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Of love and longing : a study of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry and its reception in Iran and abroad

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Of Love and Longing

A Study of Ayatollah Khomeini's Mystical Poetry and its Reception in Iran and Abroad

D. Farhosh-van Loon

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Of Love and Longing

A Study of Ayatollah Khomeini's Mystical Poetry and its Reception in Iran and Abroad

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PREFACE

When I learned that Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, had left a whole collection of mystical poems after his death, the image that I had of this revolutionary Islamic ideologist was changed. After reading several of his poems, which were full of wine motifs and praise of non-conformist Islamic figures, I was captured by the question as to why he would write this poetry, while he severely condemned any form of behaviour dissonant with the ideals of the Islamic Revolution. A couple of years later in 2009, my teacher at Leiden University, Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, stimulated me to apply for a position as a PhD-student in the NWO- project *Of Poetry and Politics: Classical Poetic Concepts in the New Politics of Twentieth-Century Iran*. The topic fascinated me so much that I applied. Also, realizing that this was a unique opportunity to conduct research on Ayatollah Khomeini's complete poetic works (*Divân*), I decided to join the project, bringing to light these personal self-documents by one of the most influential political figures of the twentieth century.

NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS, TRANSLITERATIONS AND FOOTNOTES

In translating and analysing the poems of Ayatollah Khomeini and other Persian poets, I have focused on keeping my translations as close as possible to the original text. I have made no attempt to refine my English translations poetically.

For the transliteration of Persian and Arabic words and names, I have made use of the transliteration table below, except for quoted titles and quotations, where I have remained faithful to the author's original orthography. All Persian and Arabic terms are put in italics except for those that have been Anglicized, such as jihad. I have adopted internationally accepted names, such as Saddam Hussein, while according to my transliteration system it should be Saddâm Hoseyn. For the sake of convenience I have used the term Iran throughout this study, although correctly I should have used the term Persia when it concerns the period before 1934, when the name of the country changed from Persia to Iran. In footnotes, I give a full bibliographical reference for a title at their first occurrence, and in other cases, I give a shortened title.

CONSONANTS

ا	a/e/o	ط	t
ب	b	ظ	z
پ	p	ع	‘
ت	t	غ	gh
ث	s	ف	f
ج	j	ق	q
چ	ch	ک	k
ح	h	گ	g
خ	kh	ل	l
د	d	م	m
ذ	dh	ن	n
ر	r	ه	h
ز	z	و	v
ژ	zh	ی	y
س	s		
ش	sh		
ص	s		
ض	z		

VOWELS

Short	◌َ	a
	◌ِ	e
	◌ُ	o
Long	آ / ا	â
	و	u
	ی	i
Diphtongs	ی	ey
	و	ow

Organization and Structure of the Book

Many books and articles have been published in European languages on the political career of Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), and on his Islamic movement, which transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic Republic on April 1st 1979. There has been much less research, especially in the West, into another essential aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini: the role of mysticism in his life. Even fewer studies have been conducted of his poetry, yet these are unique self-documentation, giving a window into his personal thoughts and mystical aspirations.

To my knowledge, the first Western scholar to draw attention to Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism was Hamid Algar, in his *Islam and Revolution*, in 1981. While focussing on his political career through translations of his most important public speeches, Hamid Algar highlights the mystical aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini's character in this book by translating various mystical lectures by Ayatollah Khomeini, such as his TV appearances in 1979 and 1980, in which he interpreted a Koranic verse from a mystical point of view. In 1988, the same author devoted a whole article entitled "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1906: The Pre-Revolutionary Years" to Ayatollah Khomeini's early mysticism.[1] In 1992, Alexander Knysh published "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," an article in which he tried to demonstrate that Ayatollah Khomeini's worldview was intertwined with Islamic mystico-philosophical thinking *(ʿerfân*).[2] A couple of years later, Yahya Bonaud published a scholarly work focused primarily on Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism, under the title *L'Imam Khomeiny, un Gnostique Méconnu du XXe siècle*.[3] In 1999, Johan ter Haar tried to make a connection between Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism and his interpretation of political leadership in his article "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de Optiek van Khumayni" (Sanctity and Political Authority: the Concept of Wilâyat in Khomeini's View).[4] In 2000, Vanessa Martin published *Creating an Islamic state: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*.[5] The book offers ample information on Ayatollah Khomeini's

[1] H. Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1906: The Pre-Revolutionary Years," in *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, eds. E. Burke and & I.M. Lapidus, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 263-288.

[2] A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," in *Middle East Journal*, 46:4, 1992, pp. 631-653.

[3] Y.C. Bonaud, *L'Imam Khomeiny: un Gnostique Méconnu du XXe Siècle*, Beyrouth: al-Bouraq, 1995.

[4] J.G.J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de optiek van Khumayni," in *Mystiek: het andere gezicht van de islam*, eds. M. Buitelaar and J.G.J. ter Haar, Bussum: Coutinho, 1999, pp. 90-102.

[5] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the making of a new Iran,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2000.

political activities and ideology. Also it provides the reader with abundant information on how his political views were influenced by mystical thoughts. In the context of the relationship between mysticism and a cleric's life, Roy Mottahedeh's *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (2009) is worth reading as the book demonstrates the place of mystical philosophy in the orthodox Shiite milieu of Iran.[6] Although some of these works, such as Mottahedeh's book, present interesting thoughts on Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism and its influence on his political career, they do not deal with Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, although poetry had an important role in his private life and gives insights into his approach to mysticism and to orthodox Shiite doctrines.

While it is about 35 years since the world was first introduced to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, surprisingly few Western studies have been conducted on these highly personal documents, which provide access to a side of his character that was heavily influenced by mystical thoughts. To my knowledge, the first Western scholarly response to Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry came from Finn Thiesen in 1991, with a translation of eight of his lyrical poems in his article, "A Draught of Love: A translation of Rūĥollâh Xomeini's Sabū ye 'Ešq."[7] William Hanaway translated and interpreted five of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical *ghazal*s.[8] In 1999, Baqer Moin responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, adopting some of his lyrics and trying to demonstrate the importance of his poetry "because it shows how deeply his mysticism is enshrined in his own world of personal experience."[9] Baqer Moin admits the importance of exploring all aspects of Ayatollah Khomeini's character, the political, the mystical and the jurisprudential, to form a complete image of him. Though Moin refers to these three elements in Ayatollah Khomeini's character, his book contains only a few references to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. The first extensive Western study of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* ('collected poetry') was conducted by Benedikt Reinert, with his article "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte" (2007).[10] In this long article, Reinert comments on a considerable number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems in three genres: panegyrics, quatrains and lyrical poems. Reinert gives an analysis of various mystical

[6] R. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.

[7] F. Thiesen, "A Draught of Love: A translation of Rūĥollāh Xomeini's sabū ye 'ešq," in *Corolla Iranica*, eds. R.E. Emmerick and D. Weber, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991, pp. 211-227.

[8] W.L. Hanaway, "Five Mystical Ghazals," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 30, No ¾, 1997, pp. 273-276.

[9] See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* London: I.B. Tauris, 1999, second print, p. 272.

[10] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Vol. 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, pp. 191-293.

topics in these poems and comments on traces of his socio-political thinking in his poetry. Since Reinert has translated a large number of poems by Ayatollah Khomeini, he is able to detect in them a development of Ayatollah Khomeini's political thoughts. Although Reinert comes to interesting conclusions in his article, many topics in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry collection need further analysis or are unnoticed. In 2011, Asghar Seyed-Gohrab gave an analysis of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, in his "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," focusing on the genre of antinomian mysticism.[11] Most recently, Lloyd Ridgeon published a short article entitled "Hidden Khomeini: Mysticism and Poetry," in which he responds to both Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical aspirations and his poetic endeavours.[12] It appears that despite these few Western studies on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetic activities, a thorough analysis of his poetry and the mystical and personal thoughts it reflects is still lacking.[13]

This book will explore Ayatollah Khomeini as a mystical poet, a poet who always wished to be part of a millennium-old Islamic mystical tradition. While Ayatollah Khomeini kept his love for mysticism mostly private, it had an enormous impact on his family, religious and political life. Therefore both his mystical aspiration and his poetic virtuosity must be considered, together with his political ambitions, to form a complete image of Ayatollah Khomeini. The main question of this research is how to interpret Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry. Are these poems the expressions of a convinced mystic, or did he copy this poetic framework for other purposes? Does his early poetry differ from his later work? Is his poetry innovative, or does he confine himself to the classical poetic rules and subject-matters? How does he treat poetic themes and mystical motifs in his poems? How does he adapt them to modern conditions? Do his poems contain personal notes or are they merely poetic constructions without any personal touch? Does his poetry reflect his ideological convictions?

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[11] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," in *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 51, Issue ¾, 2011, pp. 438-458.

[12] L. Ridgeon, "Hidden Khomeini: Mysticism and Poetry," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. A. Adib-Moghaddam, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 193-210.

[13] Several works in Persian focus on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetic activities, such as *Farhang-e divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*, ed. V. Adabiyyat, Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1372/1993; P. Beygi Habibâbâdi in *Gozide-ye ash'âr: she'r-e jang va defâ'-e moqaddas*, ed. H. Hoseyni, Tehran: Sura, 1381/2002; R. Khomeini, *Reunion with the Beloved: Imam Khomeini's Letters to Hujjat al-Islām wal-Muslimin Hāj Sayyid Ahmad Khomeini*, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Work, 1995; R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imam Khomeini*, transl. and introd. by M. Legenhausen, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Work, 2003.

How can we connect his poems on wine and love with his public appearance in which he accepted no infringements of Islamic norms? Should they be interpreted literally? And how can we read those poems in which he rejects Islamic institutions, such as the Kaʿba in Mecca? Are such poems related to personal problems he had with Saudi Arabia or are they merely classical metaphors without any personal loading? And finally, how did his followers and opponents respond to his poetry, and why did they respond as they did?

As we will see in the following chapters, some of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry can be seen as personal documents, others help to understand his political decisions, and several of the poems show his aesthetic evaluation of poetry. The first poem by Ayatollah Khomeini's hand to appear was published by his family in an Iranian journal shortly after his death in 1989. Shortly after this publication, more poems were brought to light, leading to the publication of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* in 1993. Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* consists of poems composed before 1936, when he was still a student in the city of Qom, and poems composed after his 1979 return to Iran after 15 years in exile. Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry collection is highly interesting, not only because of its strong mystical loading with topics such as love, wine and eroticism, but also because some poems touch on the war between Iran and Iraq, the political situation in Iran and the relation between Ayatollah Khomeini and his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i. The main questions of this thesis revolve around the paradox of Ayatollah Khomeini's convoluted personality, and how his aspirations to worldly power and to mystical sublimation are reflected in his poetry. This study gives an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetic output, his mysticism and his use of anti-imperialist ideas.

The methodology employed to examine Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry is as follows. In order to produce a thorough analysis of his poetry, I began with a close reading of a number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, examining metaphors and imagery. What kind of 'atmosphere' does the poet wish to produce by this imagery? Afterwards I have placed the poems against the background of Ayatollah Khomeini's life and time and related them to the Persian poetic tradition. Persian literature and in particular Persian poetry has been intertwined with mystical thoughts and symbols since the tenth century. Religious ideas and earthly events are usually combined in a Persian poem, in an ambiguous or bivalent way. For example, when a poet composes a poem on love, it could refer to profane love but it also contains elements which point at divine love. A reader of Persian poetry should always be conscious of this double nature in Persian poetry. Aware of the great influence of mysticism on Persian poetry in general and on Ayatollah Khomeini's life in particular, I first placed his poems in a mystical context. I examined whether his poetry can be typified as mystical poetry

or whether he has rather used mystical topics in a profane context. In addition, I placed Ayatollah Khomeini's poems in a literary context, posing questions such as: Did Ayatollah Khomeini confine himself to the literary rules of the poetic genres in which he composed his poetry? How does his poetry relate to his other literary work? Are there traces of intertextuality in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry? I have also looked at the historical context of each poem, whenever possible, posing questions such as: Are there any textual elements that could have been influenced by contemporary historical or socio-political events, and how does this help us to understand the intended meaning of the poem?

Based on this combination of close reading, and historical, mystical and literary contextualization, I try to give an interpretation, and to answer questions such as: How can unorthodox topics employed by Ayatollah Khomeini be reconciled with his public face, in which he accepted no breaches of Islamic laws and tenets? How can we explain the contradiction between Ayatollah Khomeini's strict Islamic posture in public and these highly personal *carpe diem* messages, mystical ideas and erotic poetry?

To answer these questions and to provide the reader with a thorough analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, I have divided this book into six chapters, starting in Chapter one with an introduction to the socio-political situation in Iran from the end of the nineteenth century till recent times. This is necessary to understand the role of Shiite clerics in society, their involvement with politics, and in the social and political arena. This chapter addresses questions such as: What type of political discussions, for example on governance and the dichotomy between church and state, took place amongst the clerics of the period? What role did clerics play during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)? How did they respond to the implementation of a constitution in the Iranian political system? To what extent was the clergy politically active before and after the adoption of the Iranian Constitution? How did they respond to the various lucrative economic concessions the Iranian government granted to Great-Britain and Russia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Such questions form the backdrop of my analysis in the subsequent chapters. As the positions of the clergy change dramatically during Reza Shah's (1925-1941) reign and later during Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979), an overview of the responses of the most influential clerics of this period to the Pahlavi regime is offered. Clerics also played an important role during the CIA-supported coup of 1953, which removed Premier Mohammad Mosaddeq (d. 1967) from power. Mohammad Reza Shah's modernization campaign, known as the White Revolution, had far-reaching effects on the clergy and their position in society, and many clerics, including Ayatollah Khomeini, protested. Ayatollah Khomeini came on the political scene in

1963, when he openly opposed the Shah's policy, especially his land reforms and women's suffrage. This led to his imprisonment and then exile, which lasted till 1979.

Chapter two contains a biography of Ayatollah Khomeini, with a special focus on the role of mysticism in his life. Attention is given to his studies of the mystical tradition during his time as a student in Qom, and to the philosopher Mollâ Sadrâ (d. 1640) and the mystic Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240), who influenced him. Generally speaking, in Shiite theology, there are two movements: one is very much mystical while the other disapproves of mysticism altogether. Ayatollah Khomeini belonged to the first group, and had to fight the second throughout his life. This being the case, I considered relations between Ayatollah Khomeini and the orthodox clergy, particularly the latter's response to his interest in mysticism. As poetry is a vehicle to express mystical thoughts, part of this chapter is devoted to possible reasons why Ayatollah Khomeini composed poetry. To understand the role of poetry in Iran, it is essential to investigate the role of poetry in Persian society. After this general introduction I focus on the various poetic forms to be found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*. I will answer questions such as: How and when did Ayatollah Khomeini's poems come to light? When did he write them? What are the most important themes in his poetry?

Chapter three is devoted to Ayatollah Khomeini's quatrains (*robâ'i*s). After a general introduction on the Persian *robâ'i*, a representative number of Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s are analysed, with special attention to biographical elements, in particular his relationship with his daughter-in-law, Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, with whom Ayatollah Khomeini shared his mystical knowledge. In addition to this biographical data, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote on a wide range of subjects in the *robâ'i*s genre, including mystical love, the martyred Mansur Hallâj, death for love (and death in love), the Iran-Iraq war, disparagement of the House of God (the Kaʿba in Mecca), and other unorthodox ideas.

