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**Brad Hanson**

## THE “WESTOXICATION” OF IRAN: DEPICTIONS AND REACTIONS OF BEHRANGI, ĀL-E AHMAD, AND SHARI‘ATI

### INTRODUCTION

Samad Behrangi (1939–1968), Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad (1923–1969), and ‘Ali Shari‘ati (1933–1977) were perhaps the three most influential lay Iranian intellectuals among dissatisfied, anti-regime Iranians during the 1960s and the 1970s. Each hailed from a different province of Iran: Behrangi from Azerbaijan, Āl-e Ahmad from Tehran, and Shari‘ati from Khorasan. Each developed loyal followings during his lifetime. Each became a “martyr” to his devotees and developed a wider popularity after death than he had enjoyed in his lifetime. And each formulated an extensive societal critique fortifying, inspiring, and galvanizing adherents for the final assault on the shah’s regime.

In spite of the profound differences in style, medium, and content of their messages, each confronted in his societal critique perhaps the most prominent socioeconomic, cultural force at work in Pahlavi Iran: the “Westoxication”<sup>1</sup> of Iran. This paper seeks to analyze their various depictions of and reactions to the “Westoxication” of Iran. Such an analysis may assist in better understanding the anti-American, sometimes more broadly anti-Western strains so visible in the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979.

In addition, such an analysis will trace a progression typical for many Iranians, especially intellectuals, opposed to the Pahlavi regime in the 1960s and 1970s. First is the leftist, secularist school teacher Behrangi, who mocks the trite bourgeois culture so imitative of Western culture, abhors the great income gaps in Iranian society, and protests the pervasive American influence in the Iranian educational system. Behrangi urges struggle, revolutionary and violent if need be, based on knowledge and experience to achieve social equality and cultural independence. Next is the secularist, renowned belletrist Āl-e Ahmad, who paints in broad brush strokes Iran’s economic and cultural dependency on the West, dismisses religion and the ulama as a reactionary and ineffective bulwark against Western domination, and recommends “taming of the machine” through indigenization of technology. However, after a period of intense religious reexamination during the *hajj*, Āl-e Ahmad came to accept religion as a vital, native, non-Western part of Iranian identity with a potential for effective resistance to “Westoxication.” Finally there is the lay religious leader, Western-educated

Shari'ati, who identifies with the worldwide struggle of Third World peoples against imperialism but rejects Marxism as the alternative—although at times he employs its idiom and recognizes the value of some of its insights. Shari'ati advocates a politically active, even revolutionary, revitalized Shi'ism, indigenous to Iran, struggling for social justice, as a third way between Westernization and Marxism.

Behrangi, Āl-e Ahmad, and Shari'ati each wrote prolifically. The analysis here is based on but a small portion of their vast corpus of works, that relating most directly to the phenomenon of Westernization.<sup>2</sup>

#### BEHRANGI'S CRITIQUE OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND *Amrikāzadegi*

Before examining Behrangi's leftist, secularist critique of the Iranian bourgeoisie and *Amrikāzadegi* ("Americatoxication," the present author's own coinage), and his prescription for Iranian society, it is useful to mention briefly certain prominent features of his background. Behrangi was the educator par excellence. For eleven years he taught in the village schools of Azerbaijan and intermittently at a teachers' training school in Tabriz. His face-to-face encounters with rural poverty and broad exposure to Azeri folk culture helped shape both the content and medium of his message as a writer.

Behrangi's corpus of fiction—short stories often referred to as children's stories in the West, but really timeless folktales meant for child and adult alike—is deeply rooted in his village teaching experiences and his love for Azeri folk culture. Behrangi left no doubt that he wrote these tales to instruct and to incite: "The time of limiting children's literature to passive propaganda and rigid, fruitless institutions has ended. We must lead our children away from building hopes on false and empty visions towards creating hopes based on a correct understanding and interpretation of the harsh realities of society and on how to struggle to eliminate those harsh realities."<sup>3</sup> Pleasure was not the sole or even the most important reason to read his tales: "Reading stories is not only for pleasure. I don't desire that aware children read my stories only for pleasure."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to folktales, Behrangi wrote numerous essays criticizing various aspects of the Iranian education system, appearing in the collection *Kand-o-kāv dar masā'el-e tarbiati-ye Irān* (Investigation into the Educational Problems of Iran) and elsewhere. Other essays dealt with Azerbaijani history, the Azeri Turkish language, children's literature, village life, grammar, and so forth. Many of the essays, especially those concerning specific problems in education, are pedagogical in tone, while the other essays, especially those on village life, are descriptive.

In his activities outside the classroom, too, Behrangi sought to "educate," guide the young, and reform the education system. The memorial volume of eulogies, reminiscences, and anecdotes, published as a special issue of the literary journal *Āresh*, abounds in examples of Behrangi's selfless efforts to educate in the rural areas. For example, his love for books led him to spend all his spare money on them and then, acting as a roving librarian, distribute them in the villages of Azerbaijan. In his free time he would browse in bookstores, talk people out of buying a worthless book, and suggest a more inspirational one in

its place.<sup>5</sup> Behrangi was involved in several curriculum projects, too, of which his favorite was “his alphabet book,” a primer to teach Persian to Azeri Turkish speakers.<sup>6</sup>

Complementing his role as educator, defined in the broadest sense, were Behrangi’s translation activities. Unlike Āl-e Ahmad and Shari‘ati, who translated French works into Persian, Behrangi did not translate from western languages, although he did know English, having earned a B.A. in English from Tabriz University; rather, he translated from his native Azeri Turkish. Two volumes of Azeri folktales which he had collected and translated into Persian with his friend Behruz Dehqāni were published. Also, Behrangi translated contemporary Persian authors such as Shāmlu, Farrokhzād, and Yushij into Azeri Turkish; but these translations remained unpublished, of course, since publication in Azeri Turkish was not allowed under the late shah.<sup>7</sup>

To evade the censor Behrangi used the folktale form.<sup>8</sup> Behrangi’s fiction consists entirely of folktales, either translated from the Azeri Turkish or created anew. That he should have chosen this style is not at all surprising, given his fascination with Azeri folk literature and positive experiences in teaching folktales in the village schools. However, the opportunities to evade the censor through allegories and metaphors surely were not lost on Behrangi.<sup>9</sup> Precisely for this reason, the folktale—euphemistically called “children’s literature”—with its own long and rich history in Persian literature became one of the most important genres in post-June 1963 Iran.<sup>10</sup> After Behrangi’s death his story *Māhi-ye siyāh-e kuchulu* (The Little Black Fish) won international prizes at literature festivals in Bologna and Bratislava in 1969. International recognition enhanced the story’s prestige within Iran, and so it alone among his works was not banned.<sup>11</sup> Somewhat ironically, the Kānun-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-ye Kudakān va Naujavānān (The Society for the Intellectual Nourishment of Children and Youth), under the patronage of the Empress Farah, brought out a lavishly and beautifully illustrated edition of the story.

Behrangi, like Āl-e Ahmad and Shari‘ati, died young, at the age of 29 (Āl-e Ahmad and Shari‘ati died at 46 and 44 respectively) and under somewhat mysterious circumstances. Their followers and friends, imbued with their *engagé* messages, aware of their oppositional stances and subsequent harassments at the hands of the regime, and grief-stricken by the suddenness and unexpectedness of their deaths, immediately accused SAVAK of direct or indirect complicity in their deaths. Here is not the place to review the theories and evidence cited in each of their deaths.<sup>12</sup> Advocates of one version or another may never be able to prove conclusively one way or the other the cause of death to the complete satisfaction of the skeptic. However, the strength of conviction and tenacity of position of those charging SAVAK involvement in their deaths reveal something important about Iranian society at that time: the rampant pessimism, cynicism, doubt, and oppositional feelings of many among the Iranian intelligentsia.

Behrangi enjoyed an affectionate personal relationship with Āl-e Ahmad, as is evident from Āl-e Ahmad’s reminiscences in the memorial issue of *Āresh*. Behrangi first came to Āl-e Ahmad’s attention through his *Kand o kāv* and then his short stories.<sup>13</sup> Later Behrangi attended Āl-e Ahmad’s *daureh* (salon) of young intellectuals during visits to Tehran. In turn, Āl-e Ahmad along with one

of Behrangi's close friends and a fellow Azerbaijani, the author and dramatist Gholām Hosain Sā'edi, paid Behrangi a visit in Tabriz in Ordibehesht 1346 (April/May 1967).<sup>14</sup> Āl-e Ahmad refers to Behrangi in his encomium by a nickname, "Dāgh-e Samad" ("Hot-headed Samad"), or affectionately as his little brother. Although possible, it is improbable that Behrangi knew Shari'ati, for during Behrangi's period of most productive literary and publishing activity, 1964 to his death in 1968, Shari'ati was either in prison or at Mashhad University.

