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The ᶜAbbasid Revolution 747-750 and The Iranian Revolution 1978-1979: A Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

Viewing the ᶜAbbasid Revolution and the Iranian Revolution from a comparative perspective is the focus of this study. The ᶜAbbasid Revolution was the first Islamic revolution, and the Iranian Revolution is the most recent Islamic revolution, both of which occurred in Muslim societies and practically began in the same geographical area. Although more than twelve centuries separate the two revolutions, similarities exist between them. Both produced profound results, and similar lessons may be culled from them. The first revolution toppled the house of the Umayyads and established a new dynasty. The second overbalanced the House of the Pahlavis and evolved Iran from a monarchy into an Islamic republic. The political role of merchants and their cooperation with religious leaders based on mutual self-interests in both revolutions was a significant factor. Conclusions may be drawn as to when or whether there were changes to Islamic values. These changes may have led to a change in Muslims' experiences, which can be developed, into the form of a revolution or any type of violence. Taking a comparative methodological approach, this study attempts to make a link between the Iranian Revolution and its ᶜAbbasid past.

Keywords: The ᶜAbbasid Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, merchants and politics, merchants and ᶜ*ulama*, Islam and politics in Iran

Introduction

Much has been written about the historical and political significance of the ᶜAbbasid Revolution 132/750 and the Iranian Revolution of 1978. While studies of these events certainly have led to a better understanding, there is an absence of a careful comparative study between the two revolutions. A comparison study might lead toward a clearer depiction of the existing conditions in Iran at the time of the 1978/1979 revolution and its Islamic roots. Also, it may be possible to establish the link between the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its ᶜAbbasid past.

The significance of this study is to illuminate some facts and socio-religious circumstances surrounding each revolution by examining the political contribution of merchants in the ᶜAbbasid movement that led to the 132/749 revolution and the downfall of the Umayyads. Likewise, it examines the political role of merchants in the Iranian Revolution of 1978-–1979. Further, this study demonstrates the cooperation between merchants and religious leaders in mobilizing the masses to resist changes created by the existing dynasties. These cooperative efforts were based on mutual interests between merchants and religious leaders. Despite the length of time between the ᶜAbbasid Revolution and that in Iran, more than twelve centuries, a comparison between the two is compelling and relevant to the extant conditions of the Muslim world today. Both revolutions occurred in virtually the same geographical area, currently known as Iran. The ᶜAbbasid Revolution was the first Islamic Revolution in the history of Islam with the Iranian Revolution being the most recent one. Because dramatic changes occurred as a result of each revolution, both events are seen as turning points in the history of Muslims. More importantly, however, is that both revolutions were the only successful revolutions to have occurred in the name of Islam. This comparative study demonstrates how similar conditions in the social and political climates fostered the overthrow of the ruling dynasties in both revolutions. Furthermore, the history and the culture of the Near East should be considered as a continuing dialog between its present and past; therefore, an understanding of the early periods of Islam is essential to comprehend the environment in which many historical, political, and social developments in the region have come into being. By analyzing the significant political, social, and cultural upheavals that occurred in the early, as well the contemporary Islamic world, a better understanding of the conditions existing in the region today would firmly establish the link between the present-day Near East and its Islamic past and in the context with its

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relationship with the West. We can also better comprehend that the change of Islamic values may lead to change of Muslims' existing lives and experiences. This change may take place in the form of revolutions, uprisings, or many other forms of violence.

This study draws from early sources of belles-lettres, religious discourse, and philosophical and historical writings, such as al-Tabarî's *Târîkh al-rusul wa al-mulûk,* and *al-Daᶜwah al-ᶜAbbasiyah* (written by an unknown author and edited by ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzîz al-Dûrî,), which provide the most detailed accounts of the ᶜAbbasid Revolution. Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Hay Shaᶜban's work, *The Abbasid Revolution*, and Moshe Sharon's *Black Banners from the East* provides important analysis, concerning the ᶜAbbasid event. For the Iranian Revolution, there are many works essential to study this incident, such as those of Ayatu Allah Khomeini who led the Iranian Revolution with his doctrine *Vilayet-i faqih*. Also, Alî Sharîᶜatî's writings, such as *Tamaddun va tajaddud*, were carefully examined. In addition, the writings of Nikki Keddie were of great significance to this study. In a final analysis, it may be argued that merchant networks composed a unique political and moral community whose impact proved essential to the foundation of the ᶜAbbasid caliphate and to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The conclusions of the study focused on how and why merchants organized, financed, and led the movements, and what the long-term effects of this history have been.

To facilitate this study's comprehension, the concepts of "history" and "revolution" should be clearly defined. History, as E. Carr states, is "an unending dialog between the present and the past."[1] Theda Skocpol gives a well-developed concept of "social revolutions," saying: "… are rapid, basic transformation of country's state and class structures, and of its dominant ideology. Moreover, social revolutions are carried through, in part, by class-based upheavals from below."[2] With these concepts of history and revolution in mind, it is then compelling to investigate whether these concepts may be applied to Islamic history in general and to the ᶜAbbasid and Iranian Revolutions in particular.

Some important similarities exist between the ᶜAbbasid and Iranian revolutions. The foremost of these similarities, however, is the major roles played by the merchants[3] in both societies and by religion, which was the motivating force behind the revolutionary movements.

Leadership

One of the similarities between them is that both revolutions were led by spiritual leaders who resided outside the geographical area where each revolution took place. Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî and then Ibrâhîm ibn Muhammad, known as Ibrâhîm *al-Imâm* lived in al-Humaymah.[4] This city was located on one of the major trade and pilgrimage routes between Syria and Mecca. Being far from Khurâsân,[5] where the activities of the *dâᶜis* or *duᶜât* (singular *dâᶜî* (propagandizers) were to move, the Imâm was able to direct the *dâᶜis* without being subject to arrest by the local authorities in Khurâsân. Also, residing near Damascus, the center of the Umayyad Empire, secured him from suspicion regarding activities in Khurâsân. This factor enabled *al-Imâm*, the leader of the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* (propagandization), to communicate with his people in Khurâsân, where the revolution commenced. In this case, it was the merchants who provided essential means of communication between the Imâm in al-Humaymah and the *duᶜat* (propagandizers) in Khurâsân.

In Iran, Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the Iranian Revolution, was likewise residing outside of Iran prior to the revolution. In 1964, he had been exiled to al-Najaf, a city in Iraq. Al-Najaf al-Ashraf is

[1] Edward Carr (1961), *What Is History?* New York: Vintage Books, p. 35.
[2] Theda Skocpol (1982), "Rentier and Shiᶜah Islam in the Iranian Revolution," *Theory and society,* Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 265.
[3] The word "merchants" here is used in a broader sense which includes bazaar people, traders, guilders, and female carpet workers.
[4] Al-Humaymah is a small city in what is known now as Jordan, which was a part of greater Syria under the Umayyad Caliphate. See ᶜAbd Allah Yâqût al-Hamawî al-Rûmî (1866-1871), *Muᶜjam al-buldân*, Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus: "al-Humaymah".
[5] Khurâsân is the largest region, with its capital Marw, or Marv. It is the area which located in the north-east of what is now known as Iran, and in early works was known as the East. Marv or Marw, used to be is the largest city of this province. From Marv the ᶜAbbasid revolutionaries started to march, holding black banners, from the East towards the West. See Yâqût, *Muᶜjam al-buldân*: "Khurâsan". It is now the largest providence in Iran, and Mashhad is the chief city. It is mountainous and arid with some salt deserts. Its valley produces large quantities of fruits, nuts, sugar beets and cotton. Carpet, turquoise and wool among others are manufactured in the region. It was occupied by the Arabs on the mid-7th century, and it was here that Abû Muslim al-Khurâsânî, began (8th century) his campaign against the Umayyads. The providence contributed to the military power of the early ᶜAbbasid Caliphate. Khurâsân was devastated by the Oghuz (or Ghuz) Turks in 1153 and 1157 and by the Mongols from 1220 to 1222. In 1383 the providence was invaded by Tamerlane. See Saul Cohen (ed.) (2008), *Columbia Gazetteer of the World*, New York: Columbia University Press: "Khurasan".

