

understand Schoenbrun as he helps us understand the world. One hopes David Schoenbrun will expand on these in some future memoir.

America Inside Out is informal civil education at its best—information and analysis that is both meaningful and entertaining. Above all, this book illustrates a point that the works of other senior and eminent reporters have failed to make: The evening of a career can be the prime time of the craftsman. [WV]

**THE SHADOW OF GOD
AND THE HIDDEN IMAM:
RELIGION, POLITICAL ORDER,
AND SOCIETAL CHANGE
IN SHI'ITE IRAN FROM THE
BEGINNINGS TO 1890**

by **Said Amir Arjomand**

(University of Chicago Press; xii + 341 pp.; \$28.00)

Patrick J. Ryan

When Muhammad Reza Khan, the late shah of Iran, flew out of Teheran in January, 1979, an earthquake shook parts of the country he had ruled for thirty-eight years. Some Iranians at least must have wondered that day whether the earth's tremors did not bode ill for a country then driving into exile the King of Kings, Light of the Aryans, Shadow of God on Earth. In 1971 the shah to whom these titles belonged had celebrated 2,500 years of the Iranian imperial throne. More realistically, if prosaically, that year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the military coup that had brought the shah's father, a rough-hewn cossack, to power. The Pahlavi dynasty manufactured by this coup-maker in 1925 claimed a royal inheritance from the time of Cyrus the Great. But the inheritance was mainly geographical: Ancient Persia, once ruled by the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, corresponded more or less with the modern nation of Iran.

For those puzzled by the religious and political forces in Iran that toppled the shah and his Westernized intelligentsia in 1979, Said Amir Arjomand has provided a fascinating study in the history of Iranian Shi'ite Muslim thought. Although he concentrates most of his attention on the officially Shi'ite era in Iran between 1501 and 1890, Arjomand gives a more than adequate account of Shi'ite developments outside Iran between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, when the Shi'ite version of Islam was more typically

Arab-Mesopotamian than Iranian as a religious phenomenon.

The bulk of Arjomand's research for this masterly study of how the condominium of shah and Shi'ite clergy evolved until the nineteenth century was completed before the events of 1978-79 in Iran. Thus Arjomand has avoided the pitfalls inherent in some of the instant histories of Shi'ite Iran produced by journalist-scholars in the past five years. He never loses perspective on the dialectic between what he calls "the ethos of Persian patrimonialism" (pre or non-Islamic Iranian traditions of monarchy) and various mutually contradictory strains of Shi'ite piety: millenarian, hierocratic, world-rejecting. With the exception of a brief epilogue, Arjomand does not dwell at great length on the meaning of events in Iran since

the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini. But his study provides the history of ideas that places the last five years of Iran in intelligible perspective.

The legitimacy of monarchy as a political institution has been questioned more than once in an Islamic setting. Sunnite Muslims (90 per cent of the world's Muslim population) deny that royal rule can be reconciled with Islamic doctrine. Thus, Sunnite Muslims today idealize the populist gerontocracy of Muhammad and his first four political successors (caliphs) in the seventh century. As Arabs, the caliphs adhered to traditions of governance that owed more to the political practice of desert nomads and Meccan merchants than to monarchy as it was exercised in south Arabia or the neighboring empires. Despite these pristine po-

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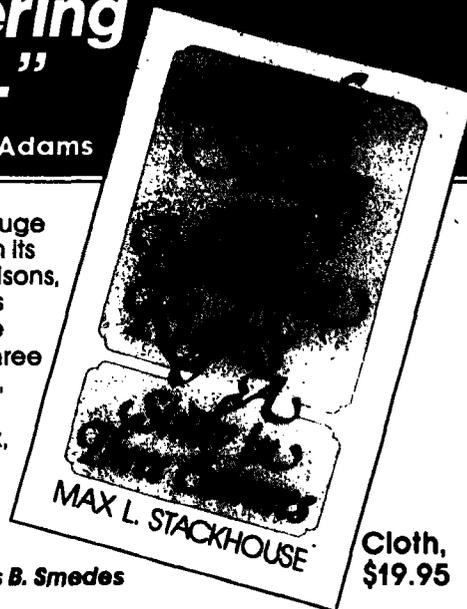
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litical ideals, Sunnite Muslims have submitted to royal institutions not only in the medieval era but also in modern times, as the politically powerful kingships in contemporary Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan attest.

Shi'ite Muslims (9 per cent of the world's Muslim population) assert that Muhammad before his death designated his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, and Ali's descendants by Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, as a dynasty of leaders (imams) for the Muslim community. The Shi'ites of contemporary Iran (90 per cent of Iranians) as well as the Shi'ites of Iraq and Lebanon (half the Muslim population in each nation) contend that twelve imams succeeded Muhammad. The Twelfth Imam, a child, is said to have disappeared ("gone into occultation") in the ninth century, to return some day as the mahdi, a divinely guided ruler. All of the Twelfth Imam's predecessors are revered as martyrs, victims of Sunnite persecution. "Twelver" Shi'ite piety lives on a lachrymose sense of wrong. In the absence of the Twelfth Imam, various deputies have directed the partisans of Ali's line in the succeeding centuries.