Keeping in mind Behrangi's background and activities, one can better understand his critique of the Iranian bourgeoisie and Amrikāzadegi. Behrangi wrote no single work such as Āl-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi* directly addressing the issue of Westernization of Iran, but instead alluded to it in several of his essays. In contrast to Āl-e Ahmad's general cultural analysis of the Westernization phenomenon in Iran, Behrangi's conception is far more class oriented and from a leftist perspective.

Behrangi quotes an Iranian sociologist, Taqi Modarresi, to the effect that the class of government employees is becoming increasingly alienated, morally lax, and apathetic to social problems—"a piece of deadwood in the trunk of the environment of social life."<sup>15</sup> Although he does not state so directly, Behrangi believes this class, the modern bourgeoisie, to be the most influenced and the most infected by the West. He then proceeds to dissect the culture of the *farhangiān* (plural of *farhangi*, educators or "educationalists"—professors, teachers, administrators, clerks, and other employees tied to the education establishment), the largest portion by far of the "deadwood" to which Modarresi alludes. Behrangi believes it is necessary to examine this group under the microscope, just as microbes are examined, to learn their life, shape, movement, and poison in order to develop antidotes against them and cure the diseases emanating from them.<sup>16</sup> Already, Behrangi claims one generation of high school and university graduates has been influenced by the infected *farhangiān*, which in time will infect the entire society. "Needless to say the disease of this class is becoming an epidemic."<sup>17</sup>

In his critique of the culture of the *farhangiān*, Behrangi asserts the sole goal in life for the *farhangi* is material comfort for himself and his family. If his monthly salary should be insufficient to assure this, then he proceeds on a life of buying on credit.<sup>18</sup> A major part of the *farhangi*'s culture is the cinema: Usually once a week he makes a ritualistic trip, often *en famille* and on a designated day, to a particular cinema—the newest and most expensive in town where the lower classes seldom come—to watch foolish, superficial, deceptive films of love and romance, impetuous fights, and orchestras with singing girls situated in the most unlikely places.<sup>19</sup> The reading matter of the *farhangiān* is equally trite: Women's magazines abound in gossip about Western movie stars, articles about the secrets of attracting men, or advertisements for the latest cosmetics.<sup>20</sup> The *farhangiān*'s music fares little better in Behrangi's critique: Music is listened to only for pleasure, love making, or remembrance of love. Any instrument in tune or out accompanied by an emotional, warbling coquette will suffice. The favorite music, on the radio, is featured in romantic, stupefying programs bearing such names as "Living Flowers" or "The Green Branch."<sup>21</sup> As for child-rearing practices, the

farhangīān strive to ascend to a higher, more noble class and, to achieve that end, teach English to their children, often before their mother tongue. However, Behrangi's example tends to confuse the importance for non-Persian speaking ethnic groups of learning Persian with the importance for all Iranians of learning English. He claims that, for example, children in Tabriz are forced to call their fathers by the Persian term of endearment, *bābā*, rather than the Azeri Turkish terms, *ātā* or *dada*. The reason given is that their parents have "smelled" the West and the petit bourgeoisie through their special reading, listening, and learning materials, and have, accordingly, relegated *ātā* and *dada* to the backward villages and old-fogey men.<sup>22</sup>

In short, the result of this bourgeois cultural environment is, in Behrangi's view, that

their world view is limited to the four walls of their home and embraces wife and children (if they have any) and their route restricted to the route from office and school to home.

Their hobbies are for amusement and taking up time. Their free time is spent in idleness and diversion. [Their] energies are spent in satisfying the stomach and its appurtenances. The result of all this: superficial and conservative men are produced.<sup>23</sup>

Behrangi's portrait of the modern Iranian bourgeoisie is a familiar one to westerners who have read Marxist as well as non-Marxist critiques of Western bourgeois culture, but for Iranians in the 1960s Behrangi's critique may have seemed fresh and novel.

While Āl-e Ahmad conceptualizes the West as some monolithic whole intent on domination of Iran, differentiating between Western nations only in relation to specific historical events inside Iran, Behrangi concentrates almost solely on the United States, focusing on areas of American cultural influence. Āl-e Ahmad's gharbzadegi becomes Behrangi's Amrikāzadegi. He especially concentrates on the wide-ranging American influence on the Iranian education system, a topic with which from personal experiences he is thoroughly familiar.

Behrangi notes the impact of American educators on teacher training schools. He estimates that more than 90 percent of the education and psychology texts used in Iranian teacher training schools are American educators' texts translated into Persian. While their discussions of homeroom, school lunch programs, and teachers' diagnoses of underweight or overweight students may be relevant to the United States, these American texts are totally irrelevant to Iranian problems. At best, they might be applicable to only a few schools in north Tehran.<sup>24</sup> Behrangi believes the extreme reliance on American educators leads Iranians to forget their own educational and cultural problems, or to remain unaware of them, or to expend their efforts on the solution of educational problems afflicting the developed countries but marginal in Iran in the face of so many more real, pressing educational problems.<sup>25</sup>

Behrangi also discusses the cultural irrelevancy of most of the texts used to teach English in Iranian schools. Most were designed, he claims, for classes composed half of Americans residing in Tehran and half of westernized Iranians, and coeducational classes at that. It is the height of absurdity for English lessons to be based on such culturally specific American terms as "hot dog" or

“baseball.”<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Behrangi, who earned a B.A. in English from Tabriz University, does not question the need to study English at all, however much he may have criticized the texts used in teaching it.

Behrangi further notes that the Ministry of Education’s directives and campaign to prohibit corporal punishment in the schools date from the time of American education advisers. While Behrangi himself does not disagree with the goal, he believes its realization will require a long-term, gradual struggle, so prevalent and deep-rooted is the practice. What Behrangi does object to is the audacity and even hypocrisy of American education advisers counseling the prohibition of corporal punishment in Iranian schools when American schools, in his view, have produced a society in which blacks are ignored, lynched, or terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan and have spawned a Goldwater with bellicose, fierce, overly ambitious tendencies.<sup>27</sup>

As for remedies to the problem of American influence in Iranian education, Behrangi suggests that Iranians—Iranians with actual teaching experience in the villages and towns, and *not* the *farang rafteh* (“those who have gone to the West”) Iranian colleague of the foreign adviser—should write the texts, devise the curriculum, and assist in the administration of the schools. Allowing teachers more control would require a general loosening up of the rather authoritarian Iranian education system, which in turn would necessitate a redistribution of power in the total society.

As for a cure to the cultural disease of the *farhangīān*, Behrangi has no ready prescription in *Kand o kāv*. However, in other writings it is apparent that Behrangi would counsel armed struggle if necessary to cast off imperialism and to transform the westernized classes, i.e., the bourgeoisie. Alluding to events of his time in an essay entitled, “Azerbaijan in the Constitutional Movement,” Behrangi mocks the belief of the Tehranis under Behbahāni and Tabātabā’i that the Constitution could be implemented without war or bloodshed: “Just as ancient and contemporary historical experience shows in the world, such a method searching for peacefulness has not freed my suffering country from the bonds of imperialism and exploitation until now. Without revenge [*kineh*] and/or alone with tied-up empty fists, one cannot prevail over the fierce enemy, well-equipped with [all] kinds of arms and tricks.”<sup>28</sup>

Even more forcefully than in this essay, Behrangi’s short stories assert that the theme of knowledge gained through experience must lead to action and movement to correct society’s ills. His most famous story, “The Little Black Fish,” illustrates this theme most vividly through the symbolic search of a little black fish for knowledge along its journey to the sea and its final life and death struggle with the fish-devouring heron. The action necessary to right society’s ills may be self-sacrificing and exemplary directed against an individual as in “The Little Black Fish,” or the action may be violent and aimed at an entire class—the privileged rich of north Tehran—as in his story, “Bist o chahār sā‘at dar khāb o bidāri” (Twenty-four Restless Hours). At the conclusion of that story a poor youth, a recent rural migrant to Tehran, desires a machine gun from the toy shop rather than the stuffed camel he had longed for throughout the story. The clear implication is that he should use it against the wealthy father who

purchased the stuffed camel, sped away with it in his car, and bloodied the desperate youth screaming after the camel in the process.

The difference in tone between Behrangi's essays and his folktales is remarkable. In the essays Behrangi discusses specific societal problems, particularly educational, and often proposes well-thought-out, pragmatic, even incrementalist solutions based on his own varied experiences as a teacher in the field. In the essays Behrangi's aversion to American influence is clear, but there are few indications that struggle, violence, and even revolution are necessary to cast it off. In the short stories, however, Behrangi chooses much broader, usually class-related themes. The morals of the tales are also clear: The oppressed, the toilers on the land, the workers must rise up against the privileged few, but only after carefully conceiving a program of action based on experience. Thus, to comprehend the full extent of Behrangi's revolutionary message, one must read his fiction and essays together, as they complement each other.