considered the second holiest city by Shiᶜite Muslims and also is where the shrine of ᶜAlî ibn Abî Tâlib is located. Moreover, al-Najaf is the intellectual center for Shiᶜie thought and teaching. Khomeini resided and taught in al-Najaf for more than fifteen years, during which time he constantly expressed his legal and political views. Despite his critiques of the Shah's policy, he was able to continue his criticism of the situation in Iran due to his residing outside of it and the Shah's authority. Even while in exile, Khomeini was able to deliver his political views to the people of Iran through a variety of channels such as merchants, students, and pilgrims to al-Najaf or Mecca.[6]

Merchants

It is necessary to briefly examine the role of merchants in Islamic history. Before Islam, Arabs in the major cities had always been commercially minded, therefore, it is unsurprising that Islam was born in a commercial environment in Mecca, the biggest commercial city in the Arabian Peninsula. Prophet Muhammad was himself a merchant who often went on trade journeys between Syria and Yemen. The reputation of the Prophet as a trustworthy honest individual was built mainly through the business of trade. Abû Bakr, who became Caliph shortly after Muhammad's death, was also a merchant. It has been reported that Abû Bakr donated most of his capital to the cause of Islam. Another important figure in Islamic history, Uthmân ibn ᶜAffân, the Caliph 23-35/643-655, was also a merchant. His contribution of all of his supply of food to the treasurer in the year of drought, (*Âmm al-Ramâdah*) 18/639, has been remembered. Many other distinguished figures, such as Muᶜâwiyah and his father Abû Sufyân, ᶜAmr ibn al-ᶜÂs, and ᶜUmar II, were merchants as well. Finally, the spiritual leaders, Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî and Khomeini, of both revolutions, were descended from merchants' families.

The significant role of merchants in Islamic history has been demonstrated on two important levels. First, on an internal level, merchants were virtually the only channel through which the surplus of agricultural products, textiles, and commodities, such as leather, metals, and cloth, were secured throughout the Islamic territories. The merchants were able to circulate these products and distribute them through a network of trade routes, alliance, and markets throughout the Muslim world.[7] Second, on an external level, the merchants played a major role in the expansion of Islam to areas not yet conquered, inside as well as outside the peninsula. In most cases, when new land was conquered, merchants followed the *muqâtilah* (warriors) and purchased the booty collected by the soldiers with cash. After the conquest of Nihâwand in 21/641, for example, Muslims captured the Kisras' treasured jewels (*kunûz al-Nakhayrajân*). These jewels were bought by ᶜÂmr ibn al-Hârith, a Kufan merchant, who then sold them at such an enormous profit that he became, according to al-Sâ'ib al-Kalbî, the wealthiest man in al-Kûfah.[8] Since each soldier's booty often included such cumbersome items as horses, slaves, antiques, etc., they were often willing to sell their goods to merchants for cash. The amount paid was usually lower in value than the booty was actually worth, but it was easier for the warriors to carry home. With this established, one can conclude that the merchants had a role in distributing the wealth and in financing the tribesmen through the purchase of their booty. While the central Caliphate provided the expeditions with men, the merchants supplied the necessary capital. Merchants, therefore, were able to move freely between Khurâsân, their headquarters in al-Kûfah and al-Humaymah, carrying the Imâm's messages, in the guise of trade, without easily arousing suspicion.[9]

It is important here to note that Muslim society in general was undergoing changes, which started at the official level in the era of ᶜAbd al-Malik ibn Marwân 65-86/684-705. These changes saw the Umayyads beginning a new plan of *taᶜrîb al-dawâwîn* (Arabization), which required all records, especially records of *dîwân al-kharâj* (taxation), *dîwân al-barîd* (post), and others, to be written in Arabic. This gave the Arabic language and, hence, Arabic culture, and even later, Arabs themselves, a sense of superiority over the other languages (especially Persian) and other cultures and *mawâlî* (non-Arabs) in the Islamic Empire. The most serious threat to the merchants, however, was the Arabization of money which started in 74/693, a process including *dînâr*, a Roman currency made of gold and *dirham*, a Persian currency

[6] Before Khomeinie was exiled to al-Najaf, he was exiled to Turkey. Also, he resided in France for short time before the Revolution.
[7] Mahmud Ibrahim (1981), "The Social and Economic Background of the Umayyad Caliphate: The Role of Muᶜawiyah," Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, p. 334.
[8] Muhammad ibn Jarîr al-Tabarî (1972), *Târîkh al-rusul wa al-mulûk*, M. Abû al-Fadl Ibrâhîm (ed.), Vol. 4, Cairo: Dâr al-Maᶜârif, p. 117.
[9] In 102/720, Saᶜîd ibn Khyzanah, the Umayyad governor in Khurâsân, arrested two of the dâᶜis accusing them of being propagandizest for ᶜAbbasid, but they were able to convince him that they were merchants and they were too busy to do propaganda for the ᶜAbbasid. Saᶜîd set them free. See Tabarî, Vol. 6, p. 616.

made of silver. Both *dînâr* and *dirham* were then subject to changes in value and measurement. The result of this kind of transformation resulted in confusion in measuring these currencies.[10] More seriously, the Umayyads were unable or neglected to secure the essential trade routes, which was a part of the rulers' assignment. Merchants, thereby, often became subject to robbery and murder. This was also due to many disturbances against the Umayyads, such as those by the Kharajites, ᶜAlawites, and Zanj.[11] This was indeed a serious threat to the merchants' interests. The ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* was, to them, the channel by which to change the situation.

As previously mentioned, merchants played a major role in the distribution of instructions between the Imâm in al-Humaymah and the *duᶜât* (propagandizers) in the East, especially in Khurâsân. This began shortly after the death of Abû Hâshim Ibrâhîm ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafîyah, when the Imâhamh (leadership) transferred to Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî, one of al-ᶜAbbâs descendants. The first report of the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* (propagandization) by al-Tabarî and others was in 100/718. The report states that Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî, the ᶜAbbasid *Imâm*, sent four of his propagandists to Iraq and Khurâsân. Both of the propagandists sent to Khurâsân were merchants.[12]

The most significant characters in the ᶜAbbasid Revolution during this era of clandestine activity until the complete success of the revolution were Bukayr ibn Mâhân, Abû Salamah al-Khallâl, and Abû Muslim al-Khurâsânî. All three were merchants, and a brief biography of each follows.

Bukayr ibn Mâhân (Abû Hâshim)

Bukayr ibn Mâhân was a Kufan merchant. He accompanied Yazîd ibn al-Muhallab in his conquest of Jurjân in 97/716.[13] Bukayr joined the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* in 100/718 and became the second leader of the Kufan revolutionary organization in al-Kûfah until his death. He was also the closest follower of Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî and, later, of his son, Ibrâhîm ibn Muhammad, the first two ᶜAbbasid Imams. It was Bukayr who carried the news of the appointment of Ibrâhîm al-Imâm as Muhammad ibn ᶜAli's successor to Khurâsân. Bukayr served as the messenger between the Imâm and his followers in al-Kûfah and Khurâsân, and he was also appointed the *naqîb al-nuqabâ'* ("leader of the leaders") of the organization of the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah,* by Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî in 100/718.[14] Thus, as one can see Bukayr ibn Mâhân was a distinguished individual in the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* due to his being a merchant, his experience in Islamic military expansion in the East, and his relationship with al-Junayd ibn ᶜAbd al-Rahmân, the Umayyad governor in al-Sind.[15] Bukayr died in 124/742, and Abû Salamah al-Khallâl assumed his position.

