of Zoroastrianism, primarily in Iran, India, and the western diaspora. Many of these modern adherents attempt to interpret the *Gathas* as containing the same monotheistic and moral teachings as the three main Abrahamic religions[12] in an effort to integrate contemporary religious and societal values with a religion that was born over two millennia ago.[13] The emphasis here is on "modern," as it is far from certain to what extent the idea of a monotheistic god, like that contained in a concept such as *tawhid,*[14] was actually present in the Zoroastrianism of Classical Antiquity or Late Antiquity.[15]

With the time period and founding of Zoroastrianism established and the question of its dubious claim to monotheism raised, it is best to delve into the actual theology of the religion. The most basic tenet of the religion is a belief in *Ahura Mazda*, who was understood by Zoroaster to be the supreme god of the cosmos. There is a belief in some Zoroastrian circles

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[11] Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

[12] Judaism, Christianity, and Islam- the three main religions using the Old Testament and the legacy of Abraham.

[13] Many Iranians fled the advance of the Muslim-Arab armies in the 7th century, forming a tight-knit Zoroastrian community on the western coast of India centered in Bombay, now known as Mumbai. They are now known as Parsi, the original Persian word that was changed to "Farsi" because the Arabic alphabet (possibly more accurately labelled an abjad, as the average Arabic writer often takes the vowels of a word to be implied) lacks a "P."

[14] *Tawhid* is best understood as meaning the indivisible oneness of god in Islam. It means in the most fundamental way possible that there is one god and one alone, a monotheism even more strict than that found in Christianity, which ascribes to the idea of a tripartite god (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, seen in the Nicene Creed, among other places).

[15] Classical Antiquity refers to the time of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, while Late Antiquity, defined by the Sassanian and Byzantine Empires, refers to the time of transition between Classical Antiquity and the Medieval Period, which started circa the fall of Rome in 476.

that *Ahura Mazda* is the uncreated Creator, an obvious attempt at further "monotheizing" the religion, but the original Avestan texts do not specifically explicate any monotheistic concepts as comparatively nuanced.

What the texts do make clear is that *Ahura Mazda* is to be understood as the embodiment of *asha* (truth and order), the antithesis to the *druj* (falsehood and disorder) that is embodied by *Ahriman.*[16] To couch the relationship in the terms of Abrahamic theology, *Ahriman* can be thought of as the "Satan" to *Ahura Mazda's* "God", although that is an imperfect and inevitably simplistic comparison.[17] Another potential parallel would be found in the *yin* and *yang* of Chinese philosophy, although there is not the same idea of a necessary balance between *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* that there is between *yin* and *yang.* A better way to understand the relationship is to refer to the ideas of the *Spenta Mainyu* of *Ahura Mazda* and the *Angra Mainyu* of *Ahriman,* which can be translated as the "Bounteous Principle" and the "Destructive Principle" respectively.[18]

The problems encountered with defining the relationship between *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* arise from the aforementioned conflict between the ideas of dualism and monotheism in Zoroastrianism. On some level, the relationship between these two is that of the struggle between order and chaos, the battle between good and evil. On a different level, the relationship much more closely resembles traditional monotheistic concepts, with *Ahura Mazda* as the supreme god of the cosmos, superior to and above *Ahriman*, who is more of an unthinking force than an anthropomorphized being in this version of the relationship, and is better described as *Angra Mainyu.*

Anthropomorphization of the Divine in Zoroastrianism

Modern Zoroastrians have addressed the seemingly irreconcilable tension between the Zoroastrian concepts of coexistent cosmogonic duality and ultimate monotheism by turning the conflict between *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* into a battle of general principles.[19] Still, there is evidence of

[16] Peter Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010)
[17] "Satan" and "God" primarily refer to the respective figures in Judaism and Christianity, as the relationship between the Allah and *Iblis Shaytan* of Islam is slightly different.
[18] Clark, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction to an Ancient Faith*, 63.
[19] Michael Witzel, *The Home of the Aryans* (Boston: Harvard University, 2003), 147.

the anthropomorphization of the two beings by the Zoroastrians of Classical and Late Antiquity. *Ahura Mazda* is often depicted as a man in Iran art and architecture, although it is possible that this is due to the admitted challenge an artist faces in trying to depict a shapeless force.[20] It is common to see bas relief or other works of art that show *Ahura Mazda* as a man, usually conquering a serpentine depiction of *Ahriman* or offering an Iranian shah the *farr,* a type of magical dust indicated by a diadem that implies the shah has been given divine right to rule.[21]

However, despite the widespread anthropomorphizing of the two in Persian art, Persian literature is often much less specific on the subject. For example, the *Gathas*, which are supposed to come directly from Zoroaster and form the foundation of Zoroastrianism, do not specifically refer to *Ahriman* as the divine enemy of *Ahura Mazda*. This is important because it demonstrates that Zoroaster did not necessarily intend for the relationship between *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* to be construed as a battle between two gods, but rather as a conflict between two opposing forces. The anthropomorphized idea of Ahriman was developed later— possibly influenced by the concepts of devils from other religions, as there is a tendency of Zoroastrianism to incorporate the ideas of other religions that will be explored later on.

Because Ahriman was developed independently from the original creation of Zoroastrianism in the *Gathas*, *Ahura Mazda* can no longer be understood to be struggling against a personified adversary. This weakens the rationale for the interpretation of him to be considered similar to the kind of monotheistic god found in other religions. Taking into account the dualistic ideas inherent in the religion, as well as the lack of an embodied force of evil or chaos, it becomes much more plausible to interpret *Ahura Mazda* as more of a force for good than as an actual being.

Comparing Indo-Iranian Religions

With the relationship between *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* clarified, it is necessary to elucidate the basic dynamics at work in the Zoroastrian cosmos in order to draw parallels between it and its Indo-Iranian Hindu and

[20] Dinshaw Jamshedji Irani and Rabindranath Tagore, *The Divine Songs Of Zarathushtra* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 45-55.

[21] In the original Avestan, the concept of "farr" is actually contained in the word "Khvarenah", which is literally translated as "glory" but understood to signify divine splendor. "Farr" as a word is unique to Pahlavi and Farsi, the two Iranian languages that developed after Avestan, or "Old Persian"

Buddhist counterparts. The concepts of *asha* and *druj* that were previously discussed, and the inherent conflict between the two, is the backdrop upon which Zoroastrianism presents its fundamental beliefs. As *Ahura Mazda* is the personified force of good, he wishes the *geti* (all physical creation) to follow the *daena*, which is the eternal law and can be alternately translated as religion, faith, or law.[22] Interestingly, its meaning can also be compared to the concept of *dharma* in Hinduism and Buddhism in the context of "virtue" or "duty".[23]

The *daena* is *Ahura Mazda's* ultimate plan to enable *asha* to prevail over *druj,* shown to humanity through the *Mathra Spenta,* or "Holy Words".[24] It instructs humans to defend *asha,* something that Zoroaster emphasizes in the *Gathas* as being possible through deeds and action. This is roughly comparable to the importance placed by certain sects of Christianity on acting on one's faith, as the apostle James famously states, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."[25][26] This emphasis on works is coupled with a rather vehement exhortation against asceticism by Zoroaster, making the link between *daena* and *dharma* all the more puzzling, as both Hinduism and Buddhism actively promote asceticism.

In those religions, self-deprivation is used to distance the *atman,* or self, from *samsara,* the painful cycle of reincarnation and existence in the superficial reality. This culminates with *moksha,* the release from *samsara* and the entrance into *nirvana.* The objective is the realization of the artificial nature of the *atman* and the reality of the oneness of the *atman*

[22] Boyce, *Zoroastrians,* 72.
[23] As previously discussed, it is not entirely accurate to present *Ahura Mazda* as a wholly anthropomorphized being. However, much of Zoroastrian theology depends on the presence of a god possessed of many human characteristics, so in order to understand Zoroastrian theology in its proper context, it is necessary to rely on an interpretation of Ahura Mazda as more of a being than a generalized force.
[24] Here it is important to note that Zoroaster attributed only *asha* as the creation of *Ahura Mazda- druj* is not only chaos, it is the lack of creation, and as such was uncreated.
[25] James 2:24
[26] This is just one of the many parallels that Zoroastrianism and Christianity share, which is why some believe that the former served as partial inspiration for the latter. There is an argument to be made that Zoroaster is in many ways a Christ-like figure, born of a virgin and conceived by divine reason, which provides an interesting hypothetical if nothing else.

with *Brahman,* the interconnectedness of all reality. Zoroastrianism is the exact opposite of this, as it is believed that if the *urvan* (often translated as "soul") avoids any part of life that is shirking its social, familial, and religious obligations. There is, however, still a belief in Zoroastrianism that reunion with *Ahura Mazda* and thus becoming one with the cosmos is the ultimate destiny of humanity once *druj* has been overcome by *asha* with the help of the *urvan* following the *daena.* This is the closest Zoroastrianism gets to a cogent concept of the afterlife outside of appropriated ideas of heaven and hell that come from other religions.

Abrahamic Influences on Zoroastrianism

Having developed the foundation that supports the various nuances in how competing ideas of duality and monotheism have been interpreted by different generations of Zoroastrians, it is time to examine the influence of other religions on Zoroastrianism. Here it is mindful to clarify that the representation of the forces supporting *asha* and *druj* as *Spenta Mainyu* and *Angra Mainyu* is actually a modern (17th century) construct not present in the original Zoroastrian texts.[27] The idea of competing forces of order and chaos was a fundamental part of Zoroaster's archetype of the cosmos, but the specific terms were developed as a response to the criticism of Christian missionaries. The creation of these terms was an effort to bring the cosmogonic duality that had been a staple of Zoroastrianism from the beginning into line with the prevailing religious currents of monotheistic modernity.

One product of the Zoroastrian urge to conform to the more "evolved" religions with highly developed abstract concepts was the development of the aforementioned conflict from a battle between two anthropomorphized beings into a dispassionate struggle between two principles. This is similar to the way in which modern Zoroastrians all but ignore the cosmogonic duality believed in by their ancestors. Instead, they favor interpreting the *Gathas* and other religious texts in a way that allows them to believe in a similar type of monotheism and morality, as that which the majority of other large religions adhere to.[28]

It is actually a common occurrence for Zoroastrians to alter their own interpretations of their texts in order to conform to the kinds of abstract ideas presented by their religious neighbors, primarily the followers of

[27] James Hope Moulton*, The Treasure of the Magi: A Study of Modern Zoroastrianism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), 41.
[28] Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith,* 54.

Abrahamic religions. Neither heaven nor hell is explored in any depth at all within the original Zoroastrian texts, save for vague allusions made in the *Gathas*. As these are now familiar concepts in the Zoroastrian faith, it is evident that over time concepts from other religions worked their way into the religious doctrine of Zoroastrianism.[29]

For the idea of heaven and hell, as well as the notion of the judgement of the *urvan* after death, it is most likely that one or more of the Abrahamic faiths were responsible. Zoroastrianism is bordered by the Asiatic religions to the east and Abrahamic religions to the west, and only the latter group has these types of ideas readily developed and prepared for diffusion. It is a strange quirk of history indeed that Zoroastrianism would share so much of its origins with fellow Indo-Iranian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, yet evolve to so closely mirror the monotheistic Abrahamic religions.

The Unique Resilience of Zoroastrianism

Of course, for all of the similarities that have developed between Zoroastrianism and its religious counterparts over the years, there are still a number of significantly different beliefs the religion possesses. The judgement of the *urvan* is not a final judgement, as in the end Zoroastrianism stipulates that all *urvan* will return to the *fravashi* that sent them. The *fravashi* has no equivalent in the Abrahamic faiths, and can be best described as the spirit of an individual that exists outside of the material cosmos.[30] This spirit will send the *urvan* to Earth to take part in the conflict between *asha* and *druj,* but, as previously mentioned, eventually all *urvan* will return to the *fravashi*.

Zoroastrianism again differs from the Abrahamic faiths by taking a universal approach to salvation— judgement is not final, and all souls find "salvation" in the end, making the purpose of the judgement of the *urvan* after death not readily apparent. It is again, equally unclear exactly what function heaven and hell play in Zoroastrianism, but neither concept is a significant part of the Zoroastrian afterlife. This is because there is actually very little articulation of a Zoroastrian afterlife other than the *urvan's* reunion with the *fravashi* outside of the material cosmos.

Finally, considering that the *Gathas* seem to have been written first, it is likely that Zoroaster conceived of *Ahura Mazda* as the supreme creator

[29] Michael Stausberg, *Zarathustra and Zoroastrianism: A Short Introduction* (London: Equinox Publishing, 2008), 12.
[30] Taraporewala, *Divine Songs of Zarathushtra*, 37.

of the universe without any influence from the major Abrahamic religions. It remains apparent that, while there has certainly been a liberal exchange of ideas from Mesopotamia and into the Iranian plateau, Zoroastrianism has retained many of the concepts developed in its original texts. However, it is true that many of the ideas that had Zoroastrianism straddling the fence between polytheism and monotheism have been gradually watered down as its adherents have been exposed to the Abrahamic faiths.

Conclusion

By some accounts, Zoroastrianism challenges Hinduism for the title of world's oldest surviving religion— if the linguistic analysis of scholars such as Mary Boyce and Gherhardo Gnoli can be trusted. In any case, the *Gathas* of Zoroaster likely predate the religious texts of any other monotheistic religion still around today, texts with rings to their names, texts like the Torah, the Quran, and both the New and the Old Testaments. The Abrahamic religions may have been the ones to usher monotheism into the mainstream of religious thought, but *Ahura Mazda*, not Yahweh or Allah, can lay claim to the coveted title of oldest supreme god of the cosmos.

The monotheism of Zoroastrianism is often unconventional, and can make for some convoluted theology when combined with its concept of cosmogonic duality, but it has survived to this day, as a remnant of a time when monotheism was a bold new concept and stunning example of doctrinal malleability. When Muslims conquered Iran, Zoroastrianism found a new home on the west coast of India, where it exists to this day. The religion founded by Zoroaster, centuries before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, was known to the members of the Italian Renaissance and part of the cultural renaissance of the Iranian kingdoms several centuries after the arrival of Islam. Several more centuries after that, the mislabeled "fire worshippers" resisted Christian missionaries' attempts at assimilation in order to remain unique— an ongoing reminder to some of the largest religions that monotheism was not exclusive to Abraham and his progeny.

Zoroastrianism has changed, adopting notions of heaven, hell, and judgement after death; it has adapted to retroactively reinterpret ancient texts that have little in common with modern religion; but most importantly, it has survived. It has shamelessly showcased an incredible ability to contort itself into what its adherents require of it, and although it will likely, inevitably, become extinct in the upcoming centuries, Zoroastrianism has left an indelible mark on the institutional concept of

religion. That is a remarkable feat that few have equaled and fewer, still, will top.

Minor in Iranian Studies

The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

More information

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The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
FARZANEH FAMILY CENTER
for IRANIAN and PERSIAN GULF STUDIES

Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

The Spread of Shi'ism in Safavid Iran: Religion and Politics under Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp

Jack Bergum

Although Shi'ism is oftentimes closely associated with Iran presently, it was not until the beginning of the Safavid dynasty in the 15th century that Shi'ism began the process of becoming the dominant religious sect in the region. However, the conversion of Iran's to Shi'ism was anything but a smooth process. Originating as the leaders of a Sufi sect in Iranian Azerbaijan, the early Safavid rulers promoted a millenarian apocalyptic vision that allowed them to consolidate leadership over a number of Turcoman tribes and eventually conquer Iran. Confronted with the challenge of governing its newly acquired territory, the Safavids distanced themselves from the millenarian ideology that they had previously embraced and began formally pronouncing Twelver Shi'ism as the official state religion and forcibly converting the people living in the empire.

The first two Safavid Shahs, Ismail and Tahmasp, are notable examples of this phenomenon and are often credited with installing Shi'ism into what is now, modern day Iran. Pressed with the need to consolidate control over an empire of disparate people, and directly opposed by the powerful empire of the Sunni Ottomans, Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasp were motivated to convert Iran to orthodox Shi'ism due to the politically expedient needs of eliminating internal opposition and solidifying their rule in the context of the international order.

The Origins of the Safavids

Despite the crucial role that the Safavids play in Iranian history, they are of relatively humble origins. Furthermore, despite their later staunch support for the Iranian conversion to orthodox Shi'ism, the early Safavids were not adherents to anything resembling Twelver Shi'ism. Instead, the roots of the Safavids extend back to a Sunni-Sufi order founded by Sheikh

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Safi al-Din Ardabili, who lived in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.[1] The Safavids would continue their existence as a Sunni-Sufi sect, based primarily out of Iranian Azerbaijan, until the middle of the 14th century when the Safavid order split into two. The first group, under the leadership of Sheikh Jafar, remained around the city of Ardabil and continued its traditions, while another, led by Sheikh Junayd, moved its base to eastern Anatolia where it would become increasingly militaristic.[2] It was under Junayd's leadership that his followers, many of whom were recent Turcoman converts to Islam, began to adopt the millenarian, militant ideology that characterized the early reign of the Safavids in Iran.[3]

Haydar, Junayd's son and successor only furthered the process of the Safavid militarization, eventually conquering Ardabil and completing the transformation of the Turcoman converts into an extremist Shia group of warriors called the Qizilbash, due to their distinctive red headgear—Qizilbash literally means red hat in Turkish.[4] The Safavids and Qizilbash, however, were still not followers of any mainstream branch of Shi'ism at this juncture in time. Instead, as Said Amir Amorjand asserts, "their Shi'ism was at best a secondary characteristic, while their primary defining features were those of popular Sufism," as was relatively common for a number of similar Sufi orders around the region.[5] Thus, after a hundred years of existence, the Safavids had already undergone a fairly major ideological shift from Sunni-Sufism to extremist Shi'ism still infused with many elements of Sufism.

The ideology of the Qizilbash, as mentioned previously, differed somewhat significantly from the Sufism of Safi al-Din Ardabili; however, it still was a far cry from the Twelver Shi'ism that the first Safavid Shahs would promote. Haydar and Junayd preached a message of social justice and millenarian revolution that appealed strongly to members of Turcoman tribes caught between the powerful influences of the Ottoman Empire and the Aq Qoyunlu (a confederation of Turkic tribes that ruled across much of

[1] Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Medieval and Modern Iran,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 110.
[2] Said Amir Armojand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 79.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, 80.
[5] Ibid, 67.

the Iranian Plateau, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.)[6] Policies enacted by both the Ottomans and the Aq Qoyunlu in the late 14th century greatly affected the Turcoman tribes living on the frontier of those empires.[7] Ottoman financial reforms had the effect of impoverishing and angering the "frontier begs (lords)" and perhaps gave them some incentive to join Junayd as he began militarizing the Safavid order.[8] Similarly, Aq Qoyunlu centralization policies in the name of Sharia also primed the Turcoman tribes to join the Safavid movement.[9] Preaching that the messianic figure of the Mahdi was close to appearing, Junayd, Hudayr and Ismail managed to merge tenets of Shia teachings (the coming of the Mahdi meant the "annihilation" of all apostates, including Sunnis) with the interests of the Qizilbash.[10] Disgruntled with centralized government and religious orthodoxy, it is understandable why Turcoman leadership in eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan began to join the Safavids and embraced the increasingly apocalyptic message of the order.[11] These early Safavids' acceptance of this millenarian ideology was extremely politically expedient to them, regardless of their actual motive. Beset on all sides by powerful Sunni neighbors, the extremist Shia rhetoric of the Safavids helped to mobilize large numbers of disgruntled Turkic tribesmen to fight for their cause.

Furthermore, the Qizilbash had a number of other beliefs, besides the millenarianism that pervaded it, that decidedly do not fit within orthodox Shia thought. Firstly, starting with Junayd, the Safavids begin to develop a theology that regarded the first Imam, Ali, as the Godhead.[12] While recognizing the twelve Imams recognized by orthodox Twelver Shi'ism, the Safavids also promoted the idea that they were direct descendants of Ali thus making them divine in some way.[13] The Safavid claim to a divine status is exemplified in the poetry of Ismail, in which Ismail describes

[6] Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2009), 20.
[7] Ali Anooshahr, "Franz Babinger and the Legacy of the 'German Counter-Revolution,'" in *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity,* ed. Kamran Scot Aghaie and Afshin Marashi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 43.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics,* 22.
[11] Ibid, 44.
[12] Ibid, 80.
[13] Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994): 136.

himself variously as Adam and Ali.[14] Other decidedly non-orthodox beliefs included reincarnation (further solidifying the divinity of the Safavid rulers) and a belief that Allah's revelation had never stopped, thereby making Muhammad not the seal of the prophets.[15] The non-orthodox components of this Safavid message were perfectly suited to the Qizilbash, that formed their base, and to the Safavid's initial desires of conquering territory. As stated by Arjomand, the "mahdistic tenet" promoted by the Safavids had the effect of channeling "ethically undisciplined extremist religiosity…into chiliastic action under charismatic leadership."[16] The extremist Shi'ism practiced by the Qizilbash, promising a revolution to frontier tribesman upon hard times, differs significantly from the more orthodox Shi'ism that Shah Ismail began to promote during his reign. The millenarian ideology of the Qizilbash, although fortuitously well suited to consolidating support from different Turkic tribes and conquering a wide expanse of territory, would prove not to be especially well suited to governing a burgeoning empire.

Under Shah Ismail, the Safavids expanded from their millenarian roots and control over the Qizilbash to become rulers of an empire whose boundaries extended well beyond the borders of modern day Iran. It was also under Shah Ismail that Twelver Shi'ism became firmly rooted as the regions's dominant, most powerful religious sect. After Haydar's death fighting in the Caucasus, Soltan Ali, Ismail's older brother, became the leader of the Safavids.[17] However, after his death in 1494 at the hands of the Aq Qoyunlu, seven-year-old Ismail ascended to a position of power.[18] Residing in Lahijan as a youth, Ismail was tutored by a number of Shiites, thus giving him some exposure to the orthodox Twelver Shi'ism that would later form the spiritual backbone of the Safavid Empire.[19] Ismail found himself thrust into major political and military action early in his life, leading the Qizilbash to victory against the Shirvanshah (the killers of Hudayr) and the capture of the city of Tabriz, which was to become his capital.[20] In 1501, when he was only fourteen, Ismail and his army defeated

[14] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 81.
[15] Babayan, "Safavid Synthesis," 136.
[16] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 82.
[17] Kataouzian, *Persians,* 111.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire,* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2006), 14.
[20] Katouzian, *Persians,* 111.

the Aq Qoyunlu—stricken by civil war—in the battle of Sharur, thereby making Ismail the ruler of the entirety of Iran.[21] Ismail's rise to Shah was meteoric and ushered in a host of lasting changes to the region, helping to create the particularly unique Iranian identity seen in Iran today. The Twelver Shiite identity of much of Iran today, in particular, was created when Ismail began to convert (sometimes forcibly) the peoples of his empire. However, Ismail first needed to shift the ideology of the Safavids from the millenarianism so vigorously embraced by the Qizilbash to something approaching Shiite orthodoxy.