Chapter four deals with the lyrical poems (*ghazal*s) Ayatollah Khomeini composed during the 1980s. After a general introduction to this genre in the Iranian poetic tradition, an extensive analysis is offered to show the influence of the medieval Persian poet Hâfez (d. 1389) on Ayatollah Khomeini, demonstrating how Ayatollah Khomeini imitated Hâfez's poetry. Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s, like his *robâ'i*s, are permeated with unorthodox motifs such as wine, homo-eroticism, and the praise of other religions, all belonging to the antinomian mystical tradition. To place these poems in a literary and historical context, a discussion on piety and how this is interpreted from a mystical perspective follows.

Chapter five treats four panegyrics (*qaside*s) that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote during his early years in Qom. The chapter opens with a historical description of the Persian *qaside*, its

structure and its applications in Iranian culture. This is followed by an analysis of the most important themes in the *qasides*. Special attention is given to the mystical themes in his poems: the mystical path, the Mohammadan light, spiritual perfection, sainthood, etc. The socio-political subjects in Ayatollah Khomeini's *qasides*, such as imperialism, governance, foreign penetration and secularisation, will also be discussed. Ayatollah Khomeini's teacher Abdolkarim Hâ'eri (d. 1936) plays an important role in these *qasides* as well. The analysis which follows focuses on debates on governance within the religious establishment of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Ayatollah Khomeini's *qasides* are interesting since they show a development of his thoughts on governance, and the leading role he allotted to the clergy in the political arena, even in his earlier years. His *qasides* are also interesting because they show how Ayatollah Khomeini mixes socio-political thoughts with mystical doctrines.

The subject of chapter six is the reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry and mysticism, in Iran and abroad. The first response to be considered is a Persian glossary and interpretation, written to contextualize Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* in the Islamic mystical tradition, the second is a book entitled *The Wine of Love* (*Bâde-ye 'eshq*), translated from Persian into English and commented upon by the American scholar Legenhausen. A supporter of the principles of the Islamic Revolution, Legenhausen elaborates on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical inclinations, placing Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry in a mystical context.

The second part of chapter six outlines the reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry by Iranians in the diaspora, who wrote parodies and satire on Ayatollah Khomeini. I analysed several poems by the famous Iranian satirist and comedian Hadi Khorsandi, one from before 1979, written in support of Ayatollah Khomeini, and a handful of quatrains in which the poet ridicules Ayatollah Khomeini's personality by parodying one his *ghazal*s. Another poem which I have analysed is written by an anonymous poet, in response to the same poem that Khorsandi parodied.

1

The Clergy's Role in Politics

1.1 Introduction

When Ayatollah Khomeini developed his theories on an Islamic form of governance, he was inspired by the political ideas of several clerics who had responded to political developments in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iran.[14] To explain Ayatollah Khomeini's political thinking, and how he as a cleric was able to gain absolute power in Iran, I will start this chapter by examining the relationship between the clergy and the political powers from the nineteenth century, when Iran was in the hands of the Qajar Dynasty (r. 1785-1925). During this period the clergy's role in political affairs increased, partly because Iran experienced continuous political intervention by European powers, notably Russia and Great Britain. These powers wanted to benefit from Iran's military weakness by exploiting Iran at an economic and political level. The Qajar period can also be characterized as a period during which Iran was exposed to new technologies and to modernist European philosophical and political thoughts, greatly affecting the socio-political climate in Iran. The clergy's response to these developments is significant as it sheds light on the politicization of the clergy, foreshadowing their prominent role during the Islamic Revolution. The political theologies developed by Iranian clerics in the early twentieth century helped forming the doctrine of the 'absolute rule of the jurist' (*velâyat-e faqih*), which became the keystone of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic ideology. Following the referendum of April 1st 1979, *velâyat-e faqih* became a key element in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

1.2 Iran's Socio-Political Situation under the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925)

Shortly after the Qajar family installed themselves as the new ruling dynasty of Iran, the country was confronted with the encroachments of two major foreign powers, Russia and Great Britain. It was not long before these powers had the ability to bring well-armed forces to the Iranian area, while the Iranian army had outdated military equipment and was not well organized. On its northern borders, Russia displayed an interest in Iranian territories. In its

[14] I have used "clergy" and "clerics" to translate *ulamâ*, the class of religious scholars with diverse roles in the mosques, schools and courts, and as trustees and notaries, on the basis of their literacy and varying degrees of theological training.

attempt to dominate Central Asia and the Caucasus, Russia launched various attacks on Iran.[15] The Shiite clergy looked with suspicion at the Russian invasions and became politically involved when Russia and Iran became embroiled in the first Russo-Iranian war, between 1804 and 1813. On several occasions, the clergy used their influential positions to declare *jihâd*, obliging Iranian Shiite Muslims to join in defending Iranian territory from Russian invasions. However, the Iranian army was not yet prepared to face modern warfare, and Iran had to cede large territories, including Azerbaijan and Dagestan, to Russia in the Treaty of Golestân (1813).[16] Iran was again defeated in the second Russo-Iranian war (1826-1828), and lost the vassal states of Tâlish (present day Aruch), Nakhchivan, Karabakh and Yerevan under the Treaty of Turkmanchay (1828).[17]

Great Britain also continuously tried to expand its influence in Iran. It had succeeded in dominating large parts of the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) to the West of Iran, on economic, military and political levels, and since 1600 had set up successful trade relations with India to the East, through the activities of the East India Company. From 1757, Great Britain also achieved military dominance in the Indian subcontinent, and expanded the British Empire into South East Asia. The Southern part of Iran was a strategic area for the British, to strengthen their commercial and political interests against Russia and other European countries.[18]

The only way for Iran to protect its territory was by modernization. Iran witnessed how several Islamic countries in the region that were part of the Ottoman Empire, but were dominated by Western powers, had quickly established strong modernized armies. The Qajar rulers realized that they had to modernize their army as well, if they wanted to withstand the invasions of powers such as Russia and Great Britain. They also realized that they would need a modern centralized bureaucratic system of government, to replace the local governors, who

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[15] A. Goldschmidt Jr., "The Historical Context," in *Understanding the Contemporary Middle East*, eds. D.J. Gerner and J. Schwedler, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004, p. 53.

[16] See E.L. Daniel, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Golestān Treaty.

[17] G.R.G. Hambly, "Iran during the Reign of Fath 'Ali Shâh and Muhammad Shâh," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 7, ed. W.B. Fisher, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 145-146. For a full translation of the Treaty of Turkmanchay see J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record 1535-1914*, Vol. I, New York: Octagon Books, 1972, pp. 231-237.

[18] A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Great Britain iii. British Influence in Persia in the 19th century, and V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003, pp. 1-9.

had operated independently from the central state and often had their own armies and tax systems.

There was also some modernization in education. The Dâr al-Fonun Institute, a polytechnic college, was established in Tehran in 1851 at the instigation of the Qajar government. European instructors were brought in to teach Iranians, primarily military officers, the military disciplines. In addition to military subjects, much of the teaching focused on technical subjects and foreign languages, particularly French. While military modernization was a primary goal in creating the institute, the students were also exposed to Western ideas such as liberalism, nationalism, and secularization. A few decades later other colleges inspired by the spirit of modernity followed in Iran, such as the Military College (founded 1885) and the College of Political Science (founded 1899).[19] These colleges, and the parallel phenomenon of Iranian students studying in Paris, London or Berlin, led the development of a small but influential group of young Iranian intellectuals, who were inspired by Western ideas such as nationalism and constitutionalism and, as we will read in the next section, would play an important role during the constitutional revolution.[20]

The modernization plans of the Qajar rulers were meant to strengthen Iran against foreign intrusions, but in retrospect it appears that the modernization campaign itself prolonged Iran's dependence on foreign powers. To generate money to finance modernization activities, the Qajar shahs, particularly Nâser al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), turned to both Russia and Great Britain. Both powers were willing to provide the Qajar Shahs with huge loans in exchange for lucrative concessions. Iran did not, however, become a significant military power. As V. Martin states, "The Qajars…came to recognize that more was to be gained in terms of defense by playing off the British against the Russians than by pursuing expensive and demanding military reforms that were unlikely to win them victory. This remained in essence their policy throughout the nineteenth century, and the military-driven reform was thus lost."[21] Instead, the Qajar Shahs granted the Russians and the British multiple concessions. In 1872, Nâser al-Din Shah granted the British businessman Jules de Reuter the right to exploit mines, to build railways and to set up a national bank (the Imperial Bank of Persia) under the Reuter Concession. In 1874, the Shah gave the Russians, amongst others, permission to construct and exploit railway roads and telegraph lines in the northeast under

[19] J. Gurney and N. Nabavi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Dār al-Fonun.

[20] For the role of the Iranian intellectuals in the political scene, see R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2009, pp. 51, 52.

[21] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 2.

the Falkenhagen Concession.[22] And in 1890, the Shah granted a British company a monopoly in the tobacco industry under another concession.

The response of the clergy to all these economic and socio-political developments was far from positive. Many Iranian clerics observed them with distrust, fearing that modernization would circumscribe their power in the social, political and economic domains, which they had gained from their role as the 'source of imitation' (*marja'-e taqlid*) for the religious community. As we shall see, they responded fiercely to these developments, in particular to the tobacco concession. Both the clergy and the merchant class were outraged when they learned about the privileges granted to the British concessionary under this agreement. Merchants feared that foreign traders would threaten the Iranian consumer market by importing cheap products from the West. The clergy would receive less Islamic tax from the merchants if the latter earned less. Clerics had a central role in boycotting the tobacco concession, with the highest ranking cleric, Mirzâ Hasan Shirâzi (d. 1895), who resided in Iraq, pronouncing a *fatwa* declaring that Iranians were no longer allowed to consume tobacco.[23] The clergy in Iran followed Shirâzi's example. In particular, Ayatollah Hasan Mirzâ Âshtiyâni (d. 1901), one of the leading clerics in Tehran, played a crucial role in mobilizing opposition.[24] When the Shah saw that Âshtiyâni, in his role as a leading religious guide, was able to attain an enormous response, the Shah personally sent him an angry letter in which he compelled him to withdraw his support for the *fatwa*, on pain of exile. A large crowd of Iranians responded to the Shah's threats, forcing the Shah to abrogate his agreements with the British concessionary. The incident, which became known as the Tobacco Revolt of 1891-1892, was a turning point in clergy-state relations, since a large portion of the clergy turned their backs on the Shah.[25] The incident also showed the enormous

[22] For consultation on these and other concessions see H. Amirahmadi, *Political Economy of Iran under the Qajars: Society, Politics, Economics and Foreign Relations 1796-1926*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012, pp. 28, 29, 63, 171 and V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* pp. 5-7. See also W. Floor and M. Ettehadieh, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Concessions.

[23] Mirzâ Hasan Shirâzi was the sole *marja'-e taqlid* during that time, residing in Iraq.

[24] H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Āštiāni, Hasan.

[25] For the role of the clergy in the Tobacco Revolt see N.R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Iranian Tobacco Protest of 1891-1982*, Abington: Francis & Taylor Ltd., 1966 and N.R. Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," in *American Historical Review 88*, Issue 3, Oxford: Oxford University Press**,** 1983, pp. 579-598.

influence of Iranian clerics on the population, not only in religious affairs but also on a socio-political level.[26]

In addition to their own economic interests, the clergy feared that the Western presence in Iran would spread political thoughts, such as democracy and constitutionalism, which, they thought, would undermine Islam, corrupt society and become a threat to the educational and Islamic judicial system, all of which were in the clergy's domain. Through journeys to Europe and through Western schools, such as the Dâr al-Fonun, the young intellectuals of nineteenth century Iran were exposed to enlightened Western ideas. Iranian reformists such as Fath-'Ali Âkhunzâda (d. 1878), Mirzâ Yusof Khân Mostashâr al-Dowla (d. 1895), Mirzâ Malkam Khan (d. 1908), and several others were convinced that the progress of the West could be explained by the adoption of codified law and the concept of government under the law. They promoted the belief that only the establishment of a constitutional government, based on democratic tenets, could save Iran from further decline. Mostashar al-Dowla promoted the adoption of a codified law which would complement the common law ('*orf*). He believed that Iran's 'backwardness' could be explained by the inability of its inhabitants to interpret the Islamic sources (the Koran and Islamic traditions). Therefore he composed a treatise named *One Word* in which he explained the congruency between the articles of western-inspired codified law and Islam by referring to various Koranic verses and Islamic traditions (*hadith*).[27] Mostashar al-Dowla is thus an example of a modernist and a constitutionalist who looked for a reconciliation between constitutionalism and Islam. As we shall see, some clerics were inspired by modern ideas such as constitutionalism.

1.3 Clergy-State Relations during the Qajar Period

To understand the reaction of the clergy to socio-political events such as the Tobacco concession, it is essential to have a closer look at clergy-state relations during the Qajar period. The Qajars seized power in Iran in 1785. Prior to that, from 1501 to 1722, Iran was under control of the Safavid dynasty, who adopted Twelver Shia Islam as the state religion, turning Sunnite Iran into a Shiite country.[28] The Safavids exerted strict control over religious

[26] For the role of the Shiite clergy in the Iranian political arena see N.R. Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," pp. 579-598.

[27] A good source for Mostashâr Dowla's views and ideas on constitutionalism is his book "Yek Kalame," which was translated and introduced by A.A. Seyed-Gohrab and S. McGlinn in, *One Word - Yek Kaleme: 19th-Century Iranian Treatise Introducing Western Codified Law*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2010.

[28] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 105-123; R. Matthee, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Safavid Dynasty.

institutions, which in the end resulted in a strong religious Shiite body after years of Sunnite dominance. Many clerics acknowledged the benefits of connecting themselves to the Safavid state, where they held influential positions. Other clerics preferred to withdraw into exclusively religious roles, remaining aloof from worldly matters. In general, both worldly and non-worldly clerics respected the authority of the Safavid rulers, on both political and spiritual levels, since they had a claim to descent from the seventh Imam.[29]

When the Safavids were succeeded by the Qajar dynasty, after an interim in which the Afshar dynasty (1736-1796) and Zand dynasty (1750-1794) ruled in parts of Iran, the clerical class had to adapt to a political system with no claims to blood ties with the Shiite Imams. On a political level, the majority of the Shiite clergy initially accepted the authority of the Qajar monarchy in return for patronage for their religious institutions. As V. Martin observes, "the clergy recognized the benefit to Shi'ism of living in an orderly state, and one with a Shi'i rather than a Sunni or infidel ruler."[30] On a religious level, three new practices developed in the Qajar period. In the first place, since the majority of the Iranian clergy agreed that not the Shah, but only specific Islamic jurists, could exercise religious authority, the concept of *ejtehâd* (independent judgement) became widely accepted early in the Qajar period. This allowed certain high-ranking Islamic jurists, called *mojtaheds*, to independently interpret the Islamic law and to form their own jurisprudential opinions.[31] *Ejtehâd* had been a point of discussion since the year 874, when the last of the twelve Shiite Imams went into hiding, and the legitimate leadership of the community became problematic. To what extent could Islamic jurists play a leadership role, in the absence of the law-giving Imam, that would allow ongoing responses to new issues? One fraction of the Shiite clergy, called *Akhbâris* (derived from the Arabic word 'news' or 'report') argued that Islamic jurisprudence should be based only on the Koran and Sunna ('practice of Prophet and Imams'). The other fraction, called *Usulis*, believed that Islamic jurists were allowed to perform *ejtehâd* on the basis of four sources of Islamic law: the Koran, Sunna, intellect ('*aql*) and consensus (*ejmâ'*).[32]

In the fourteenth century (C.E) the *Usulis* were dominant and the clergy adopted the *ejtehâd* practice. During the seventeenth century the practice was abolished, as a strong body

[29] Ibid.

[30] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 3.

[31] For further consultation on the adoption of the *ejtehâd* practice see W.L. Cleveland, A *History of the Modern Middle East*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2000, pp. 30, 108-109.