Abû Salamah al-Khallâl (Wazîr Âl Muhammad)

According to al-Dînawarî and others, Abû Salamah was a banker. He also owned several vinegar shops in al-Kûfah, which is why he was called al-Khallâl (the vinegar seller).[16] He assumed leadership of the Kufan organization after Bukayr died in 124/742. Abû Salamah was the first and nearly the sole messenger between the Imâm in al-Humayamah and the *naqîbs* in Marw, the capital of Khurâsân. He spent four months in Khurâsân shortly before the revolution, during which time he was accompanied by Abû Muslim al-Khurâsânî, one of his lieutenants. M. Shaᶜbân proposes that during this period, both Abû Salamah and Abû Muslim must have formulated an opinion about the leadership in the vital region

[10] To give an example for this kind of currency, the kind that al-Hajjâj, the Umayyad governor of Iraq, minted in 75/695, was disapproved by the *fuqahâ'* (jurisprudents), therefore was called *al-Makrûhah* (disapproved). See Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Balâdhurî (1956), *Futûh al-buldân*, S. al-Munajjid (ed.), Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah, p. 575.

[11] Examples of revolts; the revolt of al-Zanj 70-75/689-693, the revolt of Ibn al-Ashᶜath 81/700, the revolt of Shawdhab al-Khârijî 100/718, the revolt of Yazîd ibn al-Muhallab 101/719, and the revolt of Zayd ibn ᶜAlî 124/732.

[12] Maysarah al-ᶜAbdî, who died one year later, Bukayr ibn Mâhân who then became the head of the Kufan organization, along with Muhammad ibn Khamîs were sent to Iraq. ᶜIkrimah al-Sarrâj and Hayyân al-ᶜAttâr were sent to Khurâsân. See Tabarî, 6/562. Also, see Abu Hanîfah Ahamd al-Dînawarî (1956), *al-Akhbâr al-tiwâl*, A. Âmir and J. al-Shayyâl (eds.), Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdah, p. 332.

[13] Anonymous (1971), *Akhbar al-Dawlah al-ᶜAbbasiiyah*, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzîz al-Durî (ed.), Bayrût: Dar al-Talîᶜah, p. 191.

[14] Tabarî (7/290), *Akhbâr*, p. 196.

[15] Dînwarî, p. 333. Al-Sind, named after the Sindhu River, is a region located in the south East of now Pakistan, roughly coextensive with the lower Indus River valley. Despite some hilly and desert areas, it consists mainly of the alluvial plain and delta of the Indus River. There are sheep and cattle breeding and poultry farming. The region is noted for handicrafts, especially lacquerware, mirror embroidery and tile works. The Arabs invaders of Sind in 711 were the permanent Muslim settlers. It remained under direct or nominal arab rule until the 11th century, when it passed to Muslim Turkic Ghaznavids. Arab religious, social and cultural remain strong. See Yâqût, al-Sind, and *Columbia Gazetteer of the World*, p. 2930.

[16] See al-Dînawarî, p. 370. Also, see *Akhbâr*, ff. 259, pp. 248-249. Also, al-Balâdhurî (1964), *Ansâb al-ashrâf*, A. Dûrî (ed.), part II, Bayrût: Franz Steiner, p. 118.

of Marw in this crucial phase of the revolution.[17] It was Abû Salamah who hosted ᶜAbd Allâh al-Saffâh, then the Imâm and later the first ᶜAbbasid Caliph and his family in al-Kûfah, after they moved from al-Humaymah, putting his life at risk, if had the Umayyad governor in Iraq discovered his actions. After the ᶜAbbasids seized power, Abû Salamah served as *wazîr* (consultant) under the Caliph al-Saffâh. Ironically, Abû Salamah was killed by Abû Muslim four months after the revolution.

Abû Muslam al-Khurâsânî (Amîr (prince) Âl Muhammad)

Abû Muslim's origins cannot be determined from Islamic sources. However, one of the most reliable sources states that he was raised as a *mawlâ* (client) in the home of ᶜIsâ al-Sarrâj, a Kufan Shiᶜie ᶜâlim (religion learned or scholar), who also worked as a *sarrâj* (saddle-maker) and trader. Abû Muslim was thus able to learn both saddlery and the Shiᶜite-school of thought.[18] Later, he became a merchant and traveled to Isfahân for the saddle trade. In 128/746, Abû Muslim was appointed by Ibrâhîm, the Imâm, known also as Ibrâhîm al-Imâm, as the leader and coordinator of the revolution.[19] In 129/747, Abû Muslim led the revolutionary army in Khurâsân against the Umayyads, resulting in their downfall and the ᶜAbbasids' rise to power. Thus, Abû Muslim, the saddle merchant, played an active role in the ᶜAbbasid revolution and was considered by the ᶜAbbasid family to be the second most influential man after ᶜAbd Allâh al-Saffâh, the first ᶜAbbasid Caliph 132-136/750-754. Ironically, as often occurs in revolutions, the first victims are the leaders. Abû Muslim was killed by al-Mansûr, the second ᶜAbbasid Caliph, in 137/755.

As far as the financial support of the ᶜAbbasid *daᶜwah* is concerned, merchants acted as a major source of revenue. Bukayr ibn Mâhân, for example, contributed all of his profits from a trade trip to al-Sind, to the Imâm to support the people of *Âl Muhammad* (the Prophet). Bukayr did so after he was invited by Maysarah al-ᶜAbdî, a fellow merchant and the ᶜAbbasid *dâᶜî* (propagandizer) in Iraq, to join the new *daᶜwah* and give his allegiance to the people of the Prophet so that they could restore the Caliphate from the Umayyads.[20] One year later, as Bukayr reports, "I gave him (Imâm Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî) one-hundred ninety dînârs, which were collected by the Shiᶜite Kufans." Umm al-Fadl, Bukayr's wife, concurrently sent with her husband handmade robes and necklaces to the Imâm.[21] The primary financial support, however, was collected and sent to the Imâm from the Shiᶜites in Khurâsân on a recurring basis.[22]

One may be inclined to question why merchants were eager to play a major role in the revolution. The answer requires an examination of how Muslim society views both commerce and merchants. There are many Qura'anic verses in favor of *tijârah* (commerce), more than about any other occupation known to Arabs. To arrive at a fair conclusion about the concept of commerce in the Qur'an, Charles C. Torrey states:

> The mutual relations between God and man are of a strictly commercial nature. Allah is the ideal merchant. He includes everything measured. The book and the balance are his institution, and he has made himself the pattern of honest dealing. Life is a business, for gain or loss. He who does a good or an evil work (earns good or evil), receives his pay for it. Some debts are forgiven, for Allah is not a hard creditor. The Muslim makes a loan to Allah pays in advance for paradise, sells his own soul to him a bargain that prospers … at the resurrection, Allah holds a final reckoning with all men. Their actions are read from the account-book, weighed in the balance, each is paid his exact due, no one is defrauded.[23]

Also, there are many traditions of the Prophet, his companions, and *faqîhs* or *Fuqahâ'* (jurisprudences) which praise honest merchants. The most interesting of all, however, is reported by al-Shaybânî who says, "the profession of the honest merchant, or indeed any trade, pleases God more than government service."[24] Being a merchant allows a person to please God and seek economic independence from the