Shah Ismail I

Almost immediately after becoming Shah, Ismail began to promote Twelver Shi'ism, very publicly announcing this shift in official religious ideology in Tabriz in 1501—perhaps due to a need to stabilize his new regime.[22] As he began to facilitate the conversion of Iran's conversion to orthodox Shi'ism, he quickly discovered that he faced a number of significant obstacles. Indeed, according to Arjomand "the spread of the Shiite doctrine among the population of Iran did not decisively change the religious outlook of the country until virtually after the completion of the first three processes under Abbas the Great."[23] However, despite the fact that the majority of Iran was staunchly Sunni, Ismail benefitted from a "religiously promiscuous ambiance" that allowed a somewhat easier propagation of Shi'ism than might have been observed otherwise.[24] Not locked firmly into a Sunni identity, portions of the Iranian population proved to be susceptible to the conversion to Shi'ism. Despite a lack of firm Sunni identity in some segments of the Iranian population, many of Ismail's conversionary efforts were rooted in "fear, harsh punishment and persecution," as illustrated by the Shah's personal proclamation in Tabriz in 1501 that he would personally kill anyone who refused to convert to Shi'ism.[25] In order to successfully convert, an individual would have to testify that Ali was the Vice-regent of God, add a phrase to the call for prayer and publicly curse Abu Bakr, Omar and Uthman—the first three Caliphs as recognized by Sunnis.[26] Twelver Shi'ism provided a better

[21] Ibid.
[22] Babayan, "Safavid Synthesis," 137.
[23] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 109.
[24] Ibid, 106.
[25] Katouzian, *Persians,* 115.
[26] Ibid.

means of rule than Qizilbash millenarianism because it lent itself to stability and a religious legal framework, thus prompting Ismail to embrace it at the expense of the previous Safavid religious ideology.

In order for this transition to occur, Ismail recognized the need for clerics. As a predominately Sunni region before the Safavid conquest, the Iran lacked any sort of Shi'a scholarship, making the institutionalization of Shi'ism extraordinarily difficult. In order solve this problem Ismail encouraged the emigration of a number of Shia scholars. One of the most notable of these individuals was Al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki, an individual of Lebanese descent and Syrian religious education who aided significantly in the Safavid effort to promote Shiite orthodoxy.[27] Al-Karaki was one of a number of 'Amili scholars recruited to reside in Iran. These scholarsall studied in the Syrian region of Jabal 'Amil, which by the sixteenth century was the preeminent center of Shiite scholarship.[28] Ismail, as well as his successors, recruited the 'Amilis for the express purpose of attempting to impose a "high tradition of Shi'ism" on the existing Iranian aristocracy, thereby deepening their hold on their fledgling empire.[29] Furthermore, the 'Amilis could engage in independent interpretations of Islamic tradition, usually in the Safavids' favor, legitimizing Safavid rule and the changes that the Shahs attempted to impose on Iran.[30] Citing Max Weber's argument that salvation religions have different functions to the ruling and lower classes, Arjomand describes how orthodox Shi'ism not only legitimized the rule of the Safavids, but also how its implementation managed to provide "compensation for the disprivileged groups, the bulk of the nation under its spiritual custody."[31] Ismail's introduction of a number of 'Alimi scholars to Iran, although perhaps in part motivated by legitimate religious piety, was also in part a calculated move to institutionalize Twelver Shi'ism in Iran and to consolidate his rule.

Hand in hand with his introduction of Arab Shiite scholars to his empire was Ismail's gradual disassociation with the ideology of the Qizilbash. Although the Qizilbash would remain the core of the Safavid ruling apparatus until the reign of Shah Abbas I later in the 16th century, Ismail began to take some steps to distance Safavid rule from the millenarianism

[27] Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2004), 16.
[28] Ibid, 11.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, 12.
[31] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 164.

espoused by the Qizilbash.[32] Firstly, Ismail made several efforts to centralize rule, efforts that were at odds with the tribal nature of the Qizilbash.[33] In fact, he directly attempted to use his newly acquired religious scholars to undermine the power that the Qizilbash possessed.[34] Although these efforts to end the prominent influence of the Qizilbash were largely unsuccessful, they did manage to pave the way for Ismail's successors to eventually completely disassociate themselves with the group.[35] As it happened, however, Ismail's slight reduction in the power of the Qizilbash was largely achieved not through his promulgation of Twelver Shi'ism—which the Qizilbash cautiously reconciled with—but rather through his incorporation of the Iranian nobility into the administrative apparatus of his new state.[36] In any case, Ismail's modest efforts to limit the Qizilbash appear to have been motivated primarily by the desire to effectively rule, a desire to which the radical extremism of the Qizilbash was not well suited. Although popularly depicted as a religious zealot, a great deal of practicality underscored the decisions of Ismail, even those regarding religion.

Another inherently practical reason that Ismail may have so readily embraced Twelver Shi'ism was the constant threat the powerful Ottoman Empire, a bastion of orthodox Sunnism, posed on the western border of Safavid territory. As previously mentioned, the tribes that would eventually unite to form the Qizilbash, and the early Safavid base of power, had a lengthy and contentious relationship with the Ottomans. The centralization of Ottoman rule in the early 15th century and the resulting institutionalization of Sunnism resulted in the persecution of fringe movements on the empire's periphery such as the religiously heterodox Turcoman tribes.[37] Moreover, the early Safavid movement succeeded to the extent that it did in large part due to the fact that it represented the "last bid for power by the Anatolian and Caspian regions" and the Turcoman tribes that resided there.[38] From its earliest moments as a Sufi movement in the hinterlands of Anatolia, the Safavids had always been categorized to

[32] Ibid, 180.
[33] Babayan, "Safavid Synthesis," 143.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 110.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Babak Rahimi, "Between Chieftaincy and Knighthood: A Comparative Study of Ottoman and Safavid Origins," *Thesis Eleven,* 76 (2004): 92.
[38] Ibid, 93.

some extent by their opposition to the Ottomans. In fact, the very existence of the Qizilbash as "a dissident association with strong heretical tendencies" is put into much sharper focus by the pressures that Ottoman power placed on unorthodox religious movements resisting its rule.[39] Inherently opposed to the Ottomans, due to the historical shaping of the movement that gave him power, Ismail and his conversionary efforts can be contextualized, partially, as part of a greater struggle between the Ottomans and Safavids.

Shortly after Ismail's great triumph of the capture of Tabriz in 1501, tensions began to rise between the Safavids and Ottomans, which would not be completely resolved until the Safavid decline in the 18th century. There is a school of academic thought that suggests that becausethe Ottoman Empire posed a very real threat to Safavid rule, Ismail's conversionary efforts were motivated "to give Iran ideological distinction and identity" in opposition to the Ottomans.[40] In any case, the sectarian nature of the conflict between the two empires quickly became evident. After a number of Safavid conversionary efforts the Ottoman sultan, Bayazid II, deported a number of Shiite Turcoman tribes from Ottoman territory.[41] Following the revolt of a group of Shi'a Turcoman in the 1511 Takkulu uprising and the death of Bayizid, Selim I became the new Ottoman sultan (despite attempted Safavid interference).[42]

The tension between the Safavids and Ottomans came to a head in a direct conflict when in 1514 Selim led a massive army into eastern Anatolia. The resulting battle that occurred at Chaldiran, when the Ismail met Selim's forces with an army of his own, marked a massive defeat for the Safavids and the first setback for the previously undefeated Ismail.[43] Ottoman forces actually managed to capture the Safavid capital of Tabriz at one point during this campaign before withdrawing in the face of coming winter and wearying troops.[44] The battle at Chaldiran would delineate the end of the high-water mark of Ismail's rule. However, in the aftermath of Chaldiran, the Safavid establishment began to identify increasingly with

[39] Ibid, 94.
[40] Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 11.
[41] Katouzian, *Persians,* 115.
[42] Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 21.
[43] Katouzian, *Persians,* 116.
[44] Newman, *Safavid Iran,* 21.

Twelver Shi'ism.[45] This increased identification with orthodox Shi'ism may have been aided by the effect of defeat, stripping away some of the messianic glory that many Qizilbash had previously attributed to Ismail.[46] However, the Qizilbash largely remained uniform in their continued loyalty to Ismail following this setback. Moreover, the conflicts between the emerging Safavid Empire and the Ottomans only served to deepen the Safavid commitment to converting its populace to Shi'ism and thereby making an invasion of Safavid territory more difficult.[47] The powerful Ottoman Empire—as well as the Sunni Uzbeks to some extent—were a powerful motivation for Ismail to form a distinct Safavid identity that would be able to resist subversion and invasion attempts.

Shah Tahmasp

Ismail's successor, Shah Tahmasp, would continue to promote Twelver Shi'ism for reasons similar to his father, namely, to better establish political control over the newly formed empire and to keep powerful Sunni neighbors at bay. By all accounts, Tahmasp lacked some of the charisma and capability of Ismail; however, his rule did manage to more firmly entrench orthodox Shi'ism in Iran.[48] Ismail died in 1524 leaving Tahmasp, at ten years of age, the ruler of the entire extent of his father's empire.[49] Given Ismail's semi-divine status and Tahmasp's extreme youth, it is perhaps of no surprise that Tahmasp's first years of rule were marked by major turbulence. Soon after the beginning of Tahmasp's rule, Diw Sultan, a Qizilbash member of the Rumlu tribe, seized power and ruled the Safavid Empire alongside two other Qizilbash— Kopek Sultan and Chuha Sultan.[50] After some political wrangling—including the killings of Kopek Sultan and Diw Sultan—Chuha Sultan became the de facto ruler, with Tahmasp still technically the shah.[51] As demonstrated by these events, despite Ismail's modest efforts to reduce the influence of the Qizilbash both ideologically and administratively, they still were the main force propping up Safavid power. Moreover, Tahmasp's problems were compounded by a

[45] Ibid, 23.
[46] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 31.
[47] Ibid, 3.
[48] Paul A. Blaum, "Shah Tahmasp I: Making the Best of Bad Times," *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 12 1998): 71.
[49] Katouzian, *Persians,* location 119.
[50] Blaum, "Shah Tahmasp I," 73.
[51] Ibid, 73.

number of Uzbek invasions in the province of Khorasan and a degree of infighting between different Qizilbash tribal factions.[52] Even after Tahmasp managed to wrest ruling power away from the Qizilbash, he still faced the challenge of repeated Ottoman and Uzbek invasions.[53] Although he did manage to hold the empire of his father largely together, he did lose some territory to the Ottomans, including most notably the city of Baghdad.[54] Here though, it would appear that Ismail's and Tahmasp's commitment to Shi'ism paid some dividends—Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the then ruler of the Ottomans, appears to have given up his desire to conquer the Safavids in part due to the fervor for Shi'ism and hatred of Sunnism expressed by the inhabitants of Safavid territory on the Ottoman frontier.[55]Although not as successful as his father or his grandson Abbas the Great, Tahmasp seems to have been a decent ruler and did manage to build on the conversionary efforts of his father.

Like Ismail, Tahmasp made some efforts to disassociate from the millenarianism of the Qizilbash in favor of a more mainstream Shi'ism. Although never venerated as thoroughly by the Qizilbash as his father, Tahmasp was still accorded something of a divine status by many of his followers.[56] Despite this veneration, Tahmasp, especially later in his reign, made efforts to downplay any possible "messiahship."[57] Unlike his father, who styled himself the literal reincarnation of Ali and a host of other religious figures, Tahmasp merely referred to himself as the shadow of God in his memoir and ultimately downgraded the religious role of Ismail, referring to him as the precursor to the Mahdi.[58] Furthermore, Tahmasp also deserves credit for beginning the process of shifting the Qizilbash further towards Shiite orthodoxy and experimenting with "breaking Qizilbash-Safavid corporate sovereignty and enforcing the sacred law."[59] Tahmasp, like his father, by no means ended the influence of the Qizilbash or successfully curbed their millenarian beliefs. He did however take a number of steps that managed to reduce impact of the apocalyptic

[52] Ibid, 74.
[53] Katouzian, *Persians,* 119-20.
[54] Ibid, location 2795.
[55] Blaum, "Shah Tahmasp I," 84.
[56] Ibid, 88.
[57] Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 302.
[58] Ibid, 303.
[59] Ibid, 306.

Turcoman tribes and assert a gradually more orthodox Shiite identity for the Safavid Empire.

Some of the most notable of Tahmasp's actions regarding his commitment to Twelver Shi'ism involve his promotion of Shiite scholars like al-Karaki. Although Ismail had started the process of recruiting 'Amili ulama from the Arab Levant, it was Tahmasp that really began to implement the integration of the Shiite ulama into Safavid society. Taking part in some of Ismail's conversionary efforts, al-Karaki quickly assumed a prominent place in the regime of Tahmasp, making arguments using Sharia that briefly reduced the roles of some of the sadarat—members of the Iranian administrative apparatus.[60] Al-Karaki's influence during the early years of the reign of Tahmasp occurred through brief discreet alliances with some Qizilbash leaders, as both parties had reason to contest the role of Iranian administrators.[61] However, even after Tahmasp began ruling in his own right, without the undue influence of the Qizilbash, he still promoted the role of the imported 'Amili scholars in the evolving Safavid order, as they had relatively few ties to other factions present in Safavid Iran.[62] Interestingly enough, the Qizilbash did by and large support the 'Amili influenced Twelver Shiisim during this time period. Perhaps this is because as members of the Safavid state, they too realized that a more orthodox state religion had a greater chance of unifying and successfully governing an empire.[63]

Although the predominately Iranian sadarat still possessed a great deal of power over the administrative affairs of the Safavid Empire, under Tahmasp the 'Alimi began to increasingly assert themselves— setting the stage for the continued influence of Twelver Shi'ism in Iran. Appointing al-Karaki as the deputy of the Imam, Tahmasp created the first "Shiite hierocracy in Iran." [64] Tahmasp's proclamation had the effect of granting al-Karaki the status of "seal of the mujtahids [interpreters of Islamic law]" and gave him the prerogative of institutionalizing Shi'ism in the Safavid administrative apparatus, a task in which al-Karaki was only partially successful.[65] Even though al-Karaki and his successors did manage to amass a fair amount of "moral, social and political weight" to the impact of

[60] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 18.
[61] Ibid, 19.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid, 20.
[64] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 133.
[65] Ibid, 134.

their decisions, the power of 'Alimi scholars was limited mostly to non-administrative tasks.[66] Indeed, fierce resistance on the part of the sadarat created a long-term division between the actual governing apparatus of the Iranian state and religious authority.[67] Furthermore, Tahmasp's reign did see a fair amount of tolerance of heterodox Shiite thought—as seen by the continued acceptance of the Qizilbash—and by the toleration of certain members of the Iranian Sunni elite.[68] Tahmasp's promotion of Twelver Shi'ism seemed in part motivated by political expediency.

Conclusion

Ismail and Tahmasp, as the first two Safavid Shahs, managed to impose a lasting Twelver Shiite identity on Iran. Even though Tahmasp's son, Ismail II, would briefly experiment with state sanctioned Sunnism, and although orthodox Shi'ism would not be firmly established across the Safavid population until Abbas I, these first two monarchs managed to begin the conversionary process. Interestingly enough, both Ismail and Tahmasp seem to have been motivated by political utility, at least in part, for their decisions to embrace Twelver Shiisim. Ismail, originating from the millenarian Qizilbash made a conscious decision to shift the Safavid state's religious identity to Twelver Shi'ism in order to better consolidate political control over his empire. By doing this, he was able to both lessen the future risk of internal dissent and alleviate, in part, the threat the Sunni Ottoman Empire posed.

Tahmasp continued Ismail's conversionary efforts for similar reasons. Widespread Shi'ism, already present in Safavid territory because of the efforts of Ismail, allowed Tahmasp to successfully resist invasion attempts by Suleiman the Magnificent. Furthermore, Twelver Shi'ism gave Tahmasp a greater opportunity to rule effectively than the millenarianism still embraced by the Qizilbash. Tahmasp's political calculus with religion is also evident in his treatment of both the Qizilbash and the Sunni elite, whom he allowed to avoid conversion to Twelver Shi'ism. When it was politically expedient for him not to pursue the conversion of certain groups of people, Tahmasp appears to have been more than happy to let them be. With roots in a Sunni-Sufi order that may have changed ideology in part to consolidate support among Turcoman tribesman, the early Safavid Shahs demonstrated a marked willingness to

[66] Abisaab, *Converting Persia,* 29.
[67] Arjomand, *Shadow of God,* 137.
[68] Newman, *Safavid Iran,* 40.

use religion as a political tool to build a sense of identity among their subjects.

Minor in Iranian Studies

The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

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Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

Angels, Demons, and Saviors:
Tracing the Influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity

Armeen Namjou

Founded in the sixth century BC by the Iranian prophet Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism became the primary religion of pre-Islamic Iran, and is still practiced today mainly in parts of India. The social and religious impact that Zoroastrianism had on neighboring empires cannot be overstated as it is often considered the first attempt of any major religion at monotheistism. However, Zoroastrianism was not exclusively monotheistic, incorporating what would be a very influential dualistic view of the world. Although it can be said that Zoroastrianism as a religion died centuries ago, its influence still persists today. As Mary Boyce notes: "So it was out of Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism that Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian." [1]

Before we can continue, it is important to define what I mean by influence. As stated best by James Barr, it is one thing to see similarities between Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Judaism, it is an entirely different thing to argue that "the structures and internal dynamics" of these three religion are similar.[2] All three religions might share some kind of doctrine concerning angels and demons, for example, but how they define that doctrine, how much value they place on it, and how it fits into the religion are all vastly different. Additionally, I am not making the argument that many doctrines in Judaism and Christianity exist solely

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[1] Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979) 99.
[2] James Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 2 (1985): 220.

because of external influences like Zoroastrianism, an argument, as Barr notes, that many scholars do make.[3] What I am attempting is to examine elements from Zoroastrianism that resemble elements in Christianity and Judaism and provide evidence for these similarities — I am not evaluating how influential these elements were (if at all). Instead, I am finding correlations, not evaluating the legitimacy of them. With our modified definition of influence established, there are two key ways in which Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism and Christianity. Keeping in mind that any influence that Zoroastrianism had was influenced by the historical interactions between the three religions, by tracing the concept of a messiah or savior and the doctrine of angelology and demonology in Zoroastrian texts and comparing that to Christian and Judaic texts, the influence of Zoroastrianism emerges.

Ideas and Conceptions of Saviors in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity

The concept of a messiah is an old one, and the term itself is Judiac. When Cyrus the Great allowed Jews to return from Babylon, he is later referenced in Jewish texts as a messiah — this is one of many instances of a mingling of Iranian and Jewish cultures. But the idea of a leader of a cause who is special in some way, could be argued, dates back before Zoroaster. Regardless, it is reasonable to make a case for the similarities in the histories of important figures in Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. John R. Hinnells makes a compelling case for the influence of savior imagery in Zoroastrianism and its impact on Judaic and Christian imagery of saviors.[4] It is generally accepted, and will be discussed later, that the idea of the devil or Satan in the Jewish and Christian sense could have developed in part from Zoroastrian conceptions. Hinnells argues that when the development of Satan reaches the point where it becomes truly demonic and antagonistic, then the saviors of these religions are thus given the task to stop him.[5] The savior must now defeat a supernatural being, and this conception demands new imagery. Thus if the devil imagery stemmed from Zoroastrianism, then it follows that a source for savior imagery could

[3] Barr, "The Question of Religious Influence," 204.
[4] John. R. Hinnells, "Zoroastrian Savior Imagery and Its influence on the New Testament"*, Numen* 16, No. 3 (1969): 162.
[5] Hinnells, "Zoroastrian Savior Imagery," 162.

also stem from the religion.[6] Upon closer examination some similarities emerge.

Patricia Crone notes that Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians all seemed to view savior-like figures rather similarly as "bearers of glory/spirit."[7] So it seems that sacred figures in all three religions contained something inside them that elevated them beyond man. Generally, when one thinks of Zoroastrianism, an immediate contender for a savior-like figure would be Zoroaster himself. As with many important prophetic figures in Christianity and Judaism, Zoroaster believed that his words were the words of God — that God had appointed him to send his message to the masses.[8] Lloyd Applegate also notes that Zoroaster is arguably the first of the many prophets of the great religions to "espouse the doctrine of immortal life."[9] Additionally, as Mary Settegast notes, Zoroaster believed that at the end of time one of his sons, Saoshyant which roughly translates to savior, would lead "humanity in the final battle against evil, after which each individual will be judged by the goodness of his thoughts, words, and deeds."[10] Settegast points out that certain aspects of Zoroastrian eschatology—including the idea of an apocalyptic savior—is similarly found in Judaism and Christianity.[11] Zoroaster believed that human beings had an individual immortal soul that would be judged in the afterlife and subsequently be rewarded or punished for how they lived their mortal life.[12] In a general sense, this is very similar to what Jesus taught. To add to the parallels between Jesus and Zoroaster, Applegate also wonders if there is any connection between the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth and some doctrines of Zoroastrianism that cite a "virgin conception" of Zoroaster.[13] Jansheed K. Choksy, notes that Zoroaster's struggle to garner followers is a common motif in all the major religions—the rejection of a prophet by his

[6] Ibid.
[7] Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 335.
[8] Ibid., 17.
[9] Lloyd R. Applegate, "Zoroastrianism and Its Probable Influence on Judaism and Christianity," *The Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* 23, no. 4 (2000): 190.
[10] Mary Settegast, *When Zarathustra Spoke* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers Inc, 2005), 61.
[11] Settegast, *When Zarathustra Spoke,* 61.
[12] Ibid., 191.
[13] Ibid., 193

own people and often having to relocate.[14] This motif is found "from Abraham at Ur, to Jesus at Nazareth, and on to Muhammad at Mecca."[15] Furthermore, the violent nature of Zoroaster's murder is also reflected in Jesus' crucifixion.[16] Zoroaster's ethical teachings are similar to prophetic figures of Judaism and Christianity: he taught that man has free will and that his good and bad deeds will be "weighed on a balance at the final judgment."[17]

Jenny Rose mention a story about Zoroaster that is extraordinarily similar to a story in the Book of Daniel.[18] The story begins with him asking Ahura Mazda for immortality upon which Ahura Mazda shows him "the wisdom of all knowledge."[19] Zoroaster then sees a vision of "the cosmos as a tree with four branches, of gold, silver, steel and mixed iron"—these four metals were meant to represent the four successive Iranian epochs from the beginning to the end of time.[20] The association of four epochs with types of metals is extremely similar to the division of kingdoms in "Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream." [21] Similarities with Daniel continue with scholars drawing similarities between his end-of-times dream of four beasts with the final beast being compared to Azi Dahaka, which is a dragon of ancient Iranian myth.[22]

The influence of Zoroaster as an individual still persists today. Not only did the Greeks wish to know more about him and his relationship with their own philosophers, but as Rose points out, there was a trend to incorporate Zoroastrian thought back into European culture in the 15th and 16th centuries.[23] What culminated was his picture in the Vatican among mathematicians and astrologers like Ptolemy.[24] Just like with the great messianic figures of Judaism and Christianity, Zoroaster's presences is still

[14] Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Hagiography and Monotheism in History: Doctrinal encounters between Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Chrsitianity," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14, No. 4 (2003): 409.
[15] Choksy, Hagiography and Monotheism in History, 410.
[16] Ibid., 410.
[17] Ibid., 240
[18] Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 92.
[19] Ibid., 91.
[20] Ibid., 92.
[21] Ibid., 92.
[22] Ibid., 92.
[23] Ibid., 240.
[24] Ibid., 240.

felt today. Though he preached the word of God — albeit the concept of God itself greatly differed between the three religions — the question of whether Zoroaster should be considered a savior figure or not is a legitimate question. But if not Zoroaster then who? One possible answer that one could look at is Zoroaster's aforementioned sons, Saoshyant.