Even though Shi'ites of various stripes (not all of them Twelvers) ruled the central Muslim world between 945 and 1055 A.D., the Hidden Imam never returned to lay claim to what Twelver Shi'ites defined as his rightful inheritance. With the reassertion of Sunnism in the Middle East during the late eleventh century by the Seljuq Turks, Twelver Shi'ites relapsed into comparatively apolitical lives, once again postponing their hopes for the rule of the Hidden Imam to the eschatological future. Both Sunnite and Shi'ite political ideals had ceased to correspond to political realities by the eleventh century, in any case. Sultanates of Asian origin like the Seljuqs and the Mongols dominated the Middle East, their political practice owing less to Islamic inspiration than to their own indigenous models of military despotism.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, starting in the northwestern Iranian province of Azerbaijan, Muslims of the Safavid mystical confraternity embarked upon a movement of chiliastic enthusiasm that catapulted Isma'il I, their mystical and political guide, into the rulership of Iran (1501-24). Arjomand outlines the process by which these originally Sunnite Muslims adopted Shi'ism in the era just before their conquests. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, extremist elements in the newly Shi'ite Safavid movement were gradually moderated, especially those fanatics who ascribed divine status to Isma'il.

Those journalist-scholars who see in the politicized jurists ("clergy") of contemporary Iran the sole representatives of the Twelver Shi'ite tradition need to study, under Arjomand's direction, how these originally rather apolitical scholars eventually came to legitimate and almost consecrate the shah's authority. In the nineteenth century, Shi'ite theory settled on a dualistic division of the deputyship for the Twelfth Imam between the shah as the secular arm of the Shi'ite state and the supreme body of jurists as the spiritual arm. It was not until 1979 that the secular arm—the Shadow of God on Earth—was eliminated entirely, or, at best, reduced to a parliamentary puppet of one Sovereign Jurist. The Ayatollah Khomeini's adoption of the title imam might even suggest that he wishes others to consider him to act as more than a deputy for "the Lord of the Age," the Hidden Imam.

Said Amir Arjomand wisely restrains himself from dealing at great length with developments in Iran since 1890, the date of the first modern revolt against the power of a shah led by Shi'ite jurists. His scholarly presentation of the normative separation of religious authority and secular power in the Shi'ite tradition might well serve as an inspiration for any future reorganization of Iran that may opt to be both Muslim and Shi'ite as well as democratic and modernizing. (WV)

Briefly Noted

VENEZUELA: A CENTURY OF CHANGE

by Judith Ewell

(Stanford University Press; 258 pp.; \$22.50)

Judith Ewell's book dealing with the evolution of Venezuela from the 1890s until the 1980s is an interesting contribution to a growing body of literature. One of the author's principal arguments is that there is greater continuity over the period than is usually thought to be the case: The explosion of the oil industry, beginning in the 1920s, did not make quite the radical changes generally associated with it, and there was considerable continuity in the country's political evolution.

Professor Ewell argues that by the turn of the twentieth century the centralization of political power in Caracas had already been achieved and the power of the regional *caudillos* largely eliminated. The supremacy of Caracas was reinforced during the "Renovating Revolution" of Cipriano Cas-

tro, who seized power in 1899 and controlled the country until he died in bed in December, 1935. Thus, the author argues, developments in Venezuela during the present century have basically built on what had been established by the end of the previous one. The oil boom, beginning in 1922, provided a vast increase in income to the national government and so served to reinforce that domination of Caracas over the rest of the country which had been established earlier.

Although the book presents a good deal of very enlightening information, the author's basic thesis and perhaps the book's more or less strictly chronological approach do not sufficiently reflect the drastic transformation Venezuela has undergone in the last half-century. The oil industry altered the Venezuelan economy from an agricultural economy to one based on the exploitation of petroleum. Subsequently, Venezuela became an overwhelmingly urban and industrial economy. Of even greater sig-

nificance, Ewell fails to emphasize the really dramatic alteration in Venezuelan politics since 1945, and particularly since the overthrow in 1958 of the last military dictatorship, that of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Rómulo Bentancourt was the first president in the country's history to be elected democratically and to give up his post to a democratically elected successor. Moreover, for the first time mass political parties have emerged, and since 1973 there has been basically a two-party system—with the two major parties receiving 85 per cent or more of the total vote in three successive elections.

Finally, the author does not give sufficient credit to Betancourt for the changes that have occurred in Venezuela during the last half-century. It was he who organized the country's first mass party, and it was his leadership that established, between 1959 and 1964, the basis of a democratic polity where none had existed before.

—Robert J. Alexander

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