[17] Muhammad Abd al-Hay Shaᶜban (1970), *The Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 155.
[18] *Akhbâr*, p. 254.
[19] Tabarî, 7/344.
[20] al-Dînawarî (1956), *al-Akhbâr al-tiwâl*, p. 333.
[21] *Akhbâr*, p. 196.
[22] See Tabarî, 7/290.
[23] See Maxim Rodinson (1978), *Islam and Capitalism*, B. Pearc (trans.), Austin: University of Texas Press, p. 81.
[24] See Shelomo Dov Goitein (1957), "The rise of Near-East Bourgeoisie," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 588.

government.[25] Hence, one has to strive to preserve this independence. It is in the best interests of the merchants to either keep the status quo if this serve their interest, or else to seek a change of the current regime.[26] Merchants also have a certain talent for convincing others of their point of view. By using some of the commercial formulas, which are easy to grasp by their audience, merchants usually succeed in conveying a message easily. Prophet Muhammad, for instance, used commercial expressions to convince people to accept his message. Since commercial transactions are often subject to falsification, merchants like to seek common ground among themselves, instead of only conducting business affairs, as a basis on which they can establish trustworthiness. Many types of falsification have been portrayed by al-Jâhiz (d. 225/885) and Ibn ᶜAlî al-Dimashqî (d. 570/1175).[27] Since falsification is purportedly disapproved of in Islam, religious individuals would seemingly be more prone to honesty. Therefore, merchants must equip themselves with a *daᶜwah* with ties to religion. This kind of association between merchants and religion or religious *ᶜulama* (learned men) was important in both the ᶜAbbasid and Iranian Revolutions.

The role of merchants in the Iranian Revolution was indeed a major element. Before examining their role, it is vital to identify the major causes of their involvement. In 1953, Mohammad Rezâ Pahlavî, the Shah of Iran, returned to power at the insistence of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States after an attempted coup d'état against him by Iranian nationalists. From then on, the Shah positioned Iran on a course of gradual alignment with the United States. To the average Iranian, this was akin to replacing the previous imperial powers, Britain and the Soviet Union, with a new one. This angered Iranians, especially when the Shah granted special privileges to some Americans working in Iran, who were mostly employed in a military capacity.[28]

The most serious threat to Iranian society, however, was modernization. The Shah began his program of rapidly modernizing the Iranian army by importing sophisticated weapons from the West, especially the U. S., in large quantities. However, modernization gradually expanded to other areas of Iranian society through the introduction of western consumer goods. More and more, Iran became an open market for Western goods, which began to replace traditional Iranian goods. The real threat, then, was to the Iranian merchants. As one of the Iranian shopkeepers explained: "The bazaar was convinced that the Shah and the oil bourgeoisie wanted to throttle the small businessman." Another said "… if we let him, the Shah, will destroy us. Banks are taking over. The big stores are taking away our livelihoods. And the government will fatten the bazaars to make space for state offices."[29] Furthermore, by the mid-1970s, as T. Skocpol has noted, the Shah seemed determined to attack the traditional aspects of bazaar life itself. He attempted to bring self-regulating merchants' councils fully under state control and also tried to extend state involvement in wholesale and retail trade. An "anti-corruption" campaign alleging profiteering in the bazaar was launched as well.[30] As a result of these modernizations and regulations, merchants felt that their livelihoods were endangered and their interests, along with their independence, were threatened. They, therefore, felt it necessary to protect their interests, and so chose to align themselves with the *ᶜulama*, who were able to mobilize the masses against the Shah by using religion as a motivating force.

The role of merchants in Iranian society was already an important factor even before the idea of revolution became a reality. Merchants financed many of the religious foundations in Iran, such as mosques, schools, *madresehs* (seminaries), and *sûfî takiyas* (hospices). They were intricately connected to the *ᶜulama*, *vâᶜizs* (various preachers), Qura'anic teaches, *mullas* (seminary students), and even high-

[25] It is interesting that the word istiqlâl (independence), which at the present time has gained many political meanings, was used in early Islamic literature especially in the sense of economic independence and affluence. See Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Masᶜûdî (1861-1877), *Murûj al-dhahab wa maᶜâdin al-jawhar*, Vol. 8, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, p. 118.

[26] In 65/686, some of the Basrans merchants collaborated with al-Muhallab ibn Abî Sufrah by financing him and his army to put down some Kharajite disturbances nearby al-Basrah. These disturbances were a threat to the trade routs to Khurâsân and else where. See al-Tabarî, 5/616.

[27] See ᶜAmr ibn Bahr al-Jâhiz (1966), *Kitâb al-tabassur bî al-tijârah*, H. ᶜAbd al-Wahâb (ed.), Bayrût: Dâr al-Kitâb, ff. 14-15, pp. 47-48. Also, see Abû al-Fadl Jaᶜfar Ibn ᶜAlî al-Dimashqî (1977), *al-Ishârah ilâ mahâsin al-tijârah*, B. al-Shurbajî (ed.), Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyât al-Azhariyah, ff-24-34.

[28] Some examples of these privileges were, immunity, high salaries for some jet fighters' maintenance personal ($17,000 per month), as the Shah himself said in an interview with reporter from *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1977. Also, see Hasan ᶜAbd Allâh (n.d.), *Yawmiyyât al-Thawrah al-Irâniyah,* Bayrût: Dâr al-Kitâb, p. 52.

[29] See Ervand Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 444.

[30] Skocpol (1982), "Rentir and Shiᶜah Islam in the Iranian Revolution," p. 272.

ranking *mujtahids* (theologians).[31] On the other hand, Islamic religious groups were especially important. As Skocpol notes "in tying merchants, artisans, and workers together. Mullahs trained to interpret Islamic law adjudicated commercial disputes and taxed the well-to-do to provide personalized welfare services for devout poorer followers."[32]

In addition to their financial contributions, merchants, along with students, pilgrims and others, provided Khomeini with a nationwide organizational network through which information could be distributed. This network served as a means of connecting Khomeini, the exiled spiritual leader of the revolution, to the people of Iran.[33]

Religion

The second most significant component in both revolutions was religion. Both revolutions were born in the realm of Shiᶜism. In order to understand the importance of this, it is necessary to briefly examine the development of Shiᶜite thought, its subsequent involvement in politics, and its development as a major dynamic factor in motivating the masses for revolution.

Islam, to Muslims, is the religion of justice. To illustrate this in a broader perspective, an analogy can be made with Christianity. As love is the essential element of Christianity, justice is the essential element of Islam.[34] Therefore, if justice is eliminated from Islam, little else remains. This is an important reason why ᶜAlî ibn Abî Tâlib, considered by the Shiᶜites to be the first Imâm, was eliminated from the Caliphate. Shiᶜites believe that the leadership of the ummah (Muslim community) should not be left for the people to decide, but it should be in the hands of the current Imâm. The Imâm himself should not only rule, but also appoint his successor. Prophet Muhammad had appointed him implicitly, in one of his traditions known as *Hadîth Ghadîr Khumm*. According to Shiᶜi interpretation of this hadith, ᶜAlî should have been the Prophet's successor.[35] However, Abû Bakr, Muhammad's closest friend and father-in-law, was chosen by most companions to be the Caliph, shortly after the Prophet's death. To the Shiᶜites, that meant that an injustice was done to ᶜAlî, who was then forced to wait twenty-six years to assume power. Nevertheless, he came to power only through revolts led mostly by people from al-Kûfah, Basrah, and Egypt, which resulted in the death of the Caliph ᶜUthmân. Thus, justice in the Shiᶜite view was not applied to ᶜAlî, their first Imâm, until the revolt of 36/650 took place, resulting in the assassination of the Caliph ᶜUthman and installing Alî as the fourth Caliph. From then on, politics entered into the religion of Islam and became an essential element in the Shiᶜi division of Islam. This idea of *jihâd* (militant struggle) for justice lived on with the Shiᶜites who believe it should be used whenever it is deemed necessary to achieve justice.