Religion and the ulama do not figure in Behrangi's analysis. Āl-e Ahmad implies in his eulogy to Behrangi that he was not only an atheist but also a Communist.<sup>29</sup> In a discussion of the farhangīān's religion Behrangi clearly shows his preference for the "religion of materialism."<sup>30</sup> Behrangi simply fails to discuss any role for the ulama. However, he acknowledges that the villagers' religiosity must be respected and taken into account by any village teacher intent on establishing good rapport with the community, implying religion may be manipulated as a means to an end.<sup>31</sup>

Not surprisingly, politically active, leftist students posthumously claimed "Samad" as their hero and inspiration. In the fall of 1971, three years after Behrangi's death, a Behrangi festival was held at the University of Tehran.<sup>32</sup> Abroad, during the 1970s, the leftist Iranian Students Association published many of his stories both in Persian and in translation accompanied by political forewords. His face adorned posters distributed by the Fedāyin-e Khalq (Devotees of the People) in Iran and abroad during the Iranian Revolution. New editions of his once banned short stories were quickly published and widely distributed during and after the Revolution.

#### ĀL-E AHMAD'S *Gharbzadegi* AND RECONSIDERATION OF THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad was from a clerical family. His father was a local religious leader in Tehran while one brother spent two years ministering to the local Shi'ī community in Medina, where he died and was buried.<sup>33</sup> In his youth Āl-e Ahmad was active in the Tudeh party during the late 1940s. After a brief hiatus in political activity, Āl-e Ahmad became involved in politics once again through the Third Force party of the National Front Movement, led by Mohammad Mosaddeq, over the issue of nationalization of oil in the early 1950s. After the CIA-assisted coup overthrowing Prime Minister Mosaddeq and restoring monarchial rule in August 1953, another period of what Āl-e Ahmad later called "forced silence" followed.<sup>34</sup> Āl-e Ahmad also taught intermittently at a teacher's training school in Tehran.<sup>35</sup>



Āl-e Ahmad is best known as a belletrist, writing short stories, novellas, and essays of social criticism. In *Gharbzadegi* he attempted to arouse Iranians to the increasing westernization of their society. In numerous essays on literary topics he hoped to popularize Iranian authors such as Nimā Yushij, who in his opinion were underappreciated. In anthropological studies he acquainted his readers with remote parts of Iran: Kharg Island, the Zahre district, and various villages. Through its acerbic criticism of Iranian institutions, thought patterns, and everyday customs, much of Āl-e Ahmad's fiction, especially after *Modir-e madraseh* (The School Principal) in 1958, might also be regarded as didactic.

Āl-e Ahmad translated numerous works into Persian from French, including Camus's *The Stranger* and *Misunderstanding*, Sartre's *Dirty Hands*, Gide's *Return to the Soviet Union*, as well as a French translation of Dostoevski's *The Gambler*. Āl-e Ahmad's choice of works to translate may both reflect his special interests and reveal alternative points of view he desired to make accessible to the Iranian public.

Āl-e Ahmad, too, had to confront the problem of censorship of his writings, especially after he turned away from short stories to the novella of social criticism with the publication of *Modir-e madraseh*. Its sarcastic, realistic, poignant social criticism focused primarily on the education system. With his second short novel, *Nun wa'l qalam* ("N" and the Pen—a reference to Surah 86 of the Qur'ān), in 1961 Āl-e Ahmad changed deliberately to an allegorical, historical setting for political reasons, as the novel's subject matter is the failure of the left in Iranian politics.<sup>36</sup> At about the same time Āl-e Ahmad was circulating secretly *Gharbzadegi*, which was later published in 1962. Āl-e Ahmad's last published novel, *Nefrin-e zamin* (*The Curse of the Land*), in 1968 returned to the direct social criticism of *Modir-e madraseh*, but cast its net much more widely, encompassing such social problems as land reform, mechanization, and military conscription, in addition to education.<sup>37</sup>

Because of his social activist past and continuing role of social critic through his writings, Āl-e Ahmad from the publication of *Modir-e madraseh* to his death in 1969 was both spokesman and spiritual godfather for a new generation of younger "committed" Iranian authors and intellectuals. He held *daurehs* at his home in Tehran attended by young intellectuals in Tehran and visiting intellectuals from provincial cities. Behrangī participated in a few of the *daurehs*, as did Shari'ati on at least one occasion in 1965.<sup>38</sup>

Although Āl-e Ahmad did not coin the term *gharbzadegi* ("Westoxication" or more literally "Weststruckness"),<sup>39</sup> he did more than any other Iranian to popularize the term and crystallize the issue for serious analysis within Iran. Indeed, his *Gharbzadegi*, parts of which were secretly published in 1961 and the whole work in 1962, has become a classic of modern Persian prose.<sup>40</sup> Of the three social critics under consideration, Āl-e Ahmad in *Gharbzadegi* comes closest to a systematic historical and cultural analysis of westernization in Iran. However, from the very beginning of *Gharbzadegi*, Āl-e Ahmad excuses himself from a straight portrayal of the "facts" of the situation, leaving the details to others with more expertise in politics, sociology, and economics. Āl-e Ahmad

desires to be more critical than he assumes such a depiction of “facts” would allow.<sup>41</sup>

Āl-e Ahmad compares *gharbzadegi* to a disease which kills wheat from within,<sup>42</sup> to a disease with two faces: the West and the *gharbzadeh* (the “Westoxicated” or “Weststruck” native). At the general level, Āl-e Ahmad contrasts the two worlds, West and East: one developed, industrialized, rich, processors of raw materials, and exporters of finished products as well as of culture; the other underdeveloped, agricultural, poor, producers of raw materials, and consumers of Western products as well as of Western culture. Once the West/East was a two-way street of cultural borrowing and exchange, but no longer. With the end of competition between cultures, the East with feelings of servitude, inferiority, backwardness, and obsolescence accepts the western criteria of doing things.

Thus, for Āl-e Ahmad *gharbzadegi* is a worldwide disease, hardly limited to Iran alone. In his account of his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964, *Khasi dar miqāt* (A Chaff at Appointment),<sup>43</sup> published just three years after *Gharbzadegi* was written, Āl-e Ahmad is sensitive to every instance of *gharbzadegi* he encounters among the different peoples, all his fellow pilgrims, and in Saudi Arabia. For example, he purchases or views some Arabic magazines from Egypt and Lebanon and comments on their *gharbzadeh* features such as stories or articles on tanks, wine-drinking, and naked women.<sup>44</sup> Or he recognizes the topic of *gharbzadegi* being analyzed in lectures by various *wu<sup>ṣ</sup>āz* (preachers).<sup>45</sup> Distressed to find neon lights everywhere in Mecca, even in the *Khāneh-ye Khodā* (the Ka<sup>ʿ</sup>ba), Āl-e Ahmad suggests a distinctive lamp design could have been designed for this sacred quarter so that the *Khāneh-ye Khodā* would not become just like any neon-illuminated place in Pennsylvania.<sup>46</sup> Betraying his own naivete about other cultures, Āl-e Ahmad attributes the black African women’s *décolleté* (his own term) clothing to European influence, but admits that the western influence is less visible among the black African men!<sup>47</sup> Āl-e Ahmad often comments on the abject poverty of Saudi Arabia in the midst of great oil wealth largely siphoned off by Aramco. Discovering that the very expensive telegraph rate for Medina to Tehran is due to the routing of the message through Paris or London, Āl-e Ahmad sardonically, if inaccurately, surmises that on New Year’s Eve Aramco employees enjoy turkeys straight from Los Angeles.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, in a rambling monologue Āl-e Ahmad cites the *hajjis*’ (pilgrims’) rapacious appetite for western products as a prelude to a summary of the circle of dependency of underdeveloped countries:

You see how satisfied these *hajjis* are with riches. It doesn’t mean that they are slaves to consumption, but what an appetite for western products they have! Whatever is used in the rituals is either western or Japanese. . . . If you look with a Western viewpoint, then “civilization” means “consumption” (and greater needs); thus, these *hajjis* are “backward” and in the process of development. When will they reach “development”? Certainly, when they “consume” as much as possible of the products made in the West. The intent of this sermon is that this closed circle (departure of raw materials—return of manufacturers’ products—and then consumption—and for this consumption, the need for money or credit, in order to buy the Western products—and where is this money and credit gotten

from?—from the export of raw materials—and from the beginning. . .) must be opened some place.<sup>49</sup>

In the text of *Gharbzadegi* Āl-e Ahmad's focus is clearly on Iran. Encapsulating three thousand years of Iranian history into a little more than one hundred pages, Āl-e Ahmad traces a long history of gharbzadegi in Iran. In one passage Āl-e Ahmad even likens the Iranian acceptance of Islam—the Islam nurtured in the cities of Iraq and not that born in Mecca and Medina—as a turn to the West!<sup>50</sup> However, most of the work is devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian history and the British and American imprint on it.