[32] For a discussion on the Usuli-Akhbari controversy see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 117-118, 127, 204, 222-225 and A. Zysow, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ejtehād.

of *Akhbâri* clerics dominated the religious domain.[33] The ascendancy of the Qajar family (which in the view of the clergy was illegitimate because it lacked a link to the Imams), intensified the discussion on the role of clerics in the religious sphere. The influential Shiite scholar Mohammad Bâqer Vahid Behbahâni (d. 1792) ended the discussion in favor of *ejtehâd* and the *Usuli*s, by pronouncing the *Akhbâri*s to be infidels.[34] The re-introduction of *ejtehâd* greatly influenced the hierarchical structure of the religious establishment. High-ranking clerics (*mojtaheds*) who had specialized in *feqh* ('Islamic jurisprudence') and who could now independently form judgments on Sharia issues that were not explicitly settled in the Koran and Sunna, rose to the top of the clerical hierarchy, and had greater power and social influence.[35] The legitimation of *ejtehâd* also gave *mojtaheds* the right to collect the religious taxes (*khoms*) and alms (*zakât*), which each Muslim is expected to pay yearly, and which were previously collected by the state.[36] Another important socio-political consequence was that *mojtaheds*, in their role as the general vicegerents (*Nâ'eb al-'Âmm*) of the Hidden Imam, were now also allowed to declare *jihâd* ('holy war').[37]

A second religious practice that was widely accepted during this period was the need for *taqlid* ('imitation', 'following'). This means that all Shiite Muslims are obliged to blindly follow a learned *mojtahed* as a 'model of imitation' (*marja'-e taqlid*) in all worldly affairs, from personal private matters to social, political and religious matters.[38] The adoption of this title strongly influenced the power zones within the religious community, dividing the Shiite world into a small elite group of *mojtaheds*, those clerics that had studied jurisprudence and who had obtained permission (*ejâze*) from another *mojtahed* to independantly form legal judgments based on the Koran and Sunna, opposed to ordinary Shiite followers, the *moqalleds*

[33] See S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown : The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 13-15.

[34] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 127-128.

[35] Ibid., p. 225.

[36] Ibid., pp. 206, 207.

[37] The idea of the clergy representing the Hidden Imam had been developed by Muhaqqiq al-Karaki (d. 1533), but initially only applied on his role as leader of the Friday prayer. Shahid al-Thâni (d. 1558), extended their representative role to all religious tasks of the Hidden Imam, including the collection of the Islamic taxes, but not the declaration of offensive *jihâd.* Though a theoratical basis was laid for the independent authority of the clergy during the Safavid dynasty, in practice the Safavid rulers did not allow the clergy to practice their authority.This was only put into practice during the Qajar period. See ibid., pp. 190-191.

[38] Ibid., pp. 190, 224-225.

(‘imitators of the *mojtahed’*).[39] The highest ranking *mojtahed*s gained enormous religious and economic influence during the nineteenth century. They were no longer merely leaders of Friday prayers, they had a crucial role in the daily life of all Iranians, where they functioned as ‘models’ in all conceivable matters.[40] These ‘sources of imitations’ wrote books entitled *towzih al masâ’el* or ‘explanation of issues’ telling their followers how to cope with questions, religious and worldly.[41] At times, there has been broad consensus that one preeminent *mojtahed* is the ‘sole model of imitation’*(marja’-e taqlid-e motlaq)*; at other times the faithful chose their own ‘model of imitation’ from among the living *mojtahed*s. The acceptance of *ejtehâd* and *taqlid* and the subsequent introduction of the title of *marja’-e taqlid-e motlaq* further concentrated financial and political power in the hands of a small group of top-ranking clerics.[42] The most recent sole *marja’-e taqlid*, Ayatollah Borujerdi, died in 1961. Some clerics, such as Ayatollah Tâleqâni (d. 1979), then argued that religious authority should no longer be concentrated in the hands of a single *marja’-e taqlid*. [43] Ayatollah Khomeini would later reverse this de-concentration of religious authority, by making the concept of *velâyat-e faqih*, the ‘governance of the jurist’, central in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

A third important event that greatly influenced the religious sphere during the Qajar period was the fact that shortly after the fall of the Safavid dynasty the center of Shiite religious authority had shifted from Isfahan to the shrine cities of Iraq. The move was the result of continuing threats on the address of the Shiite authorities by Afghan invaders who wished to turn Iran into a Sunnite country. [44] This shift of the Shiite religious authorities to Iraq allowed them to enlarge their sphere of influence and to act as an independent religious body. The Qajar monarchs were well aware of the influence of the clergy on the population and used them as mediators to ensure that people accepted government policies. In return, the clergy could act independently from the state and generated their own income from *waqfs* (religious endowments), Islamic taxes, and educational and juridical tasks. In addition to these religious developments, failures in the government apparatus increased the power of the

[39] Only after a cleric has received permission (*‘ejâze*) from another *mojtahed* and after the public has recognized him as such, may he be called a *mojtahed*. (See ibid., pp. 202-204).

[40] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam,* pp. 203-206, 246 and J. Calmard, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Mudjtahid.

[41] For the function of the *marja’-e taqlid* see J. Calmard, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Mardja’-i Taḳlid.

[42] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam,* pp. 206-207.

[43] For the position of the clergy vis-à-vis the function of *marja’-e taqlid* see J. Calmard, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Mardja’i Taḳlid. See also M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi’i Islam,* pp. 190-191, 224-225.

[44] Ibid., pp. 126-130.

clergy during the ninetheenth century. As M. Momen indicates, in this period, "the people began increasingly to look to the ulama as their leaders and their voice vis-à-vis the government".[45] On various occasions *mojtahed*s offered shelter to people who were persecuted by the government. Because of their semi-independent position, the clergy were able to assume this role.

While religious figures generally endorsed the Qajar monarchy in return for religious and judicial privileges, some clerics were critical of their authority and argued that only an Islamic jurist was authorized to exercise legislative and political authority during the absence of the twelfth Shiite Imam. One such cleric was Ahmad b. Mohammad-Mahdi al-Narâqi (d. 1831/2), who inspired Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas on the Islamic state, as we will see. The highest-ranking *mojtahed*, Sheikh Ja'far al-Kabir Kâshef al-Ghetâ (d. 1813), issued a fatwa authorising the Qajar ruler Fath-Ali Shah (d. 1834) to launch a *jihâd* against the Russians. In response to this, Narâqi wrote a treatise in which he argued that only an Islamic jurist was allowed to represent the Imam Mahdi during his absence, both on a legislative and on a political level. The general response of the early nineteenth-century clergy to Narâqi's treatise was negative: most accepted the Qajar monarchical system and remained distant, to some extent, from political affairs.[46] As we will see in the next section, several economic decisions by the state, such as the tobacco concession, triggered the clergy to actively enter the political arena.[47]

1.4 The Role of the Clergy during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)

As Iran entered the twentieth century, the role of the clergy in political affairs increased. Economically, Iran's situation was still far from ideal, with a Shah who kept borrowing money from Russia and Great Britain to finance his European trips, and granted concessions to Western entrepreneurs to raise state income. The response of the clergy to the tobacco concession of 1890, in the form of a *fatwa*, is important as the first open sign of clerical involvement in political affairs in the modern era. The nation-wide response that the clergy generated shows their enormous influence among the Iranian population, in religious and

[45] Ibid., p. 143.

[46] See S. Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shii Law on the Doctrine of Wilāyat al-Faqīh," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. ¾, 1996, pp. 229-268. See also V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state*, pp. 117-118.

[47] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 138-142.

political spheres.[48] That the clergy were indeed able and willing to use their influential position for political affairs appears from the role they played during the Constitutional Revolution some 15 years after the Tobacco Revolt. The Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) started as a response by clerics and 'merchants'[49] to changes that Mozaffer al-Din Shah had implemented in the custom rates.[50] When two Tehrani merchants were publicly punished by the Qajar government for not lowering their sugar price, after the government had raised the cost of imported sugar considerably, the merchants in Tehran responded by closing down the bazaar. They withdrew to the shrine of Shah 'Abd al-'Azim at the city of Rey, where they were supported by the clergy.[51] As to why the clergy supported the merchants, Mahdavi argues that the clergy and the merchants in Iran have always had a close bond.[52] As he explains, on the one hand the merchants needed the clergy for official services, such as legalizing contracts, and they depended on welfare facilities provided by the religious institutions, which the government often failed to offer. In addition, the merchants could always turn to the clergy for help (shelter, etc.) in difficulties with government officials. The clergy in turn had financial motives for supporting the merchants, since they depended on their religious alms, taxes and donations. [53] As Momen states, the clergy has every reason to maintain good relations with the merchants, since the payment of these taxes is not obligatory.[54] This also explains why, when the two merchants were punished, merchants and the clergy joined hands in large-scale demonstrations. The protests against the policies of the Qajar government were soon joined by secular intellectuals. This group consisted mainly of young Iranians, who had either studied in Europe or had attended a modern school or institute in Iran, such as the Dâr al-Fonun. These young intellectuals had been inspired by modern political ideas, such as democracy and constitutionalism. In their view, a constitutional government was the only way for Iran to withstand Western imperialism and curtail the

[48] B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People and the Faqih," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. B.A. Adib-Moghaddam, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 214-216.

[49] The *bazaaris*, a collective name for those who worked within the traditional city market, such as merchants, artisans and bank-employees.

[50] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 7.

[51] For the sugar incident see R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 35, 37 and V. Martin, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution ii. Events.

[52] A. Mahdavi, "Significance of Private Archives for the Study of the Economic and Social History of Iran in the late Qajar Period," in *Iranian Studies*, 16, 1983, p. 259.

[53] Ibid.

[54] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 207.

arbitrary and absolute rule of the Qajar monarchs. The opposition to customs reform seemed to be a perfect occasion for the intellectuals to get other groups, in this case merchants and clergy, on their side in demanding a Constitution.[55]

1.5 The Clerical Response to Constitutionalism

Clerics responded differently to the constitutional movement.[56] Several *mojtaheds*, such as Sheikh Mohammad Kâzem Yazdi (d. 1919) fiercely rejected constitutionalism from the beginning, arguing that it would pose a threat to Islam, religious institutions and society. Most of the *mojtaheds* agreed with the intellectuals and supported constitutionalism. One of these was Mirzâ Sayyed Mohammad Tabâtabâ'i (d. 1920).[57] Tabâtabâ'i openly criticized the Qajar government and, in 1905, composed a personal letter addressed to Prime Minister Abd al-Majid Atâbak-e A'zam (d. 1926), in which he criticized the Qajar government for opposing a constitution. His main motivation for supporting a constitutional government was that it would prevent Shiite Iran from falling into the hands of infidel foreign powers, which could be the downfall of Shia Islam.[58] Another clerical proponent of the Constitution was Sayyed Abdollâh Behbahâni (killed 1910). While Behbahâni had refused to cooperate during the Tobacco Revolt, he openly supported the Constitutional Movement.[59]

Another influential *mojtahed* who initially supported constitutional government was Sheikh Fazl Allâh Nuri (executed 1909). Nuri was connected to the court but became critical of the government. Nuri had many followers throughout the country. While later a fierce opponent of constitutionalism (*mashruta*), Nuri initially promoted constitutional governance, providing it was in accordance with the Sharia and supervised by the clergy. He called this form of governance *mashruta-ye mashru'a* or an 'Islamicized Constitution.' In his view, constitutionalism in this form would protect Islam and limit the absolute power of the Shah. In addition, he argued, it would protect Iran against foreign penetration. In his view, both constitutionalism and absolute monarchy were far from ideal, but since – in the absence of the Imam Mahdi – he had to choose between one of these two evils, he preferred constitutionalism, since power would at least not be in the hands of one person. Nuri played

[55] For the role of the intellectuals in the constitutional revolution see A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

[56] For consultation on the groups that supported and opposed the constitution see ibid.

[57] N.R. Keddie, with a section by Yann Richard, *Modern Iran - Roots and Results of Revolution*, updated edition, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 66-67.

[58] V. Martin, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Nuri, Fażl-Allāh.

[59] A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

an important role in the Constitutional Revolution, since he was responsible for the adoption of Article 2 in the Constitution of 1907, stating that Parliament should be controlled by a Council of Guardians, consisting of *mojtaheds*, who were to ensure that all governmental and legal decisions were in conformity with the Sharia.[60] After Nuri noticed that the *mojtaheds* who constituted the Council of Guardians were elected by the member of parliament themselves and thus had a completely passive role in the political process, he became a fierce opponent of the Constitution, which eventually led to his execution in 1909.[61] Several of Nuri's ideas on the role of the clergy in politics, including the aforementioned article, inspired Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic political theory.[62]

The majority of the Shiite authorities in Iraq also openly supported the constitutionalists.[63] In 1909, Mohammad Hoseyn Nâ'ini (d. 1936), one of the leading Shiite clerics in Najaf, wrote an important treatise promoting the establishment of a constitutional government supervised by Islamic jurists (*foqahâ*).[64] It appears from Ayatollah Khomeini's work, such as *The Revealing of Secrets* (*Kashf al-Asrâr*), published in 1943/4, that he was inspired by the supervisory role Nâ'ini had envisaged for the *foqahâ*.[65] Other leading Iraqi *mojtaheds* who supported the idea of a constitutional government were Abd Allâh Mâzandarâni (d. 1912) and Mohammad Kâzem Khorâsâni (d. 1911).[66]

Generally speaking, one can say that the majority of the clergy initially supported the adoption of a constitution, in the expectation that it would respect Islamic laws. Tabâtabâ'i and Behbahâni in particular were seen as representing the religious support for constitutionalism, after they joined other constitutionalists in the 1905 'sit-in' (*bast*) at the

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[60] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 7, 8 and V. Martin, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Nuri, Fażl-Allāh.

[61] A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

See also the article's by V. Martin, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Nuri, Fażl-Allāh and V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 7, 8, 55, 104, 106, 109, 117, 120, 123.

[62] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 104.

[63] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* p. 249.

[64] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 7,8, 55, 104, 106 and F.M. Nūrā'ī, "The Constitutional Ideas of a Shiʿite Mujtahid Mohammad Husayn Naʾini," in *Iranian Studies*, 8/4, 1975, pp. 234-45.

[65] For Na'ini's influence on Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas in The Revealing of Secrets see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 103-112.

[66] For the role of the clergy in the Constitutional Revolution see N.R. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 4/3, 1962, pp. 268-295 and A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

shrine of Shah ʻAbd al-ʿAzim.[67] The clergy did not agree on the exact role of Islam within the proposed constitutional system. They realized they had to support a constitution to limit the authoritarian rule of the Shah and his appointees. But their primary motive was the need to modernize Islam itself, including its political ramifications, to enable Islam to withstand the encroachment of the powerful West. Under the influence of the pan-Islamic reformist ideas of Jamâl al-Din al-Afghâni (d. 1897), whose ideas were extremely popular in the Middle East, the clergy had become receptive to adapting Islam to modern conditions.[68] What had started in 1905 as small demonstrations by clergy and merchants against changes in the custom rates, ended up in large-scale country-wide protests, joined by millions of Iranians of different backgrounds, all participating in changing society by curtailing the power of the Shah and establishing a constitutional system.