Once he became the Caliph, Alî, for the first time, moved the Caliphate from al-Madînah to al-Kûfah, which then became the center of politics, economics, and intellectual pursuits. Al-Kûfah also became the major source of support for ᶜAlî, in his fight against Muᶜâwyah ibn Abî Sufyân, who saw himself to be eligible, too, for the Caliphate. In 40/660, ᶜAlî was assassinated and the Kufans gave their support to his son al-Hasan. Shortly thereafter, al-Hasan rescinded his right to the Caliphate to Muᶜawyah, who then moved the central government, along with its political and economic privileges, to Damascus. Subsequently, a new era of dispute over these privileges began between the Kufans and the Umayyads in Damascus.

There were a series of revolts against the Umayyads, who usually responded with excessive severity. Hujr ibn ᶜAdî al-Kindî, one of ᶜAlî's followers, was first to challenge Umayyad rule in al-Kûfah. When Ziyâd ibn Abîhi, the Umayyad governor, abused ᶜAlî's name and house in his Friday sermon in the mosque of al-Kûfah, Hujr disrespectfully responded to the governor in defense of ᶜAlî and his followers. Hujr and his followers began to publicly criticize the policy of the Umayyads and their abuse of a

[31] Ervand Abrahamian (1979), "The Causes of The Constitutional Revolution in Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 10, No. 3. p. 338.
[32] Skocpol (1982), "Rentir and Shiᶜah Islam in the Iranian Revolution," p. 271.
[33] It is important here to be mentioned that there is a dramatic lack of studies about the role of merchants in the Iranian Revolution.
[34] That does not mean that Christianity does not include justice nor Islam does not include love. See Malise Rothan (1984), *Islam in The World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 226.
[35] Ghadîr Khumm is a small village in Northern part of the Arabian Peninsula where Prophet Muhammad appointed ᶜAli ibn Abî Tâlib, in the Shiᶜite view, to be his successor.

member of the house of *Âl al-bayt* (the Prophet), who are the descendants of the Prophet from his daughter Fatimah, according to the Shiᶜi interpretation of this term. Later, Hujr and twelve members of his group were arrested and sent to the Caliph Muᶜâwiyah, who ordered the executions of Hujr and six others in 51/671.[36] Shiᶜite and even non-Shiᶜite members were enraged by this act and considered Hujr and his group martyrs.[37] One can conclude from the reports provided from primary sources that Hujr's reaction was impulsive when he heard ᶜAlî's name abused. This, in fact, revealed two elements to the Kufans: First, it is the love for Âl al-bayt, which comes from religious feelings, that motivated Hujr to retort to defend the house of the Prophet. Second, it is the duty of a Muslim to speak the word of truth, even in front of an authoritarian governor, without fear of the consequences.

In the late 50's/670's, the Umayyads faced even stronger challenges to their rule. Muᶜâwiyah was attempting to create *bidᶜah* (an innovation in Islam) by converting the leadership of the Muslims from a Caliphate, a respectable and just religious position, to a kingship, which was not considered just, and which was also constantly criticized in the Qur'ân.[38] Al-Husayn ibn ᶜAlî was one of the most distinguished figures among the opposition to Muᶜâwiyah, especially when the latter asked Muslims to give their *bayᶜah* (allegiance) to his son Yazîd as his successor. In 61/684, al-Husayn revolted against Yazîd ibn Muᶜâwiyah, and was killed in an unequal "battle" at Karbalâ'. There are two major outcomes of this event. First, al-Husayn appeared, to the Shiᶜites, to be a martyr, who struggled for the sake of his own beliefs and principles, which they shared. Second, this event confirmed to the Shiᶜites the cruelty of the Umayyads.

In 65/686, some Shiᶜite Kufans felt that they had betrayed al-Husayn, therefore, they had a moral obligation to Âl al-bayt to avenge al-Husayn's death and erase their previous failure to help him during his struggle against Yazîd's troops. Al-Mukhtâr ibn ᶜUbayd al-Thaqafî led 4,000 Arab tribesmen calling themselves the *al-Tawwâbûn* (repentant). They were gathered around the banner of "revenge for al-Husayn" (*yâ lathârât al-Husayn*).[39] This group was also known al-Kaysânîyah and became the first embodied Shiᶜite sect.[40] The most significant development set forth by *al-Kaysânîyah* was the suggestion that the *Imâmah* (religious leadership), along with the right to rule, should be given to one of ᶜAlî's sons. The oldest surviving son of ᶜAlî at that time (65/686) was Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî, known also as Ibn al-Hanafîyah.[41] According to al-*Kaysânîyah's* doctrine of the *Imâmah*, he should be the *Imâm*. This idea was widely accepted by the Kufans. In 81/700, when Muhammad ibn al-Hanafîyah died, *al-Kaysânîyah* developed another important part of Shiᶜiah's doctrine, the concept of the hidden *Imâm* or *al-Mahdî al-Muntazar*.[42] *Al-Mahdî* the imam who was rightly guided, and anticipated by the Shiᶜites to appear at any time in the future, and not found in the Qur'ân, entered particularly into Shiᶜism, and Sunnism to a lesser degree, as a figure who will come at the end of time "to fill the world with justice and equity, as it is now filled with injustice and oppression."[43] Thus, al-Kûfah became the center of Shiᶜite thought and the birthplace of al-*Kaysânîyah*, the first Shiᶜite sect. Here also is where the most significant ideas of Shiᶜi doctrine, *al-Imâmah* (religious leadership) and *al-Ghaybah* (the hidden) were conceived.

The major outcome of the development of the idea of the *Imâmah*, however, came later when ᶜAbd Allâh ibn Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî, just before his death in 98/717, passed on his claim of the *Imâmah*, to his kinsman Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî ᶜAbd Allâh ibn ᶜAbbâs (d. 124/742). Thus, the claim for the *Imâmah*, started by al-*Kaysânîyah* in al-Kûfah, was transferred from the house of ᶜAlî ibn Abî Tâlib, the first

[36] See al-Tabarî, Vol. 5, ff. 253-. Among the accusations that Hujr has been indicted with was that he claimed that the Caliphate should be among the members of the house of Abû Tâlib (وزعم أن هذا الأمر لا يصلح إلا في آل أبي طالب). See Tabarî 5/262.

[37] ᶜÂ'ishah, Prophet's wife, for example expressed her dissatisfaction to Muᶜâwyah. It has also been reported that Muᶜâwyah himself regretted his act shortly before his death. See Tabarî, 5/279.

[38] Qur'ân quoted the Queen of Sheba saying; 'Surely the kings when they enter a town, ruin it and make the noblest of its people to be low; and thus they do". Chapter, 27, verse, 34.

[39] Tabarî, 6/327.

[40] Abû al-ᶜAbbâ ᶜAbd Allah ibn Muhammad Al-Nâshi' al-Akbar (d. 293/903) (1971), *Masâ'il fi al-imâmah*, J. Ess (ed.), Bayrût: Frans Stiner, p. 24.

[41] Attributed to his mother's tribal name, to differentiate him from al-Hasan and al-Husayn, whose mother is Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. So the exact meaning of Muhammad ibn ᶜAlî, Ibn al-Hanafîyah, therefore, is the son whose mother was from the tribe of *Banû Hanîfah*.

[42] See Widâd al-Qâdî (1974), *Al-Kaysânîyah fi al-târîkh wa al-adab*, Bayrût: Dâr al-Thaqâfah, p. 168.

[43] Nikki Keddie (1981), *Roots of Revolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 7.