The name Saoshyant is mentioned in the Gathas, which are a collection of seventeen hymns created by Zoroaster himself and is a central and sacred text in Zoroastrianism. Although some scholars believe he was referring to himself, John R. Hinnells argues that the name is used in several sections in the Gathas in the singular and based on the context of the passage it can be "concluded that Zoroaster was indeed referencing a future savior.[25] Jenny Rose remarks how similar Saoshyant is to "the one like the son of man" in the book of Daniel.[26] Furthermore, the term "son of man" would come to represent one who is righteous and who would create a new world order — a similar characterization to Saoshyant.[27]

The conception of Saoshyant, like the birth of Zoroaster and Jesus entails that he will be virgin born. As the legend goes, in a lake where Zoroaster's seed is preserved and watched over by the *fravashis* (guardian angels), three virgins bathing there will become impregnated — giving Zoroaster three sons by three virgins."[28] When the end of the world draws near, Saoshyan will serve several purposes. Like many other prophets of the great religions, Saoshyan will preside an eschatological judgment.

First, Saoshyan will "restore the world" or, to put in another way, he will drive out the evil in the world. As Hinnells points out in one ancient Avestan text (an ancient Iranian language and the language of Zoroastrian scripture) Saoshyan is referred to as "fiend smiter."[29] Rose argues that a divine being fighting and slaying a beastly manifestation of evil is an essential part of Zoroastrian eschatology, not only appears in the book of Daniel but also predates it.[30] This idea of the trials and tribulations of the end of times and the destruction of the world as we know it also appears in the "Jewish apocalyptic pseudepigraphon (falsely-attributed writings) the

[25] Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 165.
[26] Ibid., 90.
[27] Ibid., 90.
[28] Ibid., 166.
[29] Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 167.
[30] Ibid., 92.

Oracle of Hystaspes."[31] Rose speculates that this apocalypse-like tale could have emerged from Iranianized Judaism in the Parthian era.[32]
After driving out the evil of the world — in this case characterized by demons — Saoshyan will incite a great resurrection of all the dead, which fittingly will destroy one of the devils greatest weapons — death.[33] Just as Zoroastrianism's Saoshyan will defeat the world's demons, as referenced in the New Testament, so does Jesus.[34] In line with the New Testament tradition, in Zoroastrianism there is the idea that there will be a physical resurrection of man and that it is the savior who will raise the dead.[35] Upon resurrection, a great "final judgment" will take place where either God or Jesus — Hinnells points out that there is confusion over who the judge will be—will evaluate all of mankind's sins.[36] In this judgment, one will either be cast down to a type of hell or "paradeisos" which Rose points out is connected with eschatological doctrines in Jewish and Christian contexts.[37] By the latter half of the third century BC,the concept of "paradeisos" permeated into the culture of the Jews of Alexandria and was used to refer to a garden, a vineyard, or a fruit orchard.[38] The term also found its way into the New Testament where it "assumes the sense" of humanity's renewal of the Garden of Eden (Rose 88).[39] Interestingly, the Garden of Eden is often considered an earthly paradise and the idea of an earthly paradise is also found in Zoroastrianism. C.N. Seddon also notes that the concept of resurrection of the body found in the Old Testament was most likely influenced by Zoroastrian sources.[40]

Additionally, Zoroastrian eschatology tradition teaches of an immortal soul and the rewards and punishments of it in the afterlife which, as J.H. Moulton cites, is established in the Gathas and is thus a concept almost as

[31] Ibid., 94.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid*., 168.*
[34] Ibid., 174.
[35] Jenny Rose, *Zoroastrianism: An Introduction* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 176.
[36] Ibid., 178.
[37] Ibid., 61.
[38] Ibid., 88.
[39] Ibid.
[40] C.N. Seddon, "Zoroastrianism and its Influence," *Modern Churchman* 31 (1942): 513.

old as Zoroaster himself.[41] In Zoroastrianism, when the final judgment occurs, all men and women will receive a "personal conscious existence of happiness or misery."[42] Like in the Judaic and Christian sense, the righteous will be rewarded and the sinners will be punished after life and for all eternity. Finally, Saoshyan's ultimate goal, according to Hinnels, is to "restore man to his primeval state."[43] One of the primary reasons man sins is because they must eat and drink, which accordingly makes them susceptible to the demon Az or "greed."[44] A return to this primeval state will destroy their dependency on food and drink and eliminate the susceptibility to sin.[45] This idea of transcendence above a human existence is found in Judaism and Christianity as well.

Although the images saviors are all extremely similar, it is important to note where the historical foundations for these similar evocation's of a savior could have possibly stemmed from. Hinnells points to the Parthian invasion of Jerusalem around 40 BC.[46] Around this time, the Jews in Jerusalem were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the Roman Empire and, as a result, welcomed a Parthian invasion — most likely hoping for a freedom similar to that given by Cyrus the Great centuries before.[47] As a result of all the warfare around them, it is possible that around this time "apocalyptic speculation flourished" to explain these occurrences.[48] Thus, it is in this historical context that the common savior imagery in all three religions could have emerged: that of the savior defeating demons, bringing about a mass resurrection, and a judgment of the dead-turned-living.

The Similarities of the Doctrines of Angels and Demons in All Three Religions

Angelology and Demonology are doctrines that are similarly related in all three religions. In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda is the one true God and

[41] J. H. Moulton, "Zoroastrian influences on Judaism," *The Expository Times* 9, No. 8 (1898): 357.
[42] Ibid., 357.
[43] J. H. Moulton, "Zoroastrian influences on Judaism," 169.
[44] Ibid., 170.
[45] Ibid., 170.
[46] Ibid., 178.
[47] Ibid., 182.
[48] Ibid., 183.

is the creator of all that is good in the cosmos.[49] Another "uncreated" entity is Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman as he is more informally called).[50] Angra Mainyu is an adversary of Ahura Mazda and is the great evil of the cosmos, with the two entities forever battling each other.[51] Ahura Mazda then created six great creations often referred to as the "Amesha Spenta" or "Holy Immortals" to aid Ahura Mazda.[52] These six divine beings are: "Vohu Manah" or "Good Purpose," "Asha Vahishta" or "Best Righteousness," "Spenta Aramiti or "Holy Devotion," Khshathra Vairya or "Desirable Dominon", "Haurvatat" or "health," and finally Ameretat or "Long Life."[53] These divine beings were brought into the world to aid man in his constant struggle against evil.[54] In addition to the "Amesha Spenta", there existed the "Fravarshis" which are the guardian angels of human beings.[55] Conversely, Angra Mainyu had his own legion of evil spirits dubbed "daevas".[56] Angra Mainyu wanted his "daevas" to corrupt man through "evil word," "evil thought," and "evil deed."[57] Similarly, in Judaism, Yahweh was viewed as the supreme entity and creator of the universe and attributes of love and goodness were often associated with him.[58] The same can be said for God in a Christian context. How the devil is characterized in the New Testament is also reminiscent of Angra Mainyu Seddon claims.[59] The New Testament devil is made out to be the enemy of God, one who attempts to seduce man —just as Angra Mainyu does.

Seddon also points to the idea that the conception of the "seven lamps of fire round the throne in the apocalypse" in the New Testament, could have sprung from the Amesha Spenta and another important angel in Zoroastrianism called *Sraosha* or obedience.[60] Seddon adds that in the book of Tobit in the Old Testament — composed around 200 BCE — the demon Asmodaeus is generally believed to be the Zoroastrian demon

[49] Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices,* 20.
[50] Ibid., 20.
[51] Ibid., 20.
[52] Ibid., 22.
[53] Ibid., 25.
[54] Ibid., 24.
[55] Applegate, "Zoroastrianism and Its Probable Influence on Judaism and Christianity," 189.
[56] Ibid., 189
[57] Applegate, "Zoroastrianism," 189.
[58] Ibid., 187-188
[59]Seddon, "Zoroastrianism and its Influence," 515.
[60] Ibid.

Aeshma Daeva who is the demon of wrath first seen in the Avesta.[61] This is perhaps the most thoroughly cited influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism and Christianity, especially for the influence of Zoroastrians concept of angels and demons on Judaism and Christianity. The demon's name in the Jewish context probably derives from a middle Persian word—if not directly than indirectly.[62] Additionally, though the demon of wrath was called Asmodaeus in the Jewish tradition this demon — as Werner Sundermann states — the demon was adapted into Christian mythology as well under the name of "Asmedai".[63] Sundermann discusses how the Zoroastrian version of this demon was an enemy of the "meritorious consummation of the cohabitation of man and women," because this would lead to further generations of human offspring who would support Ahura Mazda and oppose Angra Mainyu.[64] Sundermann goes on to conclude that the semantic similarities between the Jewish and Iranian terms for the demon and "the role they play as enemies of martial union" are possible explanations for why both terms refer to the same demon.[65] Since it is most likely the case that Asmodaeus was derived from the Zoroastrian version of the demon then the mention of a dog in the Tobit cannot be overlooked.[66] Prods Oktor Skjaervo explains the importance of dogs in the life of a Zoroastrian: Ahura Mazda created dogs to assist man in protecting his livestock and the homestead.[67] Additionally, killing a dog was considered a grave sin and would harm the chances of your soul entering paradise.[68] What most connects the Zoroastrian importance of dogs with the story in the Tobit is the fact that dogs were a key part of various cleansing rituals especially ones related to the dead.[69] Sundermann also notes that in the story in the Book of Tobit a dog played an important role in a funeral ceremony, thus relating directly to the Zoroastrian use of dogs.[70]

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 514.
[63] Werner Sundermann, "Zoroastrian Motifs in Non-Zoroastrian Traditions," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18, No. 2 (2008): 156.
[64] Sundermann, "Zoroastrian Motifs in Non-Zoroastrian Traditions," 159.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Prods Oktor Skjaervo, *The Oxford Handbook Of Iranian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 96.
[68] Ibid*,* 97.
[69] Ibid., 97.
[70] Ibid., 159.

J. H. Moulton cites similarities between angelology and demonology in Judaism and Zoroastrianism.[71] He notes how the six Amesha Spenta are very similar to the Jewish hierarchy of angels: "Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Sandalfon, etc."[72] He compares how similar the battle between "Michael and his angels with the dragon and his angels" is with Vohu Manu's conflict "with the corresponding evil powers, and especially by the thousand years struggle against Azi Dahaka, the Destructive Serpent.".[73] Moulton also observes the similarities in guardian angels in both religions and the fact that the angels in the latter part of the Old Testament "acquire a distinct and definite personality, with names and functions of their own"—as do the angels in Zoroastrianism.[74] Choksy finds parallels in Zoroaster's revelation from Vohu Manu in Judaism and Christianity.[75] Specifically that Vohu Manu's depiction as a righteous entity parallels the depictions of the angel Gabriel in Christianity and Judaism.[76] Jenny Rose adds on to these similarities by arguing that during the "deutero-canonical period," these Judaic angels began to be seen dualistically as in Zoroastrianism.[77] With the angels either identified as being entities of "light and good" or angels of "darkness and evil".[78] Rose also notes a development in the Jewish tradition that has elements of Zoroastrian influence. Specifically, that in the Jewish texts *Ascensio Isaiae* and *Jubilees,* Satan is personified as a "prince of demons" and is the head of a group of rebel angels.[79] Satan being personified in this way entails the idea of opposing forces fighting against one another for eternity—an unprecedented idea in the Jewish tradition until Jewish encounters with Zoroastrianism.[80] Zoroastrian angelology and demonology influences can also be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, specifically the *War Rule* and the "Community Rule" texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[81] The "Community Rule" describes tension between "the prince of light" and "the spirit of

[71] Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 352.
[72] Ibid., 356.
[73] Ibid., 356.
[74] Ibid., 356.
[75] Ibid., 409.
[76] Ibid., 409.
[77] Ibid., 89.
[78] Ibid., 89.
[79] Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 89.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 93.

darkness" named 'Belial," and tensions between "the spirits of truth" and of "perversity and destruction."[82] These seemingly dualistic tensions between clashing deities obviously resemble motifs found in Zoroastrianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls did emerge around the time of the Avesta, which is the sacred text of the Zoroastrian religion.

Conclusion

The parallels between Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity are complicated, vast, and often questionable. Though it is evident that all three religions have interacted with each other, to what degree and to what extent did any exchange of religious ideas occur is still hotly contested. Even examining Zoroaster—the founder of the religion — as a savior of sorts is problematic. But in spite of all that the, similarities exist. How Zoroaster taught others to live there life and what happens after death are all extraordinarily similar to Judaic and Christian thoughts on these ideas. The idea of saviors as entities that will help conquer evil once and for all at the end of times is another common theme throughout all three religions.

From an empirical standpoint, Zoroastrianism's greatest influence on Christianity and Judaism might be on angelology and demonology. Specifically the demon of wrath Aeshma Daeva, seems to be a direct influence on Judaism and to a lesser extent Christianity. The personification of angels in Zoroastrianism and the dualistic idea of divine good battling divine evil is another common thread found in all three religions. Finally — and perhaps most fittingly—the parallels between the eschatology of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity are significant. Simply put, they all have the same general idea of what happens after one dies and how the end of the cosmos looks—albeit with some select deviations of course. Moulton reasons that—from a sociological perspective—when the Jews realized that Zoroastrians had their own doctrine about the afterlife it was the "stimulus" they needed to interpret their own religion and understand what it told them about the afterlife.[83] So, it seems that Zoroastrianism led Judaic and Christian thinkers to reevaluate how they saw certain aspects of their own faiths and perhaps — even if it was subconsciously — paved the way for how Jews and Christians viewed the role of saviors and how they conceptualized what angels and demons were and what this function was in their faiths.

[82] Ibid., 93.
[83] Moulton, *Zoroastrian Influences on Judaism*, 358.

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The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

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Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

Marco Polo in Iran: Cultural Encounters in Medieval History

Coleton Winters

Human history is filled with legendary characters whose names are remembered to this day. One such person is the travelling merchant, Marco Polo. As far back as the fourteenth century, there are those who claim that no man had seen as much of the world as Marco Polo.[1] His travels are famously recorded in a book that has passed down through the centuries under titles like *Description of the World*, *Marvels of the World*, and *The Travels of Marco Polo*. While many consider the various versions of the text to be genuine, there have also been skeptics who do not believe that Marco Polo saw the things he claimed. In Jacopo d'Acqui's *Imago Mundi*, written in the fourteenth century, d'Acqui makes the claim that when Marco Polo fell ill for the last time he was urged to excise the exaggerated portions of the book so closely associated with him.[2] While the author may not be able to tell if that event happened, it still serves as evidence that a large number of people believed that the stories were fabricated. This is easily understandable as many of the tales are quite fantastical. Though for every one of the far-fetched stories included, there seems to be a half dozen practical descriptions of a location.

Some of the most fantastical tales in the book are those covering the Middle-East and Iran, areas Polo passed through on his way to Asia. But in passing he also recorded a great deal of information about the cities, peoples, and geography of the region. He even records information about the Arabian horse trade. This paper will examine where in Iran and the surrounding areas Marco Polo went, and what he saw and would have seen

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[1] Ronald Latham, trans., *The Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: Penguin Books, 1958) 344-345.
[2] Peter Jackson, "Marco Polo and His 'Travels," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998): 82-101.

there in the thirteenth century. By exploring Marco Polo's texts, modern readers will have the chance to see what Iran was like in the thirteenth century through the eyes of the Italy's most famous tourist.

There are two possibilities described in Marco Polo's text to enter Iran: Baghdad and Tabriz. While Baghdad may not be a part of Iran, it stands to note that Marco Polo did not include Tabriz as part of Iran either. These are merely stops along the way that serve as convenient transition points. I will start with the larger city of Baghdad since that is the order they appear in the text. There is very little description of Baghdad itself, other than that it is the largest and most splendid city in that area and that an unnamed river flows through it to a city called Kais. He also says merchants follow the river, since according Marco Polo, Kais is where they enter the Indian sea. The text also lists the goods that are produced in Baghdad and says the city is a center of learning and study of Islamic law and various sciences, such as astronomy, but that is about it for the actual description of the city. The section on Baghdad also includes two or three stories, depending on how they are counted. The first one is about a greedy caliph with a great deal of wealth who was conquered by the Khan Hulagu. When his treasure trove was discovered, the Khan locked the caliph in it to starve to death since he had not used the treasure to defend his city. There is another story of a group of Christians who must move a mountain through prayer to avoid being executed. The mountain is moved by a devout shoe maker, who had his own short story about how he gouged out one of his own eyes when he saw a woman's leg and was tempted by it.[3] But it is very unlikely Marco Polo ever actually travelled to Baghdad. Some of the most obvious evidence of this is the meager description of the city, which in many ways is not actually a description of the city itself. The best evidence, however, is Marco Polo's mention and description of the river that flows through Baghdad. A Major Sykes of the Royal Geographical Society explained this in his correspondence published in the Geographical Journal,

> The above arguments are, however, but minor, if we consider the utterly inaccurate description of his supposed onward journey. To quote the text: "A very great river flows through the city, and by this you can descend to the Sea of India. There is a great traffic of merchants with their goods this way; they descend some eighteen days from Baudas, and then

[3] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 51-57.

> come to a certain city called Kisi, where they enter the Sea of India. There is also on the river, as you go from Baudas to Kisi, a great city called Bastra, surrounded by woods in which grow the best dates in the world." Now, in both these paragraphs there is separate and independent mention and inference that Kisi is at the mouth of the Sea of India or the Persian Gulf, whereas it is situated some 400 miles from the mouth of the Shatt-al-Arab, which is the name given to the united streams of the Tigris and Euphrates. Would Marco Polo have been guilty of such an astounding statement? Having studied his works carefully in parts where I can check it, I unhesitatingly answer in the negative.[4]

This evidence shows that Marco Polo clearly did not travel to Baghdad. Regarding the stories that he attributed to the location, it is probable that he picked them up from Christian circles in the east during his travels. This is supported by other tales, very much like these ones, coming up in other sources.[5] Why did Marco Polo include Baghdad in his tales if he had never actually been to the city? The fact that he did so reveals that Marco Polo isn't recounting his own travel itinerary. Instead Baghdad had to be included to make a more complete and encyclopedic description of the world.

This leaves Tabriz as Marco Polo's entry point into Iran. Though Marco Polo himself did not consider Tabriz as a part of Iran despite its location on the Iranian plateau.[6] The route through Tabriz seems far more likely than through Baghdad. When the descriptions of the two cities are compared, the one of Tabriz seems extremely detailed. Similarly to Baghdad, it provides information on the goods made there, but goes a step farther in describing the people of the city: "There are Armenians and Nestorians, Jacobites and Georgians and Iranians; and there are also worshippers of [Mohammed], who are the natives of the city and are called Tabrizis." It even notes that many Italian merchants are found here buying goods. Marco Polo also notes that he admired the fruit that grew in the orchards around the city[7] an same admiration shared by an Arab named Ibn

[4] P. Sykes, "*Marco Polo's Travels,*" *The Geographical Journal* 26.4 (1905): 462-466.
[5] Jackson, "*Marco Polo and His 'Travels,"* 90.
[6] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 57.
[7] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 57.

Hawqal, who in his own writings noted the fertility of Tabriz's fruit gardens.[8] The Italian merchants also corroborate this to some degree: "Tabriz was one of the [centers], which exchanged goods with Venice and Italy because the silk of Iran reached Europe through Venice and Italy."[9] So there is little doubt that this center of commerce is the city the Italian merchant family travelled through on their way to the court of Kublai Khan.

The first places mentioned after entering Iran hardly receive any description; however, there are still some interesting references. The first city mentioned is Saveh, and unlike some cities, the text directly implies that Marco Polo was there. Though the only thing mentioned about the city is the burial place of the three wise men, which the young traveler apparently wished to investigate.[10] The next town mentioned in the narration, a few days' travel from Saveh, describes "fire-worshippers" who tried to keep a fire "perpetually burning.[11] So in the course of looking for information on the three wise-men, it appears Marco Polo had located some Zoroastrians. As the more centrally located Zoroastrian communities were the ones least affected by the invasion of the Mongols, this location is likely accurate.[12]

The next city brought up by Marco Polo is Yazd, which he describes as a "very fine and splendid city and center of commerce."[13] Despite this recommendation, only thirty-one words are devoted to the city itself--forty-eight words less than this paragraph. So despite being in the logical path to Hormuz and being a famous city, there is little that can be said of the Polos' time there.

Seven days travel from Yazd is the city of Kerman, which receives a much more detailed analysis than most cities in Polo's narrative.. There are a few reasons this could be. The most obvious possibility is that this is a city that Marco Polo visited at least three times, both on his way to China and on his way back to Iran when he was escorting Kököchin to marry Arghun Khan. Another is that Kerman was a very important city that

[8] Maryam Mir-Ahmadi, "*Marco Polo in Iran," Oriente Moderno* 6 (2008): 4.
[9] Mir-Ahmadi, "*Marco Polo in Iran*," 5.
[10] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 58.
[11] Ibid., 58-60.
[12] Massoume Price, "Zoroaster and Zoroastrians in Iran," *Iran Chamber Society,* http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/articles/zoroaster_zoroastrians_in_iran.php Accessed January 4, 2017.
[13] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo,* 62.

received much attention for a variety of reasons. According to Maryam Mir-Ahmadi,

> Section 35 is about Kirmän, which always received considerable attention due to strategic and political reasons, and also for its borders with eastern territo ries [sic], and because it was exposed to boundary dangers and attacks. Kirmän prov ince [sic]is the Carmani... of the ancient geographers. By the time of Marco Polo's visit in 1271 it had become an emporium for traders from the Persian Gulf, Khoräsän, and Central Asia. Kirmän was also important because it produced lots of Iranian goods and owned numerous mines.[14]

These mines and Iranian goods were not overlooked by the young Marco Polo, who noted the turquoise that was mined out of the mountains as well as the veins that went on to produce steel. The city was also a great manufacturer of weapons and armor , as the text reads, "The inhabitants excel in the manufacture of all the equipment of a mounted warrior – bridles, saddles, spurs, swords, bows, quivers, and every sort of [armor] according to local usage."[15] The young Italian's attention was also caught by the local falcons, which the text claims are the best in the world and that they are so fast no bird can escape them.