The demands of the Iranians were answered by Mozaffer al-Din Shah in 1906, with the installment of the first *Majles* (parliament), followed by the adoption of a constitution one year later in 1907. The Constitution named Twelver Shia Islam as the state religion. But the new governmental system proved to be short-lived. When Mozaffer al-Din Shah died in 1907, he was succeeded by his son Mohammad Ali Shah (d. 1925), who strongly disapproved of the constitutional system and, in 1908, bombarded the parliament building and took all power into his own hands. Many pro-constitutional *mojtaheds*, in particular Nuri and the Iraqi *mojtaheds*, became disenchanted and ceased their support for constitutional government, seeing more future in a coalition between the clergy and the monarchy.[69] The constitutionalists however continued their attacks on the Qajar government, resulting, in 1909, in the abdication of Mohammad Ali Shah in favour of his son Ahmad Shah (d. 1925). Again an Assembly was installed and a constitution was adopted, but this time it was secular, with no room for religion or religious parties. This can partly be explained by the fact that a large group of influential pro-constitutional *mojtaheds* had dropped their demands for an Islamic (*mashru'a*) form of constitutional governance, siding instead with Mohammad Ali Shah after his 1908 *coup d'etat.*[70]The constitution did not bring what people expected. As H. Katouzian indicates "the Revolution's triumph in 1909 led to growing chaos rather than law, order and democratic government, for chaos had been the traditional Iranian society's response to the fall of the

[67] For this event see A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

[68] For Afghâni's life and thoughts see N.R. Keddie, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Afḡānī, Jamāl-al-Dīn.

[69] Ibid.; V. Martin, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Nuri, Fażl-Allāh.

[70] A. Amanat, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution i. Intellectual Background.

state." [71] In addition to the political chaos, Iran was deeply affected by the First World War, as Britain, Turkey and Russia fought out their disputes on Iranian soil. In 1907, Russia and Britain divided Iran into zones of influence: Russia dominated the northeastern parts of Iran, the British dominated the South. Iran decided to cooperate with Germany. It was not until 1921, when Reza Khan (d. 1944) appeared on the political scene, as commander of the Cossack Brigade after launching a coup on the Qajar regime together with Sayyed Ziyâ al-Din Tabâtabâ'i (d. 1969), that peace and order, on both the societal and governmental levels, slowly returned to Iran. Tabâtabâ'i named himself Prime Minister, while Reza Khan was the new Minister of War. In 1925, Reza Khan abolished the Qajar monarchy, crowning himself the new Shah of Iran. Reza Shah appeared to be a strong leader, able to pull the country out of its post-war depression. In an attempt to turn Iran into a modern, strong and independent nation-state, he implemented large-scale reforms. He centralized and consolidated the government's power by placing everything under heavy state control. In addition, he implemented a series of modernization plans, affecting the economic, educational, judicial, and cultural spheres. The army was modernized to protect the country against foreign threats, but also to reduce the power of Iranian tribes whose chiefs had often had their own armed forces and a degree of political independence. Many railroads were constructed to improve communication, extend government control, and to enable the industrialization of even peripheral areas.

1.6 The Rise of Reza Shah and the Curtailment of the Clergy's Role

Reza Shah's modernization policies also had far-reaching consequences for the religious institutions.[72] Reza Shah was aware of the clergy's influence on the Iranian population. Prior to his coronation, he deliberately sought the support of the clergy and merchants in his attempt to remove Prime Minister Sayyed Ziyâ al-Din Tabâtabâi from the government in 1921 and Ahmad Shah from the throne in 1924. He knew that he needed the approval of these two groups to put him in power. This explains the friendly relationship between Reza Shah and the clergy prior to his coronation in 1925. In this period one sees Reza Khan presenting

[71] H. Katouzian, *Iran in the 21st Century: Politics, Economics and Conflicts,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, p. 1.

[72] For a discussion of clergy-state relations during the early Pahlavi Era see A. Keshavarzian, "Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier: State Building and Clergy Building in Reza Shah's Iran," in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol.45(1), 2003, pp. 81-112, and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 80-87. See also M.M.J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, pp. 108, 109 and V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 9-17.

himself as a true Muslim, visiting holy shrines and going on pilgrimages.[73] This changed once Reza Khan attained full power in Iran in 1925. He slowly began to undermine the religious institutions. As V. Martin argues, Reza Shah "perceived religion as retrogressive and the 'ulama as backward-looking obstacles to progress."[74] Therefore, he set out to limit their power, on the cultural, educational, legal, socio-economic, and judicial levels.

On the cultural level, Reza Shah's first move was the 1927 Conscription Law, which obliged all men, including the clergy, to serve in the national army. One year later he introduced a dress code, the effect of which was to ban culturally and religiously defined clothing. Although these two laws did not apply to theological students and clerics who had tertiary-level religious qualifications, they were applicable to all the preachers who were not so highly qualified, limiting the influence of a large group of clerics. In 1929, Reza Shah banned two important religious ennactments. The first was Shiite 'passion play' (*ta'ziya*) performances, a sort of public theatre in which actors depict the death of the third Shiite Imam, Imam Hoseyn.[75] The second was traditional annual marches to commemorate the martyred Shiite Imams.[76] In 1936, Reza Shah went as far as prohibiting women wearing the head scarf and other forms of *hejâb*. All these measures were intended to weaken religion and diminish the influence of the clergy in society. Reza Shah also tried to curtail the power of the clergy in education, by placing the educational system under state control and by making a sharp division between secular and religious education. This deprived the clergy of their dominant position in education. In a short period, thousands of secular schools with a western-inspired curriculum were erected throughout the country.[77]

On a legal level, the clergy also experienced great setbacks. Traditionally, the clergy had been responsible for the registration and documentation of property. This changed after Reza Shah established a Land and Property Bureau in 1929, and the Registration of Documents and Property Act in 1932, obliging Iranians to officially register their properties. In 1934 Reza Shah also placed part of the administration of the religious endowments (*waqf*)

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[73] M.H. Faghfoory, "The Ulama-State Relations in Iran: 1921-1941," in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 414-416.

[74] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 9.

[75] See the article by P. Chelkowski, in *Encyclopeadia Iranica*, under Taʿzia. See also M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* p. 251.

[76] A. Keshavarzian, "Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier…," p. 107 and M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 250, 251.

[77] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 250, 251.

under state control.[78] The reforms greatly diminished the income of the clergy, who had traditionally controlled these charitable properties and buildings, financed from donations by Muslims.[79] The legal services that the clergy had fulfilled as notaries, registrars, and administrators were greatly reduced by these legal reforms, leading to a great loss of income and social status and the clergy's semi-autonomous financial status.

The centralization of the judicial system under Reza Shah probably hit the clergy hardest. After dissolving the state judiciary in 1927, Reza Shah began secularizing the judicial system, by putting the entire system under the control of the Ministry of Justice. Through various legal reforms, Reza Shah was able to remove religious judges and lawyers from the judicial system. He replaced them with young, secular persons with a more modern education. In 1937, Reza Shah adopted a law stating that only those trained at the secular Tehran University were allowed to be judges in state courts. Through laws like these, the Qajar government was able to expel the clergy from the judicial system and deprive them of their role in policy-making.[80]

1.7 The Clergy's Response to Reza Shah's Modernization Policies

Despite Reza Shah's assaults on religious institutions in the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of the clergy decided to refrain from political involvement.[81] This can be explained first of all by the Pahlavi government's violent response to protests. While Reza Shah was aware of the enormous social influence of the clergy (the *ulamâ*), and initially tried to maintain a friendly bond with them, their critique of the 1927 Conscription Law led him to reassess this. As Faghfoory puts it, the Conscription law "was also the last time that the government submitted to the ulama's pressure, as government leaders realized that any further retreat was a tactic recognition of their own weakness and the ulama's power and influence."[82] Thus, after 1927, Reza Shah increased his repression of religious institutions and did not shy away from the use

[78] Ibid. See also A. Keshavarzian, "Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier…," p. 98.

[79] Ibid.

[80] For the effects of judicial reforms on the clergy see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* pp. 13, 14 and M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 250, 251. See also M. Mohammadi, *Judicial Reform and Reorganization in 20th Century Iran: State-Building, Modernization and Islamicization*, New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 80-108 and H. Enayat, *Law, State, and Society in Modern Iran: Constitutionalism, Autocracy and Legal Reform, 1906-1941,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 113-144.

[81] For this apolitical stance of the clergy under Reza Shah see B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, The People, and the Faqih," pp. 212-216.

[82] M.H. Faghfoory, "The Ulama-State Relations in Iran: 1921-1941," p. 426.

of violence, even directed at the clergy. While the clergy's apolitical posture under Reza Shah was partly a question of fear, it can also be explained as a reaction to disappointment with the results of the Constitutional Revolution. Ultimately, the constitutionalists had completely ignored their demands for an Islamic form of governance. Cooperation with the Pahlavi government seemed to be a safer way for the clergy to secure their position in society. [83]

There were other socio-economic motivations for the clergy's apolitical posture under Reza Shah. From 1922, work began on the construction of a new Shiite seminary in Iran, under the leadership of the most prominent *mojtahed*, Ayatollah Abdolkarim Yazdi Hâ'eri (d. 1936). This shifted the center of the Shiite world to the city of Qom in Iran, whereas previously the leading Shiite scholars had resided in the holy cities of Iraq. The new institute would enormously expand the influence of the Shiite clergy in Iran and throughout the Shiite world and was an important reason for them to cooperate with the Pahlavi state. As Ghamari-Tabrizi argues, "With the exception of a few high-ranking clerics, the clerical establishment was concerned more with defending the institution of clergy than asserting its political authority." [84] Of course, there was harsh criticism by the clergy of the Shah's reforms, in particular of the ban on women wearing the *châdor*. But Ayatollah Hâ'eri prevented wide-scale protests from the clergy, by issuing a *fatwa* in 1928, ordering his followers and students to refrain from political involvement. The *fatwa* was a response to an incident on March 21, 1928, when Iranians celebrated both the Iranian New Year (*Nowruz*) and Ramadan. On that day, Reza Shah's wife visited the shrine of Fâteme Ma'sume, the sister of the eight Shiite imam, in Qom to attend a New Year celebration and, once inside, unveiled herself. When the Shiite clergy heard of this, they were outraged. In particular, Hâjj Sheikh Mohammad Bâfqi (d. 1946) forced her to leave the shrine, because she had shown disrespect by unveiling herself. Reza Shah had Bâfqi arrested. Ayatollah Hâ'eri stepped in to ensure peace, by issuing a *fatwa* forbidding any mention of the incident, and urging the clergy to take a quietist posture.[85] In a way, Hâ'eri represents the prevailing apolitical view of the clergy, who believed that in the absence of the twelfth Shiite Imam, it was their task to "afford moral

[83] B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, The People, and the Faqih," pp. 212-216.

[84] Ibid., pp. 212-213.

[85] For the incident and the reaction of Ayatollah Hâ'eri see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 28 and see B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, The People, and the Faqih," p. 212. See also M.H. Faghfoory, "The Impact of Modernization on the Ulama in Iran, 1925-1941," in *Iranian Studies*, vol. 26, 1993, p. 296.

guidance in society and act as exemplary ethical leaders untainted by the corruption of governance."[86]

Under Reza Shah, an elite group of clerics developed, who received certain privileges and rights from the Pahlavi state, in return for their approval of Reza Shah's modernization policies. The leading clerics, headed by Ayatollah Hâ'eri, accepted the 1927 Conscription Law on the condition that the leading clerics should be exempted. They also approved the ban on the annual commemoration of Imam Hoseyn's death, a popular event not entirely under their control. Forbidding such religious expressions put more religious authority in the hands of the senior clerics. As Faghfoory explains, the Pahlavi government launched wide-reaching propaganda programs to demonstrate the un-Islamic nature of such popular religious celebrations, which in the eyes of the state were opportunities to launch demonstrations, and had nothing to do with Islam.[87] While the Pahlavi government feared such public commemorations for security reasons, since Shiite preachers had used them to mobilize large audiences against the government, the top-ranking clerics were suspicious of the 'ignorant' preachers who coordinated such commemorations. By supporting Mohammad Reza Shah's ban, they could prevent low-level preachers from becoming too powerful.[88] Support for secularizing policies also enabled the top clergy in Qom to undercut the social standing of clergy who had only a preliminary seminary education, and so secure a uniform, exclusive and very influential social position, and greater power, for themselves.[89] Although they could not actively oppose Reza Shah's secularizing policies, certain members of this group were secretly working out their ideas on opposing the Pahlavi government and were waiting for the right moment to rebel.

1.8 The Clergy under Mohammad Reza Shah

On August 25, 1941, the course of Iranian history changed when Soviet, British and American troops occupied Iran in the heat of the Second World War, claiming that Reza Shah sided with the Germans. In reality, this offered them an opportunity to create supply routes from the Persian Gulf to Russia. The allies deposed Reza Shah and replaced him with his young son Mohammad Reza Shah (d. 1980). The change in monarch also affected the social role of the clergy, who initially continued their apolitical stance, partly because of their fear of the

[86] B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, The People, and the Faqih," p. 213.

[87] M.H. Faghfoory, "The Impact of Modernization on the Ulama in Iran, 1925-1941," p. 298.

[88] A. Keshavarzian, "Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier…,"p. 107.

[89] Ibid., p. 102.

powerful centralized government.[90] However Iran's continuing dependency on outside powers was grist for the mill of some opposition parties. The Tudeh Party, an Iranian communist party born in 1941, which became very popular, was Soviet-orientated and hoped to pull Iran from Western domination, in favour of a totalitarian regime.[91] The National Front of Iran, which from 1949 was headed by Mohammad Mosaddeq (d. 1967), was also very popular. The National Front promoted parliamentary democracy and the nationalization of the oil industry. When Mosaddeq was appointed Prime Minister in 1951, one of the first things he did was to nationalize the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which had been in the hands of the British since 1913.[92]

Great Britain and America, in particular, objected to the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. With the help of General Zâhedi and some former top figures in the National Front, such as Ayatollah Sayyed Abdolqâsem Kâshâni (d. 1962), who no longer agreed with Mosaddeq's policy, Great Britain and America secretly launched a large-scale anti-Mosaddeq project under the name of AJAX, intended to remove Mosaddeq from power. While at first hesitant, Mohammad Reza Shah also gave his support to the project. Great Britain's motive was mainly economic, while America's participation can be attributed mainly to its desire to prevent the Soviet Union benefiting from instability in Iran. With the help of the CIA, these three parties succeeded in toppling Mosaddeq in 1953, replacing him with General Zâhedi. [93] The political unrest surrounding Mosaddeq's rise and fall had large consequences for the socio-political situation in the country. After the *coup d'état* of 1953, Mohammad Reza Shah's regime became more dictatorial, treating political parties as a threat to stability and allowing Iranians little or no freedom of speech, and no political participation. The coup further diminished the role of the clergy in society. Their apolitical role during Mohammad Reza Shah's early years as monarch, can partly be explained as a sign of respect for the leading *marja'-e taqlid,* Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961), the highest authority in the Shiite world, who had been the sole *marja'-e taqlid* since 1945 and who set the norms for the Shiite community in Iran. As V. Martin indicates, Borujerdi and the Shah had agreed that the clergy

[90] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet,* pp. 125-128 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* p. 65.

[91] For the activities of the Tudeh Party see S. Zabih, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism ii. In Persia from 1941 to1953 and Ṭ Haqšenâs, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism iii. In Persia after 1953.

[92] M.J. Gasiorowski, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Coup d'Etat of 1332 š./1953.