Shiᶜite *Imâm*, to the house of ᶜAbbâs.[44] From then on, the ᶜAbbasid claim, along with their daᶜwah, started again in al-Kûfah, and then in Khurâsân. A religious slogan called for support of the house of the Prophet (*al-ridâ min Âl Muhammad* (the Prophet). This slogan attracted most of the Shiᶜites, especially the merchants, who, as mentioned, worked vigorously for more than thirty years in one of the most successful clandestine revolutionary organizations in early Islam, resulting in the downfall of the Umayyads and the rise of the ᶜAbbasids.

Another important factor related to the house of the Umayyads themselves should be taken into consideration, which added more fuel to the cause of the ᶜAbbasid Revolutions. After the death of Hishâm ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik (126/743), the Umayyads began to dramatically lose their popularity among the Muslim community. Disturbances within the Umayyad house itself took place, as several Umayyad factions developed and fought among themselves.[45] The Umayyads began losing their kinship solidarity. Ibn Khaldûn (d. 1406), called *ᶜasabiyah*, which is considered the backbone of preserving the kingship *al-mulk,*[46] and the Umayyads had resigned to basically killing each other, thus paving the way for their downfall. The Umayyads, also, did not represent the majority of the Muslims, to a large degree. Rather, they represented *ashrâf* (the Arab elites) and enforced the Arabs' attitude of superiority toward non-Arabs through their program of *taᶜrîb* (Arabization).[47] This led to a decline in their popularity among the masses, especially *mawâlî* (sing. *mawlâ* (non-Arabs). It is important here to mention that Islamic primary sources do not give a clear picture about mass participation in the ᶜAbbasid Revolution, though this is an important element in order for a political change to be counted as a social revolution. However, the ᶜAbbasid seizure of power is considered the second turning point in the history of Arabs, the rise of Islam being the first.[48]

With the religious factor in mind, we can turn to examine similarities with the Iranian Revolution. In the quarter century prior to the Islamic Revolution of Iran, there were major changes related to religion that were considered by the *ᶜulama* of Iran to be critical changes against the religion of Shiᶜi Islam. The resurgence party attempted to nationalize religion by controlling the endowments for *vaqf* (religious affairs).[49] Also, the family Protection Law of 1967 disregarded the *Sharîᶜah* (Islamic law) and gave the secular courts, instead of *Sharîᶜah* ones, jurisdiction over family disputes. Furthermore, the students of the *Fayzieh Madreseh*, located in Qum, one of the most famous and prestigious Shiᶜite teaching centers in Iran, were subject to harassment and sometimes detained. The ᶜulama of *Fayzieh* were one of the most outspoken elements against these changes, hence Qum became the center of criticism against the Shah and his plan of modernization and leniency toward the West.[50]

Following the establishment of the Shiᶜite state in Iran in 1501 by the Safavids, the city of Qum gradually became one of the earliest centers of Shiᶜi Islam in Iran and was also the site of the shrine of Maᶜsûmah, a sister of ᶜAlî al-Ridâ (d. 201/818), the eighth *Imâm* according to the twelvers' division of Shiᶜî Islam, known also as *Jaᶜfarites*. Many famous Shiᶜite scholars taught at *Fayzieh* and left their

[44] It should be noted here that Abû Tâlib and ᶜAbbâs are brothers. Both were sons of ᶜAbd al-Muttalib and both were uncles of Prophet Muhammad. It should be understood, therefore, that when the term "Âl Muhammad" (the people of Muhammad) it can be applied to the people of both houses of Abû Tâlib and ᶜAbbâs. This term was used decisively in a later stage of the daᶜwah to recruit new members for the ᶜAbbasid movement. Whereas, the term "Âl al-Bayt" (the people of the house) is applied only to the people who are descendents of the sons of Fâtimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, and ᶜAlî ibn Abî Tâlib.

[45] In 126/744, Yazîd III killed al Walîd II, the Umayyad Caliph, and seized power. One year later, Marwân ibn Muhammad led a coup d'etat against Yazîd III and seized power.

[46] See Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (2014), *al-Muqaddimah*, Ali Wafi (ed.), Vol. 2, Cairo: Dar Nadat Misr, p. 495.

[47] ᶜUmar II, the Umayyad Caliph, tried to reduce the Arab hegemony through his reforming. For example, he set forth a new economic policy by which Arab and non-Arab are treated equally in term of land taxation (*kharâj*). Also, he put down the poll tax on the non-Arab, who converted to Islam. Howeve, this fair policy was not carried out after ᶜUmar II's Death.

[48] Moshe Sharone, for example, says; "The rise of the ᶜAbbasid to power was a revolution in many senses, political, cultural, and social". See Moshe Sharone (1983), *Black Banners from the East*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 16. Jacob Lassner examines the semantic meaning of the term "*dawlah*," which was used by Muslim Historians to describe the nature of the Abbasid *daᶜwah*. This term derived from a root meaning "to turn" or "come about" is the semantic equivalent of the English word "revolution" which, since the time of the Renaissance, has come to denote political upheaval as well as rotation". He then concludes that the Abbasid Revolution was a true revolution to the word describing it". "The Abbasid *dawlah*," he added, "was a great victory, signifying a turn in fortune as well as return to the pristine Islam of their ancestor, the Prophet". See Jacob Lassner (1986), *Islamic revolution and Historical memory*, New Haven: American Oriental Society, p. xxi & 135.

[49] See Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 444.

[50] Qum is a West-Central Iran city, located in a semiarid region, with a population of less than a million people. It is an industrial and transportation center. Large deposits of petroleum were found in the area. Qum was and still a center of the Shiᶜite Muslim since early Islamic times and is the burial place of Fatima al-Maᶜsûmah (d. 816 Fâtimah the infallible). The city became a center of pilgrimage in the 17th century and an imposing shrine was created over Fatima tomb. Qum was pillaged by the Afghans in 1722, but in the 19th century its great shrine was lavished, restored and embellished. See Cohen (ed.) (2008), *Columbia Gazetteer of the World*, p. 2548.

legacies behind. Among these scholars were ᶜAbd al-Karîm Hâ'irî and Ayatollah Rûhollah Khomeini. According to H. Algar, Hâ'irî's arrival in Qum, followed by his revival of the religious teaching institution, was the first in a series of developments that elevated Qum to the status of spiritual capital of Iran and the first bastion of the Islamic Revolution. Hâ'irî was largely quiescent in political matters, but his institutional achievements, confirmed and amplified by Ayatollah Burujirdî in the years 1945–1962, laid the groundwork for the revolutionary role at the city of Qum played, as assumed under the leadership of *Imâm* Khomeini.[51]

Khomeini developed this kind of "groundwork" through his classes and his public lectures, which he usually gave in *Fayzieh's* courtyard. One member of his audience wrote, "In his lectures the Imâm taught true Islamic ethics, which cannot be separated from revolution, in such a way that he left a deep impression on all who attended."[52] The students and scholars who flocked to the lectures were joined by the towns-people of Qum and even by travelers from other cities who came to Qum specifically to listen to Khomeini's lectures.[53] Here, Khomeini developed the framework of his revolutionary thoughts and Islamic ethics, which rejected Western modernization, such as the one that had been taking place in Iran under the Shah. Khomeini's philosophy of the leadership in Islam also started to be developed as a doctrine illuminated in detail in his work *Vilayet-i faqih,* which may be considered the beginning of the revival of the neo-Shiᶜism.

In the early 1960's, the Shah and his programs became the objects of Khomeini's, and other members of the *ᶜulamas'* criticism. Modernization, to most of the *Shiᶜite ᶜulama*, meant turning Iran away from a religious Shîᶜî tradition society (which it had been for more than five centuries) and creating a secular one in its place. This was obviously a serious threat to the *ᶜulamas'* own interests. With the growth of secularism, the prestige of the *ᶜulama* declined. Such prestige, however, had been their privilege for many centuries and was deeply ingrained in Iranian society. It is also important to observe that the Shah tried to exclude the *ᶜulama* from educational, legal, and welfare activities that historically had been theirs to perform for centuries.