There is quite a lot of travelling and various descriptions thereof before coming to the next city of note. Marco Polo passed through the region of Rudbar, which is marked in the passage as being a lush region with all sorts of produce: Grains, apples of paradise (known to us today as bananas), dates, and even pistachios. He describes many of the animals he sees as well, especially the turtle-doves: "Turtle-doves flock here in multitudes because of the quantities of berries they find to eat. There is no end to their numbers. The Saracens never eat them, because they hold them in abhorrence."[16] While he also notices the francolins of the region, it is the white oxen that seem to capture most of his attention, as "they are the loveliest things in the world to look at."[17]

[14] Mir-Ahmadi, "*Marco Polo in Iran*," 10.
[15] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 62.
[16] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 64.
[17] Ibid., 64.

Like with anything in life, bad always comes with good, and in this part of the book the effect is two-fold. Marco Polo claims that all the villages and towns here have earthen walls, due to a group of people called the Qaraunas. They are described as having a mixed heritage of Tartar fathers and Indian mothers; a marauding group of people that are a plight on the land. The claim that these raiders use "diabolical arts" to bring about a "great darkness" across the land during the day is an example of the kind of fantastical elements that weaken this section of the book. Marco Polo writes that It is in this darkness that thousands of them will ride side by side so that when they cross over the land none can escape. The people are captured and held for ransom or sold into slavery. They answer to a king named Neguder who Marco Polo claimed was ruling over a city called Dilivar, and in some texts (notably Ramusio's manuscript) it is from this city they learned their dark arts. His Qaraunas followers are called Neguderis after him.[18] The second fault of the passage stems from the fact that his account of these bandits is hard to confirm, since Marco Polo himself is one of the few sources of information about them. Neguder himself certainly is a real figure, as were his followers. He was a Mongolian commander from the Golden Horde. As the khanates started to splinter he and his followers found themselves abandoned in the Khorasan region. Even the later Mughal emperor Babur noted that this group existed in the mountains.[19] The rest of the entry seems much more confused, as the Sultan named Asidin in Polo's tale has been historically identified as "Izz al-Din Kushlu Khan." This causes problems for the city Dilivar though. The city itself is believed to be Lahore, as Polo calls it"citta di Lavar", but there is no record of Kushlu Khan having ruled over this city, let alone having lost it to Neguder. Kushlu Khan himself was the ruler of the region called Sind.[20] This confusing account suggests that it is another example of a story that was told to the traveler in passing. This belief though is somewhat contradicted by the text itself which makes a brief assurance that Marco Polo himself barely escaped capture by the sorcerous bandits near a town called Kamasal and that many of his companions did not.[21] It is possible, however, that Marco Polo's group was attacked by this group of

[18] Ibid., 64-65.
[19] Sunil Kumar, "The Ignored Elites: Turks, Mongols and a Persian Secretarial Class in the Early Delhi Sultanate," *Modern Asian Studies* 43.1, (2009): 51-52.
[20] Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Military and Political History,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 115-116.
[21] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 65.

bandits, and thus the likely reason why someone told them the stories about the Neguderis in the first place. Though it seems just as likely this could be nothing more than an embellishment on the part of the romantic writers that recorded Polo's tale. In either case, it is difficult to prove the young Italian's claims from this part of the book.

Marco Polo then comes to the major port city of Hormuz. As a result of the prominent trade location, Polo's list of goods from Hormuz is one of the narrative's most diverse, naming everything from gems and elephant ivory to gold and silk. Marco Polo also makes a point of mentioning that many of these goods are brought from India by ship,[22] an important detail to consider, in understanding Marco Polo's journey through Iran. Otherwise it would seem that Marco Polo was simply zig-zagging over the plateau with no real destination in mind. The following passage is also important to consider:

> Their ships are very bad, and many of them founder [sic], because they are not fastened with iron nails but stitched together with thread from coconut husks. They soak the husk till it assumes the texture of horsehair; then they make it into threads and stitch their ships. It is not spoilt by the salt water, but lasts remarkably well. The ships have one mast, one sail, and one rudder and are not decked; when they have loaded them, they cover the cargo with skins, and on top of these they put the horses which they ship to India for sale. They have no iron for nails; so they employ wooden pegs and stitch with thread. This makes it a risky undertaking to sail in these ships. And you can take my word that many of them sink, because the Indian Ocean is often very stormy.[23]

Considering the cities that Marco Polo visited since Tabriz, it is likely that the merchant family was heading to this port. There is no apparent evidence in the text to dispute this idea. A ship after all is far more convenient to travel in than it is to walk and it would easily save the travelers a lot of time to take a ship to a location much closer to the Khan's court. Being Venetians they would also be accustomed to travelling by sea. So I believe the merchant family was heading to this trading port on purpose with the intention of taking a ship. However this is clearly not what happened since there is no description of a sea journey in this part of

[22] Ibid., 66.
[23] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 66-67.

the book. Instead it talks about a return route to Kerman. The above passage offers some insight into this-- the Venetians were accustomed to shipbuilding, and as such they were highly critical of the ships they encountered in Hormuz. While they may have travelled to the port with every intention of taking a ship, it is likely that the possibility of drowning on the stormy Indian Ocean because of an untarred ship changed their minds. This sudden reversal of plans explains the pattern of Polo's stops along his journey, as it leaves the family of merchants taking a detour north to Khorasan to travel over land to China.

The family leaves Hormuz and heads back North to Kerman, marking Polo's second visit to the city, but notably they follow a different route. However, the description is very much the same. The only real addition made at this point is the mention of natural hot baths, which are supposedly very good for curing various ailments.[24] Thermal and mineral hot springs are still very much around in the province of Kerman in Iran, possibly even the same ones that Marco Polo himself visited.[25]

The account of Marco Polo's journey into the Northern provinces and toward the frontiers of Iran is one of the book's most interesting. As a Venetian who had been raised beside the sea, the dryness and desolation of the Iranian Plateau seems to have had a profound effect on him, as demonstrated by his detailed examination of the deserts he passes through. He claims that there were no beasts because of the lack of vegetation and that what little running water can be found is brackish and green, requiring that travelers carry their drinking water with them. In fact he claims the water starved region "is all a desolate and arid waste."[26] Marco Polo is in no way exaggerating the harshness of the environment, though it is nothing compared to the ones he will soon see farther East. Though three days from Kerman he gets a chance to rest from the arid environment. He describes an underground stream that has carved out caverns with plentiful access to water, where travelers rest with their animals and replenish their water supplies.[27] Despite Marco Polo's recollections of this being a river, more contemporary historians believe that this was actually a "qanät,"[28] that is,

[24] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 68. Ibid, 68.
[25] Zargham Mohammadi and Hassan Sahraie Parizi, "Hydrogeochemistry of the Jowshan thermal springs, Kerman, Iran," *Latest Trends on Engineering Mechanics, Structures, Engineering Geology* 87, 505-509.
[26] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo,* 68-69.
[27] Ibid., 69.
[28] Mir-Ahmadi, "*Marco Polo in Iran*," 10.

"a gently sloping underground channel or tunnel constructed to lead water from the interior of a hill to a village below."

After a further four days, Marco Polo reaches Kuhbanan. The city is ancient, dating back to the Neolithic Era, and while the surrounding regions have many areas of archeological interest the traveler has very little to say.[30] He says the city is large and the population is Muslim, also mentioning that the city is rich in metals. A special mention is made of the large steel mirrors produced here, which he describes as being of "exceptional quality". He also briefly describes the process used here to produce a salve for the eyes.[31]

Upon leaving the city, Marco Polo entered the Dasht-e Lut, or the Emptiness Desert. This being one of two massive and inhospitable deserts on the Iranian Plateau. The other is called Dasht-e Kavir, which is the most lifeless place on Earth where not even bacteria lives. To this day, the desert that Marco Polo travelled through isentirely uninhabited. It is one of the hottest places on Earth and it holds the record for highest recorded surface temperature on the planet at one hundred and fifty nine degrees Fahrenheit.[32] Marco Polo's account has them carrying everything they may possibly need on their journey over the desert, sincethe region lacks any sort of trees or fruit. Water too is hard to find, this being one of the driest places in the world. The only water that can be found is the bitter brackish kind that Polo described before reaching Kuhbanan. However it is this water that the animals are forced to survive on. The text claims that the animals can be tempted into drinking it by mixing flour into it, otherwise even they are reluctant to drink the foul water.[33]

After travelling over Dasht-e Lut, Marco Polo comes to Tun and Qayen. Polo describes this region as having "cities and towns in plenty"; however, the description of the region is far less interesting than the fantastical tales he shares about the area. The first of which is of a solitary tree in the northern borders of Iran. On one side of the tree all its leaves are green, and on the other side its leaves are white. This tree stands alone in a vast plain, and in all but one direction it is the only tree for one hundred

[30] Ibid., 12.
[31] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 69.
[32] "Iran Geography|Deserts, Forests, Mountains, seas," *Trip to Persia*, http://triptopersia.com/iran-nature/geography, Accessed January 4, 2017.
[33] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 69.

miles The people of the region are said to be extremely attractive and they benefit from "an abundance of good things of every sort."[34]

It is the story that is told right after though that is of real interest. It is a story of drugs, murder, and mysticism. Marco Polo came across a tale of a sheikh of a mountain fortress and his secretive order of hashishiyyin. A tale that has passed down even into the popular culture of today, for example the popular video game franchise *Assassin's Creed* was inspired by this order.[35] In fact even the word assassin is believed to have originated here.[36] Our narrator starts the retelling of his tale by assuring the reader that he will tell the story in the same way that many people have told it to him, all but confirming the suspicion that the fantastical stories coming out of the Iranian sections of the book are just stories Marco Polo himself heard while travelling. He then goes on to tell how the "Sheikh of the Mountain," who is much more commonly known as the "Old Man of the Mountain,"[37] began to create a paradise on Earth:

> He had had [sic] made in a valley between two mountains the biggest and most beautiful garden that was ever seen, planted with all the finest fruits in the world and containing the most splendid mansions and palaces that were ever seen, ornamented with gold and with likeness of all that is beautiful on earth, and also four conduits, one flowing with wine, one with milk, one with honey, and one with water. There were fair ladies there and damsels, the loveliest in the world, unrivalled at playing every sort of instrument and at singing and dancing. And he gave to his men to understand that this garden was Paradise. That is why he made it after this pattern, because [Mohammed] assured the Saracens that those who go to Paradise will have beautiful women to their hearts' content to do their bidding, and will find there rivers of wine and milk and honey and water. So he had

[34] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 69-70. Ibid, 69-70.
[35] Rus McLaughlin, "The History of Assassin's Creed," http://www.ign.com/articles/2011/11/12/the-history-of-assassins-creed, Accessed January 4, 2017.
[36] Andrea Stanton, *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia.* 4 vols. (Thousand Oakes: Sage Publications, 2012) Vol. 1, 21. Could just cite volume one and only list 21 as page number.
[37] Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967): 9.

> had [sic] this garden made like the Paradise that [Mohammed] promised to the Saracens, and the Saracens of this country believed that it really was Paradise.[38]

The narrative continues by revealing that all the men permitted to enter the false paradise are unknowingly on the path to become assassins for the "Old Man." He would drug young men and bring them to the garden, so that they would wake up in Paradise. When he needed men to kill for him, he would take the youths from the garden while they slept so that they would wake in the castle, after which these youths would go to the Old Man, who would assure them that they really had come from the Paradise that was promised to them by Mohammed. The young men would of course want to die so that they could return to the afterlife they had unwillingly left. Playing on this desire, the Old Man would send them on a simple mission to kill a man nearby, and he would have other men shadow them to judge their worth. Once they had killed their target, whichever ones had avoided capture and displayed the most skill would be sent on real missions to assassinate key targets. Marco Polo also recorded how this castle fell under siege in 1262 by the Mongols, and was eventually captured three years later when the defendants had run out of supplies.[39] Marco Polo's story is fantastical and many of its aspects do not line up with the real facts; however, they are not nearly as incorrect as one might expect. For example, Marco Polo's story implies that the organization was short lived, while its actual lifespan was an estimated three centuries. In which time the organization of assassins managed to kill not only one, but two caliphs; as well as numerous sultans, crusaders, and other public figures. However the Old Man and his castle are both very much real. His name was Hassan-i Sabbah, and his castle headquarters was Alamut in the Elborz Mountains. Under his leadership the secretive cult of assassins spread their influence and power from Iran and began to capture more castles to operate from.[40] This is something Marco Polo also comes close to the truth about when he says that the Sheikh of the Mountain had dispatched his lieutenants to carry on their practices in other locations.[41]

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[38] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 70-71.
[39] Ibid., 70-73.
[40] Stanton, *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia Vol 1*, 21.
[41] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 73.

The last city covered in this paper is Balkh, described as standing on "East-north-easterly frontier of Iran."[42] Before the Mongols had come so far to the west, the city had been rich and prosperous. It had been a great producer of silk, and from its agricultural produce "was the granary of the whole of Khorasan and Khwarazm."[43] The city had roughly two-hundred-thousand inhabitants at the start of the thirteenth century; however, after the Mongols came and killed the majority of its population, the city became little more than derelict ruins. A full century after Marco Polo passes through the area, travelers still report seeing the same deserted sights he does.[44] Describing some proof of the city's past grandeur, he writes that there are many palaces that lay shattered there from the Mongols. To further illustrate how grand the city had been, there is one interesting detail recorded in *The Travels* about the city: apparently, per the locals, this was the city in which Alexander the Great married the daughter of King Darius III, Barsine.[45] While the accuracy of these local reports is not essential to assessing the grandeur of the city, even the possibility that such an event could take place there is proof that the city had to have been exceptional. All of the various manuscripts that record his adventures were written decades later and therefore do not capture what his thoughts were at the time.

Marco Polo's first-hand account of his adventures is extremely useful, not only for the readers of this paper, but for scholars and travelers as well. Marco Polo tried to faithfully convey the things that he had learned, and its influence was tremendous-- the book was one of the few sources of information widely available on the lands of the East, and manuscripts of it have even been found bound to crusade treatises.[46] The tales that Marco Polo brought back continue to capture peoples' imaginations, inspiring films and even a big budget television show on Netflix.[47] Italy's most

[42] Ibid., 74.
[43] Ed. J Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran*. Vol. 5, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968): 487
[44] Ibid., 487.
[45] Latham, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, 74.
[46] Jackson, "Marco Polo and His 'Travels," 88.
[47] Lisa Eadicicco, "Netflix Is Creating One Of The Most Expensive TV Shows In The World — Here's Why It's So Important," *Business Insider*, http://www.businessinsider.com/netflix-marco-polo-tv-show-budget-2014-11, Accessed January 4, 2017.

famous tourist has clearly been a huge asset to history by capturing a living picture of the thirteenth century world.

Minor in Iranian Studies

The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

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The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA
College of International Studies
FARZANEH FAMILY CENTER
for IRANIAN and PERSIAN GULF STUDIES

Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

Iranian Oil Concessions of the Twentieth Century: Economic and Legal Agendas Surrounding the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 1901-1953

Corey Standley

Deception is a fine craft, difficult to master and devious when applied. There has always been something uniquely deceptive about the way in which large, hegemonic powers of the West have approached and had dealings with less developed states, especially in regards to natural resources: Columbus with the Indians, Leopold with the Congolese, the British and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company with the Iranians. Scattered across time, there are instances of deceit and subversion aimed at exploiting those with aspirations to reach a comparable level to the very power pushing them back down into the depths of civilization. The subject of this paper is the series of concession agreements made with various Iranian regimes in regards to the mineral rights in the oil-rich nation of Iran, the ways in which the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company would exert imperial strength, even as a technically private entity, and the ways in which it effected the economic and legal atmosphere in Iran from 1901 to 1953.

Specifically, the periods of the D'Arcy Concession, the 1933 Reza Shah Pahlavi renegotiation, the 1949-1952 Mohammed Mosaddeq nationalization period, and a glimpse into the 1952 International Court of Justice case, which all of the previous events led up to, will be examined in depth. These periods will show how fluid and continuous the strangle of

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the Iranian economy became, from originating as a way for rich foreigners to invest in infrastructure, to reclaiming oil fields worth hundreds of millions annually, and the lengths to which a company and a nation would go to preserve their grip over it all. A critical examination of this period may explain the current sentiments of the scarred Iranian nation toward those imperialist Western nations who precipitated the scars.

Humble Concession Origins

The origins of Iran's twentieth century economic history were closely tied to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia of 1917. In the century leading up to the Red Revolt, the Russians had taken large swathes of land in the Caucus areas that bordered the Qajar-led Iranian state. With the imperialist Russians inching ever-closer from the north through raiding parties engaging in skirmishes, the Iranian government had little choice but to accept hostile concessions that created a forced dependency on a Russian export market.[1] This meant that with additional British incursions from the Indian southeast, the partition of Iran was a serious threat in the period between the Constitutional Revolution in 1905 and the Russian Revolution in 1917.[2] Suffice to say, Russian-Iranian relations were not the most friendly during this period. However, that did not mean that they did not engage with each other; let it not be forgotten that this was occurring at roughly the same time as the Qajar/ Oluma-backed Russian invasion in 1911 that ended the Constitutional Revolution.[3] In all, Iran was teetering precariously on the edge of obscurity.

The nature in which the Qajar government conducted itself with regards to foreign investors throughout the nineteenth century must also be examined. Desperate to join the modern world, the Iranian government was prepared to give individuals, such as Baron Julius von Reuter, basic monopolies over all major industries: such as rail, telegram, post, banking, and mineral rights.[4] The understanding was that when investors built these vast infrastructures, the Iranian people would benefit from having access to more industries and would receive the added economic stimulus of such large projects occurring in their own territory. However, the every-day

[1] Hadi Salehi Esfahani and M. Hashem Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century: A Global Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 42 (2008): 4.
[2] Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 71.
[3] Ibid., 71.
[4] Keddie, *Modern Iran,* 54-55.

Iranian was not happy with these types of deals, and in the end they crumbled due to the lack of popular support sometimes led by flat-out revolts.[5] These failed earlier agreements set the stage for the one major concession that had sticking power—the concession endowed to William D'Arcy. The habit of Qajar Shahs giving away seemingly egregious amounts of resources and territory in the hopes that it will trickle down, has had lasting impacts on Iranian economics, politics, and culture.[6]
In the end, the Communist Revolution, along with the discovery of rich oil fields in Iran, aided in the loosening of Russian handcuffs on the Iranian economy; however, as history shows, one imperial power's exit will always lead to another's entrance.

In 1901, London-based playboy, lawyer, and investor William D'Arcy was able to land a concession agreement with the Iranian government. The agreement stated that for sixty years D'Arcy and his to-be-formed exploration company would maintain the sole rights for oil exploration in all but ten northern Iranian provinces, while in return the Iranian government received roughly sixteen percent of the total profits as royalties derived from these findings.[7] Even better for D'Arcy, according to Article 7 of the concession he and his exploration group were granted exemptions for any import tax on equipment brought in, while Article 5 stated the group had exclusive rights on the laying and coursing of pipes.[8] This meant that not only was D'Arcy getting the initial access to all of this land and oil, but he was also able to do it for cut-price; all the while maintaining significant autonomy during mining, transporting, and refining operations. However, things seemed to be worse for the Iranians after a deeper analysis of the concession deal. Article 11 goes on to create an Imperial Commissionaire, intended to keep Iran in the deal at least on the superficial level while also maintaining a position where the commissionaire held almost absolute power over the sovereign Iranian monarchy. The article reads as,

The said Government shall be free to appoint an Imperial Commissioner who shall be consulted by the Concessionaire and of the first Company the

[5] Ibid., 56-57, 60-63.
[6] Ibid., 34, 36, 56.
[7] Anglo-Persian Oil Company, *Agreement of 28th May, 1901 (the D'Arcy Concession) between, the government of His Imperial Majesty the Shah of Persia ad William Knox D'Arcy,* https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101072922352. Accessed January 19, 2017.
[8] Anglo-Persian Oil Company *Agreement of 28th May, 1901,* 2.

Directors of the Companies to be formed. He shall supply all and any useful information at his disposal and he shall inform them of the best course to be adopted in the interest of the under taking. He shall establish by agreement with the Concessionaire such supervision as he may deem expedient to safeguard the interests of the Imperial Government.[9] This was one of the clearest indications that this concession was meant to exploit Iran's inability to retaliate, setting an early precedent of power and control over the Iranian monarchy and state.

D'Arcy became an even wealthier man in 1908 when oil was found in Masjid Suleiman, a city in southern Iran. To put the scope of this oil field into perspective, it would eventually host the world's largest oil refinery in the Abadan refinery on the coast of the Persian Gulf.[10] The British government took notice as D'Arcy began to rake in the riches.

By 1905, D'Arcy had grown anxious and sold his majority share to the Burma Oil Company with whom he had become partners.[11] Upon seeing returns on the 1908 Masjid Suleiman site, in 1909 Burma Oil splintered off a new publically traded company to control operations in Persia, known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which eventually became the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC).[12] As the profits continued to grow, the Royal British Government decided to buy a fifty-one percent controlling stake in the AIOC and assume control over operations in the region.[13] This was strongly influenced by the fact that in 1912 the Royal British Navy switched from coal to oil power.[14] At this point, Britain still maintained one of the largest Navies in the world, and consequently with The Great War beginning in 1914, there was soon a very large dependence on oil in the British Sphere. The might of a government-controlled AIOC, and trillions in untapped crude oil, created an Iranian economic climate ripe for boom once unshackled from the regressive imperialistic agreements

[9] Ibid., 3.
[10] Neveen Abdelrehim, Josephine Maltby, and Steven Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Control: The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, 1933-1951," *Enterprise & Society* 12 (2011): 833.
[11] Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: Free Press), 125-26.
[12] Ibid., 119.
[13] Neveen Abdelrehim, Josephine Maltby, and Steven Toms, "Accounting for Power and Control: The Anglo – Iranian Oil Nationalization of 1951" *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 23 (2012): 596.
[14] Keddie, *Modern Iran,* 72.

formerly in place. Russia, as mentioned, was Iran's primary export market. With the Russians now subdued on the international stage and preoccupied with internal conflict, whom would the Iranians export to now?