[93] For the 1953 coup see M.J. Gasiorowski, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Coup d'Etat of 1332 š./1953. See also V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* pp. 18-20 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* p. 66.

would stay aloof from politics, as long as the Shah would not interfere in religious affairs.[94] According to M. Momen, "part of this accommodation between the *ulamâ* and the Shah was the leeway given to the *ulamâ* to raise a violent anti-Bahâ'i campaign."[95] The clergy-state accommodation was severely tested in 1955, when the Bahâ'is were openly attacked on national radio by Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Falsafi (d. 2006), followed by numerous physical attacks on Bahâ'i sympathizers. The international community responded with shock, forcing the Shah to condemn the anti-Bahâ'i pogroms, although he had secretly allowed the clergy to launch the persecutions. After this incident of 1955, the former relatively friendly relations between the Pahlavi state and the clergy were never restored. This appears from Ayatollah Borujerdi's public attack on the Land Reform Bill that Mohammad Reza was about to implement, as part of a new large-scale modernization program. Soon the clergy objected to other modernization plans.[96]

1.9 Rise of Ayatollah Khomeini

The 1961 death of Ayatollah Borujerdi, the sole 'source of imitation,' greatly affected the religio-political climate in Iran. Since the leading clerics did not agree on which cleric could replace him and whether religious authority should be put in the hands of one or more clerics, a period of instability followed, in which several Ayatollahs could act independently.[97] During this period without any supreme religious authority, the Shah launched a large-scale modernization program, known as the White Revolution (1963-1979).[98] This included large-scale land reforms and extending the franchise to women. The modernization program greatly affected clergy-state relations, since the Shah ordered the establishment of state-governed religious institutions to further curtail the power of the clergy.[99] The Shah also adopted new local council laws, allowing both non-Muslims and women to vote. The clergy's negative

[94] For information on Ayatollah Borujerdi see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 53-59 and H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Borūjerdī, Ḥosayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

[95] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* p. 253.

[96] Ibid., pp. 253-254.

[97] Ibid., pp. 254-255. See also B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 70.

[98] For more information on the White Revolution see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 62-64. and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 21-22, 62. See also S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 71-73.

[99] For more information on the opposition *din-e mellat* versus *din-e dowlat* see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 255-258.

reaction was unprecedented.[100] A majority of the clergy openly resisted the Shah's social, economic and political oppression. During the demonstrations that followed, Ayatollah Khomeini, then a low-ranked cleric, rapidly gained fame by heading the religious opposition groups that were demonstrating, and by openly criticizing the Shah and his government in a well-known speech on June 3 1963.[101] Ayatollah Khomeini objected especially to granting equal rights, such as the right to vote, to women. His view on women's rights at that time was totally opposite to the political role for women that he promoted after the Islamic Revolution.[102] After his speech on June 3 1963, he was arrested and sentenced to death.[103] Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters backed him in large demonstrations. The uprising soon spread to other cities which resulted in total chaos throughout the country. Ayatollah Khomeini's followers included his students, large groups of merchants and the devout poor. They were impressed by Ayatollah Khomeini's pious way of life and the courage behind his momentous speech of June 1963. The government responded violently, killing hundreds of demonstrators. However, the continuous pressure of the clergy and Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters on the Shah resulted in the release of Ayatollah Khomeini in April 1964. The leading Ayatollahs succeeded in annulling the death sentence, by bestowing the title of Ayatollah on Ayatollah Khomeini and by falsely making the Shah believe that it was against constitutional law to sentence an Ayatollah to death.[104]

Although Ayatollah Khomeini did not openly revolt against the Shah's policies, prior to the death of Borujerdi, in the 1940s and 1950s he had accumulated a substantial group of followers amongst his students to whom he entrusted his revolutionary religio-political ideas, sometimes in private. This group later developed into a well-organized Islamic Movement, the *Nahzat-e Eslâmi*.[105] Amongst these student and supporters were Ayatollah Mortezâ

[100] For the Shah's suppression of the clergy see S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown,* pp. 84-86. See also M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 251-261.

[101] For parts of Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-government speech see R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet,* pp. 190-193. For Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-governmental movement see ibid., pp. 188-191, 244-245, 308.

[102] For Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas on women suffrage during the early 1960s, see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 60, 61.

[103] A. Milani, *The Shah,* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, pp. 297-298.

[104] Ibid., p. 298.

[105] For information on the development of this movement, see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 48-74.

Motahhari (d. 1979) and Ayatollah Hasan Ali Montazeri (d. 2009), who were to play a crucial role in the Islamic Movement and Islamic Revolution.[106]

After his release in April 1964, Ayatollah Khomeini continued to criticize the Pahlavi government. On October 27th 1964, when many Iranians had gathered at Ayatollah Khomeini's house in Qom to celebrate the birthday of Fâteme, the daughter of Prophet Mohammad, he delivered a sermon critical of the political situation. The Pahlavi government had just granted legal immunity to American military advisors in Iran, and had contracted another billion-dollar loan from America.[107] The media machine that Ayatollah Khomeini used to reach Iranians was crucial for the success of his revolutionary agenda. During the sermon, Ayatollah Khomeini's words were written down by some supporters, who soon spread them amongst the Iranian population through traditional networks, particularly the conservative merchants of Tehran.[108] As soon as the Pahlavi government heard of Ayatollah Khomeini's speech, it prepared to exile him. The plan was put into action only one week later, when he was arrested and immediately transported to Turkey by plane.

Ayatollah Khomeini spent his first year of exile in Turkey, where he was regularly visited by supporters from Iran, who often donated their religious taxes to him. Ayatollah Khomeini spent his days in Turkey travelling around the country and writing books. Since Ayatollah Khomeini quickly created a warm bond with the Turkish officials who were supposed to keep an eye on him, the Pahlavi government decided to exile Ayatollah Khomeini to Iraq towards the end of 1965, to prevent him from becoming too popular in his host country. [109] As V. Martin states, "The regime in Iran, justifiably perhaps, believed that there [Iraq] he would be eclipsed by the towering figures of long established ayatollahs and that his name would sink into oblivion."[110] The opposite proved to be the case.

Iraq would be Ayatollah Khomeini's home until 1978. The news that Ayatollah Khomeini had moved from Turkey to Iraq spread rapidly in Iraq, and within days of his arrival a huge crowd, consisting of followers, senior Shiite and Sunnite clerics and Iraqi

[106] For information on Motahhari's life and thoughts, see ibid., pp. 75-99 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 168-172.

[107] For Ayatollah Khomeini's sermon of October 27th 1964, see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 122-127 and V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 64.

[108] For Ayatollah Khomeini's critique of the Pahlavi government in the period 1963-1964, see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 160-169.

[109] For Ayatollah Khomeini's period of exile in Turkey see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 129-139.

[110] See V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 139.

government employees, came to show their respect. The leading Ayatollahs of Iraq, including Grand Ayatollah Mahmud Shâhrudi (b. 1948) and Grand Ayatollah Abu 'l-Qâsem Musavi Khu'i (d. 1992) also visited Ayatollah Khomeini soon after his arrival in Iraq. Not all Shiite clerics were happy with Ayatollah Khomeini's arrival. Ayatollah Mohsen ibn Mahdi Tabâtabâ'i Hakim (d. 1970), one of the leading Ayatollahs in the Shiite world, believed that Ayatollah Khomeini was too much involved in political affairs. In this period, many Shiite Ayatollahs were in favour of the separation of religion and state, with religion being the domain of the clergy in the absence of the Hidden Imam Mahdi, and politics a secular affair belonging to the Shah. Ayatollah Khomeini came into conflict with Hakim on the political role of the clergy.[111] The tense relationship never improved, illustrating the differences between top clerics on this issue. In Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote treatises, books and poetry and developed his thoughts about an Islamic government. In the 1940s and 1950s, Ayatollah Khomeini supported a constitutional government if the constitution was based on Islamic law. During his stay in Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini advocated a new view of Islamic government, rejecting monarchy in any form. In 1969 and 1970, Ayatollah Khomeini gave lectures on this concept of Islamic government, which he later published under the title of *Islamic Government* (*Hokumat-e Eslâmi*).[112]

Although Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled from Iran, the number of his supporters rapidly increased.[113] His Islamic movement (*Nahzat-e Eslâmi*) owed much of its success and popularity to Ayatollah Mortezâ Motahhari (d. 1979), one of Ayatollah Khomeini's most loyal students, who became his representative in Iran during his exile.[114] Motahhari collected the Islamic taxes of Ayatollah Khomeini's followers on his behalf and, most importantly, transmitted his messages to Iranians.[115] Initially Ayatollah Khomeini's followers consisted of religious students, conservative merchants and the poor, who were attracted by the welfare facilities his Islamic movement offered, and which the Pahlavi government failed to offer. The well-organized structure of *Nahzat*, which utilized conservative networks such as the

[111] For this first confrontation between Ayatollah Khomeini and Hakim see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 141-143.

[112] For on elaboration on *Islamic Government* see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 25, 115-124 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet,* pp. 380-382. See also R. Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of Jurisprudent*, Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2005.

[113] For the development of Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-governmental movement during his exile, see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 69-74.

[114] For Motahheri's life and thoughts, see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 168-172.

[115] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 77.

mosque and bazaar, conveyed Ayatollah Khomeini's messages to Iranians from all social classes and enabled the movement to organise enormous gatherings.[116] Motahhari played another crucial role in this, by casting Ayatollah Khomeini's socio-political messages in a theoretical structure, which would later bear fruit in the establishment of an Islamic republic.

Ayatollah Khomeini´s *Nahzat* was only one of the groups that arose at all levels of Iranian society, in opposition to the Shah´s economic, international and modernization policies of the 1960s and 1970s. The National Front Party, which had played a crucial role in bringing Mosaddeq to power in 1951, found its support mostly amongst elite and middle-class Iranians. The communist Tudeh Party, founded in 1941, experienced a revival. In the eyes of the Shah, it was one of the biggest threats to his rule, in part because of its links to the Soviet Union, so it was heavily suppressed. Another socialist opposition group that gained a lot of support was the marxist *Fedâ'iyân-e Khalq* (1971), which consisted mainly of university students. As Ghamari-Tabrizi argues, "Ayatollah Khomeini's exile coincided with the rise of a new generation of Muslim intellectuals and military activists inside the country." [117] One of these Muslim intellectuals was Ali Shariati (d. 1977), who became enormously popular among young Iranians during the 1970s. Shariati was an Islamic modernist, who condemned the apolitical posture of the Iranian clergy and pushed for a reconciliation of Islam with modern Western ideas.[118]

Some of the groups opposing the Shah's regime had a militant Islamic leftist character, and were a sort of guerrilla movement, consisting of intellectuals who were prepared to give their lives to achieve social and economic equality. The most important of these were the Liberation Movement of Iran (*Fedâ'iyân-e Eslâm*) and the *Mojâhedin-e Khalq.* The *Fedâ'iyân-e Eslâm* had been founded in 1961 and was headed by the religious cleric Mahmud Tâleqâni (d. 1979) and by Mehdi Bâzargân (d. 1995). The *Mâjahedin-e Khalq* (1966), which had both an Islamic and a socialist character, also attracted many Iranians.[119] Both Islamic opposition parties saw the need for Islam to reform. Ayatollah Khomeini and his

[116] At Ayatollah Khomeini's request, the Association of United Societies, an organisation consisting of three bazaar societies working together to spread Khomeiní's messages through prints, was established in 1963 (see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 67-69).

[117] B. Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People and the Faqih," p. 226.

[118] For an elaboration on Ali Shariati see M. Mahdavi, "The Rise of Khomeinism: Problematizing the Politics of Resistance in Pre-Revolutionary Iran," in *A Critical Introduction to Islam*, pp. 58-61.

[119] A good source on the Mojâhedin is the book by E. Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

movement were greatly aware of the ideas such as socialism which were sweeping through the country and generating enormous interest. They also saw the need to modernize Islam to attract the young, without offending their bazaari supporters, who were very conservative. [120]

As Mohammad Reza Shah's regime became more repressive during the 1970s, discontent among the population also grew. Besides the general critique of the Shah's dictatorial regime, each social group had its own reason for criticizing the Pahlavi government. The religious establishment and Shiite population were furious at the continuing suppression of religious institutions. Iran also entered a period of heavy recession and then inflation, after the 1973 foundation of the OPEC and the consequent increase in Iran's oil income, from which only a small group of Iranians profited. The merchants were outraged because of commercial reforms which Mohammad Reza Shah had implemented in the 1960s and 1970s destroying the traditional markets. The Shah's large-scale agricultural reforms had forced rural Iranians to move to the big cities, where they often had no work or income. Political parties such as the *National Front Party* (secular) and the *Tudeh Party* (Communist) were angry at the Pahlavi government because of their political suppression. In 1975, the Shah introduced a one-party government by setting up the *Rastâkhiz Party* (Resurgence Party) and forbidding any other form of political movement. The whole Iranian society was under strict governmental control, reinforced by the Iranian secret police (SAVAK), which had been set up in 1957 and was at its most active during the 1970s, sometimes arresting people without charge and using brutality. All these political, economic and social circumstances during the 1960s and 1970s had led to widespread dissatisfaction with the Pahlavi government, eventually resulting in nationwide demonstrations starting in 1977.[121]

Initially the anti-government demonstrations were supported by two groups: those with a political motive and those with a religious one. Protests started with members of the National Front Party distributing pamphlets in which they attacked the Shah's corrupt and repressive regime.[122] The demonstrations were soon joined by members of the Association of United Societies, who came out in open revolt against the regime, charging SAVAK with involvement in the death of Ayatollah Khomeini's son Mostafa, who died on October 23 1977 in Iraq under mysterious circumstances. Several months later (January 7 1978), Ayatollah

[120] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 79, 80.

[121] For the period leading up to the Iranian Revolution, see ibid., pp. 20-27, 147, 148 and M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 282-289.

[122] For the period leading up to the Iranian Revolution, see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 282-289.

Khomeini was portrayed in a humiliating way in the semi-official newspaper *Ettelâ'ât*. On January 9th thousands of students took to the streets of Qom in response, demanding the return of Ayatollah Khomeini. They also urged the Shah to restore the Constitution and re-open the universities, which he had earlier closed. The Pahlavi police killed dozens of these students, and the clergy responded *en masse* to the slaughter. Even those who had previously stayed out of politics, such as Ayatollah Shari'atmadâri (d. 1986), responded to the incident. The 40-day long mourning period that followed led to further clashes with the Pahlavi police, and more deaths. Even in Tabriz, mourners were killed by the Pahlavi government, and the anti-Shah demonstrations then became nation-wide strikes. Government attacks on Iranian citizens continued. One of the worst incidents came on August 19 1978, when some 400 cinema visitors were killed in a fire in the city of Abadan. On September 7th that year, the Pahlavi Government forbade all forms of protest. However, demonstrators took to the streets again the next day. The Pahlavi police responded immediately, killing hundreds of protestors and imposing martial law.

After the massacres of September 8 1978, which became known as Black Friday, members of the middle class joined the political and religious groups mentioned above, in protest marches against the Shah's regime. From October 1978, nationwide strikes by groups such as bank employees and workers in the oil industry paralyzed the economy. In response, the Pahlavi government had Ayatollah Khomeini removed from Iraq to France, hoping to decrease his influence. But France proved to be a better place for Ayatollah Khomeini to lead his campaign against the Shah. Not only was he better able to communicate with Iran, it was also easier for him to communicate with the Western media, who immediately approached him for comments on the events in Iran. Through cassette tapes, Ayatollah Khomeini could provide his followers in Iran with advice and comments. The Shah's suggestion that Ayatollah Khomeini could return safely to Iran was rejected by Ayatollah Khomeini, who refused to return while the Shah was in power. On November 6 1978 the Shah dismissed Prime Minister Sharif-Imâmi and installed a military government.