In the Shiᶜite sect, the ᶜulama had the ultimate political, as well as religious, authority, but could exercise it only when the government grossly transgressed the Shariᶜah and, thereby, endangered the Islamic community. According to Khomeini, as expressed in his 1943 work *Khashf al-asrâr* (revealing the secrets):

> …when they (the mujtahids who practiced religious advising) have judged certain laws to be against God's regulations and a particular government to be bad, they still have not opposed the system of government … because a decayed government is better than none at all. Even when the rulers are oppressive and seem to be against the people, they (the mujtahids) will not try to destroy the rulers.[54]

However, if it were proved that the Shah was indeed an oppressive ruler, and his program of modernization might, or might not, work against the majority of the Iranian people, modernization then was a real threat to the *ᶜulama*, as well as the merchants, for the reason cited above. Therefore, both the *ᶜulama* and the merchants should work together to stop the Shah from, as he was accused by khomeini, collaborating with America to undermine Islam, destroy Iranian agriculture, and turn the country into a dumping ground for foreign goods.[55]

In 1964, Khomeini was sent into exile in Iraq where he continued to teach and to criticize the Shah's plan to modernize Iran. During his exile in al-Najaf, Khomeini was able to review his previous political views on government and, in doing so, became more and more steadfast in his opposition to the Shah, who to Khomeini and other opposition figures, had became a symbol of injustice, *istibdâd* (tyranny), and oppressive rule. Hence, the only way to eliminate tyranny and corruption, Khomeini argued, "was

[51] Hamid Algar (1988), "Imam Khomeini 1952-1962: The Pre-Revolutionary Years," in *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, E. Burke and I. M. Lapidus (eds.), Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 262.
[52] Algar (1988), "Imam Khomeini 1952-1962," p. 271.
[53] Algar (1988), "Imam Khomeini 1952-1962," p. 272.
[54] Khomeini, *Kashf al-asrâr*, as quoted by Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 476.
[55] Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 505.

through an Islamic political revolution."[56] This notion, in fact, was attractive not only to the discontented lower classes, who felt they had been abandoned in the process of modernization, which had served to widen the gap between rich and poor; it also appealed to some members of the intelligentsia outside of the ᶜulama milieu, as well. Among the intellectuals opposing the Shah was ᶜAlî Sharîᶜatî, a western-educated sociologist. Sharîᶜatî is considered the ideologue of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. He, as N. Keddie notes, "presented a radical and largely democratic and progressive version of Islam that had, before and after the revolution, a great appeal, especially to young bazaaris and students."[57] Sharîᶜatî takes a different approach than Khomeini, although both views ultimately lead to the same goal: an Islamic state. He first analyzes the Iranian situation and lists the ills of contemporary Iran as "world imperialism, racism, class exploitation, class oppression, class inequality, and *gharbzadegî* (intoxication by the West)."[58] Sharîᶜatî prescribed the cure for these ills, not only for Iran, but also for the Third World counties. He believed that the underdeveloped countries would not defeat imperialism, overcome social alienation, and mature to the point where they could borrow Western technology without losing self-esteem unless they first rediscovered their roots, their national heritage, and their popular culture."[59] He then applied the idea of "returning to one's cultural roots" to Iran. In Iran's case, he says, "… Islamic civilization has worked like scissors and has cut us off completely from our pre-Islamic past … our people remember nothing from this distant past … consequently, for us, a return to our roots means not a rediscovery of pre-Islamic Iran, but a return to our Islamic, especially Shiᶜite roots."[60]

Significantly, Sharîᶜatî avoided applying the ᶜulama's argument, usually used against the Leftists, that Marxists are *kâfirs* (non-believers). He said, "examine carefully how the Qur'ân uses the word *kâfir*? The world is only used to describe those who refuse to take action. It is never used to describe those who reject metaphysics or refuse to accept the existence of God, the Soul, and the resurrection."[61] Sharîᶜatî seemed to take the middle road concerning opposition to the Shah where the ᶜulama, the merchants, Nationalists, Leftists, and pro-Western factions come together. It may also be argued that Sharîᶜatî paved the way for non-religious elements in Iranian society to support an Islamic revolution, a revolution that ended all forms of exploitation, eradicated poverty and capitalism, modernized the economy and, most important of all, established a just dynamic and classless society.

Gradually, Iran became a fertile ground for revolution, as the Iranian people began to seek a kind of transformation of the state and society in accordance with Islamic principles. This kind of transformation could be brought about only as Khomeini strongly believed, under the aegis of the ᶜulama, acting as a cohesive body, and led by the *marjaᶜ-î-taqlîd*.[62]

In his revolutionary doctrine *Velâyat-î-faqîh*, Khomeini argued that there is no separation between religion and state in Islam.[63] Muslim *faqîhs* are fully capable of running the state when the foundations of injustice, tyranny, and oppression are destroyed.[64] From al-Najaf, Khomeini appealed to the *ᶜulama* in Qum saying, "Do not allow the Westerners and their lackeys to dominate you. Teach people true Islam so that they will not think that the "clergy" in Qum and al-Najaf believe in the separation of church and state and spend their time thinking about the issues of childbirth and menstruation."[65] Until this moment, it was very difficult to ascertain whether the *faqîhs* were fully equipped with the political

[56] Ayatollah Khomeini (1979), *The Islamic Government*, Joint Publication (trans.), New York: Manor Books, p. 23.
[57] Nikki Keddie (1982), "Comments on Skocpol," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 290.
[58] Ervand Abrahamian (1988), ""Alî Sharîᶜatî: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, E. Burke and I. M. Lapidus (eds.), Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 293.
[59] ᶜAlî Shaiᶜatî, *Tamaddun va tajaddud,* quoted by Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 469.
[60] Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 470. In fact, one might easily notice that Islam did not cut Iran, nor most Muslim countries off completely from its religious past, and its unity with the state. Al-Thaᶜâlibî, for example, quoted Ardshir I saying; "Kingship preserves itself by religion, and religion strengthens itself by kingship". See al- Thaᶜâlibî, *al-Ghruar*, as quoted by Michael Morony (1984), *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 29. Even the notion of martyrdom in Shiᶜi Islam has its own roots in pre-Islamic Iran. Nikki Keddie believes that Iranian religious culture goes "as far back into pre-Islamic as well as Islamic times, as does emulation of martyr figures, who are found in great pre-Islamic Iranian religions. In early Islamic centuries, several social revolts combined pre-Islamic with Islamic ideas in Iran". See Keddie (1981), *Roots of Revolution*, p. 3. Also, one of the most important festival in Iranian calendar is *Yawm-î Nîruz*, a pre-Islamic festival, and Iranian people still observe this day until the present time.
[61] Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 469.
[62] Algar (1988), "Imam Khomeini 1952-1962," p. 279.
[63] Some recent scholars believe otherwise. Keddie, for example, says; "It is cliché to say that religion and politics have always been united in Islam but this is untrue". See Nikki Keddie, (1975), "The revolt of Islam and its Roots," Vol. 6, p. 363-385.
[64] Khomeini (1979), *The Islamic Government*, p. 195.

and economic skills, and, hence, capability of "running the state." However, led by Khomeini, the *ᶜulama* indeed worked as a cohesive body and implored Islam to motivate and mobilize the masses toward revolution.