Eventually, the profits flowing to and from Russia became dwarfed by the might of the Iranian oil export market— a market that would span the globe.[15] Rather than have a relatively forced dependency on one or two nations, the AIOC used Iran as a platform to provide vital oil in the coming World Wars to Britain and other allied nations, while also drawing in massive profits. To this end, Winston Churchill proclaimed in 1959, that the AIOC was a "great enterprise contributing to the national prosperity in peace and our safety in war."[16] Iran was once again a hub for the global market as it was in the glorious days of the Safavid Dynasty, when it was the linchpin of the Silk Road. The AIOC played a key role in revitalizing the Iranian economy in the early twentieth century, however the costs of such one-sided agreements would soon show themselves.

A Pahlavi Reassessment and Nationalistic Origins

The first true challenge to the British hegemonic rule over Iranian oil occured in the Pahlavi period from roughly 1921-1941. In 1921, a former Cossack by the adopted name Reza Shah Pahlavi led a coup against the Qajar prince Ahmad Shah. Reza Shah marched on Tehran with a band of co-conspirators and arrested various officials and bureaucrats; by 1923 he was the Prime Minister of Iran.[17] During this period, Reza Shah saw it fit that Iran's dependence on the United Kingdom in terms of oil production was ill-founded, and ordered that new avenues be approached. This spurred on an attempt to create a second, and crucially independent, concession agreement with the Americans. After Iran successfully staved off a claim on an old pre-revolution Russian concession to oil in the North, they openly invited the U.S. to participate in exploring the region.[18] However, due to America and Britain's relationship, they eventually pulled out after British pressure was applied to the American companies seeking involvement. The departure of the American businesses left the Iranians and Reza Shah stuck with the AIOC.[19]

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[15] Esfahani and Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century," 5.
[16] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 833.
[17] Keddie*, Modern Iran, 80*-85.
[18] F. Kazemi, "Anglo-Persian Oil Company," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, No. 1 (December 1895): 63.
[19] Keddie, *Modern Iran,* 84-85.

Since the AIOC was generating great quantities of both raw and finished material, the Iranian government under the new Pahlavi rule wanted a more well-defined and inclusive chunk of the revenue. The 1901 agreement's "16% of annual net profit royalties" was ambiguous regarding what these royalties included; in reality, the amount of agreed royalties that the AIOC paid to the Iranian government was closer to eight percent.[20] Due to this discrepancy, the two parties formally canceled the 1901 D'Arcy Agreement in November of 1932.[21] A reformed agreement was drawn up and signed by 1933, and this revised concession seemed to be a major coup for the new Pahlavi government, as well as the British AIOC. Most importantly, it guaranteed a more clearly defined royalty percentage that was closer to fifteen percent.[22] These new royalties were calculated by a combination of "a fixed sum of 4s per [British] ton, a guaranteed twenty percent of worldwide profits above a fixed level and a minimum payment of 750,000 [British Pounds]." Importantly, and something that will be explored further below, this new agreement promised the implementation of a process known as 'Iranianisation,' whereby more Iranian workers and administrators would gradually be introduced into the AIOC's overall operation.[23]

The international community was very impressed with the Shah's ability to secure so many favorable conditions for his nation, and company leaders were far more comfortable with the new agreement. They felt that this new agreement was more solid, since it provided fewer loopholes for the Iranian government to try and pursue another restructuring, as Iran could no longer dispute the calculations of royalties and everything else was fixed lump sums.[24]

Of course, all that glitters is not gold. The agreement that seemed so generous to the Iranian people had one fatal flaw— it was not constructed in a way that allowed royalties to rise in hand with the global price of oil.[25]

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[20] Esfahani and Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century," 5.
[21] Katayoun Shafiee, "A Petro-Formula and its World: Calculating Profits, Labour and Production in the Assembling of Anglo-Iranian Oil," *Economy and Society* 41 (2012): 589.
[22] Ibid., 5.
[23] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 833.
[24] Gregory Brew, "In Search of "Equitability": Sir John Cadman, Reza Shah and the Cancellation of the D'Arcy Concession, 1928-33," *Iranian Studies* 49 (2016): 15.
[25] Esfahani and Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century," 5.

Consequently, Iran suffered when World War II began and the British Pound depreciated. This was a particular slap in the face as in 1941 the Allies invaded and occupied Iran in an effort to create an "Iranian Corridor"; an occupation that led to Reza Shah, the British darling of the twenties, abdicating the throne to his young and inexperienced son— Mohammad Reza Shah. Thus renewed the cries of nationalism thought quashed by the 1911 coalition.[26] lead to a discussion about oil rights and eventually a want to nationalize the industry. Iranians were disillusioned by these imperialistic agreements and wanted real change implemented. Enter Mohammad Mosaddeq.

Mosaddeq was a nationalist forged in the fires of the constitutional movement in the early twentieth century.[27] He was a leader among the Popular Movement Party, established after the fall of Reza Shah, whose primary goal was to "establish and extend constitutional and democratic government" throughout Iranian government and society.[28] But not everyone wanted to restore democracy— he fought long and hard against the communist Tudeh party as well as strong political forces from the right.[29] Eventually, forces from the right would have their way as he was unlawfully overthrown in the mid-1940's, but by 1951 was once again re-established to his post as Prime Minster.[30]

At his return, Mosaddeq and his National Front party were convinced that consolidating Iranian resources was the first step to a more unified and democratic Iran.[31] In a time where it was difficult to come by a regime that lasted longer than six months, the Iranian people saw Mosaddeq as a champion of the democratic and anti-imperialist movement.

Of course, the most prominent resource targeted in Iran was the oil industry. By 1949, the AIOC controlled an astonishing 27.25 million English tons of oil extracted from Iran's soil— soil that held the world's third largest oil reserves.[32] Just like in 1932-1933, Iranians saw the massive

[26] Keddie, *Modern Iran,*105-107.
[27] Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 48.
[28] Mark J. Gasiorowski and Malcom Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004): 4-5.
[29] Ibid., 47-48.
[30] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 834; Gheissari and Nasr *Democracy in Iran,* 48-49.
[31] Gasiorowski and Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddeq,* 5.
[32] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 832.

share of oil being produced by their country and felt it was an unfair situation given the stagnation of profits received by Iran compared to that shared by holders of the AIOC. It also did not help that the value of oil rose year-by-year up until 1953.[33] Couple this with the fact that when Iranians saw America and Saudi Arabia strike a fifty-fifty bargain in 1950 and attempts to reach a similar deal with the AIOC resulted in it turning up its proverbial nose— the nationalistic frustrations Mosaddeq was bringing to a head were understandable.[34]

By now, the AIOC was generating massive profits, was seldom taxed, and provided a moderate to low level of compensation to Iran for mineral and production rights. Due to the growing disdain after the news of ARMCO's fifty-fifty split, the AIOC had to do something to appease the Iranian populace. In their efforts to stifle Iranian contempt and keep them indulgent to the reworked 1933 agreement, the AIOC began to invest heavily in infrastructure.[35] They built over two thousand houses and nearly eighty ancillary buildings just in 1949, citing a commitment to building a relationship with not only the government of Iran, but the non-skilled workers in the fields and refineries as well.[36] In addition to these investments, the AIOC also invested heavily in education and technical training at institutions such as the University of Tehran.[37] From an outsider's perspective, it seemed as though the AIOC was doing all the right things in order to both have their cake and eat it too.

Cracks began to form. Most of the new housing developments were for foreign workers from England, and many of the hospitals and schools were reserved specifically for their use, for the sake of "British Prestige".[38] This reinforced Britain's colonialist approach towards their stewardship of less developed or established nations, and again left the Iranian populace in a dissatisfied position. As a practical example, in an internal report filed in 1950, AIOC chairman William Fraser referred to Iranians 124 times merely as "employees," while British workers had the higher distinction of "staff."[39] This hierarchical and spatial segregation was well documented

[33] Esfahani and Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century,"14.
[34] Edward Henniker, "Nationalization: The Anglo – Iranian Oil Company, 1951: Britain vs. Iran," *Moral Cents* 2 (2013): 9.
[35] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 837-44.
[36] Ibid., 844.
[37] Ibid., 837.
[38] Ibid., 848.
[39] AIOC, *Annual Report and Accounts* (1950): 12, 28.

throughout private correspondence, and was proof that AIOC management was less concerned about the social benefits awarded by philanthropic endeavors and more so the social control it granted them in Iran.[40] To cap it all off, one AIOC executive admitted that, "The Company organized and conducted its operations without much thought to Iranian ideals and customs, and based everything on its own usage and standpoint."[41]
In all, it became clear that the primary reasons for the process of Iranianisation had been corrupted by AIOC management in order to further their own monetary gains through social control, and also used the concept of Iranianisation to resist challenges in wider negotiations.[42] However, Mosaddeq had begun to see through the charade.

Nationalization and International Court of Justice Proceedings

By 1947, the Iranian nationalization movement was reaching critical mass. In an effort to stifle change the AIOC proposed a provisionary reform to the agreement in 1947 that was so unpopular it was mired in the Majles for months and shot down by 1949.[43] The Iranian people were displeased that American corporations were offering fifty-fifty splits, and when the AIOC would not come near that they decided it was not worth their time and an easier solution would be nationalization.[44] By Mosaddeq's reinstitution in 1951, the nationalization sentiment had grown so much that when the United Kingdom offered a fifty-fifty split of profits; it was met by a wave of moderates who now favored nationalization due to the stubbornness of the British government.[45] At this point, even Truman's administration in America began to believe that it was time for the AIOC to begin sharing profits.[46]

The Majles passed nationalization legislation in 1951 and put it into effect by 1952.[47] The British were in full disarray as they felt that conceding to Iran's oil nationalization would set a dangerous precedent in other principalities— should a state feel overly oppressed by British rule

[40] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 847.
[41] AIOC, *Annual Report and Accounts* (1950): 849.
[42] Ibid., 850.
[43] Keddie, *Modern Iran,*124.
[44] Ibid., 124-25.
[45] Ibid., 124.
[46] Henniker, "Nationalization: The Anglo – Iranian Oil Company, 1951: Britain vs. Iran," 24.
[47] Keddie, *Modern Iran,*124.

they may just, "abrogate British concessions."[48] Incidentally, just five days after the nationalization legislation passed the AIOC imposed, "immediate reductions in wages, travel, and accommodation allowances on the grounds that rents and prices had fallen," which meant that by April of 1951, "45,000 employees were on strike, martial law had been imposed, and…three Europeans were lynched."[49] However, this was just the beginning of British opposition to the nationalization of Iran's oil.

One of the first actions the British government took was submitting a formal complaint to the newly created International Court of Justice (ICJ). On July 5th 1951, the United Kingdom brought forth a document bearing grievances against the Iranian government, arguing that Iran had reneged on multiple treaties signed throughout the twentieth century.[50] The court initially accepted a hearing in order to determine to what extent they had jurisdiction over the case and what could be done in the meanwhile. Ultimately the hearing culminated in the United Kingdom's presentation of a request for interim measures. Such measures included the continuation of the AIOC running operations rather than the Iranian government, the prevention of any seizures by the Iranian government of AIOC properties, repayment of royalties by Iran should they continue to maintain possession of AIOC production and property, and the abstention of further propaganda distribution regarding public opinion of the AIOC.[51] Iran rebutted that the ICJ had no jurisdiction over the case, as it, "hopes that the Court will declare that the case is not within its jurisdiction because of the legal incompetence of the complaint and because of the fact that exercise of the right of sovereignty is not subject to complaint."[52] Further, they asserted that because of this sovereignty and the fact the concession agreement never mentioned the United Kingdom in any capacity, there was no argument to be made that they were in an inter-state dispute.[53] Thus, Iran

[48] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 827.
[49] Ibid., 835.
[50] International Court of Justice, "Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. Case (United Kingdom v. Iran), Order of July 5th," I.C.J. Reports 1951, ICJ-2013. The Hague, Netherlands, 1951, 89.
[51] International Court of Justice, "Section B. Request for the Indication of Interim Measures of Protection," ICJ-8983. The Hague, Netherlands, 1951, 90-91.
[52] Ibid., 92.
[53] Henri Rolin, "The International Court of Justice and Domestic Jurisdiction: Notes on the Anglo-Iranian Case," *International Organization* 8 (February 1954): 37.

made it clear they would not willingly accept the interim measures or the jurisdiction of the Court in this instance.

By the end of the first round of litigation, the ICJ determined that a number of interim measures were to be put in place to add law and order to the proceedings. These were relatively mild actions, such as ensuring there was no aggravation or prejudicing of rights done by either party. However, there were two sticking points that created stress between the two nations. First, the Court indicated that all operations should continue as they had before the nationalization legislation came into effect— including the reinstitution of British workers into their former positions. Second, that there should be a "Board of Supervision" established containing two members from each party and one from a third party to ensure these practices were carried out in full. The board was intended to ensure the company was able to continue production in the interim while complying with the rest of the Court's measures.[54] These requirements led to some amount of friction, as both parties attempted to impose their will on the oil company and the direction of revenue and production.

However, not all of the justices agreed with this decision. In their dissenting opinion, Judges Winiarski and Pasha cited the "Case concerning the Electric Company of Sofia and Bulgaria (in 1939)" where Bulgaria objected to the jurisdiction of the Court and the Court allowed this objection.[55] They argued that because Iran rejected the jurisdiction of the Court, no measures should be taken until either party brings forth substantial evidence that the Court does indeed have jurisdiction.[56] By this regard, Mosaddeq and his National Front were convinced the action of nationalization was fully covered by a state's right to sovereignty.

The British made a fatal mistake during these proceedings. In order to not close a door they may need to use in the future, the British government did not deny the principle of nationalization was within the sovereign rights of a state. They attempted to make an argument that this case was different by stating there was a treaty agreed upon by the two parties. However, as mentioned earlier, the United Kingdom was not formally part of this agreement, only the company in which they owned a majority of the shares. To make matters worse, due to its nature as a concession

[54] Ibid., 94.
[55] International Court of Justice, "Dissenting Opinion of Judges Winiarski and Badawi Pasha," ICJ- 2015. The Hague, Netherlands, 1951, 96-98.
[56] Ibid., 96-98.

agreement, the ICJ did not recognize the legitimacy of said "treaty."[57] This spurred the British into a mode of desperation, causing them to approach the UN Security Council on September 28, 1951 asking for their intervention, claiming the expulsion of British national workers was in direct violation of the Court's interim measures.[58] Again, Mosaddeq argued this was a dispute between a nation and private company, which was a compelling enough argument to stave off a decision until after the ICJ could release their findings, by which time it would have been too late for the United Kingdom.[59]

On July 22, 1952, the ICJ released their judgment that after reading deeper into the laws regarding treaty and concession disputes, they regarded only the former in the jurisdiction of the Court.[60] Due to the lack of evidence presented by the British delegation that this was a treaty and not a concession, the Court came to the conclusion it lacked jurisdiction on the matter.[61] The case indicated there was hope for post-colonial nations to reclaim their resources and undermined what little global power and authority the United Kingdom had after the Second World War. The Iranians felt they had achieved the ultimate victory, as they proved to the colonial British powers the international community recognized their right to control the minerals in their own land. However, the British had not exhausted all avenues of action.

Bringing Down Mosaddeq and the Iranian Oil Consortium

For Britain, the next step after taking the case to the ICJ was to impose not only an embargo on Iranian oil, but also on most of Iran's exported goods. However, the real issue for Iran was that the United States, and most other large oil producing and consuming nations, agreed with this embargo. The most aggressive example of this stance was a physical gunboat blockade established by the AIOC in the Persian Gulf.[62] As Britain was the primary export market for Iran at this point, a newly nationalized AIOC with few skilled administrators and engineers meant Iran was producing oil— their main export— well below capacity. Because of this,

[57] Rolin, "The International Court of Justice," 43.
[58] Kazemi, "Anglo-Persian Oil Company," 64.
[59] Ibid., 65.
[60] International Court of Justice, *"Anglo – Iranian Oil Case (Preliminary Objection): Judgment of 22 July 1952,"* The Hague, Netherland 1952, 24-25.
[61] Ibid., 25.
[62] Keddie, *Modern Iran,* 124.

Mosaddeq approached the United States with the impression they would remain a neutral party and purchase oil from Iran. However, this was not the case. In reality, President Eisenhower and his administration were wary of Mosaddeq and his hardline approach to negotiations, and therefore decided to join the embargo until Mosaddeq caved in some capacity.[63] This foreshadowed a growing animosity towards the United States as Iran expected such treatment from Britain, but were under the impression that the United States was a much more fair and neutral party.[64] The combination of all of these acts led to a severe decline in the Iranian economy, and in turn increased tensions among the various political sects in Iran. In the oil industry, the lack of competent administrators and engineers able to tend to the refineries and well sites meant the embargo was all the more effective.[65]

By 1953, the Iranian economy and social structure was in full-blown crisis, as the devastating effects of the embargo made many groups aligned with the National Front coalition rethink their position.[66] High-ranking officials within the military, police force, clerics, and communists all began to feel as though Mosaddeq's foreign policy, however pure idealistically, was getting them into hot water that would alienate them from an emerging global economy. This eventually led to the Shah's attempt to replace him as Prime Minister— a replacement that did not last long. Not even a year had passed and there was such a great sentiment to have Mosaddeq at the helm that he was reinstated, reiterating the Iranian people's conviction to the cause of nationalization.[67] This was the catalyst to a crucial political realignment, as Mosaddeq went all-in and the opposing coalition's cards were simply better. In 1953, this new coalition of realists in Iran would align with the American and British intelligence community, who orchestrated an August coup d'état to depose Mosaddeq, thus ending the short reign of a nationalized oil industry.[68]

As Mohammad Reza Shah was once again the monarch in the revitalized Pahlavi state, one of his first actions was to instate a new Prime

[63] Ibid., 125.
[64] Ibid., 126.
[65] Abdelrehim, Maltby, and Toms, "Corporate Social Responsibility," 852.
[66] Gheissari and Nasr, *Democracy in Iran,* 53.
[67] Keddie, *Modern Iran,* 126.
[68] Ibid., 128.

Minister, Fazlollah Zahedi[69]. By 1953, the Shah resumed diplomatic relations with Great Britain in an attempt to get the Iranian oil machine running once again. However, in order to satisfy the still-rabid nationalists, he devised a plan where the AIOC would no longer have sole rule over Iranian oil, but would rather be part of an international consortium popularly known as the Seven Sisters.[70] This consortium was comprised of the AIOC, Royal Dutch/Shell, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of California, the Socony-Vacuum Company, the Texas Company, and the Gulf Oil Company. The primary goal of the U.S. companies was surprisingly not profit, but instead to ensure that global prices would not fluctuate with Iran's reintroduction to the market. While the Iranian oil embargo was still in place, the U.S. and other European companies aimed to create a stable and profitable market for all parties involved, as the massive Iranian market coming back so quickly could have led to a global market collapse.[71]

Establishing the consortium was difficult, as there were disputes over how the companies would divide the ownership and production of Iranian oil. The AIOC and the British government insisted they have no less than fifty-one percent of combined assets, when also accounting for their shares of ownership in Shell, while the Americans felt this would destabilize any legitimacy the consortium had in the eyes of Iranian nationalists. Eventually, the parties agreed that the AIOC and the group of U.S. companies would each hold forty percent, while the remaining twenty percent would be split between Shell and a small French company owned primarily by the AIOC.[72] This split was beneficial to almost all parties as it shared profits evenly among the Western oil companies while allowing Iran to maintain some semblance of a nationalized oil sector, as these companies were technically "contracted entities" of the National Iranian Oil Company.[73]

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[69] Mary Ann Heiss,"The United States, Great Britain, and the Creation of the Iranian Oil Consortium, 1953-1954," *The International History Review* 16 (August 1994): 513.
[70] Kazemi, "Anglo-Persian Oil Company," 61-65.
[71] Heiss, "The United States," 515.
[72] Ibid., 518-521.
[73] Homayoun Mafi "Iran's Concession Agreements and the Role of the National Iranian Oil Company: Economic Development and Sovereign Immunity," *Natural Resources Journal* 48 (Spring 2008): 411-412.

After the agreement, the Western powers were still the proprietary producers and extractors of Iranian oil, as without their capital and skills the Iranian government and its people did not have the means to successfully produce and market their resource. Ultimately this deal returned Iranians to a lower position of reliance just as before the nationalization movements began. The consortium would last until oil was re-nationalized during the 1979 Islamic Revolution, by which point the AIOC would rename itself the British Petroleum Company (later shortened to BP).[74]

Interestingly, a relatively unnoticed result of the coup was that Iranian credit had gone up, as the powerful Americans and British deemed the new regime friendlier. This elevated status led to a rise in private sector credit lines by 46, 61, and 32 percentage points in 1957, 1958, and 1959 respectively.[75] However, the price of oil steadily declined after the coup, eventually leading to a negative trend caused by an increase in tonnage available on the market, most likely due to even higher levels of production in Iran post-Mosaddeq. There was hope as the export of non-oil goods began to rise after Mosaddeq's fall.[76] In all, Mosaddeq's removal signaled a revision against nationalization and a continuance of concession agreements with imperialist powers, leading only to the strengthening of global oil giants and Western powers even in the post-imperialism era.

Conclusion

The brief history of Iranian oil through the AIOC years is bookended by imperial powers using economic and military might to strong arm Iran into less than prosperous agreements, which ultimately benefitted these stronger powers and allowed them to continue to grow in might. Oil's influence on Iran's internal and foreign affairs in the twentieth century was strong, as so many during this period were dependent on employment through the AIOC. The imperialism Iran experienced began with humble origins, evolved when Reza Shah emerged, and came to a head when Mosaddeq nationalized the oil industry and the International Court of Justice, along with every other major player in the oil market, became involved. Ultimately Reza Shah, Mosaddeq, and Iran as a whole challenged the status quo that small resource rich countries were not beholden to imperialistic Western powers. While they failed by most measurements,

[74] Kazemi,"Anglo-Persian Oil Company," 65.
[75] Esfahani, Pesaran, "Iranian Economy in the Twentieth Century," 6.
[76] Ibid., 14.

their actions planted the seeds for massive changes in Anglo-Iranian and American-Iranian relations in the future and the ways in which Iranian oil is discussed.

Oil Politics in the Pre-Mossadegh Years: The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and Iran's Struggle for Equitability, 1901-1941

Andre Teimore

When William D'Arcy negotiated the notorious Iranian oil concession of 1901 with the Qajar state, it is unlikely that he could have foreseen the agreement's long-term implications regarding both Anglo-Iranian relations and Iranian internal politics. These implications ultimately involved influence on Iran's political stability, conflict between Iran and the UK, and state-corporation conflict between Iran and the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). What began as a highly controversial concession between D'Arcy and Mozzafar al-Din Shah, on behalf of the Qajar state, eventually evolved into a state-corporation relationship that was upheld by multiple concession agreements and renegotiated extensions to those agreements.[1] This relationship between Iran and the AIOC was, at various times, supported by a problematic set of agreements as both parties were often engaged in a power struggle that involved protection of profits, adherence to the terms of their agreements, and Iran's efforts to avoid excessive exploitation.[2]

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[1] "Oil Agreements in Iran," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, last modified July 20, 2004, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/oil-agreements-in-iran. Accessed January 19, 2017.
[2] "Anglo-Persian Oil Company," *Encyclopædia Iranica,* last modified August 5, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/anglo-persian-oil-company. Accessed January 19, 2017.