For example, he attributes the rise of Reza Shah almost solely to Britain and oil, a belief quite common among oppositional Iranians. The train of historical cause and effect proceeds as follows in his account: during World War I the British navy converted to oil; at the end of the war there was a precipitous decline in oil demand so the oil companies and the West were interested in developing an internal Iranian market for the Iranian oil which they controlled; such a market would be feasible only under stable conditions secured by a strong central government; thus, Reza Shah is empowered.<sup>51</sup>

In another example Āl-e Ahmad dates the rise of American influence in Iran from the 1946 Azerbaijan crisis. He, along with most historians, contends that only U.S. pressure forced the United Nations to act against the continuing presence of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan. Although there was much talk about freedom and oil in northern Iran (a reference to the treaty demanded by the Soviet Union granting them a concession to develop northern Iranian oilfields, just as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company exploited southern Iranian oilfields), the West's real concern was oil in Khuzistan. The new consortium agreement in 1954 granting a 40 percent interest to American oil companies at the expense of the British and paying a pitifully small royalty to the Iranian government consummated American domination over Iranian oil, in Āl-e Ahmad's opinion.<sup>52</sup> This strong criticism of the shah's terms for settling the oil nationalization issue after the overthrow of Mosaddeq is the most direct criticism Āl-e Ahmad makes of the shah in *Gharbzadegi*, although both the shah and the gharbzadeh class are indicted indirectly throughout the book. The American role in Iran is also criticized, although obliquely, in *Modir-e madraseh*, where Āl-e Ahmad chooses an American to be the driver of the vehicle injuring a schoolteacher in an auto accident.

In Āl-e Ahmad's view, with the oil sector of the economy in the hands of western companies, it is only a matter of time until the West makes Iran totally dependent. He blames the rural migration to the cities on the mechanization of agriculture necessitated by the West's desire to recycle petrodollars for tractors.<sup>53</sup> He blames the massive unemployment on the destruction of local handicrafts by industrialization.<sup>54</sup> He savagely attacks the cooptation of the gharbzadeh class serving western economic interests and propping up the regime.<sup>55</sup>

Paralleling the economic dependency in Āl-e Ahmad's formulation is Iran's cultural dependency on the West. Iranian magazines feature the latest Hollywood films and Broadway play reviews. Urban women become mere consumers of western cosmetics. News of the world is supplied to Iran through the lens of Reuters or UPI press services.

Of all the cultural institutions, perhaps education had, in Āl-e Ahmad's view, become most *gharbzadeh*. From the West came the invidious "diploma disease," i.e., emphasis on credentials and certificates for employment purposes rather than concern for true educational wisdom.<sup>56</sup> Āl-e Ahmad harshly attacks Iranian scholars and graduates of the literature, law, and theology faculties for their aping of western orientalisks, their retreat into the trivia of the past, and their lack of concern for Iran's real problems: the invasion by the West, plunder, and industry. He expects little of social relevance from this group: "From this ragtag group what good or blessing can be expected? Except greater submersion into *gharbzadegi*. . ."<sup>57</sup>

Āl-e Ahmad also confronts the problem of Iranian returnees from Europe and the United States. These returnees expect government positions by virtue of their western education. Slots are created, but more often than not they end up "governmental deadwood," for the returnees have become not only alienated from Iranian culture but also, wittingly or unwittingly, the agents of the West: "They are perfect examples of something severed from its roots, this the result of *gharbzadegi*. They are perfect specimens of individuals with their feet in the air. These are the ones who execute the notions and views of foreign advisors and experts."<sup>58</sup>

Āl-e Ahmad is pessimistic about the value of the services to the homeland of this "horde of European educated Iranians" until fundamental changes are made in the environment.<sup>59</sup> He goes further and proposes a complete halt of the despatch of Iranian students to Europe and the United States for perhaps twenty years, suggesting instead that they be sent only to Japan and India, the two countries in his opinion which have best coped with the machine age and adopted technology well: "In my opinion, only in the event that such a plan is acted upon, will it be possible through the creation of an equilibrium between the 'Eaststruckness' of future visitors to Asia and the 'Weststruckness' of present-day returnees from Europe that one can be hopeful concerning the subject of education."<sup>60</sup>

Āl-e Ahmad's general cultural critique of the westernized Iranian education system and Behrangi's specific critique of the Americanized Iranian education system have much in common. However, their prescriptions vary. Āl-e Ahmad would staff the government ministries with "Eastoxicated" Iranians to balance the "Westoxicated." Behrangi would rely on experienced Iranians who had formulated their conceptions of and solutions to the problem from experiences in their own society, uninfected by the West or the East.

In Āl-e Ahmad's formulation *gharbzadegi* is practically equated with *māshinzadegi* (machinisme). Āl-e Ahmad attributes western domination over Iran primarily to the West's possession of the machine, technology, and modern science. The West thrusts its "machines" upon Iran in order to frighten, exploit, and control Iranians. Āl-e Ahmad maintains that there are three possible courses of action: passive submission to "machines" (and the West)—the present course; retreat into the abyss of traditional customs; or taming the "machine" without being tamed by it—becoming familiar with it, building it, not just consuming machines manufactured abroad.<sup>61</sup> If Iran is to regain its economic and cultural independence, it must exorcise the spell cast by the machine. There is no doubt that Āl-e Ahmad advocates the third approach.

In *Gharbzadegi* Āl-e Ahmad dismisses any positive role for the ulama in opposing gharbzadegi. He associates the ulama with his second alternative, the retreat into the abyss of traditional customs. In Āl-e Ahmad's reading of modern Iranian history, the Iranian ulama were never an effective bulwark against gharbzadegi. In the nineteenth century and the Constitutional Revolution period, he regards the ulama as a reactionary force, "retiring into their cocoons against industrialization."<sup>62</sup> They thwarted the Constitution by emphasizing the difference between *mashruṭeh* (constitution) and *mashru'eh* (Sharia legality), which in time became the *bidini* (atheism) / *dindāri* (religiousness) polarity.<sup>63</sup> The ulama's reaction to Reza Shah's divestment of their educational and judicial functions and general anticlerical harassments, in Āl-e Ahmad's account, was merely to make *harām* (forbidden by religion) radio and television, when they could have resisted gharbzadegi from their special positions in Qom and Mashhad.<sup>64</sup> Āl-e Ahmad estimates that 90 percent of the Iranian population was very religious, expecting the return of the Imam, and critical of the government for its injustices. The religious institutions were full of believers, but apathetic and merely passively distrustful of the government.<sup>65</sup>

Āl-e Ahmad's damning critique of the ulama's ineffectiveness and religion's failure to realize its potential to resist gharbzadegi was to undergo a change. Āl-e Ahmad's pilgrimage to Mecca, as retold in *Khasi dar miqāt*, was a veritable odyssey in search of religious faith. Prior to the pilgrimage he must have undergone a considerable change in belief over the years since his involvement with the Tudeh party. By entitling his pilgrim's tale, *Khasi dar miqāt*, Āl-e Ahmad may have intended to represent himself like chaff, a mote, a straw at the divine court, since in Persian literature *khas o kas* (*kas* meaning person) usually occur together for purposes of rhyme.<sup>66</sup> His internal struggles, groping, and turmoil are evident throughout the book as exemplified by his description of his own emotions upon witnessing the annihilation of self into the singleminded crowd circumambulating the Ka'ba.<sup>67</sup> From the account of his pilgrimage, one may infer that Āl-e Ahmad is on the verge of embracing Islam wholeheartedly—perhaps on his own terms—if the conversion has not already taken place. Āl-e Ahmad seems, in the years just before his death, to have accepted Islam as an indigenous, non-Western part of Iranian identity and a possible path to salvation from the curse of gharbzadegi. In comparing religion in Āl-e Ahmad's earliest works with the later ones, one Iranian critic concludes that: "In the first works the writer attempts to view the world of religion heedlessly and sometimes negatively. But with the passage of time and the acquisition of experience religion becomes a means of defense against the western world. . ."<sup>68</sup> However, Āl-e Ahmad died before he was able to express very concretely the implications of his ongoing reassessment of religion as an oppositional force to gharbzadegi in Iran.