During the month of Moharram 1978 (starting December 2nd), demonstrators succeeded in seizing government offices. Some soldiers responded immediately by opening fire on the demonstrators while others decided to surrender and join the opposition. The Shah's gesture of appointing his lifelong opponent, Shahpur Bakhtiar, as Prime Minister, to

placate the opposition and enable order to be restored, had no effect.[123] On January 16 1979, the Shah left Iran for Egypt at the request of Bakhtiar, under the pretext of a long holiday, but he never returned to Iran.[124] Egypt was the only country prepared to receive him. America, one of the Shah's closest allies, refused to offer him shelter. Only two weeks later, on February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran where he was welcomed by millions of Iranians. [125]

Although initially the Iranian Revolution could not be characterized as Islamic, it later became Islamic. Oppositional groups such as the National Front Party realized that only Ayatollah Khomeini could mobilize the mass support needed to topple the Shah. From 1978, the lack of political freedoms led even the liberal and secular middle classes to join the demonstrations of the religious opposition, aware that this was the only way to express their criticism of the Shah's corrupt regime.[126]

There are several reasons why Ayatollah Khomeini's movement succeeded in attracting such a large following while other opposition groups, who had a long history in the Iranian political arena, could not. First of all, Ayatollah Khomeini closely followed the political interests of young Iranians, realizing that their support would be crucial. He noticed that young Iranians had strong nationalistic tendencies and rejected Western interference. By combining this anti-imperialistic trend in his speeches with Islamic motifs, Ayatollah Khomeini was able to win a large and diverse following among young Iranians.[127] His exploitation of political trends and his charismatic character during a period of corruption, drew many people to him. As Mahdavi explains, according to Max Weber, "Social crisis,…, creates a non-rational need for charismatic experiences and revolutionary change."[128] The circumstances in Iran at the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, when almost all social classes were negatively affected by the Shah's regime, pushed Iranians *en masse* into the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was able to win their hearts with his charismatic leadership. He did

[123] For the period leading up to the departure of the Shah, see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 282-289.

[124] For Mohammad Reza Shah's departure from Iran in 1979, see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 149.

[125] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 282-289.

[126] A. Bayat, "Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1998, pp. 136-169. See also M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam,* pp. 287-289.

[127] L.A. Reda, "Khatt-e Imam: The Followers of Khomeini's Line," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. A. Adib-Moghaddam, pp. 124, 125.

[128] M. Mahdavi, "The Rise of Khomeinism…," p. 67.

this by using Shiite motifs, familiar to Iranians of all classes from childhood.[129] Ayatollah Khomeini often referred to the events of Karbalâ, in 680 AD, when Imam Hoseyn fought against Yazid and his army. The battle of Hoseyn's troops against oppression and tyranny was compared to the fight between the Iranian opposition and the Shah's regime. Each of Ayatollah Khomeini's moves was compared to the Karbalâ story. Ayatollah Khomeini's courageous behaviour was likened to that of Imam Hoseyn. The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini was in exile resembled the occultation of the Hidden Imam. Often Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters addressed him as Imam Khomeini, a title which in a Shiite context had previously been applied only to the twelve Shiite Imams, although in a Sunnite context the term is also used for the leader of Friday prayers. Although Ayatollah Khomeini rejected the use of titles, he did not protest when people addressed him in this way. The most important qualities that Iranians found in Ayatollah Khomeini, were those the Shah lacked. He was pious, courageous, anti-Western and not at all interested in material goods.[130]

The Iranian revolution paved the way for the establishment of the first Islamic Republic and ended Iran's tradition of monarchies. Up to then, the Shiite clergy had tolerated various Shahs exerting political authority over the Islamic community, but Ayatollah Khomeini introduced an Islamic form of governance that had no precedent. I have tried to demonstrate in this first chapter that although Ayatollah Khomeini was the first cleric to actually implement an Islamic form of governance, there were precedents for his ideas in the work of several nineteenth-century *mojtaheds*, such as Narâqi, Nâ'ini and Sheikh Fazl Allâh Nuri. It appears that Ayatollah Khomeini was part of a long tradition of clerics who wrestled with the challenges posed by foreign powers, modern developments and European political philosophies. Many nineteenth-century Iranian clerics tried to develop a way to run a modern state based on Islamic principles, so as to meet the needs of modernity while safeguarding the country's Islamic Shiite identity. Previously, mainstream Shiite theologies had not allowed the clergy to meddle in politics, but Ayatollah Khomeini used the Islamic political theories of Narâqi and developed them further to a form of governance in which the clergy is allowed to represent the Hidden Imam in all matters, even in the political arena. By adopting the position of *vali-ye faqih* (Guardian Jurist) in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini politicized and modernized Twelver Shia Islam, attracting even young Iranians

[129] Mahdavi's explanation for Ayatollah Khomeini's widespread popularity in M. Mahdavi, "The Rise of Khomeinism…," pp. 65-67.

[130] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 66.

who were impressed by modern ideas, who supported him in his political agenda to develop Iran to the level of other modern countries without losing its Shiite character.

2

Ayatollah Khomeini's Inner World: Mysticism and Poetry

2.1 Ayatollah Khomeini's Mysticism

When a poem by Ayatollah Khomeini was published by his youngest son, Ahmad, in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân* several days after his father's death in 1989, it came as a great surprise both inside and outside Iran. Several years later, in 1993, Ayatollah Khomeini's complete collection of poetry (*Divân*) was published in Iran.[131] Many people were surprised that such poems, filled with mystical concepts, had been composed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Some immediately denied their authenticity, arguing that they had been falsely attributed to him to polish up his image. Others, of a mystical disposition, embraced them. The orthodox clergy, on the whole, strongly condemned the mystical character of the poems, struggling with some of the topics which Ayatollah Khomeini had adopted such as erotic love and wine. Many Iranians living abroad also reacted with surprise, and often negatively, to the publication. Famous Iranian poets in Europe and America such as Hadi Khorsandi and Nader Naderpour wrote parodies or other poems and articles condemning Ayatollah Khomeini's poems.

I have translated and analysed a considerable number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, focussing on three poetic forms. I will begin with his *robâ'i*s, or quatrains, written during the 1980s, in chapter three. In chapter four I will focus on his *ghazal*s (lyrical poems) which were written both before 1936, from 1979 till March 1984 and from April 1985 till his death in 1989. Lastly I will examine his oldest poems, the *qaside*s or panegyric poems, which he wrote in his twenties when he was a student in Qom. I will apply a literary-historical approach to the poems to answer questions such as: Why did Ayatollah Khomeini write poems about wine and homo-erotic love? Did he write them for private use or were they meant for publication, and in the latter case, who did he want to reach and why were they never published? Do his poems give us an insight into his character? Was Ayatollah Khomeini for example a different man in a private setting than in public? In all this, I will try to grasp the message of his poetry. Before launching an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, it is

[131] R. Khomeini, *Divân-e Emâm: sorudehâ-ye hazrat-e emâm Khomeini*, Tehran: mo'asseseh tanzim o nashar-e âsâr-e emâm Khomeini, 1372 (1993).

necessary to consider his mystical inclinations, an aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini that remains unfamiliar to Western audiences.

2.2 Studies of Ayatollah Khomeini's Mysticism

There have been only a few previous works on Ayatollah Khomeini and his mysticism. In 1981, the well-known American scholar Hamid Algar, who had the chance of interviewing Ayatollah Khomeini during his stay in France, translated several of Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches into English in his *Islam and Revolution*.[132] The book not only contains Ayatollah Khomeini's famous lectures of 1969 and 1970, in which he presented his theories on Islamic Governance, it also contains translations of Ayatollah Khomeini's TV performances of 1979 and 1980 in which he gives a mystical interpretation of the first *sura* in the Koran. In the book, Hamid Algar refers to Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism on various occasions. In 1988, Hamid Algar published an article entitled "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1906: The Pre-Revolutionary Years", in which he sheds light on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical inclinations.[133] In 1999, Baqer Moin published his *Ayatollah Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah*, which has remained a standard work in a Western language on Ayatollah Khomeini's life.[134] Moin focuses not only on Ayatollah Khomeini's political career, but also on his mystical affiliations and poetic activities. *Creating an Islamic state: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran* by Vanessa Martin is very useful if one wants to learn more on Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism.[135] Martin gives the reader an insight into Ayatollah Khomeini's ideological thinking and how it was influenced by Platonism and mystical philosophers such as Mollâ Sadrâ and Ibn 'Arabi. Several scholars devoted their attention to Khomeini's mysticism, which I referred to earlier, but I only refer to their names.[136] Yahya Bonaud,[137] Roy Mottahedeh,[138] Alexander Knysh,[139] Johan ter Haar,[140] Finn Thiesen,[141] Benedikt

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[132] R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution; Writings and Declarations*, ed. by H. Algar, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981.

[133] H. Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1906: The Pre-Revolutionary Years," in *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, eds. E. Burke and & I.M. Lapidus, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 263-288.

[134] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.

[135] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the making of a new Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2000.

[136] See the part on "Organization and Structure of the Book."

[137] Y.C. Bonaud, *L'Imam Khomeiny: un Gnostique Méconnu du XXe Siècle*, Beyrouth: al-Bouraq, 1995.

[138] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.

[139] A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," in *Middle East Journal*, 46:4, 1992, pp. 631-653.

Reinert,[142] Asghar Seyed-Gohrab,[143] and most recently, Lloyd Ridgeon.[144] In Iran itself, numerous articles and books have been published on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical works and on his poems.[145] These Iranian scholars fall into two groups: some admire Ayatollah Khomeini and attribute a saintly aura to him, while others are critical of him and his political and religious ideas, often dismissing his poetic works. In all these works in Persian, attention is focused on Ayatollah Khomeini's political views rather than his mystical aspiration and even less on his poetic talent.

2.3 The Role of Mysticism in Ayatollah Khomeini's Life

Ruhollah Khomeini was born on September 24th 1902 in the small town Khomein, about hundred kilometres southwest of Tehran. His grandfather, who grew up in India, and his father Ayatollah Mostafâ (d. 1903) were both religious scholars. When Ayatollah Khomeini was only a few months old his father was murdered by bandits, and he was taken into the care of his mother and aunt. They also died young, when he was about sixteen years old. As was common in his family, Ayatollah Khomeini followed a traditional Islamic lower education. In 1921, he started his higher religious education, first in Arâk and later in Qom. There, the *Hawze-ye 'Elmiyyeh* seminary had just been erected by his teacher, the famous Ayatollah 'Abdolkarim Hâ'eri Yazdi (d. 1937). Here Ayatollah Khomeini studied subjects such as philosophy (*falsafe*), ethics (*akhlâq*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*feqh*). Shortly after enrolment, he began attending additional courses that were not part of the prescribed educational

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[140] J.G.J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de optiek van Khumayni," in *Mystiek: het andere gezicht van de islam*, eds. M. Buitelaar en J.G.J. ter Haar, Bussum: Coutinho, 1999, pp. 90-102.

[141] F. Thiesen, "A Draught of Love: A translation of Rūĥollāh Xomeini's sabū ye 'ešq," in *Corolla Iranica*, eds. R.E. Emmerick and D. Weber, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 211-227.

[142] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Vol. 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, pp. 191-293.

[143] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," in *Die Welt des Islams,* Vol. 51, Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 438-458.

[144] L. Ridgeon, "Hidden Khomeini: Mysticism and Poetry," in *A Critical Introduction to Ayatollah Khomeini*, ed. A. Adib-Moghaddam, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 193-210.

[145] *Farhang-e divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*, 1372/1993; P. Beygi Habibâbâdi in *Guzide-yi ahs'âr: She'r-e jang va defâ'-e moqaddas*, ed. H. Hoseyni, Tehran: Sura, 1381/2002; R. Khomeini, *Reunion with the Beloved: Imam Khomeini's Letters to Hujjat al-Islām wal-Muslimin Hāj Sayyid Ahmad Khomeini*, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Work, 1995; R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imam Khomeini*, transl. and introd. by M. Legenhausen, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Work, 2003.

program. These optional courses, that were only given to a select group of students, all had to do with Islamic mysticism (ʿ*erfân*).Under the supervision of teachers such as ʻAbdolkarim Hâ'eri Yazdi, Mirzâ ʿAli Akbar Hakim Yazdi (d. 1924), Sayyed Abd al-Hasan Rafi'i Qazvini (d. 1976), Mirzâ Javâd Âqâ Maleki Tabrizi (d. 1924) and Mirzâ Mohammad ʻAli Shâhâbâdi (d. 1950), Ayatollah Khomeini would learn the principles of mysticism.[146] Ayatollah Khomeini was an excellent student and chose to specialize in ʿ*erfân* and ethics. At the early age of 33, he received permission (*ejâze*) to become a *mojtahed*, which meant that he was thereafter allowed to use his own judgement in interpreting the religious law.[147] Having made himself an expert in philosophy, mysticism and ethics, Ayatollah Khomeini spent the first ten years of his career as a teacher in Qom, while leading an otherwise withdrawn life with his wife Khadija Thaqafi and his eight children.[148]

It is known that Ayatollah Khomeini had shown a special interest in mysticism from the beginning of his education. This is evident from his early literary works, in which the influence of mystical philosophers such as Mollâ Sadrâ, Ibn ʻArabi and Shehâb al-Din Yahyâ Sohravardi (executed 1191) is evident. Alexander Knysh has pointed out that two books on mystical philosophy belonging to Ayatollah Khomeini came to light at a religious institute in Hamadan in 1983. The books had Ayatollah Khomeini's signature inside, and also his commentaries in the margins. One was a commentary by Sharaf al-Din Dâvud al-Qeysari (d. 1350) on the mystical work *Fosus al-Hekam* (Bezels of Wisdom) by the Andalusian Islamic mystic Ibn ʿArabi. The other was *Mesbâh al-Ons* (Lamp of Intimacy) by the Ottoman scholar Mohammad b. Hamza al-Fanari (d. 1431). This is a commentary on *Meftâh al-Gheyb* (Key to the Unseen) by Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi (d. 1274). With the permission of Ayatollah Khomeini, and after some small changes, both books and commentaries were published.[149] In 1928, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote a commentary on the *Du'â-ye Sahar*, one of the most often recited Islamic prayers during Ramadan, and this commentary also exhibits heavy mystical influences.[150] In 1929, at the age of twenty-seven, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote *Mesbâh al-Hedâya 'ila al-Khelâfat va al-Velâyat* (Lamp Showing the Right Way to Viceregency and

[146] See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009, pp. 42-43.

[147] For an elaborate discussion on the position of *mojtahed* I refer to chapter1.3 in this study.

[148] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state*, p. 29; B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 1-21.

[149] A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," pp. 635-651.

[150] J.G.J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de Optiek van Khumayni," p. 93.

Sainthood).[151] This treats various subjects from the field of mystical philosophy. Ayatollah Khomeini describes how creation has emanated from the world of God and why, therefore, no distinction can be made between God and creation. Ayatollah Khomeini also pays much attention to the spiritual path the mystic must travel before he can reach his final goal, which is union with God. He also focusses on the role of humankind and particularly on that of the prophets, saints and mystics within his worldview. By supporting these ideas in his books, Ayatollah Khomeini places himself in the tradition of classical mysticism.

The *Mesbâh* (Lamp) and other mystical works by Ayatollah Khomeini show that he adheres to a type of mysticism that originates with Ibn ʿArabi. This thirteenth-century mystical philosopher wrote numerous works on mystical concepts. He became in particular famous for theories on the 'oneness of being' (*vahdat al-vojud*) and the 'perfect man' (*ensân-e kâmel*) and became a source of inspiration for many philosophers. The essential thought behind the concept of the 'oneness of being' is that everything that exists in the world is a reflection or manifestation of God. Such ideas pre-dated Ibn ʿArabi, and several Persian mystical poets had referred to them, but Ibn ʿArabi's theories on this concept permeated Persian mystic literature from the thirteenth century. The whole of creation has the same origin, which is God's essence. The idea is very similar to pantheism, which identifies God with the universe. However, it differs in that, God is still greater than His creation, because without Him there would not have been any creation.[152] Mystics often explain the concept of the 'oneness of being' with the metaphor of the sea-wave that disappears into the ocean. At first it looks different from the ocean but in reality it is made of the same substance: water.[153] Each individual or entity in this world is thus like a wave in the immeasurable sea.[154] In his

[151] The work has the same title as a mystical 'manual' by Mahmud Kâshâni (d. 1334/5) in which he elaborates on mystical practices. This book is on its turn an adjustment of the book *Awarif al Ma'arif* ["Gifts of Mystical Knowledge") by Sohravardi (d. 1234). Although Ayatollah Khomeini's and Kâshâni's work have the same title, they do not seem to have any connection, despite the fact that they both deal with mystical topics. For consultation see A. Knysh, *"Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy,"* p. 637.