The eventual outcome of the seemingly tense relationship between Iran and the British oil company was a major effort by the Iranian government to nationalize its oil industry. The successful nationalization of Iranian oil drew the ire of the British government, and eventually led to a British-American effort to initiate a coup aimed at deposing the Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, and propping up Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.[3] There is often excessive focus on Prime Minister Mosaddegh's efforts to nationalize the oil industry; however, it is arguable that Mosaddegh was not the first high-profile Iranian leader to push for a more equitable relationship with AIOC. When analyzing the history of the D'Arcy concession, the revisions to the original concession between D'Arcy and Mozzafar al-Din Shah, and the additional agreements and concessions that took place between 1901 and 1933, it is clear that Reza Shah Pahlavi made significant efforts to renegotiate the terms of the concessions and possibly cut all ties with AIOC, all of which could be regarded as precursors to Mosaddegh's ambitious attempt to nationalize Iranian oil. Though the politics of these historical events are significant and worthy of analysis, the object of the research is to examine the terms of Iran's oil concession to William D'Arcy and its agreements with the AIOC, while analyzing the legal basis for the nationalization of Iranian oil. It is inevitable that politics will always play a vital role in international disputes; however, any analysis of the legal terms of Iran's agreements with the AIOC and the United Kingdom will be constrained within the legal terms of those agreements.

The Origins of British-Iranian Oil Agreements

Although the disputes that led to both Mosaddegh and Reza Shah's efforts to nationalize Iranian oil were between the Pahlavi state and the AIOC, the origins of this relationship were rooted in the 1901 D'Arcy concession.[4] In 1901, William Knox D'Arcy, an Australian millionaire of British decent, took particular interest in the prospect of seeking an oil concession from Iran. After negotiations took place between D'Arcy's secretary and Mozzafar al-Din Shah, the D'Arcy concession was signed in May 1901, giving D'Arcy exclusive rights to find and export all Iranian oil, with the exception of exploiting provinces within the Russian Sphere of

[3] Ibid.
[4] "Oil Agreements in Iran."

Influence, for sixty years.[5] Specifically, the terms of the D'Arcy concession withheld any privilege for D'Arcy to discover or mine oil in the provinces of Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazendaran, Asdrabad, and Khorassan, but it also prevented the Iranian government from granting any other party the right to construct pipelines near the southern coasts and rivers of Iran.[6]

The Anglo-Persian Oil Company was a product of the legacy left behind by the D'Arcy concession. Though, D'Arcy had obtained exclusive rights from the Shah to explore Iran for its oil, D'Arcy did not have a large corporation to advance his interests, and he would eventually require more than private funds to advance his quest for oil.[7] As D'Arcy's company became in desperate need of funding, it eventually struck an investment deal with Burmah Oil in 1905.[8] It is important to note that in addition to the financial assistance D'Arcy required, the terms of the concession stated D'Arcy would have a limited time to establish companies that would be given all the privileges of the concession.[9] It is likely that this left D'Arcy with few options but to accept whatever deal he could strike for financial aid; this was a predicament that left the concession itself vulnerable to exploitation. The British government appeared to have taken full advantage of this situation by putting pressure on Burmah Oil to save the D'Arcy concession through financial support.[10] Burmah Oil's involvement in the concession was the United Kingdom's first attempt at taking control of Iranian oil. This was unlikely a problematic situation for the Iranian government, who had been largely oblivious to the value of oil at the time and were primarily focused on revenues for infrastructure development. The involvement of the United Kingdom would, however, become an issue regarding disputes between the parties of the oil concession at a later time.

Development of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company

When negotiations between D'Arcy and Burmah Oil were complete, an agreement was made that formed the Concessions Syndicate LTD, which inherited the assets of D'Arcy's First Exploitation Company and

[5] Geoffrey Jones, *The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry*, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), 130.
[6] Mark Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum Concessions in Iran and Alberta,* (Alberta: University of Alberta Press), 8.
[7] Jones, *The State and the Emergence,* 133.
[8] Ibid., 134.
[9] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 11.
[10] Jones, *The State and the Emergence,* 133-134.

established D'Arcy as the director.[11] Shortly after, upon the discovery of vast quantities of petroleum in 1908, the relationship between D'Arcy and Burmah Oil needed to evolve, which lead to the incorporation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) in 1909.[12] Once the company had gone public, Burmah Oil purchased a majority of its shares from D'Arcy.[13] It is clear that from the conception of the D'Arcy concession to the eventual birth of APOC, the company was not under state control; however, APOC's relationship with the United Kingdom was apparent in the following years, as the UK became the primary beneficiary of Iranian oil.[14] The British government grew dependent on its relationship with APOC while it also obtained significant control of the company's voting power, and this dependency was ostensibly the underlying foundation for future conflict between the United Kingdom and Iran.[15]

In addition to a developing precursor to tensions between Iran and the United Kingdom, there were issues that were inherently present between Iran and APOC toward the end of the Qajar Dynasty. The D'Arcy concession contained a resolution in Article 10 that mandated a payment worth 16% of APOC's net profits in royalties to Iran each year.[16] This was a value that was increasingly deemed as insufficient to the Iranian government, who was concerned about some of the tactics the company was engaging in to undermine the sovereignty of the Qajar state and to decrease the amount of royalties paid. Much of the Iranian government's concern was centered around the means by which APOC calculated its "net profits" and the deductions that were factored into those calculations.[17]

Aside from the monetary issues associated with tensions between Iran and APOC, questions arose concerning the company's efforts to undermine the sovereignty of the monarchy. Among the most significant challenges to the Iranian government was APOC's willingness to subjectively

[11] Ibid.
[12] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 17.
[13] "Anglo-Persian Oil Company."
[14] Jones, *The State and the Emergence,* 145.
[15] Homayoun Mafi, "Iran's Concession Agreements and the Role of the National Iranian Oil Company: Economic Development and Sovereign Immunity," *Natural Resources Journal*, 48 (2008): 409.
[16] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 9.
[17] Ronald W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 1, The Developing Years 1901-1932*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 365-371.

undermine its own agreements with Iran and negotiate directly with Iranian tribes who did not have sovereignty or legal authority over their land. In 1905, the Concessions Syndicate and the Bakhtiyari Khans had signed an agreement allowing the company to drill on Bakhtiyari territory while granting a three percent stake to the Khans.[18] The agreement had eventually established the Bakhtiyari Oil Company (BOC) and APOC went on to receive 97% of its shares. [19] It is important to note that Article 10 of the D'Arcy concession also stated that any company formed "in accordance" with the concession would be required to contribute to the 16% royalties that D'Arcy and associated companies were required to pay to the Iranian government.[20] For the Iranian government, and particularly the monarchy, the Concession Syndicate's relationship with the Bahktiyaris had become increasingly problematic for two main reasons. First, the Iranian government viewed the Concessions Syndicate/APOC's dealings with the Bakhtiyari Khans as illegitimate and a violation of the sovereignty of the Iranian government on the basis that the Khans did not own the oil or the land, and they have any jurisdiction to sell the rights to drill on Iranian land to APOC or any other entity.[21] Second, it was to the belief of the Iranian government that it was corrupt for APOC to deduct the three percent profits of BOC from its annual royalties to Iran.[22] This deduction from the profits of APOC was among the concerns of the Iranian government, and it, along with various other issues the Iranian government had in regards to APOC's calculations, played a vital role in the eventual renegotiations regarding the terms of the D'Arcy Concession. This became clear when the relationship between both parties began to degenerate during the First World War, as British dependence on Iranian oil was key to military modernization.[23]

In 1915, cracks began to form in the relationship between APOC and the Iranian government, when several of the company's pipelines were ruptured by Bakhtiyari tribesmen. As a result of the ruptures, APOC claimed that Article 14 of the D'Arcy concession had required Iran to contribute £160,000 to cover the costs of the damage; however, the Iranian

[18] Stephanie Cronin, "The Politics of Debt: The Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Bakhtiyari Khans," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2004): 4.
[19] Ibid., 5.
[20] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 9.
[21] Cronin, "The Politics of Debt," 5.
[22] Ibid., 5.
[23] Mafi, "Iran's Concession Agreements," 409-410.

government disagreed with this claim.[24] Article 14 of the D'Arcy concession states:

> The Imperial Government binds itself to take all and any necessary measure to secure the safety and carrying out of the object of this Concession, of the plant and of the apparatuses of which mention is made for the purposes of the undertaking of the Company. The Imperial Government having thus fulfilled its engagements, the Concessionaire and the companies created by him shall not have the power under any pretext whatever to claim damages from the Persian Government.[25]

As such, the Iranian government asserted the D'Arcy concession explicitly stated that the Persian Government was not responsible for compensating D'Arcy (or his associated companies) for any damages.[26] It is likely that APOC's dealings with the Bakhtiyari Khans, and the manner in which the company had deducted from its royalty payments, only made the Iranian government's decision to object to compensating for damages easier. While the D'Arcy concession had required such disputes to be settled through arbitration, APOC had decided to forego arbitration and sanction the Iranian government by ceasing royalties from 1915 to 1919.[27] The disagreement was eventually managed through arbitration in 1920 where a provisional agreement had been reached but was never ratified by the Majles.[28] Additionally, there was growing discontent among Iranians that royalties were dramatically fluctuating from year to year as a result of being tied to net profits rather than production or gross selling value (the exclusion of deductions). This dispute would eventually haunt the relationship between the Iranian government and APOC once the Pahlavi Dynasty came to power and Reza Shah sought to reevaluate Iran's commitment to the D'Arcy concession.

The Armitage-Smith Agreement

By the end of the First World War, it was clear that if the D'Arcy concession were to continue and the Iranian government and APOC were

[24] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 18.
[25] Ibid., 10.
[26] Ibid., 28.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Alan W. Ford, *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute of 1951-1952: A Study of the Role of Law in the Relations of States* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 17.

to engage in a productive relationship, revisions would need to be made in order to clarify and settle on each other's understanding of the agreement. It was increasingly evident that Iran's interests were not being regarded by the concession, and it is likely that appeasing the British government became a priority for APOC, as the Admiralty had established a secret agreement with APOC for a twenty-year fuel contract, which also granted the Royal Navy a rebate from APOC's profits (it is likely that rebates such as this were part of the deductions from royalties to Iran).[29] What is most notable about this agreement is that it paved the opportunity for the British government to become the largest shareholder of APOC, giving it significant voting power within the company.[30] Additionally, uprisings within Iran, and the rise of nationalist movements, displayed the peoples' dissatisfaction with the exploitation of Iranian resources and apparent weakness of the Qajar state.[31]

It had become in the Iranian government's best interest, both politically and economically, to pursue a new resolution to settle the issues between itself and APOC, while it was also in APOC's best interest to strengthen its weakening relationship with the Iranian government. As such, the two parties sought to settle on the Armitage-Smith Agreement of 1920. Sydney Armitage-Smith, a British treasury official, had been given the task of negotiating an agreement with the Qajar state that would alleviate the concerns of both parties with regards to their disagreements over the D'Arcy concession.[32]

The Armitage-Smith Agreement went a long way toward resolving many of the issues the Iranian government had with APOC and the terms of the original D'Arcy concession, but it is arguable that the agreement also took a few steps back, as there were new provisions which seemed to disadvantage Iran in favor of APOC's profits. The first article of the Armitage-Smith agreement corrected the issue in which subsidiary companies of APOC that operated outside of Iran were free from any obligation to contribute their profits toward royalties to the Iranian government, but the Article exempted oil that was exported by ships to be counted toward profits which significantly reduced the royalties that Iran would have received otherwise. Additionally, subsidiary companies were granted various forms of reductions from their obligations to contribute to

[29] "Oil Agreements in Iran."
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] "Anglo-Persian Oil Company."

Iran's share of the profits, while such companies also went on to be defined as those in which APOC had a 50% or greater stake in the company.[33] Requiring a 50% stake as a threshold likely eliminated most companies in which APOC had partial ownership from being considered as subsidiary companies. The Armitage-Smith Agreement did, however, successfully resolve many of Iran's issues prior to both parties engaging in talks for the agreement. It had resolved the issue in which APOC was able to deduct BOC profits, and those of various other subsidiary companies, from its royalties to Iran.[34] Nevertheless, many issues persisted, such as the ongoing decision to use net profits as the basis for calculating royalties as opposed to production. This decision had essentially left open a loophole in which it was to APOC's advantage to invest as much of its earnings as possible in capital, rather than having excess profits that would be subject to royalties.

Ultimately, the Armitage-Smith Agreement seemed to do little to appease the Iranians. Although both the Iranian government and APOC had operated under its terms, the Armitage-Smith Agreement was never actually ratified and approved by the Majles.[35] Within Iran, popular opinion toward the relationship between the Qajar state and APOC was particularly negative as nationalist movements had spread across the country and led to the eventual rise of Reza Shah, whose bid to establish a new dynasty was successful.[36] It is under the Pahlavi state that we begin to see a dramatic shift in the Iranian government's approach in regard to its dealings with APOC. The nationalist movement that had brought Reza Shah to power had shown an eagerness among Iranians for their government to take an assertive approach to acting in the country's best interests, and it was a promise that Reza Shah would be obligated to uphold.

Precursor to the 1933 Oil Dispute

During the mid-1920's, after the establishment of the Pahlavi state, there was increasing motivation within the Iranian government to establish a new agreement that would replace the D'Arcy concession in favor of a more equitable agreement.[37] Rather than pushing for such swift and radical

[33] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 22-23.
[34] Ford, *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute,* 17.
[35] Mafi, "Iran's Concession Agreements," 409.
[36] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 24.
[37] Ibid., 24-25.

reforms that could have been potentially problematic, Reza Shah initially made efforts to revise the agreements that had already been established. There was significant concern that as the D'Arcy concession (and the revisions from the Armitage-Smith Agreement) became increasingly profitable for APOC, Iran's resources were being unfairly exploited by the company and the influence of the British government. Additionally, the concession was at risk of losing its legitimacy as it was negotiated by an overthrown dynasty. As such, in 1928 Reza Shah declared the Armitage-Smith Agreement was invalid due to the fact it was negotiated by Ahmed Shah of the Qajar dynasty, and, most notably, the agreement was deemed as a modification of the original D'Arcy concession that had not been approved by the Majles, therefore it was illegitimate in the eyes of the Iranian government.[38] This could be viewed as a somewhat surprising move by Reza Shah as the Armitage-Smith Agreement had made significant efforts to alleviate some of the initial concerns of the Iranian government. It is likely that the Shah believed it would be far simpler to renegotiate from the terms of the original D'Arcy concession rather than having to revise a modified agreement that he viewed as inherently disadvantageous to Iran. The decision to cancel the Armitage-Smith Agreement can also be seen as a pointed statement to the United Kingdom. The Iranian government was focused on maintaining its sovereignty, as a powerful corporation backed by an even more powerful foreign government was making advances in the exploitation of its resources.[39] The priority in 1928, however, was to engage in discussions about Iran's agreement with APOC and the address the immediate violations of Iran's sovereignty.[40]

The Iranian government's primary concern was that the Armitage-Smith Agreement had failed to resolve the means by which royalties were calculated. Iranians were unsettled by the fluctuations in royalties from year to year. This was, again, due to the fact that royalties were based on net profits rather than production or gross selling value.[41] It was Reza Shah's goal to clarify for APOC that he felt Iran was being unfairly exploited for its resources, and it deserved a far greater share of the company's profits. The issues over the calculations of royalties would

[38] Mafi, "Iran's Concession Agreements," 409.
[39] "Oil Agreements in Iran."
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ford, *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute,* 17-18.

become increasingly problematic for both parties as a global economic recession had placed significant pressure on the oil industry.[42]
Widespread negative opinions toward APOC eventually led to discussions of a new agreement between Iran and the company. The discussions were primarily conducted between high-profile advisors to the Shah, such as Abd al-Hosayn Teymurtash and Sir John Cadman, chairman of APOC. It is noted that Cadman had expressed a necessity for the Iranians to feel as though they were benefiting from the concession while pursuing some form of resolution that would be of equal benefit to APOC and the United Kingdom.[43] This was the approach that was taken in 1928 when Cadman and Teymurtash set their goals on a "partnership principle" as the basis for their discussions. Though the advertisements of their discussions were somewhat unnecessarily romanticized, they were, in fact, successful. The goal was to organize an agreement in which the Iranian government would have a 25% stake in the company while receiving a fixed royalty per barrel of oil produced.[44]

While talks were initially positive, a deteriorating global economy and the bankrupt status of the Iranian government, which was under immense domestic political pressure, led to a breakdown of discussions. This was largely due to a significant decrease in royalties to Iran from the previous year as a direct result of the global economy's effect on APOC's profits. The drop in royalties in 1932 was daunting to the Iranians, so much that Reza Shah had called for the immediate cancellation of the D'Arcy concession.[45] Reza Shah's seemingly hasty decision could be regarded as a knee-jerk reaction to the shocking decrease in royalties, and it could also be seen as an effective attempt to skew renegotiations in favor of the Iranians by gaining leverage on APOC and the United Kingdom. It is likely that Reza Shah initiated the cancellation of the D'Arcy concession with the full intention of either obtaining a more equitable deal with APOC, or opening the door to nationalize the Iranian oil industry. While it is unlikely that the latter was Reza Shah's priority, it credits the notion that nationalization of Iranian oil was not a new concept in the 1950's.

The Lessons of International Conflict

[42] Gregory Brew, "In Search of 'Equitability': Sir John Cadman, Reza Shah and the Cancellation of the D'Arcy Concession, 1928-33," *Iranian Studies* (2016): 6.
[43] Ibid., 6-7.
[44] Brew, "In Search of 'Equitability," 8-12.
[45] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 25.

The cancellation of the D'Arcy concession was not a simple affair. APOC believed its agreements with the Iranian government were binding. This included the Armitage-Smith Agreement. The Iranian government, however, viewed the D'Arcy concession as an agreement that had been violated by the subjectively crooked manner in which APOC was calculating its royalties to Iran. In 1931, APOC paid nearly £1,000,000 in taxes to the United Kingdom while paying only £366,782 in royalties.[46] It was clear that Reza Shah felt it was within his authority to cancel the concession in the midst of Iran's economic troubles; however, the immediate aftermath of the cancellation of the D'Arcy concession was chaotic for both the Iranians and the British. In addition to APOC's refusal to accept the validity of Reza Shah's cancellation of the concession, the British government was outraged due to its vested interests in the company, and it sought to consult the League of Nations for arbitration on the matter.[47] This was the first major instance in which international conflict had developed between Iran and the United Kingdom from disputes related to the D'Arcy concession.

Engaging in a legal dispute between two states over a state-corporation conflict was likely uncharted territory in 1932. The League of Nations was still a fairly new concept at the time, and there was little precedent that could easily determine a resolution. The British were adamant that Iran's actions presented an existential threat to British national security and Iran could not simply turn away from its obligations.[48] This was a bold proclamation by the United Kingdom considering it was not an official part to the D'Arcy concession. The potential consequences of Reza Shah's decision to cancel the D'Arcy concession became evidently clear as the British government contemplated military intervention on the basis it was "necessary to protect British lives and property," and the British government even went as far as deploying warships into the Persian Gulf as tensions rose between both governments.[49] The conflict between the two nations would ultimately require a formal resolution through international courts.

As the dispute was brought before the Permanent Court of International Justice, both nations argued their case. Iran was convinced the case was a domestic affair between Iran and APOC, and that the British government

[46] "Anglo-Persian Oil Company."
[47] Brew, "In Search of 'Equitability," 12-13.
[48] "Anglo-Persian Oil Company."
[49] Ford, *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute,* 17.

had no justification for dragging the dispute to the Court of International Justice.[50] Additionally, the representative for Iran argued that APOC had never sought an appeal to Iranian courts in order to resolve the dispute, but rather, it had allowed the United Kingdom to intervene in state-corporation affairs. Ultimately, the court ruled that it had no jurisdiction on the matter of state-corporate affairs, stating the United Kingdom was not party to the D'Arcy concession; this was essentially aligned with Iran's interpretation of the case, leaving the dispute as one that must be settled under the jurisdiction of Iranian courts and through the application of Iranian law.[51]

The conclusion of the 1932-1933 dispute allowed for the Iranian government and APOC to renew their discussions over a revised concession agreement that would be more fair and favorable to the Iranians. The message had already been sent that Iran had the jurisdiction to cancel any agreement that it deemed as unfairly exploitative or as a threat to its sovereignty and dominion over its own land and resources. It is likely, however, that Reza Shah was acutely aware of the lengths the British government would venture in order to secure its interests, and any further backlash against APOC could have had severe consequences for the Iran. 1933 brought about the development of a new concession that consisted of further compromise between Iran and APOC. The royalties based on 16% of net profits were discarded in favor of a set payment based on production and dividends paid to company shareholders.[52] This was, again, an agreement with advantages and disadvantages for the Iranians, and there were further drawbacks such as the abolishment of Article 15 of the D'Arcy concession, which allowed the Iranian government to seize all assets of the company that remained in Iran once the concession had ended.[53] The success of the 1933 concession is subjective; however, it became clear in the 1950's through Mosaddegh's ascendance to political fame that the Iranians were dissatisfied by the outcome of Reza Shah's challenge to APOC.

Conclusion

It would be a mistake to simply deem Reza Shah as complacent to Iran's exploitation in the same manner as the Qajar state. It is clear Reza Shah used every legal tool he had access to in order to influence a more

[50] Ford, *The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute,* 17-18.
[51] Ibid., 17-18.
[52] Cullen, *The Evolution of Petroleum,* 27.
[53] Ibid..

preferable resolution to the disputes between Iran and APOC. Although the Pahlavi monarch had ascended to the throne via a promise of reforms through strength and the pursuit of Iranian interests, his legacy of challenging APOC and the United Kingdom is arguably tarnished by his failure to negotiate an equitable oil agreement that could adapt to Iran's needs and changes in the global economy.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom's challenge to Reza Shah's reforms, and its willingness to employ force as means of carrying out its interests, foreshadowed the consequences of Mohammad Mosaddegh's bid to nationalize Iranian oil. It is unlikely that Iran could have been in a scenario in which it could successfully nationalize its oil industry without facing severe backlash from those with vested interests in Iranian oil, regardless of the legality of nationalization. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Reza Shah made a genuine effort to renegotiate Iran's relationship to APOC, and, perhaps, if he had been more methodical in his approach rather than canceling the D'Arcy concession in 1933, it may have been possible to reach an agreement that would be of acceptable benefit to APOC, the United Kingdom, and Iran.