*Gharbzadegi*, this short polemical work by a belletrist, was a harbinger of many of the North-versus-South debates of the 1960s and 1970s: Third World demands for a new international economic order and new informational order, OPEC's struggle to annul inequitable consortium agreements, Third World recognition of, and plans to combat, the often more subtle forms of "cultural imperialism," and other developments of that period which are still being played

out. *Gharbzadegi* is a less systematic, Iranian version of dependency theory propounded by such other Third Worlders as Andre Gunder Frank, Ernesto Caruzo, Celsao Furtado, and Samir Amin. Because of its wide-ranging, hard-hitting, acerbic, path-breaking style and its indigenous, oppositional content, *Gharbzadegi* found a receptive audience inside Iran among “committed” disaffected intellectuals and groping university students.

#### SHARI<sup>‘</sup>ATI’S REVOLUTIONARY REVITALIZED SHI<sup>‘</sup>ISM AND REJECTION OF MARXISM

Alone among the three, <sup>‘</sup>Ali Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati had sustained direct experience of the West. He studied philology, sociology, and history for five or six years (1958/1959 to 1964) at the University of Paris after his studies at Mashhad University. He also spent a little more than a month in self-imposed exile in London just before his death in June 1977. Like Āl-e Ahmad, Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati was from a clerical family. His father, Mohammad Taqi Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati, was a religious leader and teacher active in the remnants of the National Front opposition to the regime in the mid-1950s and on the radio in Mashhad lecturing on religious topics in the 1960s. Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati’s family was rooted in Mazinan, a village near Sabzevar in northern Khorasan.

While Behrangi and Āl-e Ahmad wrote both fiction and essays, Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati wrote only essays. However, his primary medium of communication was the lecture, delivered from either behind the professor’s lectern or atop the *menbar* (pulpit). These lectures were recorded, transcribed, and published widely, especially during and after the Revolution, inside Iran and abroad, underground and openly.<sup>69</sup> Only a few works such as *Eslāmshenāsi* (*Islamology*) and *Kavir* (*The Desert*), an autobiographical account, were written expressly for publication.

Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati taught briefly as a high school teacher before entering Mashhad University and again as a professor of Islamic history at Mashhad University after his return from France. Later Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati was fired and blacklisted from teaching at any Iranian university, providing one of the impetuses for his move to Tehran in 1349 (1970/1971) and his assistance in founding the Hosainieh-ye Ershād, a mosque/teaching complex, along with other lay religious leaders such as Mehdi Bāzargān. There he lectured to a full house of predominantly secularly educated, urban, middle class youth on Islamic topics.

Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati’s paramount aim in all this lecturing and writing activity was, as he confided to his son Ehsan in 1972, to galvanize an entire society: “We are talking about a society half of whose members are asleep or have been deluded, and the other half who are awake are in a state of flight. We want both to awaken the asleep, inducing them to stand up, and to have the fleeing escapees returned to Iran, encouraging them to stay.”<sup>70</sup>

Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati’s more activist role and difference in medium called for different techniques in evading the censor. He employs various commonly understood code words to refer to the shah or the regime such as “Pharaoh.”<sup>71</sup> He speaks abstractly and at times apolitically. He attacks earlier monarchs, intending the criticism for the reigning shah.<sup>72</sup> But perhaps the most common technique—and one used by many *menbari* speakers besides Shari<sup>‘</sup>ati—was to relay the story of the martyrdom of Hosain, emphasizing the role of the reigning Umayyad caliph,

Yazid. The symbol of the oppressor Yazid for the contemporary shah, although unstated, was quickly perceived by the audience. With the use of this rather transparent guise, one wonders why Shari'ati was permitted to lecture for such an extended period, given the revolutionary nature of his message. Mansur Farhang, Iran's ambassador to the U.N. in 1979–1980, claims: "It took the SAVAK six months to realize what he was doing. And even then, it was more the massive turnout of the university students at the Husseinieh Ershad, where the lectures were delivered, than a coherent understanding of Shariati's message that alarmed the SAVAK agents."<sup>73</sup>

Shari'ati's activism and rising popularity led first to the closing of the Hosainieh-ye Ershād, then to his arrest in Mehr 1353 (September/October 1975) and imprisonment for a year and a half,<sup>74</sup> and eventually, to exile to London in May 1977. Shari'ati alone among the three suffered imprisonment.

While Behrangi and Āl-e Ahmad concentrated on delineating the extent of the Westernization of Iran, describing its iniquitous and ubiquitous effects and surmising about its causes, Shari'ati virtually assumes the familiarity of his audience with these previous critiques and their essential validity. While Behrangi and Āl-e Ahmad espouse certain positions to rid Iran of Westernization and its harmful effects (Āl-e Ahmad's exorcising the spell of the machine by industrializing, modified only late in his life to recognize the validity of Iran's indigenous religious tradition; and Behrangi's replacement of American advisers with non-Westernized Iranians and revolutionary violent class warfare), they do not develop them in detail. Only the broad outlines of their "solutions" are known. In contrast, Shari'ati expends nearly all his effort on advocating his path to salvation of Iranian society: a revolutionary, revitalized Shi'ism, based on the ideology of *tauhid* (monotheism or "divine integration," the opposite of *sherk*, polytheism or pluralism) and emphasizing social justice and equality. He tends to neglect analyzing the westernization of Iran in any but a broad, polemical way. However, Shari'ati does feel compelled to address the alternative of Marxism and show its inferiority and incompleteness in comparison to *tauhid* and revitalized Shi'ism.

Typical of Shari'ati's polemics on the West's domination of Iran is this selection from *Reflections of a Concerned Muslim: On the Plight of Oppressed Peoples*:

My friend, I live in a society where I face a system which controls half of the universe, maybe all of it. Mankind is being driven into a new stronghold of slavery. Although we are not in physical slavery, we are truly destined with a fate worse than yours! Our thoughts, hearts, and will powers are enslaved. In the name of sociology, education, art, sexual freedom, financial freedom, love of exploitation, and love of individuals, faith in goals, faith in humanitarian responsibility and belief in one's own school of thought are entirely taken away from within our hearts! The system has converted us into empty pots which accommodate whatever is poured inside them!<sup>75</sup>

In other places Shari'ati criticizes the West citing Western critics themselves, Western sources, and even Western anecdotes, using Western terminology transliterated into Persian.<sup>76</sup>

Shari'ati very much considers himself part of the Third World movement of oppressed peoples in struggle with imperialism. His study in France coincided

with the Algerian Revolution. The demonstrations and protests in Paris, the hot debates among French intellectuals, and the maneuverings of the French Communist Party and other leftist groups originally opposed to the Algerian Revolution could not have failed to influence him. Reportedly, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati became personally acquainted with the revolutionary, Frantz Fanon. Later he wrote an article on him and translated *Wretched of the Earth* into Persian. Indeed, in Shari<sup>c</sup>ati’s lectures at the Hosainieh-ye Ershād, Frantz Fanon’s name and ideas are more frequently mentioned than any Iranian’s (including Shari<sup>c</sup>ati’s acquaintance and indigenous popularizer of gharbzadegi, Āl-e Ahmad). In a moving letter to his son, Ehsan, in which Shari<sup>c</sup>ati rejects every creed from communism to fundamentalism—every creed except that which Shari<sup>c</sup>ati and like-minded colleagues are in the process of formulating—he quotes directly from Fanon.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to his usually polemical attacks on the West and westernization, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati makes several novel criticisms Āl-e Ahmad and Behrangi do not. For example, he rejects the concept of the “universal man,” which he regards as a western imperialistic fabrication to enervate native Asian and African cultures and to sap the vitality of the native *raushanfekrān* (intelligentsia).<sup>78</sup> Shari<sup>c</sup>ati also recognizes some value in European scientific methods of analysis, but warns against their blind application, although he himself employs various “western” analytical approaches such as Hegelian thesis/antithesis and linguistic phenomenology.<sup>79</sup>

The question now arises, what is that correct method? In order to learn and to know Islam, we must not imitate and make use of European methods—the naturalistic, psychological or sociological methods. We must be innovative in the choice of method. We must of course learn the scientific methods of Europe, but we do not necessarily need to follow them.<sup>80</sup>

Informed of Marxist analyses during his student days in Paris and no doubt aware of their appeal among many of his students in Mashhad and at the Hosainieh-ye Ershād, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati felt compelled to address this competing ideology. In a fascinating short lecture entitled *Agar Pāp va Mārks nabudand (If There Weren’t the Pope and Marx)*, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati assumes the role of the wise, knowledgeable guide to youth regarding Marxism:

If Marx’s enlightened thinking [*raushanfekri*] has any value, it is solely that you attempt to understand the movement it was bound up with and the longings it believed in. One should analyze it scientifically; comment upon it; codify its history benefiting this movement; arm oneself with the help of its philosophy, logic, science, economics, sociology, and anthropology; and give class awareness [*āgāhi*] and ideological arms to the working class, which became unified in confrontation with it; and accordingly, imitate it intellectually in propaganda and scientifically.<sup>81</sup>