[152] For consultation on Ibn ʿArabi's theories see W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

[153] Mystics also compare the spiritual path to a wave in the sea. At the end of its path, the wave will disappear into the greater ocean, just as the spiritual traveller will annihilate his Ego in God's Essence. See J. Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005, p. 176.

[154] Other popular metaphors used in mystical poems to express the 'oneness of being' are chess figures that all look different but in reality are all made of wood, or different coloured pieces of glass that do not look alike but

Mesbâh, Ayatollah Khomeini frequently uses Ibn ʿArabi's theories on cosmology and metaphysics. Like Ibn ʿArabi, Ayatollah Khomeini supports the view that the perfect man has a guiding role in the Islamic community.

Ayatollah Khomeini was also greatly inspired by Mollâ Sadrâ, the famous seventeenth-century theologian and philosopher who was also an adherent of Ibn ʿArabi and who became known especially for his book *al-Hekma al-Mota'aliyya fi-l-Asfâr al-'Aqliyya al-Arba'a* (Transcendent Wisdom of the Four Journeys of the Intellect), which is usually referred to as the *al-Asfâr al-Arba'a*, or the "Four Journeys." In this book Mollâ Sadrâ elaborates on the spiritual path of the mystic towards perfection. He divides this path into four intellectual journeys. The first journey leads the mystic from the earthly world towards God. In this stage, the mystic learns about metaphysics and philosophy. He learns that the whole creation is actually one, despite its diversity. During his second journey the mystic travels with God in God. During this journey the mystic realizes the nature of God and sees the divine attributes reflected in himself. After he has realized this, the mystic's Self will be annihilated and he will become one with God's essence. In the third stage, the mystic travels from God back to creation. During the last journey, the mystic travels through creation while remaining in constant contact with God. The mystic realizes that everything around him is a reflection of God. He no longer sees multiplicity and diversity, but instead sees unity.[155] At this stage the mystic has reached perfection and the level of viceregency (*velâyat*). Now it is his task to share his divine knowledge and guide the Islamic community.[156] In his *Mesbâh*, Ayatollah Khomeini is rather vague about who may reach this final stage. On several occasions, Ayatollah Khomeini says that only the twelve Imams and prophets can attain this final level, while on one occasion he gives the impression that this level can also be reached by the ordinary man.[157]

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have all been created from the same substance. See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 284-285.

[155] For an elaboration on the 'four journeys' of Mollâ Sadrâ see S.H. Rizvī, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics; Modulation of Being*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 30-33 and S.H. Rizvi, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, under Mulla Sadra.

[156] For consultation on Mollâ Sadrâ see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state*, p. 29; B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 31, 33, 35, 38, 40, 44, 46, 76, 153, 207; S.H. Rizvi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Mollâ Sadrâ Širâzi; H. Corbin, "La Place de Mollā ṣadrā Shīrāzī dans la Philosophie Iranienne," in *Studia Islamica*, No. 18, 1963, pp. 81-113.

[157] See V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state*, p. 29; B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 39.

Ayatollah Khomeini and Mollâ Sadrâ shared many ideas. Both believed that a true comprehension of God could only be attained by first studying the Islamic sources such as the Koran, *hadith* ('traditions') and Islamic law and then developing intuitive knowledge.[158] Like Mollâ Sadrâ, Ayatollah Khomeini strongly believed in humans' ability to reach a higher spiritual state, up to the level of perfection. Mollâ Sadrâ presented existence as a hierarchical system, with lower and higher being or beings of various intensities and with God at the top. According to Mollâ Sadrâ, within this system, existence could modulate (*tashkik*). By presenting being or reality in this way, Mollâ Sadrâ explained both the unity of existence and its multiplicity.[159]

Ayatollah Khomeini was a great supporter of Mollâ Sadrâ's version of mysticism. Both Ayatollah Khomeini and Mollâ Sadrâ promoted the idea that the duty of the perfect man lay not merely in withdrawal and private devotion, but also in the community where he served as a guide and leader. Both saw *'erfân* not only as a private matter but as woven into all aspects of life, up to the final stage in which the perfect man could also fulfil a leading function in the community.[160]

The impact of mystical philosophers such as Mollâ Sadrâ and Ibn ʿArabi on Ayatollah Khomeini's worldview is evident not only in the various mystical books he wrote, but also in the private lessons he gave to students of Islamic mysticism, and in his lectures and speeches. Among these are the lectures he gave to some religious students in 1972, later published as *Jehâd-e Akbar yâ Mobâraza bâ Nafs* (The greater jihad: the struggle with the Self).[161] In these lectures Ayatollah Khomeini highlights the need for every Muslim to develop himself on a spiritual level. He advises his students to read the works of great mystical philosophers such as Ibn ʿArabi and Mollâ Sadrâ. He also stresses the importance of acquiring both scholarly knowledge and mystical knowledge, because both are needed to form a complete picture of divine reality.[162] In 1979 and 1980, after Ayatollah Khomeini had returned from exile and had become the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he was asked to give lectures on national

[158] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state*, p. 29; B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 41.

[159] For an elaboration on the 'modulation of being' see chapter 2 by S.H. Rizvi, *Mullâ Sadrâ and Metaphysics; Modulation of Being*, pp. 38-53; See also S.H. Rizvi, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, under Mulla Sadra.

[160] Ibid.; H. Corbin, "La Place de Mollā ṣadrā Shīrāzī dans la Philosophie Iranienne," pp. 81-113.

[161] The book was published in 1972 by Payam-e Azadi Publications and later translated into English by M. Legenhausen and Azim Sardalir. For this English translation see *The Greatest Jihad: Combat with the Self*, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Pubication of Imam Khomeini's Work, 1989.

[162] A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," pp. 635-651.

television in which he would comment on verses from the Koran. Ayatollah Tâleqâni (d. 1979) had been giving these lectures, and Ayatollah Khomeini was asked to take his place. To the displeasure of many orthodox clerics, Ayatollah Khomeini's commentaries on Koranic verses in these lectures were filled with mystical concepts and were published by several publishers.[163] One of the things that Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized in these lectures was that every person has the ability to develop his human potential to perfection on a personal level. In the vein of mystical philosophers such as 'Abdolkarim ibn Ebrâhim al-Jili (d. 1406-1417), Ayatollah Khomeini elaborated on the mystical path towards perfection. In his book on the perfect man, al-Jili described his personal experiences on his spiritual journey. In this process of becoming one with God, the mystic aims at becoming a perfect reflection of God. The mystic wishes to return to his initial state in which he was one with God and thus perfect. This return to a perfect state should be seen as a process of self-realization of the individual's divine essence. It is a process of letting go of the Self to a point where only the divine essence remains. This journey should thus be seen as a process of consciousness or self-realization. Al-Jili divided this journey of the self-manifestation (*tajalli*) of God in the mystic's heart into four stages. In the first phase 'The Illumination of the Divine Actions,' the mystic realizes that God is the sole agent in the world. In the second stage, 'The Illumination of the Divine Names,' a divine manifestation of God's Names takes place in the heart of the mystic after his Self has been annihilated (*fanâ*). In the third phase, 'The Illumination of the Divine Attributes,' the attributes of God manifest themselves in the heart of the mystic. However, the intensity of illumination depends on the capacities of the mystic. In the fourth and final stage, 'The Illumination of the Divine Essence,' the Self of the mystic is replaced by the Essence of God, thus the total of all Divine Names and Attributes, and he may henceforth be called a Perfect Man.[164]

Iran's orthodox Shiite hierarchy did not favour mystical worldviews such as those promoted by al-Jili and Ayatollah Khomeini. They felt that this personal approach to obtaining divine knowledge could undermine the collective power structures of the well-established religious institutions of Iran, and the authority of the state. Most orthodox clerics also had a problem with the claims of some mystics to have attained to a certain state of spiritual perfection through 'direct insight,' although they had not followed the typical

[163] For example by the Islamic Republic Part in Teheran, by Azadi in Qom, by Islamic Publications Office in Qom, by The Message of Freedom in Tehran and by Tabatabai Publications in Qom.

[164] See R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921, pp. 125-130.

curriculum for religious students. In their eyes, *'erfân* was uncontrollable and deviated from the collective religious norms. Mystics' detachment was seen as indifference to life, and their willingness to give up everything, including life, for their convictions made them appear unpredictable, and suspect.[165]

This widespread aversion to mysticism among the orthodox may have been the reason why the television program, in which Ayatollah Khomeini spoke of mysticism, was taken off the air in 1980 after only five broadcasts, although his readings had become immensely popular amongst Iranians. In the last of these five lectures on national television, Ayatollah Khomeini spoke of his personal experience with the orthodox clergy and their negative attitude towards mysticism. Another interpretation holds that the program was stopped because of Ayatollah Khomeini's heart problems: there are few sources to draw on and the question as to why the tv-program was taken off the air remains unresolved.[166]

Whatever the reason for the ending of Ayatollah Khomeini's 'mystical' lectures on national television, it is obvious in Ayatollah Khomeini's work and public appearances that mysticism played a central role in his life. There is ample proof that both his worldview and his ideas on religious scholarship and political authority were permeated by mystical thoughts. Indeed, Ayatollah Khomeini had always approached the private and the public sphere from a mystical point of view. He never made a secret of his mystical aspirations, despite the objections they engendered amongst the orthodox clergy. Baqer Moin describes the frequent instances of harassment that Ayatollah Khomeini and his family suffered from seminary students during his years in Qom, simply because he was teaching *'erfân*. Even the great Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961) objected to his interest in mysticism and philosophy, yet Ayatollah Khomeini never stopped teaching and writing on these subjects, even when he lived in exile or when he had become the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.[167] In 1972, for example, he was lecturing on the greater jihad against the soul.[168] His mystical interpretations

[165] See R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, ed. 2009, pp. 135-148; V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, ed. 2003, p. 33.

[166] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 273-274; J.G.J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de Optiek van Khumayni," pp. 93, 94.

[167] It is important to notice that not all clerics were against his interest in mysticism. The later Ayatollah Motahheri (d. 1979) and Montazeri (d. 2009), for example, had both been students in his classes on '*erfân*.

[168] For an English translation of these lectures I refer to the book *Islam and Revolution*, by R. Khomeini, pp. 349-362, in which H. Algar has translated these lectures into English.

of the Koran in 1980 have just been mentioned, and in 1989 he wrote an open letter to President Gorbachev, part of which reads:

Mr. Gorbachev, reality must be faced. The main problem confronting your country is not one of private ownership, freedom and economy; your problem is the absence of true faith in God, the very problem that has dragged, or will drag, the West to vulgarism and an impasse. Your main problem is the prolonged and futile war you have waged against God, the source of existence and creation.[169]

Ayatollah Khomeini feared that Gorbachev, who had fought Marxism in his country, would be persuaded by Western capitalism. He therefore highlighted the fact that this would not solve the misery of the country. Ayatollah Khomeini believed that the lack of religiosity and spiritually was at the root of all problems in the Soviet Union. Ayatollah Khomeini then explains to Gorbachev why there must be a God:

> It is self-evident that matter, whatever its nature, has no awareness of self. Consider a stone statue: each side is ignorant of the other side, whereas human beings and animals, we clearly observe, are aware of their surroundings. They know where they are, and have some idea of what goes on around them. There must be, then, an element in men and animals that transcends matter and is separate from it, living beyond the life of matter. Intrinsically, man seeks to attain absolute perfection. He strives, as you well know, for absolute power over the world; he is not attached to any power that is defective. If he has the entire world at his command, he naturally feels inclined to have command of another world once he is informed of its existence. No matter how learned a person may be, if he learns of some other branch of knowledge, he naturally feels inclined to attain mastery of that branch of knowledge also. Therefore, there must be some Absolute Power and Absolute Knowledge to which man is attached. It is God we all seek, although we may not be aware of it. Man strives to attain Absolute Truth, so that he may be annihilated in God. Basically, the desire for eternal life that is inherent in every individual is proof of the existence of an Eternal World to which destruction cannot find its way.[170]

In this part of the letter, Ayatollah Khomeini explains the relationship each person has with God. In the vein of Mollâ Sadrâ, he clarifies this matter in terms of a worldview in which the whole of creation is in a continuous state of progress. In this case Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the progress of *ma'refat*, knowledge from and of the divine, which each element in

[169] For this translated letter see www.ghadeer.org/english/imam/letter%20Imam/callto/callto2.html, accessed on June 12 2012.

[170] Ibid.

the universe wishes to obtain. The more access the mystic obtains to this knowledge, the more he progresses on his path, to the point at which he has become one with this 'Absolute Power.' The mystical interpretation of evolution that Ayatollah Khomeini gives in the letter is strongly influenced by Platonic and Neo-Platonic thinking. According to this theory, the universe is a chain of evolution that starts with the four basic elements and yields the diversity of minerals, plants and animals, and then human beings, and finally the perfect man. Mowlânâ Jalâl al-Din Rumi (1207-1273) elaborates on this mystical interpretation of evolution.[171] In one of his most famous poems, Rumi refers to this 'road of evolution' in the following way:

I died as a mineral and became a plant,	از جمادی مُردم و نامی شدم
I died as plant and elevated to animal,	وز نما مُردم، به حیوان بر زدم
I died as an animal and became man.	مُردم از حیوانی، و آدم شدم
Then what to fear? When did I become less from dying?	پس چه ترسم؟ کی ز مُردن کم شدم؟
Once again I will die as man,	حملهٔ دیگر، بمیرم از بشر
To draw out my angelwings and head.	تا بر آرم از ملایك پرّ وسر
But also from angelhood I must move forward,	وز ملك هم بایدم جستن ز جو
Everything perishes but God.	کلّ شیءٍ هالك الّا وجهه
Then again, after I sacrificed my angelhood,	بار دیگر از ملك قربان شوم
I will become what nobody ever imagined.	آنچه اندر وهم ناید، آن شوم
So reduce me to nothingness, to nothingness because all organs	پس عدم گردم، عدم چون ارغنون
Tell me: 'To Him we shall return.'[172]	گویدم که:إنّا الیه راجعون

The interpretation of evolution that Rumi presents in this poem differs from Darwinian evolution: both Rumi and Charles Darwin (d. 1882) perceive the universe in terms of chains of evolution in which lower organisms develop into higher beings. But while Darwin believed that the universe had a purely natural cause and each specimen evolves to a new form, mystics such as Rumi believe that God is at the basis of existence and has created the world and everything in it so that he could see himself reflected in it.[173] According to the mystics, mankind's purpose is to return to God by making a journey of progress. During his life, the

[171] See article by A. Zarrīnkūb, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Evolution.

[172] My translation is based on A.J. Arberry's rendition in *Classical Persian Literature*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994, p. 241. (Jalâl al-Din Rumi, *Mathnavi*, vol. 3, ed. M. Este'lâmi, Tehran: Zawwâr, 1372, p. 180, ll. 3903-3908)).