Minor in Iranian Studies

The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

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FARZANEH FAMILY CENTER
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Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

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

Jocelyn Viviani

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 Rahnema, *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 interrupt 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 *raushanfikr* 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 Protes*t," 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 the 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.

Minor in Iranian Studies

The Farzaneh Family Center for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies is pleased to announce the OU Board of Regents approved the establishment of a Minor in Iranian Studies at the University of Oklahoma. The minor is administered through the OU College of International Studies and the Department of International and Area Studies. Students wishing to petition for the minor must satisfy the listed requirements. Please contact the advisers below for more information about the minor's requirements and procedures.

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Requirements for the Minor in Iranian Studies:
The minor in Iranian Studies consists of a minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework, nine of which must be at the upper-division level. The credit hours are divided into required courses and elective courses as listed below:

Required Courses
All students petitioning for the minor in Iranian Studies must complete:

IAS 2003 Understanding Global Community (3 hours)
PERS 2113 Third Semester Persian (3 hours)

Elective Courses
Nine (9) additional upper-division hours from the list of three-credit-hour courses below. At least three of the hours must be taken in the Department of International and Area Studies. Other courses not listed below may also be approved for the minor, if they include significant Iran-related content and are approved by the faculty advisers.

IAS 3223 Modern Iran
IAS 3403 History of US-Iranian Relations
IAS 3413 Iran and Islam to 1800
IAS 3493 Iran Since 1979
IAS 3763 Women and Gender in the Middle East
IAS 3683 Poverty and Inequality in the Middle East
IAS 3753 Youth Culture in Contemporary Iran
FMS 3843 Topics in National Cinema: Iranian Cinema
ARCH: Survey of Middle Eastern Architecture

The Power Behind the Pulpit:
The Rise of the Revolutionary Guard in Post-1979 Iran

Parker Selby

On May 2004 a few hours after the grand opening of the much awaited Imam Khomeini International Airport outside of Tehran departing planes were grounded and arriving planes diverted to nearby Mahabad Airport. Only one plane from Dubai was allowed to land. The owner of the closed airport was a Turkish-Austrian consortium Tepe-Afken-Vie which had invested $15 million dollars in a deal with the Iranian government to operate the airport. The incident resulted in diplomatic tension between Turkey and Iran and national embarrassment.[1]

The shutdown was caused by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp a faction of Iran's armed forces which cited security threats as a pretext for the shutdown. However, it later became apparent that the real reason for the Revolutionary Guard's closure of the airport was that one of its affiliated engineering firms had lost the bid for the contract. The airport was reopened in 2005 under the management of local airlines.

The incident demonstrated two things: first, the closure of the airport demonstrated the ability of the Revolutionary Guards to use force to pursue its interests. The show of force and the closure of the airport at the Imam Khomeini served to underline the fact that the Guards wielded disproportionate amount of force to even the civilian government which was forced to comply with the Guards wishes. Second, it demonstrated the extent to which the Guard's participation and influence in the national economy.

The Revolutionary Guard further demonstrated its political clout in the Majles elections of 2004 and the presidential election of 2005. In the 2004 parliamentary elections conservative, hard-liner candidates swept most of

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[1] "Airport Debacle is 'bad for Iran,' *BBC News*, May 12, 2004. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3707123.stm. Accessed April 16, 2012.

the seats, approximately a third of whom were former Revolutionary Guards.[2] One year later Mahmoud

However, despite some analysts' claims that the Revolutionary Guards and the *Basij* represent merely the armed force of the clerically dominated government, their increase in economic and political power since their creation in 1979, now threatens the conservative clerical establishment embodied in the Office of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and the Guardian Council. Some have gone as far to say that the brutal crackdown of protestors during the 2009 presidential coup represents a "masquerade coup" by the "neo-principlists" lead by Ahmadenejad.[3] Although such claims may be exaggerated there is no doubt that Iran's Revolutionary Guard is a key player in Iranian politics and economy. Due to their perceived radicalism in the West and the United States, the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as an institution have important implications for US and international intervention in Iran.[4]

In this paper I examine the Revolutionary Guard as a political, military, economic, and social institution and seek to answer the following questions: How did the Revolutionary Guard evolve into the economic and political force that it is today? To what extent has the Guard succeeded in gaining the approval and popularity of a large segment of Iranian society? How effective is it as an economic and military institution? And finally, what impact does US and international intervention have the Revolutionary Guard?

To answer these questions, I will survey the origins and evolution of the Revolutionary Guard from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to the present day. The evolutionary of the Revolutionary Guard as an institution can be roughly divided into three periods: formation and consolidation (1979-1988), economic expansion during the reconstruction era (1988-1997), and the political ascendancy (1997-present). After a brief survey of its history, I analyze the Revolutionary Guard as an institution and indentify and its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I conclude with an evaluation of US and

[2] Elliot Hen-Tov and Nathan Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran: Praetorianism 2.0," *The Washington Quarterly* 34 (2011): 51, accessed March 26, 2012, doi: 10.1080/0163660X.2011.534962.
[3] See Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, "The Ayatollah's Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis," *Middle East Journal* 64 (2010): 543-58, accessed March 28, 2012, doi: 10.3751/64.4.12.
[4] In this paper I will assume that sanctions are a form of intervention.

international intervention and answer to what extent economic and military intervention can influence Iranian foreign and domestic policy. I will argue that its penetration of Iranian politics, economy, and military have made the IRGC a largely independent institution that will most likely become the primary authority in the Islamic Republic for the foreseeable future in spite of Iran's democratic, reformist movement and the clerical elite.

Formation and Consolidation (1979-1988)

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Engelab-e Islami*) was formally created May 5, 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini during the tenure of President Mehdi Bazargan amidst the chaos of the Revolution; however, its true origins lie earlier than the revolution itself. The core of what became the leadership of the Revolutionary Guard consisted of various leftist Islamic groups such as the Mojahedeen-e Khalq (MEK) and the Mojahedeen of the Islamic Revolution (MIR). These two groups already had acquired experience in revolutionary activity before the outbreak of the Revolution in 1978 waging guerilla warfare against the Shah's regime. Many future Guard leaders such as Behzad Nebavi and Mohsen Reza'i served time in the Shah's notorious prisons where they gradually grew disenchanted with the secular Marxist ideologies of their fellow inmates and embraced the strictly Islamic ideology of Khomeini. After their release Nebavi, Reza'i and other like-minded inmates left the MEK and created the MIR in April 1979. Nevertheless, many revolutionaries during the revolution and the early 1980's would hold dual membership in both MEK and MIR.[5]

Other members of the Revolutionary Guard came from the *komitehs*, the local organizations that sprang up during and after the Shah fell to police the population and capture alleged regime supporters and counter-revolutionaries. Most of them were pre-revolutionary dissidents and guerilla fighters, some of whom had been trained by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). It was during this early phase of the revolution that many of the future Guard members would acquire experience in internal security for the Revolutionary Guards would become notorious.[6] Thus, it is clear that before the formal inauguration of the

[5] Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 32-33.
[6] Shaul, Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), 63-64.

Revolutionary Guards in May 1979, many of the Guardsmen had some experience in guerilla warfare and internal security.

After the fall of the Shah and the triumph of Khomeini the new regime faced several challenges from former revolutionary allies such as MEK and the Tudeh Party and ethnic separatist movements in Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and Khuzestan. Furthermore, the violent purges of revolutionary tribunals and the *komitehs*, even by the Revolutionary Council's admission, were out of control. Consequently, the newly formed Revolutionary Guards were entrusted with the dual tasks of suppressing separatist movements and reigning in the *komitehs* and tribunals. After the beginning of the Kurdish revolt in August 1979 the Revolutionary Guards, along with *Artesh* divisions were dispatched to suppress the revolt. Although the Guards acquired more military experience in the Kurdish and other campaigns to crush Arab, Baluchi, and Azeri separatist movements their performance was mixed; the Revolutionary Guard's experience was mainly in urban warfare and their unfamiliarity with the mountainous terrain in the north allowed the Kurdish *peshmerga* to plan ambushes that inflicted many casualties on the Guards.[7]

Efforts to curb the excesses of the revolution tribunals were likewise mixed. Attempts by the Provisional government to impose order on the *komitehs* merely made them stronger. Dispatched by the Revolutionary Council to centralize the *komitehs* and the tribunals, Mahdavi-Kani succeeded somewhat in reducing their numbers (during the revolution and its aftermath around 1,000 local *komitehs* had formed in Tehran itself), however, his efforts to centralize served merely to consolidated them.

The eight-month period of Bazargan's tenure was a crucial period in which revolutionary organizations, especially the Revolutionary Guard shaped the emerging order. Despite Bazargan's insistence on implementing the rule of law his efforts were largely thwarted by the developing "parallel government of revolutionary committees, courts, and guards backed by the Revolutionary Council."[8] During this formative period the political and security apparatus of the Revolutionary Guard began to form. Although it was monitored by the Revolutionary Council through an appointed cleric, the Guard was largely successful in maintaining its autonomy. Several of the Revolutionary Council's appointed representatives to the Revolutionary Guard Council were rejected by the Guards who resented what they saw as

[7] Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*; (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 230-234.
[8] Bakhash, *Reign of the Ayatollahs*, 52-55.

the imposition of leaders without their consent.[9] Thus, although it is correct that the Guard was largely a political instrument of the clerics on the Revolutionary Council, even during its formative period the Guard displayed tendencies of autonomy. This trend would acceletate and continue throughout its history.

The Iran-Iraq War was a decisive event in the evolution of the Revolutionary Guard into a professional organization. Although it gained valuable military experience in suppressing the ethnic revolts that sprung up after the fall of the Shah, before the war the IRGC remained largely an unorganized militia concerned more with the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic. However, the experience of the Iran-Iraq War molded the IRGC into a professional military.[10]

The sheer increase in the size of the IRGC and the *Basij* during the Iran-Iraq War demonstrates its role in consolidating and strengthening the Guard; the first year of the war saw IRGC membership double from 20,000-30,000 to 50,000. By the end of the war that number would increase to around 450,000. It also expanded its purview, establishing branches in the navy and the air force, a national command structure, and a budgetary administration. Furthermore, by 1987 3 million Iranians had received *Basij* training.[11]

The war also served to expand the IRGC's monopoly of violence and minimizing the role of its main competitor: the *Artesh*. At the beginning of the war the ranks of the *Artesh* had been depleted to 150,000[12], and the lingering distrust of it throughout the war led the Islamic Republican Party (IPR) to advocate for the expansion of the IRGC's abilities, powers, and privileges to wage the "sacred defense." Such privileges included superior pay and benefits to its members and superior access to arms and spare parts.[13]

The Revolutionary Guard's performance in the Iran-Iraq War was lackluster. Due to several disadvantages such as a chronic shortage of spare

[9] Among the rejected appointees were Ayatollah Hasan Lahuti and future president Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam*, 33.
[10] Marius A. Belstad, "Born by Revolution, Raised by War: The Iran-Iraq War and the Rise of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps" (Master Degree's Thesis, University of Oslo, 2010), 30.
[11] Ibid, 32-37.
[12] Efraim Karsh, *Essential Histories: The Iran-Iraq War* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 19.
[13] Belstad, "Born by Revolution, Raised by War", 32.

parts, heavy armor, aircraft and advanced weaponry, the Guard relied mainly on sheer manpower and religious zealotry.[14] This was demonstrated in its "human wave" tactics, which entailed the charges of massive numbers of lightly armed *Basijis,* sometimes as young as 10-12 years old, at enemy positions. These charges were ostensibly to weaken the enemy's lines and pave the way for attacks by more heavily armed Revolutionary Guards. *Basij* charges were also utilized to clear minefields. Although the IRGC's use of human waves scored some military victories, it resulted in unnecessary casualties and mostly resulted in stalemate on the front. The most illustrative case of the inefficiency of the human wave tactic was Operation Karbala 4, a failed Iranian offensive to capture the Iraqi city of Basra in December 1986; around 10,000 Iranian troops were killed a period of three days.[15] Such tactics also failed to prevent the Iraqi counter offense beginning in 1987 which pushed Iranian forces out of Iraq and managed to capture sizeable portions of Iranian territory. Sensing defeat on land by the Iraqi forces, increasing American and international pressure in the Persian Gulf, and domestic pressure from a public exhausted by devastation and economic ruin, Ayatollah Khomeini finally yielded to Rafsanjani's advice and accepted the UN-proposed ceasefire.

The Revolution Guard has long emphasized its role in the "Sacred Defense" of the Islamic Republic in as evidence of its legitimacy.[16] Despite its mixed performance on the battlefield, the Guard points to its success in resisting the Iraqi onslaught despite being vastly outnumbered and the alleged US and international community's support of Iraq. The later was particularly incorporated into the Guard's mythology of the Iran-Iran Iraq War. Mohsen Reza'i would later call it the "War against the World." One author has also claimed that as a result of its large role in the Iran-Iraq War, the Guard acquired nationalist credentials and perceived legitimacy from the population at large:

"During the war, the IRGC developed to become a truly national actor, defending not just its politically likeminded compatriots but the whole

[14] At the beginning of the war Iraq had 2,750 tanks, 4,000 armored vehicles, 1,400 artillery pieces, and 340 combat aircraft, in contrast to Iran, which had the capacity to field only 500 tanks, 300 artillery pieces, and less than 100 combat aircraft, Ward, *Immortal*, 248.
[15] Ibid, 37-41.
[16] Wehrey, Frederic et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*: *Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2011), 24.

country against the Iraqi onslaught. Iranians not initially positively inclined towards the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps or the ideology of the fundamentalist *ulama* therefore to a larger degree found themselves fighting for the same basic value of Iranian independence in the face of external danger, and, whether they liked it or not, had to acknowledge the IRGC's important role in defending the Iranian nation."[17]

It is difficult to judge whether or not how many Iranians today accept the Revolutionary Guard mythology of the Iran-Iraq War. Although the Guard and the regime at large have kept the memory of the Guard's sacrifice in the war alive through museums, public ceremonies, and movies it is not clear if this resonates with younger generations. Although some Iranians have expressed ambivalence and/or distrust of the Guard's portrayal of its part in the war effort, it would be misguided to assume that even the Guard's critics would welcome international or American military intervention in Iran. Such an action would probably serve to increase the Guard's legitimacy in the eyes of the public, as was demonstrated by the public support it enjoyed during the Iran-Iraq War.

Economic Expansion During the Reconstruction Era (1988-1997)

The end of the Iran-Iraq War, the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, and the election of President Hashemi-Rafsanjani ushered in an a new era for the Islamic Republic characterized by pragmatism and a toning down of the Revolutionary rhetoric and policies of the Khomeini era. As a part of his pragmatic political program, the new administration, while remaining a conservative, clerical dominated institution, initiated a program of reconstruction (*saz-bazi*) that aimed to encourage foreign investment and the rebuilding of Iran's economy devastated by a decade of war and revolution. Furthermore, Rafsanjani attempted to reorganize and rationalize the bureaucracy, signaling a shift away from the charismatic rule of the Supreme Ruler to an institutionalization of authority.[18]

As a part of this drive to rationalize state institutions, the Joint Armed Forces General Staff was created in 1988 to institute coordination between leading officers of the Regular Army (*Artesh*) and the IRGC. A year later the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics was created to incorporate the IRGC into a larger military structure and reduce its autonomy. The establishment of other agencies such as the Ministry of

[17] Belstad, "Born by Revolution, Raised by War", 45.
[18] Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 2006) 105-107.

Intelligence and Security (MOIS) were likewise intended to reign in the Revolution Guard and encourage cooperation and intelligence sharing between the different agencies.[19] However, Rafsanjani's attempts to integrate the IRGC was significantly hindered by the resistance from the Revolutionary Guards' leadership as well as Khomeini's successor Supreme Leader Khamenei's granting the Guard additional security mandates not sanctioned by the Presidency.[20] Although partly due to the power of the Supreme Leader over the military, the ability of the IRGC to resist Rafsanjani's attempts at integration demonstrate that the Revolutionary Guard retained a significant degree of its autonomy throughout the reconstruction era.

In one of his most significant actions during the Reconstruction that would greatly influence the development of the IRGC, Rafsanjani began encouraging the Revolutionary Guards to engage in economic and financial activities to "bolster its budget." As a part of his reconstruction policy Rafsanjani was seeking to lower the government defense budget and ushering the IRGC into private business was part of his initiative to encourage government agencies to acquire revenue independently, thus freeing up government funds for other projects.[21] Perhaps, it was also a calculated move to appease the IRGC's hardliners who resented Rafsanjani's role in convincing Khomeini to end the war with Iraq. Whatever his motives were, his decision would mark the beginning of the IRGC's penetration of the Iranian economy on an unprecedented level and only serve to strengthen the organization's autonomy.

As a result of Rafsanjani's economic policies of "privatization" and his need to placate the disgruntled Guardsmen, the state began transferring previously state-dominated sectors such as petroleum, natural gas, construction of housing, pipelines, roads, agriculture, and international trade to IRGC-affiliated corporations and firms.[22] In effect privatization in the Islamic Republic means the transfer of formerly state dominated industries to an informal network of IRGC-affiliated firms and corporations in a no-bid process. Among the biggest these benefactors is *Khatam al-Anbiya* (also known as *Ghorb,*) a consortium of several agricultural, industrial, engineering, and construction firms that has been

[19] Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 8-10.
[20] Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini: Iran Under his Successors*, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 59-60.
[21] Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran, 56.*
[22] Ibid., 56-59.

awarded over 750 government contracts since its creation in 1990. More importantly it is reported to be the Islamic Republic's sole contactor in the natural gas industry.[23]

In addition to its business interests, the IRGC also influence indirect control over the large economic foundations (*bonyads)* such as the Foundation for the Disinherited (*bonyad-e mostaz'afin*), Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans' Affairs, and *Bonyad-e Shahid* which control nearly 40 percent of the Iranian economy and are allotted around 58 percent of the state budget. Many of the heads of these foundations are former Revolutionary Guards or *Basij* who report directly to the Supreme Leader and not the state.[24]

The IRGC is also known to engage in illicit black market activities which would later become the subjects of several corruption trials during the Khatami era. Due to its control over most of Iran's seaports, the IRGC is in the position to control the import and export of illicit goods, which some have claimed include drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. Such black market transactions are estimated earn $12 billion a year.[25]

Political Ascendancy (1997-present)

Beginning during the Khatami Presidency (1997-2005) and culminating during the Ahmadinejad Presidency (2005-present) the IRGC extended its control of the internal security and intelligence apparatus, and began to exert unprecedented political influence. As the IRGC gained influence and suppressed reformist movement it came increasingly in conflict with the clerical conservative establishment whose reliance on the IRGC is threatening to transform the Islamic Republic of Iran into a "Praetorian State" in which the Supreme Leader would be the appointed puppet figure of the IRGC.

The election of President Khatami in 1997 by a popular approval not witnessed since the election of Bani Sadr was the beginning of a conservative resurgence. The relaxation of press censorship, the call for a policy of détente with the United States and the West, development of civil society (*jam'e madani*), the implementation of the rule of law, and other democratic reforms threatened clerical rule and the office of the Supreme Leader. Thus, the Supreme Leader Khamenei increasingly relied on the IRGC to use extra-constitutional and non-democratic means to counter the

[23] Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 59-64.
[24] Arjomand, *After Khomeini*, 60-61.
[25] Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 64-66.

reform movement.[26] The most striking example of this occurred in July 1999 when *Basij* and *Ansar-e Hezbollah* paramilitaries violently suppressed student protests at the Tehran University. The later organization, though not officially a part of the IRGC, has informal links with the Guard leadership. Although being the leading figure of the reform movement, Khatami did nothing to stop the suppression of the student protests.[27] Khatami's inability to prevent the Guards and the clerical establishment from crush the protests demonstrated the limits of presidential power and the rising influence of the IRGC in Iranian politics.

The IRGC also began to resume its internal security and intelligence roles that it had enjoyed during the early days of the Revolution. Despite Rafsanjani's attempts to subsume the IRGC's policing and intelligence functions within a national, centralized hierarchy, the result was the development of parallel IRGC and official security and intelligence institutions whose jurisdictions overlapped. During the Khatami era, the IRGC began developing of its own "shadow intelligence agency" to challenge the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) which was staffed largely by reformist, Khatami supporters.[28] Furthermore, after the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 the MOIS was purged of its reformist leaders and replaced with largely IRGC veterans.[29] Once again the IRGC demonstrated its ability to redefine itself and adopt a wide variety of roles in the Islamic Republic as a part of its broad mandate as guardians of the revolution.

Furthermore, it was during the Khatami Presidency that the IRGC began to extend its purview over ballistic missile defense systems and Iran's nuclear energy-and possibly weapons program. As will be discussed more thoroughly below, this has significant implications for the possibility of US intervention in Iran and the security of neighboring countries. The IRGC nearly launched ballistic missiles at US Coalition forces in Iraq in 2003 and has launched ballistic missiles against *Mojaheddin-e Khalq* bases there as well.

The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 signaled the culmination of the conservative backlash began during the tenure of President Khatami. However, it also witnessed the unprecedented entry of

[26] Hen-Tov and Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran", 58.
[27] Ali Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics", *Middle East Quarterly* 15 (2008), 4.
[28] Wehrey et al., *Rise of the Pasdaran*, 29-31.
[29] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians, 554.*

the IRGC, of which Ahmadinejad is former member, into politics. In his first term nine of the twenty-one ministry portfolios, including the posts of Ministry of Energy, Justice, Defense, and Commerce, were occupied by former IRGC officers. Furthermore, Ahmadinejad appointed scores of former IRGC officers to governor posts throughout Iran to reward them for their political support in the 2005 Presidential Election.[30] Also, approximately one-third of the Majles seats in the 2000's have been filled by former Guardsmen.[31]

The 2009 presidential election in which Green Movement members protesting the rigging of election were crushed by the *Basij* was not only a victory of conservatives against the reform movement but the victory of the IRGC. It has been argued that the 2009 Election Crisis was in reality a virtual IRGC coup.[32] This is a slight exaggeration; the conservative clerical establishment still largely remains in control of the Islamic Republic through the judiciary, Maslahat Council, and the Guardian Council. Nevertheless, the 2009 Election Crisis demonstrated the great extent of the IRGC's power and the resumption of its internal security role that it had not enjoyed since the days of the revolution. Moreover, Ahmadenejad's claims to communicate directly with the Hidden Imam and other "neo-conservative" figures such as Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi's radical re-interpretations of the doctrine of the *vilayet-e faqih* have created some tensions with the conservative clerical elite. The lack of clear candidate for Khameini's successor and the growth of the IRGC's military-industrial complex combined could shift the balance of power in the Islamic Republic to the IRGC.