Having seemingly praised Marxism so highly, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati goes on to warn his audience against blind imitation of Marxism:

That does not mean, however, striving blindly and enacting its prescription blindly; for this imitation is [that of] a common patient of an expert physician. The imitation of a healthy person is to strive like him [the physician] to become an expert physician. This imitation isn’t unique.<sup>82</sup>



Shari'ati contends that, although Marx viewed religion only as a force of the rulers, Shari'ati and his followers should eschew this interpretation, for their understanding of religion and history is much broader than that of nineteenth-century materialism. He suggests that if one apes Marx, not only will one not become a good socialist or responsible intellectual seeking the truth, but one will also lose one's capacity for independent judgment and free thought.<sup>83</sup>

In other essays, entitled in translation *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique* by Hamid Algar, Shari'ati attacks Marxism, as well as other Western "isms" such as capitalism, liberalism, and existentialism, on several grounds. He points out "that Marxism itself is utterly a product of the history, social organization, and cultural outlook of this same West" which it seeks to deny.<sup>84</sup> He charges Marxism "whose most basic premise is denial of the personality in history" with becoming "the major breeding ground of personality" as the names of its variants indicate: Marxism, Leninism, Trotskyism, Titoism, Maoism, and so forth.<sup>85</sup> He often describes Marxism in terms of a religion bent on "the systematic eradication of all forms of religion."<sup>86</sup>

Of all the Western "isms," Shari'ati recognizes that Marxism is the most comprehensive, complete ideology, embracing every field of human activity with its world view.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, according to Shari'ati, Marxism remains unidimensional, unbalanced, and incomplete in its interpretation and evaluation of man on the sole basis of production (*taulid*); in contrast, Islam rests its interpretation and evaluation of man on the basis of tauhid.<sup>88</sup> Marxism emphasizes the materialistic aspect of human existence while neglecting the other dimensions. Shari'ati raises the example of a youth "whose very being socialism . . . has enveloped head to foot" who "is ready to part with his life, soul, being, and love in order to see that the worker, or some peasant, someone who has suffered oppression is awarded his due."<sup>89</sup> The youth so myopic in his "one-sided attention to this class relationship within society" and neglectful of other human dimensions, values, and needs is to be pitied—all the more so, for the youth "shows such a strong aptitude and spiritual leaning."<sup>90</sup> Shari'ati notes: "We see that socialism removes from man all his limbs and branches except one, but it so encourages that one to spread out that it outgrows root and trunk. Thus, it makes man one-dimensional, however lofty and sublime that one dimension may be."<sup>91</sup>

Opposing Marxism, in Shari'ati's view, is the religion/ideology/world view of Islam, the only multidimensional, balanced, and comprehensive religion among the world's historical religions.<sup>92</sup> That does not mean, however, that opposing ideologies may not share common ideals. Islam, like Marxism, "addresses economic welfare and social justice as principles of its social order: indeed it stresses them"; however, in Islam they are means toward achieving individual moral growth and development and not the ends in themselves.<sup>93</sup> Islam combines the keen sense of social responsibility of socialism with two other key dimensions, the spirituality of mysticism and the primacy of existence/freedom of existentialism, in balance. Only in the school of Ali, that is, Shi'ism, can Iranians "satisfy the needs of our own time in the best way possible," for "As our children become socialists, their mystical sense and spirituality are lost. As they become mystics, they grow so indifferent to social problems that their very mysticism

inspires loathing. As they leave both of these behind, and arrive at the existential I and existential freedom, they turn into hippies, western existentialists and worthless denizens of cafes."<sup>94</sup>

Shari<sup>c</sup>ati, through a reinterpretation of the story of Cain and Abel in the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān, attempts to demonstrate that Marx's schema of social development (primitive socialism transformed into serfdom into feudalism into bourgeois capitalism into industrial capitalism into the classless society) can be reduced to but two structures: the two poles represented by Cain and Abel, the ruler = king/ aristocracy/ owner versus the ruled = God/ the people.<sup>95</sup> He finds the only essential factor differentiating the two brothers is their occupations, Cain the agriculturalist, and Abel the pastoralist. From the difference in occupations springs two monumental archetypes: Cain represents the system of agriculture and individual or monopoly ownership, the landlord, the ruler, the aggressor, and the murderer; while Abel signifies the system of pastoralism and primitive socialism preceding ownership, the victim, the ruled, and the murdered.<sup>96</sup> Shari<sup>c</sup>ati adds that:

Cain is not inherently evil. . . . What makes Cain evil is an antihuman social system, a class society, a regime of private ownership that cultivates slavery and mastery and turns men into wolves, foxes or sheep. It is a setting where hostility, rivalry, cruelty and venality flourish; humiliation and lordship—the hunger of some and the gluttony of others, greed, opulence and deception; a setting where the philosophy of life is founded on plundering, exploitation, enslavement, consuming and abusing, lying and flattering; where like consists of oppressing or being oppressed, of selfishness, aristocratic arrogance, hoarding, thievery and ostentation; where human relations are based on the giving and receiving of blows, on exploiting or being exploited; where human philosophy consists of maximum enjoyment, maximum wealth, maximum lust, and maximum coercion; where all things revolve around egoism and the sacrifice of all things to the ego, a vile, crude, and avaricious ego.<sup>97</sup>

However one reacts to Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's flights of rhetoric, one cannot deny that he speaks in the leftist idiom so appealing to the *revolté* youth at the same time as he rejects Marxism for Iran and indeed for the entire Muslim world.

Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's alternative to both westernization and Marxism is a politically active, even revolutionary, revitalized Shi'ism based on the world view of tauhid. This essay is not the place for a detailed analysis of Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's conception of a revived Islam in Iran, but a few features should be mentioned. First, it derives from a reinterpreted Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān and a reinterpreted early Islamic history, using sociological and psychological insights (as Shari<sup>c</sup>ati attempted in the story of Cain and Abel). Second, it is very much a political religion, a religion of liberation from oppression, a religion of continuous struggle for social justice and equality, a religion of protest against the status quo. Third, it is indigenous to Iran and therefore the only acceptable vehicle for redeeming Iranian society under attack from alien traditions. And fourth, it deemphasizes the role of the ulama in practice by concurrently elevating the responsibility of the individual.

This last feature, the role of the ulama, deserves more careful analysis. Many of Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's writings exhibit a strong anticlerical tone. For example, he often castigates small-minded ulama for countenancing or even encouraging non-Sharia popular religious practices such as the chest-beating, self-mutilation, and

bare chests associated with the street processions commemorating the martyrdom of Hosain.<sup>98</sup> Or he mocks them for their preoccupation with religious trivia such as the correct placement of the arms during praying or their sophistry in discussing inane problems such as the hypothetical difficulties incurred by a Muslim fasting during Ramadan at the North or South Pole.<sup>99</sup> The ulama should address far more substantial issues. Of great importance is Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's redefinition of the term *taqlid* (seeking guidance from a *mujtahid*), limiting it only to consultation between the general public and the *‘alim* (singular of ulama) expert in religious sciences “in practical and legal matters which are of a technical, scientific nature,” and *not* as “absolute and unquestioning allegiance to the wisdom, beliefs, and judgment of the clerics.”<sup>100</sup> In the same vein, he proclaims *ijtihad* (search for correct understanding of religious dogma) the responsibility of all Shi<sup>i</sup> individuals and not just the *mujtahids*.

However, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati does not dismiss all ulama. Indeed, socially responsive ulama in tune with their times have a great mission to fulfill:

More important than anything is the great mission of the *‘alim*, who according to the tenets and principles of the great school entrusted to him and according to the needs and movements and exigencies of the time in which he lives—and his religions must be vibrant—must stretch out his hand to the principles, implications, and new understandings suitable to the time, and suitable to the needs of the time and to the necessities of the people of this time, infer from them, and extend them so that religion does not remain in the old, conditional, past framework which is long past—and does not stagnate, and does not fall behind the times.<sup>101</sup>

Although he died six months before the first massive demonstration in Tabriz in December 1977 marking the beginning of the Iranian Revolution, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's role in the Revolution was crucial. He has been called “the ideologue” of the Iranian Revolution and the Voltaire of the Revolution.<sup>102</sup> Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's portrait was virtually the only one, other than that of the Ayatollah Khomeini, displayed in the periodic demonstrations. Hundreds of street vendors earn their livelihoods by selling Shari<sup>c</sup>ati books and cassette tapes in cities across Iran. And, in spite of previous major differences with many of the ulama, Shari<sup>c</sup>ati's popularity was generally recognized by the politically powerful ulama and past differences glossed over, at least through late 1980.