Many factors aided the *ᶜulama* in achieving such a task, among which is the Shiᶜi Islamic annual calendar, including many religious occasions such as the Friday prayer, feasts, and the prescriptions for public funeral processions. All of these provided widely understood forms in which to channel simultaneous mass political action. *ᶜÂshûrâ'* (the tenth of the month of Muharram), for example, has always been an emotional remembrance of al-Husayn and his martyrdom. This particular occasion provided, in the time of struggle against Shah, a reinforced commitment to the overthrow of the evil, tyrannical "Yazîd of the present age," as personified by Muhammad Rezâ Pahlavî.[66] Second, unlike the *ᶜulama* in Sunni Islam, the Shiᶜite *ᶜulama* in modern Iran gained financial independence from the state. This independence came through the ownership of land and the collection of the *khums* (tithes), *zakât* (alms), and *vaqf* (endowments), and donations given to Shiᶜite shrines. Half of this tithe was used to support the *ᶜulama* and students of the *Shariᶜah*, while the remaining half was used for social welfare programs, allowing the *ᶜulama* to assist the people without having these financial means pass through government.[67] Thus, the *ᶜulama* were able to criticize the Shah without the fear of being dismissed from their posts. They were also able to engage with poor Iranians, especially those from rural areas who had migrated to the cities and found themselves living in slums. From this sector, the revolution received some of its most ardent support, as the dispossessed migrants blamed their situation on the White Revolution *Inqilab-i sifid* and the Shah's land reforms of 1963, which resulted in the rapid urbanization of Iranian societies and the deconstruction of Iran's feudalist traditions.

By 1978, the Shah began to sharply decline in popularity and failed completely to communicate with his people. The foremost reason for this was that he dissolved all of the labor unions, independent organizations, professional associations, and opposition parties. Thus, when he tried to negotiate with the leaders of the moderate secular opposition, he discovered, to his dismay, that they had neither the personal following nor the political organization needed to restrain popular emotions.[68] Hence the political field was fully open for the *ᶜulama* and merchants, who retained strong ties with the masses.

As time passed, relations between the *ᶜulama* and the merchants grew demonstrably closer. It became a common occurrence to see a member of the *ᶜulama* walking hand in hand with a respectable *Hajjî* businessman from the bazaar and in the streets of cities and villages. Both groups, working vigorously for their own interests, were jointly able to unite the people of Iran against the Shah. Anti-government demonstrations increased every day until events reached a climax in February 1979, when the Shah fled Iran and the Ayatollahs assumed power.

The End of the Old Dynasties

The final similarity between the ᶜAbbasid and the Iranian Revolutions is the downfall of the old dynastic regimes and the rise of new ones founded on religious principles. In February of 750 (Jamâdâ 19, the second 132), Marwân ibn Muhammad, the last Umayyad Caliph, was defeated at the battle of Greater Zâb and was then forced to flee.[69] ᶜÂmir ibn Ismâᶜîl, one of the ᶜAbbasid commanders, pursued Marwân until he surrounded him in Egypt. Tabarî reports that the last Umayyad Caliph was killed in Egypt by a merchant who used to sell pomegranates.[70] Meanwhile, ᶜAbd Allâh ibn Muhammad (al-Saffâh), who was by then the *Imâm*, returned from his place of hiding to al-Kûfah, the Shiᶜî stronghold, declaring the start of a new dynasty, the ᶜAbbasid.[71]

Coincidentally, in February 1979, the Iranian Revolution reached a successful conclusion, resulting in the downfall of the Pahlavî regime and the rise of the Ayatullahs. Muhammad Rizâ Pahlavî fled Iran

[66] Yazîd is Yazîd ibn Muᶜâwiyah, the Umayyad Caliph, whose troops killed al-Husayn ibn ᶜAlî the third Imâm in Shiᶜi Islam. In the views of the *ᶜulama*, Yazîd and the Shah are two sides of the same coin. That coin is tyranny.
[67] See Nikki Keddie (1971), "Iranian Power Structure and Social Change 1800-1969," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 5. See also Keddie (1981), *Roots of Revolution*, ff. 17, pp. 31-32; Keddie (1982), "Comments on Skocpol," p. 273.
[68] See Abrahamian (1982), *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 516.
[69] Jerre Bacharach (1974), *A Near East Studies Handbook*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, p. 114. Also, Moshe Sharone states that Marwân was defeated in January 25, 750. See Sharone (1983), *Black Banners from the East*, p. 13.
[70] Tabari, Vol. 7, p. 422.
[71] Tabarî, 7/435; al-Balâdhurî (1964), *Ansâb al-ashrâf*, p. 1001.

and eventually sought refuge in Egypt where he remained until his death in August, 1980. Meanwhile, Imâm Khomeini returned again from his exile in France to Qum, the Shiᶜi religious center, declaring the revival of the neo-Shiᶜism, the start of the Ayatollahs' era, as they ruled the Islamic Republic of Iran, as they do presently.

Conclusion

The principal theme around which this comparative analysis between the ᶜAbbasid and the Iranian revolutions organized is that an understanding of the early periods of Islamic history is essential in comprehending the many historical, political, and social developments which have reshaped the Muslim world throughout fourteen centuries. Although Skocpol sees that the Iranian Revolution fits the concept of "social revolution," in examining the modern theories of revolution, it is difficult to fully apply any of them to the Islamic revolutions.[72] The reason is that from the only two successful Islamic revolutions in history, it has been demonstrated that when merchants, who were economically independent from the state, together with the *ᶜulama*, also financially independent, were capable of joining forces and mobilizing the masses with religious themes against oppressive, or what were perceived to be oppressive rulers, then an Islamic revolution occurred. It should also be emphasized that merchants and the *ᶜulama* were able to form a successful partnership due to the threats to each of their particular interests, posed by the ruling governments. In the case of the ᶜAbbasid Revolution, the merchants themselves were religious Shiᶜite. Also, two of them, Abû Muslim al-Khurâsânî and Abû Salamah al-Khallâl, were military commanders who possessed the self-confidence necessary to lead the revolt. Their interests under the Umayyads were endangered due to two factors: Arabization, especially changing of the minting of coins, and the failure of the Umayyads to provide security on trade routes. In the Iranian Revolution, many merchants were also religious, but their primary motivation was the economic threat posed by the Shah's modernizations.

To merchants, modernization meant Iran would become a free market for Western, mainly American goods, which they feared would replace traditional Iranian products. Iranian merchants ostensibly believed they would be unable to compete against the mass-produced, technologically superior, and plausibly lower-priced Western wares. Therefore, they were in a sense compelled to oppose this kind of modernization through the only way they believed possible: the removal of the Pahlavî regime by means of a revolution. They realized the need to collaborate with a likewise discontented *ᶜulama*, who were capable of mobilizing the masses, due to their traditionally revered position in Iranian society.

On the other hand, modernization meant something different to the *ᶜulama*. It meant a gradual secularization of society, thereby endangering their position of prestige. They also sought the removal of the Pahlavis. Since it was necessary to secure pecuniary resources to conduct a revolution and establish a new government, the support of the segments of Iranian society with access to these resources was a necessity. Moreover, merchants welcomed the establishment of an Islamic government because such a government would, or so they expected, turn Iran into a protectionist society instead of a free market, in which it would be difficult for their traditional, predominately handcrafted wares to compete with Western, mass-produced goods. The *ᶜulama*, with their reputation of xenophobia, would create an economic policy favorable to Iranian merchants. However, more studies need to be undertaken to examine whether the expectations of both the merchants and the *ᶜulama* not to mention the Iranian public, were realistically met, since the revolution was completed and the new Islamic regime has settled into the practice of governing the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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[72] It is true, in fact, that those theorists, as Skocpol puts it; "who argue that rapid modernization alone produces revolution are wrong…" See Skocpol (1982), "Rentir and Shiᶜah Islam in the Iranian Revolution," p. 265 & 272.

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