Conclusion

As this survey of its history has shown, the IRGC has displayed a striking degree of institutional resiliency, functional diversity, and autonomy since its founding during the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Despite attempts during the Rafsanjani and Khatami presidencies to subordinate it to the central government, the Guard has continued to grow in size and influence unabated. As it has evolved the Guard has taken on a variety of roles and functions in the Islamic Republic from intelligence gathering, providing internal security, suppressing dissidents and military defense to spearheading economic development and providing scholarships

[30]Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Iranian Politics," 9-10
[31] Hen-Tov and Gonzalez, "The Militarization of Post-Khomeini Iran", 51-52.
[32] Safshekan and Sabet, *The Ayatollah's Praetorians*, 554-56.

to rural students. This it has done all as a part of its broad mandate in the constitution to safeguard the principles of the Islamic Revolution.[33]

All of this has serious implications for the prospect of American or any other foreign power's intervention in Iran, and any serious discussion of economic sanctions and regime change in Iran must incorporate the IRGC into its calculations.

Due to the IRGC's extensive penetration of the economic, financial, and business sectors since the Rafsanjani Presidency, it is most likely that international sanctions on Iran will only serve to cement the IRGC's iron grip on the Iranian economy as the withdrawal of foreign firms leaves the IRGC with fewer viable economic competitors and allows it to expand even more. The IRGC's control of the nation's ports also puts it in the position as the main beneficiary of lucrative smuggling operations as the demand and price of Iranian oil increases. Although ratcheting up sanctions might limit the ability of the Iranian rentier state from collecting the rents on oil, the main source of its revenue and arguably a significant source of its legitimacy, it is unlikely it will lead to significant changes in the Islamic Republic's domestic or foreign policy, much less a regime change. Like the sanctions era in Iraq under Saddam's Ba'ath regime, sanctions will most likely lead to severe economic dislocation and a humanitarian crisis which will in turn increase the population's reliance on the state, regardless of its popularity or legitimacy.

Likewise, any military intervention by the United States or its allies in Iran will necessarily entail a confrontation with the IRGC as well as the *Artesh*. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the IRGC has moved away from its prior disdain for more sophisticated weaponry and begun purchasing more sophisticated long-range ballistic missiles and anti-ship and air defense systems. Moreover, it has also been busy developing its domestic arms industry, although complete self-sufficiency has not yet been accomplished.[34] Furthermore, if the accusations are true that Iran has succeeded in manufacturing nuclear weapons it is probable that the IRGC has asserted its authority over their development and deployment.

Iran's national defense strategy relies on its armed forces to conduct asymmetrical warfare against an invading enemy by attacking its supply and communication lines with irregular units, and the IRGC and the *Basij* militias are to play a significant role in this strategy of guerilla warfare. About 600,000 of the 3 million active *Basij* members are said to receive

[33] Alfoneh, "The Revolutionary Guards' Role in Politics," 6.
[34] Ward, *Immortal*, 308-310.

regular military training and instruction in tactics of asymmetric warfare and thus would most likely be a formidable force in any foreign invasion or occupation.[35]

It remains unclear how most ordinary Iranians view the IRGC and the *Basij*. Due to both of their critical roles in suppressing the protests during the 2009 Presidential election it is likely that many participants in the Green Movement do not view the IRGC as legitimate. However, dislike of the IRGC or the Islamic Republic does not necessarily translate into support of foreign intervention and it would be ill-advised of US policy makers to expect approval for its interventionist policies as it expected before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Although some middle class Iranians and *bazaaris* have expressed dissatisfaction with the IRGC's virtual monopoly over large segments of the Iranian economy others have emphasized the IRGC's role in reconstruction the country after the economic destruction during the Iran-Iraq War.[36] Moreover, the IRGC also has provided thousands of students with scholarships, loans, and welfare subsidies, although some claim that handouts such as these have not completely succeeded in buying the loyalty of Iran's younger generation. It seems that the rural/urban divide largely influences the degree of the IRGC's popularity, with rural inhabitants largely supporting the Guard due to its implementation of several rural public works projects whereas urban inhabitants largely resenting the Guard for its suppression of demonstrations, civil society activities, and arresting dissidents.[37]

The IRGC, of all of the institutions in the Islamic Republic, is now poised to rival even the Office of the Supreme Leader. As it increases it monopoly of the use of force and its penetration into politics, some have speculated that after the death of Khamenei the IRGC will use its power to appoint a politically pliant Supreme Leader that will bow to the Guard's political and economic interests. As the Guard continues to assert its praetorian control over the Office of the Supreme Leader and the rest of the government its legitimacy will rest mainly on its ability to maintain a monopoly over the use of force, to distribute its oil wealth relatively equally and to fund national development, and to defend its population from foreign and internal threats. Whether these predictions are true or not, the IRGC has now established itself as a permanent political actor in Iran,

[35] Wehrey, Frederic, et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 44-47.
[36] Ibid, 70-75.
[37] Wehrey et al., *Rise of the Pasdaran*, 28-29.

one that cannot be ignored by the international community and the United States in particular.

Playing with Politics:
Where Youthfulness and Politics Collide on Iran's Football Fields

Aubrey Crynes

Across the globe, the idea that sports are deeply intertwined with politics is not surprising. With the existence of multinational sporting organizations, international competitions, and lucrative marketing deals, it is no wonder the two have become conflated. But even without the interjection of nations, sport at a local level carries huge connotations. Conclusions could be drawn on class, ethnicity, and religious background merely from the jersey a person decides to put on in the morning. Depending on where one is in the world, and the socioeconomic class in which they grow up, football can bring many different images to mind. Does one think of little league games or the new posh sport fad their mom pushed them into? Does football have a community connotation, growing up playing in back yards and rallying around a club or national team? Or does football connote something more sinister, like burned stadiums, riots, and infamous football hooliganism. Across the globe academics and sports fanatics alike have continually dissected these questions, but does any of that matter to those just playing the game?

Sports do not exist in a vacuum, and as much as some may want to just go out and kick a ball around, it can often be much more complex. This is especially true for those living in the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the state is intricately intertwined with its citizen's lives. Due to the government's extensive legislation of public sector interaction, something

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as simple as a neighborhood pick-up game can be embedded with political connotation. This puts normal citizens and players at odds with government functionaries and police forces. While there may be no political intent in a game, if any offense is perceived on behalf of law enforcement or paramilitary groups, it can possibly place citizens at risk of confrontation or arrest. Despite these risks, sports, especially football, retain high popularity across Iran. In Iran, football is a way to reclaim youthfulness in the hyper-politicized public sphere, but because of that hyper-politicization, football remains inseparable from politics. The shifting status of football in Iran is best exemplified in the way the government reacts to football, the way Iranians use football as non-movement, and when football becomes purposefully political.

Football and Westoxification

The propaganda of the Islamic Republic often finds itself in a double bind, wanting to draw nationalist sentiment from the rich history of Persian empires of days past, but all the while knowing that was the period of *jahilliyah*, or ignorance, before the coming enlightenment through Islam. In the days after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, many were questioning what life would look like in the new Islamic Republic. The nation needed to transform itself, but how it would accomplish that goal was unclear. As the new government moved forward, it became clear it was more useful to work with the structures of past regimes, spin them, and add a new Islamic flavor. Fortunately for football fans, the holy Qur'an does not denounce the sport. Ayatollah Khomeini's famous statement, "I am not an athlete, but I like athletes" made it seem like football players and fans had been given the call to play on.[1] Despite football's relative popularity and success on the international scale, it was not the sport the government was interested in pushing. Wrestling, an ancient Iranian tradition, was the perfect pastime for mixing storied Iranian history while staying in the parameters of Islam and supposedly sating the public's need for recreational leisure. After all, football was introduced to Iran from the West as a remnant of oil companies and World War occupation, a fire then fueled by the Shah's opulence and indulgence. Clerics across the country felt Iranians would recognize football as a tool for imperialist dominance and turn their backs on the game for good. But the Islamic Republic did not get its wish, as

[1] Houchang E. Chehabi, "The Politics of Football in Iran," *Soccer and Society* (June 2006): 389.

football was too deeply loved by the people and so they began to try to find ways to deal with it instead.

In the classic 'if you can't beat them, join them' spirit, the Islamic Republic and its civilian paramilitary branch, the Basij, began working towards co-opting football matches to showcase Islamic sportsmanship. First came the nationalization of the teams, banning Latin script letters on uniforms, and assigning teams new names that fit into the ethos of Islamic sport.[2] These reforms were key to the survival of football in Iran— reclaiming even the visual narrative of football from the Shah's modernization reforms and the trappings of Western European clubs. This meant that while the roots of the game still lay with the government's enemies, football could still be present in the new Islamic government.

Other attempts to make football more Islamic however, were much less successful. One of the most comical was the government's attempt to persuade football fans to chant Islamic slogans and religious praises instead of traditional club songs or chants during matches. Football matches had become one of the few public outlets left in the Islamic Republic that were not wholly centered on religion, so when the Basij attempted to bring religious exaltation into the arenas, they were not well received. Instead, they were laughed out of the stadium.[3] The Islamic Republic was quickly learning it had to allow some spaces for the public to exist apart from religion; if they could not stop football entirely, they could still influence it.

Club matches inside of Iran are subject to all the rules and guidelines that shape public life in the Islamic Republic, but matches outside of Iran do not meet the standards that clerics championed— Islamic Morality. The government has also recognized what an important tool international football could be for the Islamic Republic. Matches could help grow nationalist sentiment at home, and victory always brought international acclaim. The question was how to hold, participate in, and allow viewing of the international matches that were beyond government control. The Islamic Republic's response to this problem has been to implement an impressive regimen of television censorship. From blurring out women's hair in crowd shots, to lowering the volume of the chanting – or even muting it entirely, to just replacing shots of the crowd with other footage; the Islamic Republic relies on a slightly delayed broadcast and an

[2] Chehabi, "The Politics of Football in Iran," 390.
[3] Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 229.

experienced censorship team to effectively display only the world they want their citizens to see.[4]

This governmental pre-occupation has turned football from a leisurely past time to a high stakes political venture. The integration of politics in to football has allowed it to become a not-so-subtle political signifier of the technically party-less political landscape. The clash of sports and official politics played out starkly in the 1997 presidential elections. Muhammad Khatami and his reformist movement gained shining endorsements from some of the nation's top football players, while his more conservative opponent aligned himself with wrestling. That same year Mayili-Kuhan, the conservative leaning national football team coach, had barred some Iranian players from joining the squad for a World Cup qualifying match because they played in the German Bundesliga, leading to an international performance so dismal that the situation came before the Iranian parliament.[5] Between Khatami's landslide victory and the removal of Mayili-Kuhan in favor of a Brazilian coach, football was quickly transforming into the sport of the reformists. Football was there to stay and had become more politicized than ever.

With all this government attention focused on football, the sport was bound to become political. Repurposing football to become a tool for the state was still not enough to get people in opposition of the regime to lose interest in the sport, but it also wasn't pure enough for the hardliners to pick up. What sport you liked, not just what team you supported, became a large blinking political signifier. Football is still just a game, and there are many who play the game for this reason alone, despite any lingering political connotation.

Football as a Non-Movement

When a child picks up a football and goes outside to play with their friends, they are not thinking of political expression, they just want to have fun. As teens join after school programs and play on organized teams, it is not to take a political stand, but to play the game. This unheard of phenomenon of youth just wanting to do things for fun, even in hyper-political areas like Iran, is simply called "*youthfulness,* [which] signifies a particular habitus, behavioral and cognitive dispositions that are associated

[4] Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World*, 230.
[5] Chehabi, "The Politics of Football in Iran," 396.

with the fact of being young."[6] Iranian youth, like their counter parts from across the globe, love football. But unlike many other youth, there isn't much else for them to do legally. Because of decades of sanctions, Iran's economy has stagnated while its population boomed, leading to masses of unemployed youth. With an economy that needs 10% growth annually to absorb its youth only charting an estimated 0.6% and a heavily regulated public sphere, Iran's youth are desperate for something to do.[7] Iranian youth struggle under societal pressure to be able to provide for themselves in a crippled economy and lack other outlets of expression. Iranian youth have turned towards sport to ease some of the pressure in their day-to-day lives. Football is by far the most popular sport, and comes in many forms making it more accessible to the average citizen. Whether its attending a match, juggling or "free styling", or forming local club teams, football can provide a form of escape from the trials of everyday life.[8] The search for non-politicized spaces is what drives youth to try and take sports back from its government ascribed political connotations. That is to say, just because these youth want football to exist separately from the more difficult parts of their lives in the Islamic Republic, doesn't mean it does.

he football uniform alone presents obstacles in the Islamic Republic. Men running around with shorts riding up to their thighs is enough to shock a hardline cleric, and that image does not include the scandalous possibility of a woman looking on. While Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa allowing the broadcast of athletes who were not fully covered providing the people watch without lust, Ayatollah Khamenei later ruled it was too much for a woman to look upon an unrelated man who was wearing shorts and a t-shirt – even if she could manage it without lust.[9] Proper Islamic dress did not just pose an obstacle for women wanting to watch a football game; it made it hard for them to play the sport as well. With Khatami's reform movement, women began seeing a gradual easing in public morality policing and began to become active in the sport scene. Since football was

[6] Asef Bayat, "Muslim Youth and the Claim of Youthfulness," in *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.
[7] Omid Memarian and Tara Nesvaderani, "The Youth*" Iran Primer*, http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/youth, Accessed October 11, 2016.
[8] Garrett Nada, "Youth in Iran Part 4: Crazy for Sports," *Iran Primer*, http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/aug/20/youth-iran-part-4-crazy-sports, Accessed October 11, 2016.
[9] Chehabi, "The Politics of Football in Iran," 394-395.

still too radical of a jump, initially women settled for futsal, an indoor version of football played with smaller, five person teams, and shorter court sizes.[10] The fact that futsal was played indoors made it much more acceptable by the government's standards as the women playing could not be seen by passersby and the futsal uniform could be worn with fully covering layer underneath it if need be. Presently, football is becoming a sport for women in Iran as well.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is not the person that would come to mind when one thinks of a political figure fighting for international women's rights. But when FIFA banned the Iranian women's team from playing in a qualifying match in 2012 for wearing uniforms that adhered to the Islamic Republic's dress code, he took up the cause. Perhaps he was simply looking to regain popular support after the widely questioned 2009 presidential elections, but the fact he fought for their cause was still important for the progression of women's football in Iran. Iran created its women's national team in 2005 spurred on by an invitation to compete in a West Asian Football Women's Championship.[11] The team has performed well in continental competition, but due to FIFA uniform regulations, the Iranian women's team is now just beginning to fully break out on the world's stage. Success at the international level has allowed for gradual but continued easement on the government's attitude towards women's football, and sports in general, but some progress is being made. Despite the amount of clothes they are required to wear, women in Iran have continued their interest in the sport and the government is beginning to respond to the demand. There has even been growth in sports where women are seen by men, football being just one of many, something that would have been unheard of in the early days of the Islamic Republic.[12]

However, carving out space for women's sports happened before the government took up the cause. All-girls schools, supportive families, and the players themselves have all worked towards finding a space for these girls to play. In the early 2000's, before the invitation and subsequent creation of a national women's team, provincial school leagues were cropping up around the country. Provincial tournaments were even held and attended by teams across Iran. Though not explicitly illegal, those

[10] Garrett Nada, "Youth in Iran Part 4."
[11] Bill Spindle, *"*In Iran, a Women's Soccer Revolution*." The Wall Street Journal*. August 24, 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/in-iran-a-womens-soccer-revolution-1440424818. Accessed December 06, 2016.
[12] Nikki R Keddie, *Women in Iran Since 1979*, *Social Research* 67 (2000) 431.

playing and in attendance had to be careful as not all approved of the choice to allow the girls to play: boys were not allowed to attend the tournaments at all.[13] This instance of local level organizing was testing the limits of what was allowed in the Islamic Republic, but was also key in allowing these kinds of changes to occur. By creating these leagues and playing in these tournaments, girls are exercising their "politics of presence". While the intent of these girls' leagues may have been to encourage physical activity or teamwork, their outcome made ripples into the political arena of the Islamic Republic.

The youth of the Islamic Republic want to interact with football the same way youth do in the rest of the world. Football is fun. It's a good way to spend time with friends, and playing on teams is a rewarding experience. But because of the Islamic Republic's reach into the public sphere, just enjoying the game becomes much harder to do. Simple participation can be political, even if that was not the intent of the actor. Despite its close ties to politics, youth in Iran continue to turn to football as an act of reclaiming their youthfulness with the wish to just be kids for a while.

Football as Purposeful Politics

People in Iran are aware of how everything in the public sphere, including football, is highly politicized. While some seek out the game as a means of escape from daily life in the Islamic Republic, others turn toward football as a platform for their grievances. Many people approach football with the intent of creating change. This purposefully political football can be found in the stands, on the pitch, or in the streets but all of it is an example of Iranians taking the game they love and using it to make themselves heard.

Banning half the population from the nation's most popular sport does not quite seem like the most well advised policy, but due to the government's insistence on the upkeep of visible piety of the Islamic Republic, women have been banned from attending matches inside the country. That does not mean they comply. Reports exist of women dressing up as men to attend matches, risking punishment in order to watch their favorite game.[14] The government once opened a match to women, but rescinded the position the next day stating, "Unfortunately, a small number

[13] Jenny Steel and Sophie Richter-Devroe, "The Development of Women's Football in Iran. A Perspective on the Future for Women's Sport in the Islamic Republic," *Iran* 41 (2003): 319-320.
[14] Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World*, 218.

of football fans have not been able to conform to the Islamic-human norms of our system. Therefore, we will not be able to admit sisters into football stadiums."[15] Women could still watch games at home on the television or listen to them on the radio, but at the end of the day it wasn't the same as being able to physically be at the match. In 1998, after the Iranian National Team beat Australia to qualify for the World Cup— Iranians from all over the country were ecstatic. As the national team arrived in Tehran, thousands of people swarmed the gates of Azadi Stadium to celebrate, including women. When told to return home, the women cried out, "Aren't we part of this nation? We want to celebrate too. We aren't ants."[16] Some women were allowed inside in an attempt to placate the crowd, but everyone eventually made, or forced, their way inside, regardless of gender. This open defiance of the government and its legislated morality were distressing to the Islamic Republic, but the act came at a time of celebration and so they rested easy in the knowledge that the incident had not turned into anything more.

But football is not only used to protest during times of celebration; Iranians can also seize on a disappointing day on the pitch, and use it to air much deeper frustration. In 2001, with a humiliating 3-1 defeat at home in a World Cup qualifying match, and egged on by diaspora radio stations claiming the government had rigged the match in retaliation for the celebrations of 1998, the Iranian people again took to the street but this time in anger. Though set off by the loss, the demonstrations that night had much more to do with the stalled and largely undelivered promises of reform offered during Khatami's presidential campaign.[18] Football's ability to give voice to and then unleash citizen's pent up frustration is found in few other places in the Islamic Republic. The force of the reaction of the Iranian people reminded the government of the sheer power of the masses— a demonstration not often seen. Without a catalyst like football, it is extraordinarily hard to achieve a mass demonstration in Iran due to the government's control over the public sphere, though it is not impossible.

The Green Movement of 2009 was the largest mass demonstration Iran has seen since the 1979 Revolution. In the days leading up to the election, it was said that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had been hoping for a national team victory in a World Cup qualifying game, saying he could not "afford

[15] Shiva Balaghi, "Football and Film in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Middle East Report* (Winter 2003): 229.
[16] Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World*, 221.
[18] Chehabi, "The Politics of Football in Iran," 399-400.

a loss on the eve of the election in such a tight race."[19] But while Iran won the match, that was not enough to save Ahmadinejad from the protests that erupted after his victory, which was perceived as fraudulent by many Iranians. As the world looked on, guessing and speculating what this meant for the future of the Islamic Republic, the Iranian National Team headed to South Korea for another qualifying match. The football team in which Ahmadinejad had personally invested so much to reinforce his populist brand, walked out onto the pitch, on the world's stage, with six players wearing green armbands.[20] The bands had been removed by half time, but the message remained clear. Iran's most beloved team did not support Ahmadinejad – or his government.

The scale of this dissent was unheard of in sports politics in the Islamic Republic. While the players' protest may have only consisted of a few pieces of green cloth, their message was magnified by unprecedented international aspect of the protest. Due to the combination of numerous international sanctions and isolationist policies pursued by the government, many of the actions inside Iran did not make it to international news. But with the sheer size of the Green Movement protests, Iran was facing closer scrutiny than it had in a while. For these football players to proceed with their display of dissent on an international stage, football was forever intertwined with politics in the government's eyes. When the Islamic Republic was finally becoming comfortable with ideas of sports diplomacy, international competition, and using sports to create and maintain nationalist spirit, those football players reminded them just as the government could use football as a political pawn, so too could the people.

In Iran, the government's reach into the public sphere means that many otherwise commonplace aspects of people's lives have been wrapped up in politics. Interacting in the public sphere in any way in the Islamic Republic has some sort of political dimension, whether it is intended or not. Sometimes instead of mitigating those aspects, the citizens of Iran choose to embrace and use the political aspects of their lives for their own gain. Some Iranians feel it is impossible to separate any aspect of public life from the political, so they attempt to swing the politicized public life back at the government. Just as many would rather football exist outside of the government's reach and attempt to interact with it despite the politics of the

[19] "Iran's Political Football," *Majalla Magazine*. June 13, 2014, http://eng.majalla.com/2014/06/article55250277/irans-political-football. Accessed December 06, 2016.
[20] Ibid.

game, others would rather embrace the politics of football head on. By utilizing the wins, losses, and the international stage football provides, Iranians of all walks of life use football to make their voice heard.

Conclusion

Sports live at the intersection of identities, political affiliations, and personal beliefs, but because of the nature of sports, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint its effects. Trying to find information on sport in the Islamic Republic proved to be especially difficult. While there is a decent amount of information on how the Islamic Republic interacts with games like football, there was very little information on how Iranian citizens interact with football in their daily lives. I could not find any detailed sources on class and football in Iran, though extensive studies have been done on the same subject in other nations. There was very little mention of football and politics outside the capital of Tehran, where most of the more major demonstrations regarding football were held. Though the provinces probably have not had such large events related to football, what does and does not happen is still very telling. There also is not much information on the state of youth football in Iran. Is it relegated to neighborhood pick-up games? Are there school level organizations or municipal recreation leagues? To what extent does club football have a following in Iran? Are there any rivalries that exist or is all the attention turned toward the national team? A wealth of knowledge can be drawn from how a nation interacts with football, and it seems a lot about Iran has been either left unconsidered or has yet to be translated.

The unique interest taken in football by the government after the 1979 revolution placed the sport in a complex position, even without the Islamic Republic's reach into the public sphere. Despite setting up football to be inherently political, many across the nation still seek to enjoy the game at its simplest level. Even those just trying to participate in the world's most beloved sport can create unintended political consequences. Others choose to embrace and magnify football's political dimensions, using the space to air frustrations with the government they would otherwise have a hard time voicing. So, while some try and reclaim youthfulness with football in Iran, because of the government's reach into the public sphere, football remains deeply intertwined with the political.