Two groups of revolutionaries, however, reportedly hold Shari<sup>c</sup>ati in especially high esteem. The Mojāhedīn-e Khalq (People's Warriors in Holy War) claim Shari<sup>c</sup>ati as their very own. In the internecine internal struggles of the Mojāhedīn-e Khalq in 1354 (1975–1976), Shari<sup>c</sup>ati reportedly took the side of the “Islamic” faction against the Marxist faction and even prepared texts at the requests of the Mojāhedīn.<sup>103</sup> Forqan, a rather mysterious group claiming credit for the political assassinations of General Qarani and Ayatollah Motahari soon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran in spring 1979, also derives inspiration from Shari<sup>c</sup>ati, if the background article on the Forqan group in *Āyandegān* (20 Ordibehesht 1358/10 May 1979) is to be believed.

## CONCLUSION

Samad Behrangi, Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad, and ‘Ali Shari<sup>c</sup>ati each articulated in a different fashion an interpretation of the worldwide phenomena of westernization

of Third World indigenous cultures, economic domination, and elite cooptation. Only Shari'ati, the most western-educated of them all, developed a response capable of mobilizing large numbers of Iranians during the 1978–1979 Revolution. However, Behrangi and Āl-e Ahmad, by a more thorough depiction of the most blatant manifestations of the westernization of Iran and its consequences, helped lay the foundation among the intelligentsia, in particular, for support in toppling the pro-West, pro-American regime of the shah.

At the risk of exaggeration, Behrangi, Āl-e Ahmad, and Shari'ati may be viewed as representatives of three distinct oppositional stances within Iran: Behrangi was the secularist Marxist popular revolutionary struggler; Āl-e Ahmad was the secularist social activist intellectual who discounted religion as an oppositional force but then underwent a period of personal religious questioning and began to accept religion in Iran as a powerful indigenous oppositional force; Shari'ati was the lay religious activist seeking to overthrow western domination not by Marxism but by a reinterpreted, revolutionary Shi'ism emphasizing social justice.

The language of these three is far from dead. It reverberates across Iran as partisans of one view or the other, organized into Fedāyin-e Khalq, Mojāhedīn-e Khalq, and other political groups, or unorganized, join in the continuing political power struggles of the early days of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Based on the prognoses of these three Iranian intellectuals, Iran is unlikely ever again to adopt voluntarily so indiscriminately ideas and customs from the West.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>"Westoxication" as an English translation of the Persian *gharbzadegi* seeks to convey both intoxication—the infatuation with the West—and infection—the poisoning of westernization of an indigenous culture. These are the two senses the popularizer of the term, Āl-e Ahmad, probably had in mind. Other English renderings of it are the more literal "Weststruckness," and "Westomania," "Westernitis," "Westamination," and "Blighted by the West."

The transliteration system employed here for Persian is simple: a, e, and o for the short vowels; ā, i, and u for the long; au and ai for the diphthongs; and no diacriticals for the different consonants pronounced alike.

<sup>2</sup>By Behrangi I utilized *Kand o kāv dar masā'el-e tarbiati-ye Irān*, several of his essays appearing in *Majmu'ah-ye maqālehhā*, and several of his short stories, including most prominently, "Māhi-ye siyāh-e kuchulu"; by Āl-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi*, *Modir-e madrseh*, and *Khasi dar miqār*; by Shari'ati, *Mas'uliat-e Shi'eh budan*, *Agar Pāp va Mārks nabudand*, the parts of *Eslāmshenāsi* translated by Sachedina and Algar, the translation by Campbell, and parts of other works noted below.

Other recently published analyses and translations of works by these three Iranian social critics include: For Behrangi: G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, "Human Values in the Works of Two Persian Writers," *Correspondance d'Orient*, 11 (1970), 411–18; Thomas Ricks, "Samad Behrangi and Contemporary Iran: The Artist in Revolutionary Struggle," in *The Little Black Fish and Other Modern Persian Stories*, Mary and Eric Hooglund, trans. (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1976), 95–126; and Michael C. Hillmann, ed., *Literature East and West*, "Major Voices in Contemporary Persian Literature," vol. 20 (1976, but published June 1980). For Āl-e Ahmad: Michael C. Hillmann, "Al-e

Ahmad's Fictional Legacy," *Iranian Studies*, 9, 4 (Autumn, 1976), 248–265; Sabri-Tabrizi, "Human Values"; and Hillmann, *Literature East and West*. For Shari'ati: Hamid Algar's introductions in two translations of Shari'ati's essays in *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar, trans. (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1979) and *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique*, R. Campbell, trans. (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1980); and two articles by Mangol Bayat-Philipp, "Shi'ism in Contemporary Iranian Politics: The Case of Ali Shari'ati" in Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim, eds., *Towards a Modern Iran* (London: Frank Cass, 1980), pp. 155–168 and "Islam in Pahlavi and Post-Pahlavi Iran: A Cultural Revolution?" in John L. Esposito, ed., *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1980), pp. 87–106.

Recently published histories of Pahlavi Iran devoting attention to one or more of the three figures include: Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1980); Michael M. J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); and Nikki Keddie, *Iran: Roots of Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), especially the chapter by Yann Richard.

<sup>3</sup>Samad Behrangi, quoted in Ricks, "Samad Behrangi," p. 124, who in turn quoted from the introduction to *The Little Black Fish and Other Stories by Samad Behrangi*, Iranian Students Association, trans. (California, 1972), p. ii.

<sup>4</sup>Samad Behrangi, "Arusak-e sokhangu," p. 64, quoted by Gholam Hosain Farnur in "Mo'alleme-mardom," *Āresh*, no. 18 (1347/1968), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup>Gholam Hosaim Sā'edi, "Shab hast, āri hast," *Āresh*, no. 18 (1347/1968), pp. 106–107.

<sup>6</sup>Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad, "Samad va afsāneh-ye 'avām," *Āresh*, no. 18 (1347/1968), p. 12. Although Behrangi dearly loved his native language, Azeri Turkish, and wrote and translated in it, he also was convinced of the necessity of Azerbaijani children learning Persian. However, he believed Azeri Turkish speakers should not be taught Persian in the same way as native Persian speakers. Instead, Behrangi made quite a detailed proposal to teach Persian to Azeri Turkish speakers in a carefully planned way, acknowledging the linguistic differences of the two languages and building on the children's knowledge of Azeri Turkish vocabulary shared with Persian (see *Kand o kāv*, pp. 87–100).

<sup>7</sup>Sā'edi, "Shab hast," p. 106. Sā'edi, himself of Azerbaijani origin, also remarks that after Behrangi had collected Azeri folk tales he was surprised that he was not allowed to publish them in his mother tongue. It was then that he decided to make Persian translations for publication (Sā'edi, op. cit., p. 16).

<sup>8</sup>No comprehensive account of the Pahlavi censorship apparatus and its widely varying degree of suppression of regime-challenging publications exists, although Amin Banani touches on the issue in "The Role of the Mass Media" in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies* (New York: Praeger, 1971). Obviously, Behrangi, Āl-e Ahmad, and Shari'ati each had to confront the problem of possible censorship of their writings. Each did, using different techniques.

<sup>9</sup>In a review of *The Little Black Fish and Other Modern Persian Stories* Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak states: "Hidden layers of meaning and covert turns of phrase designed to fool the government censors while at the same time convey their true meaning to an audience who seeks political statement in the heart of any literary work, makes his fiction all but untranslatable." *Iranian Studies*, 10, 3 (Summer 1977), 221.

<sup>10</sup>Ricks, "Samad Behrangi," p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>Mary and Eric Hooglund, Translator's Note, in *The Little Black Fish and Other Modern Persian Stories*, p. xix.

<sup>12</sup>Briefly, Āl-e Ahmad and Shari'ati are believed by some either to have died of simple heart attacks or of a SAVAK-administered injection of air into the bloodstream in the case of Āl-e Ahmad, or of some unexplained SAVAK-engineered means in the case of Shari'ati. Both Michael Hillmann (in Introduction and Notes to Jalal Al Ahmad, *The School Principal*, John R. Newton, tr. [Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974], p. 27 and again in *Literature East and West*, p. 64) and Ehsan Yar-Shater in his article in *Iran Faces the Seventies*, (p. 308) affirm the heart-attack version for Āl-e Ahmad. Memorial volumes in honor of Shari'ati soon after his death cite a wide variety of circumstantial evidence to negate the plausibility of a natural death. Ervand Abrahamian (personal letter to the author, July 24, 1979) retracted his statement that SAVAK killed Shari'ati ("Iran in Revolution: The Opposition Forces," *MERIP*, no. 75/76 [March/April 1979], p. 6), stating that British doctors seemed to have verified a heart attack and that Shari'ati's family, who took

custody of the body, produced no medical evidence to prove "foul play." However, the argument can still be made that, inter alia, the constant harassment, uncertain livelihood, and problems with censorship caused such undue strains and tensions as to bring about their premature deaths, at least indirectly attributable to the regime.

Behrangi's death is more problematic. See Āl-e Ahmad, Sā<sup>c</sup>edi, Eslām Kāzemieh, and others' refutations in the memorial issue of *Āresh* of the regime's version of his death: Drowning while crossing the Aras River, which forms part of the boundary between Iranian Azerbaijan and Soviet Azerbaijan, either as a suicide or in a desperate attempt to cross over into the Soviet Union.

<sup>13</sup>Michael C. Hillmann, in *Literature East and West*, p. 197.

<sup>14</sup>Āl-e Ahmad, *Āresh*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Samad Behrangi, *Kand o kāv dar masā'el-e tarbiati-ye Irān* (Tabriz: Chāpkhāneh-ye Mohammadi-ye Elmieh, 1344/1965), p. 123.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 123–124.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 125–126.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 3–22.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup>Behrangi explains that since most Iranian teachers of English do not even know what a "hot dog" is, they explain to their students that since Americans are Christians and therefore infidels, they eat pork, donkey, and even dogs! Likewise, very few Iranian teachers of English understand the game of "baseball" (*ibid.*, pp. 83–84).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>28</sup>Samad Behrangi, *Majmu'ah-ye maqālehhā* (Tabriz: Enteshārāt-e shams, Tir 1348/1969), p. 27.

<sup>29</sup>Āl-e Ahmad states that "sickle" and "distinction of one culture and one language" (left ambiguous—Behrangi's attachment to Azeri Turkish culture and language or to socialism?) are as holy to Behrangi as Medina is to his older brothers (*Āresh*, p. 12).

<sup>30</sup>*Kand o kāv*, pp. 128–129.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>32</sup>Hooglund, *Little Black Fish*, p. xii.

<sup>33</sup>Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad, *Khasi dar miqāt* (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e ravaq, Shahrivar 2536/1977), p. 40.

<sup>34</sup>Hillmann, in *Literature East and West*, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup>Āl-e Ahmad once remarked that no Iranian writer during his lifetime had ever been able to support himself by writing alone. Āl-e Ahmad himself was no exception. Prolific and popular writer that he was, Āl-e Ahmad was forced to teach occasionally for a salary.

<sup>36</sup>Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad, *Arzyābi-ye shetābzadeh* (Tabriz: Ibn Sinā, 1965), pp. 93–100, quoted in Hillmann, Introduction and Notes to Al Ahmad, *School Principal*, p. 30, n. 8.

<sup>37</sup>Michael C. Hillmann, Introduction and Notes to Al Ahmad, *School Principal*, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup>Professor Amin Banani informed me in a conversation that he had met Shari'ati at a *daureh* at Āl-e Ahmad's home in Tehran in 1965.

<sup>39</sup>Āl-e Ahmad acknowledges the term was borrowed from Ahmad Farid in *Gharbzadegi* (Tehran: Āzād, 1341/1962), p. 5. See note 1 above for alternative translations of the term.

<sup>40</sup>Such a classic of modern Persian prose literature has *Gharbzadegi* become that UNESCO commissioned an English translation of it for inclusion in its Persian Heritage Series.

<sup>41</sup>*Gharbzadegi*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup>Āl-e Ahmad is clearly playing on the word *senzadegi*, the affliction of wheat by an aphidlike pest quite common in Iran.

<sup>43</sup>The Persian title signifies a fateful appointment with strong religious connotations, as *miqāt* is the technical term for the rendezvous place or time for pilgrims departing on the *haji*.

<sup>44</sup>*Khasi dar miqāt*, pp. 46–48, 74.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 28, 79.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 61–62.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 64–65.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>50</sup>*Gharbzadegi*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 41–42.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 71–76.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 94. Although Āl-e Ahmad did not use the term “diploma disease,” which was popularized by Ronald Dore in *The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualification, and Development* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), he depicted the same phenomenon in an Iranian context some fourteen years before Dore’s more comprehensive, global analysis.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 96–97.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 98; translation by Hillmann in Introduction and Notes to Al Ahmad, *School Principal*, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup>*Gharbzadegi*, pp. 98–99.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 99; translation by Hillmann in Introduction and Notes to Al Ahmad, *School Principal*, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup>*Gharbzadegi*, pp. 59–61.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 52–53.

<sup>66</sup>Maryam Mirahmadi, “Ta’sir va nofuz-e mazhab dar asār-e Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad,” *Sokhan*, 26, 10 (Āzār/Dey 1357–November/December 1978), 1079.

<sup>67</sup>*Khasi dar miqāt*, p. 90.

<sup>68</sup>Mirahmadi, “Ta’sir va nofuz-e mazhab,” p. 1081.

<sup>69</sup>The revived Hosainieh-ye Ershād in Tehran is currently publishing an “authoritative” series of Shari’ati’s collected works.

<sup>70</sup>Ali Shari’ati, “Letter to His Son, Ehsan,” 24 Aban 1351 (15 November 1972), in *Haft Nāmeḥ az Mojāhed Shahid Doktor ‘Ali Shari’ati* (Seven Letters from Valiant Struggler Dr. Ali Shari’ati) (Tehran: Abuzar Publications, 1977), U.S. Joint Publications and Research Service, trans., no. 73760 (June 13 1979), p. 39.

<sup>71</sup>Ali Shari’ati, *Mas’uliat-e Shi’eh budan* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e enteshārāt-e Hosainieh-ye Ershād, 1350/1971), p. 11.

<sup>72</sup>For example, Shari’ati in *Mas’uliat-e Shi’eh budan* (p. 11) lampoons Queen Gauhārshād, who intended to honor Islam without understanding its central tenets by constructing a monumental mosque complex in Mashhad. The real attack, however, was the shah and shahbanu’s phony religiosity manifested by their donation of gold doors, crystal Czechoslovakian chandeliers, silver guardrails, etc., to the Shrine of Imam Rezā in Mashhad, given great play in the controlled press.

<sup>73</sup>Mansur Farhang, “Resisting the Pharaohs: Ali Shari’ati on Oppression,” *Race and Class*, 25, 1 (Summer 1979), 32.

<sup>74</sup>Shari’ati had been arrested and imprisoned at least once before, in 1964 at the Turkish border upon his return from France, presumably for his oppositional activities as a student in Paris.

<sup>75</sup>Ali Shari’ati, *Reflections of a Concerned Muslim: On the Plight of Oppressed Peoples*, Ali A. Behzadnia and Najpa Denny, trans. (Houston, Tex.: Free Islamic Literatures, Inc., 1979), pp. 9–10.

<sup>76</sup>See Mangol Bayat-Philipp, “Shi’ism,” pp. 165–166.

<sup>77</sup>See Shari’ati, “Letter to His Son, Ehsan,” p. 43.

<sup>78</sup>Ali Shari’ati, *Ummat va Imāmat* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e enteshārāt-e ershād, 1350/1972), pp. 52–53.

<sup>79</sup>For Shari’ati’s employment of Hegelian dialectics see *Simā-ye Mohammad bā tarjomeh-ye Engliši*, Abdulaziz Abdulhosein Sachedina, trans. (Tehran: Sherkat-e saḥāmi-ye enteshār for Hosainieh-ye Ershād, 1350/1971), pp. 54–56 and 61–63, on the superiority of Islam over other world religions; and *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar, trans. (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1979), pp. 88–96, on the dual nature of man, i.e., the divine and the earthly. For Shari’ati’s employment of linguistic phenomenology to demonstrate the inherent dynamism of Islam, see *Mas’uliyat-e Shi’eh budan*, p. 16.

- <sup>80</sup>Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 60.
- <sup>81</sup>Ali Shari'ati, *Agar Pāp va Mārks nabudand* (n.p.: n.d.), pp. 9–10.
- <sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.
- <sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
- <sup>84</sup>Ali Shari'ati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique*, R. Campbell, trans. (Berkeley, Calif.: Mizan Press, 1980), p. 49.
- <sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.
- <sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.
- <sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.
- <sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.
- <sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.
- <sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.
- <sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117.
- <sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 84.
- <sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73.
- <sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.
- <sup>95</sup>Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, pp. 112–116.
- <sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.
- <sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 107.
- <sup>98</sup>Shari'ati, *Mas'uliyat*, p. 37.
- <sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
- <sup>100</sup>Ali Shari'ati, *Tashaiyo<sup>c</sup>-e 'Alavi va tashaiyo<sup>c</sup>-e Safavi* (Tehran: Sāzmān-e enteshārāt-e Hosainieh-ye Ershād, 1350/1971), p. 141.
- <sup>101</sup>Shari'ati, *Mas'uliyat*, pp. 24–25.
- <sup>102</sup>Farhang, p. 31.
- <sup>103</sup>See Introduction to *Haft Nāme*, p. 3.