[173] For the differences between Darwin's and Rumi's concept of evolution see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Soefisme: een levende traditie*, Amsterdam: Prometheus / Bert Bakker, 2015, pp. 144-45.

soul of the mystic has to travel from one realm to the other, until he has reached the highest realm possible, which is the realm of God.[174]

In his letter to Gorbachev, Ayatollah Khomeini also uses this mystical evolutionary scheme, according to which humankind must make a journey of many stages to return to God. The ability of the individual to reach the highest spiritual level is central to Ayatollah Khomeini's worldview. This idea is also evident in his letter to Gorbachev in which he refers to the intrinsic urge to look for the highest spiritual point, for God, although some may not realize that it is God they are looking for. Then, after a person has found God "he may be annihilated in God."[175] The way Ayatollah Khomeini explains evolution in terms of knowledge and annihilation clearly fits into this mystical tradition. In the following part of the letter, he advises Gorbachev to read the works of mystical masters such as Ibn ʿArabi, Sohravardi and Mollâ Sadrâ to learn the truth of Islam. This is further evidence that Ayatollah Khomeini's worldview was strongly intertwined with mystical ideas. He ends his letter by inviting some Russian scholars to come to Qom to "glimpse the depth of the delicate stages of gnosis which will be impossible for them to acquire without making such a journey."[176] The letter shows that Ayatollah Khomeini did not consider a study of Islamic sources such as the Koran, the *hadith* or Sharia texts sufficient. In his eyes, spiritual enlightenment was an additional requisite for forming a complete picture of God.

The orthodox clergy in Iran were outraged when they heard that Ayatollah Khomeini had advised the president of the Soviet Union to read the books of Sohravardi and Mollâ Sadrâ to learn more on Islam. Shortly after his letter to Gorbachev, Ayatollah Khomeini received an open letter from a group called 'The Protectors of Jerusalem' which said:

> Your Holiness…you have not referred Mr Gorbachev to the truth of the holy Qor'an, but have asked him to read [the works of] the condemned heretic Avicenna, the Sunni pantheist and arch-mystic Ibn al-Arabi, the works of Sohravardi who was executed by the Muslims for his ideological deviations, and the writing of Mollah Sadra, who was exiled to the village of Kahak near Qom because of his intellectual deviations….Your Holiness's lectures at the Feiziyeh School of theology were cancelled for exactly the same reason. …In view of all this, we fail to understand why you refer the gentleman to deviant philosophers and mystics for the study of Islam. Are there not sufficient

[174] See A. Zarrīnkūb, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Evolution.

[175] A translation of this letter can be found on www.ghadeer.org/english/imam/letter%20Imam/callto/callto2.html, accessed on June 12 2012.

[176] Ibid.

> reasons in the Qor'an to prove the existence of God and to explain the principles and precepts of religion? Does it mean that the leaders of Islam are unable to explain the truth of the Qor'an without resorting to philosophy and mysticism? You know that both Greek philosophy and Indian mysticism existed long before the advent of either the Prophet Mohammad or Moses and Jesus. If philosophy and mysticism were sufficient to guide mankind, then was there any need for the Almighty to grace us with the mission of the prophets?[177]

The disapproval of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical affiliations is obvious in this letter. The main objection of the 'Protectors of Jerusalem', whom Baqer Moin defines as "Qom members of a fringe organisation", is that Ayatollah Khomeini supported persons who deviated from normative Islamic thought.[178] In their response, they use terms such as 'heretic' for Avicenna, 'Sunni pantheist' and 'arch-mystic' for Ibn ʿArabi and speak of the 'intellectual deviations' of Mollâ Sadrâ. As in the case of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical readings on national television, they objected to Ayatollah Khomeini promoting unorthodox mystical ideas. For ages, the relationship between the orthodox and the mystics has been strained, because mystics' preference for personal and direct contact with God through experience, without any need for a traditional religious education or consulting Islamic theologians, was seen as a great threat to the power structures of the Islamic community. In addition, many mystics espoused the unity of existence (*towhid*) and therefore believed that each person was able to reach a spiritual state of perfection, a position that was severely condemned by the orthodox. The belief in the unity of existence was also seen as a threat to power structures, since it led mystics consider themselves superior, and even above the laws of God and man. In addition to these fears, there were numerous stories associating mystics with homosexual practices. The very close and personal bond between the mystic and his spiritual master, which often played out behind closed doors, had for ages led to suspicion of homosexual activity. Moreover many mystics did not marry. In general one can say that mysticism was long regarded as something mysterious and incontrollable that could threaten the power structure within the religious institutions and the country at large.[179]

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[177] This letter was written by a group called "The Protectors of Jerusalem" and was translated by B. Moin in *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 275.

[178] See ibid.

[179] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, ed. 2009, pp. 135, 144-149, 179-183.

This orthodox aversion to mysticism is also clear in the letter the 'Protectors of Jerusalem' addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini. But the letter did not silence Ayatollah Khomeini: he responded a few weeks later, saying:

> This old father of yours has suffered more from stupid reactionary mollahs than anyone else. When theology meant no interference in politics, stupidity became a virtue. If a clergyman was able, and aware of what was going on [in the world around him], they searched for a plot behind it. You were considered more pious if you walked in a clumsy way. Learning foreign languages was blasphemy; philosophy and mysticism were considered to be sin and infidelity. In the Feiziyeh my young son Mostafa drank water from a jar. Since I was teaching philosophy, my son was considered to be religiously impure, so they washed the jar to purify it afterwards. Had this trend continued, I have no doubt the clergy and seminaries would have trodden the same path as the Christian Church did in the Middle Ages.[180]

The correspondence above shows that Ayatollah Khomeini's relations with the orthodox, including his colleagues in Qom, was bad from the beginning of his career because of his interest in philosophy and sufism. However Ayatollah Khomeini continued to impart his mystical doctrines. Traces of his spiritual convictions are evident in most of his books and lectures, and in the last years of his life he condemned the orthodox clergy more openly for their criticism of Islamic mysticism. His private letters to his son Ahmad, published by his grandson Hoseyn after his death in 1989, confirm the role mysticism and the search for spiritual perfection played in Ayatollah Khomeini's life and reveal his strong aversion to hypocritical orthodox clerics.[181] Let us now examine the extent to which Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical leanings are reflected in his poetry.

[180] The letter was composed on February 22nd 1989 and published in *Resalat* on February 25 1989; translated by B. Moin in *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* ed. 2009, p. 276.

[181] Some of these letters have been published by Ayatollah Khomeini's grandson Hoseyn in 1995 under the title *Reunion with the Beloved: Imam Ayatollah Khomeini's Letters to Hujjat al-Islām wal-Muslimin Hāj Sayyid Ahmad Ayatollah Khomeini* by the Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works, in Tehran.

2.4 Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetical Work

From the beginning of his *Divân* (collected works), it is obvious that Ayatollah Khomeini imitated classical Persian poems that were famous for their mystical content. Although there are few studies of his poems in western languages, a few articles and translations can be mentioned. The first English translation I know of is by Finn Thiesen, who translated eight of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems.[182] William Hanaway gave a translation and interpretation of five mystical *ghazal*s by Ayatollah Khomeini.[183] In 2005, and again in 2011, Asghar Seyed-Gohrab translated and analysed one of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems.[184] In 2007, Benedikt Reinert wrote a long article entitled "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte", in which he analysed a large number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems with the intention of placing him in the Persian intellectual and mystical tradition.[185]

2.5 The Role of Poets and Poetry in Persian Society

It is not surprising that Ayatollah Khomeini composed poetry, considering the importance of poetry in Persian culture. But does writing poetry make him a poet? As Baqer Moin says, Ayatollah Khomeini called himself a *mâ'er*, a 'non-poet' on several occasions, and this is also the opinion of several Iranian intellectuals in the West.[186] One must however distinguish the long-standing Persianate definition of a poet from a Western one, and a contemporary Iranian one. Being a poet in Iran was a profession, and a role that was initially connected to the court and the aristocracy. In his famous *Qâbus-nâme* (1082/3) Key Kâvus defined the profession of poet as 'a branch of learning.' He made a sharp distinction between real poets and would-be poets, calling the former those who possessed 'technical skills and knowledge,' which the latter lacked. Nezâmi 'Aruzi (d. 1209), another classical literary theoretician, emphasized the social function of the poet as the establisher of a good reputation, not only for his patron but also for himself. Nezâmi stressed that a poet needed a good general education and under the guidance of a master had to learn both modern and classical poetical works by heart. Improvisation was seen as the greatest possible skill of a poet. To use J.T.P. de Bruijn's

[182]F. Thiesen, "A Draught of Love…," pp. 211-227.

[183] W.L. Hanaway, "Five Mystical Ghazals," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 30, No ¾, pp. 273-276.

[184] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini en de Wijnschenker," pp . 115-130; idem, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," pp. 438-458.

[185] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 191-293.

[186] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, ed. 2009, p. 272; it might be that Ayatollah Khomeini referred to various Koranic verses in which mention is made of the 'non-poetics of prophet Muhammad. See Koranic verses 21:5; 36:69; 37:36-37:37; 52:30;69:41.

words, the poet's main task was "to provide food for thought through wisdom formulated in poetry." [187] The poet had a strong political role as the adviser of his royal or aristocratic patron. He belonged to his inner circle and lived a similar high-standard life. Ayatollah Khomeini was not a poet, and did not have the role of a poet, according to this classical Persian definition, but fits more closely with the redefinition of the poet's role and education that emerged in the twentieth century.

To understand why a mystic, scholar, political activist and national leader – and one who did not consider himself "a poet" – would write poetry, and what the writing implies about his role in society, we will have to consider the evolving role of poetry in Persian-speaking societies.

Poetry has and does play a very important role in Persian society, at all levels from politicians and royalty to mystics and students. As Benedikt Reinert says, all educated young Iranians write poetry and Ayatollah Khomeini was not an exception.[188] Anyone who travels in Iran or knows about its culture will acknowledge the essential role of poetry in everyday life. It is one of the most popular art forms in Persian culture. Yarshater calls it "…the most significant artistic achievement of Persia".[189] Jan Rypka says that "love of poetry, be it active or passive, is evident and alive in Iran today as scarcely anywhere else in Europe"[190] Beginning from a young age, Iranian children in school must learn the poetry of great Persian poets such as Saʿdi or Hâfez by heart.

Thanks to Western scholarship we have documents from the pre-Islamic period indicating that Iran had a strong poetic tradition that centred around the court.[191] At that time poetry was not written but sung, by minstrels (*motreb*) who, in exchange for a reward or protection, sang lyrics for their patrons and the other members of the royal family.[192] Poetry

[187] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Shi'r ii. In Persian.

[188] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," p. 223.

[189] E. Yarshater, "Some Characteristics of Persian Poetry and Art," in *Studia Islamica*, No. 16, 1962, pp. 61-71.

[190] J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968, p.80.

[191] The oldest evidence of Iranian poetry that has been found are the Gathas documents. These religious poetic lines are said to have been written by Zarathustra, the prophet of the Zoroastrian faith. See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iran.

[192] For an elaboration on Persian court poetry see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry; See also M. Boyce, "The Parthian Gōsān and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. ½, 1957, pp. 10-45. See also J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Het Lot van de Perzische Hofdichter," in *Dichter en Hof: Verkenningen in Veertien Culturen*, Utrecht: Hes Uitgevers, 1986, pp. 149-166.

was a means for the ruling elite to promote and legitimize their rule. Poetry was thus inextricably linked to leadership. After the invasions of Iranian territories by the Muslim Arabs in the seventh century, Arabic became the language of science and politics. Many Persian authors and poets wrote in Arabic. Although Arabic dominated the literary scene for about three centuries, the works of many figures, such as Abu Nuvâs (d. 814) and Mohammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), were imbued with Persian culture.[193]

Now that poetry was written down, a clear distinction was made between the minstrel and the poet. The first served as a sort of entertainer by composing music and singing songs, the latter, or at least the most high-ranking of the poets, was appointed for his thorough knowledge of diverse branches of knowledge. Years of study fitted him to advise his patron, in poetry, on diverse matters, and so the poet, with the patron's personal physician, was part of the inner circle at court.[194]

The first written poetry in Persian appeared in the ninth century.[195] One of the reasons for the return to writing in Persian was that local Persian rulers, who governed under Abbasid suzerainty, could not understand Arabic.[196] These semi-independent rulers also used literature to legitimize their power and to connect their genealogy to the great pre-Islamic kings of the Sassanian dynasty (r. 224-651). This trend of promoting their pre-Islamic 'Iranian' identity, according to which all Iranian rulers descended from the 'king of kings,' was even applied by non-Persian dynasties who had Sassanian genealogies created for them.[197] The Ghaznavids (r. 975-1187), who were of Turkic origin but who cherished Persian culture, are an example.[198]

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[193] For poetry by Abu Nuvâs see *Abu Nuwas: A Genius of Poetry*, ed. Ph. F. Kennedy, Oxford: Oneworld, 2005. For Tabari's work see C.E. Bosworth in *The History of al-Tabari,* Vol. V (1999), Vol. XXXIII (1991), Vol. XXX,, Albany: State University of New York Press.

[194] For the difference between the minstrel and the court poet see J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Het Lot van de Perzische Hofdichter," pp. 151-152; M. Boyce, "The Parthian Gōsān and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," pp. 10-45. See also J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry.

[195] This poem was written by the secretary Mohammad-e Vâsef at the order of his ruler Yaqob b. Leyth, who could not understand Arabic poems. See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iran.

[196] The Abbasid Dynasty was an Islamic caliphate that ruled large parts of the Middle-East and Spain from 750 till 1258. See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry; See also G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *The Cambridge History of Iran,* Vol. 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 595-632.

[197] For an elaboration on the king tradition I refer to the book by J.T.P. de Bruijn, "Het Lot van de Perzische Hofdichter," pp. 151-152.

[198] For consultation see A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Iranian Identity iii. Medieval Islamic Period.

The Persian poetical scene of the ninth century was thus strongly connected to politics and cultural identity.[199]

Persian poets' role of glorifying the pre-Islamic past has survived in Iran in modern times. From the nineteenth century onwards, when nationalist ideas filtered into the country from the West, many Iranians concentrated on their country's pre-Islamic glories, blaming Islam and Arabs for Iran's backwardness.[200] This nationalistic trend was also visible in literature. A group of intellectuals were very active in spreading Persian nationalism and emphasizing that all Iranian nationals, despite their diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds, shared a common Iranian identity that predated Islam. Among the best known of these intellectuals are Mirzâ Fath 'Ali Âkhunzâdeh (d. 1878), Mirzâ Âqâ Khân Kermâni (d. 1896), Jalâl al-Din Mirzâ (d. 1871), and later Ahmad Kasravi (d. 1946). In their view, the Persian language had to be 'purified' from foreign elements to be true to its pre-Islamic Iranian origin. Thus up until recent times, Persian poets were strongly connected to politics and cultural identity, even as poets and poetry became disconnected from the courts of royal patrons.[201]

The new concept of the social position of the poet can be connected to the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) and the crumbling and eventual end of the autocracy of the Qajar dynasty (r. 1785-1925), and with it the tradition of court patronage. Poets had to rely on other sources of income and began taking a stand in the political struggles of the day, and to write poetry that related much more closely to daily life outside the court. Many poets who had previously favoured the Qajar rulers now began to openly condemn their former patrons. They became advocates of the people's rights and critics of social injustice. Poets also became highly personal.[202] This emphasis on the personal, social, and politically-involved stance of the poet has continued to be the general image of the modern Iranian poet.[203]

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[199] For consultation see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iran.

[200] A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Iranian Identity iv. 19th-20th Centuries.

[201] M. Kia, "Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1998, pp. 9-36; M. A. Jazayery, "Western Influence In Contemporary Persian: A General View," in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 29, 1966, pp. 79-96.

[202] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Shā'ir ii. In Persia; idem, *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, chapter one, pp. 1-42

[203] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Shi'r ii. In Persian.

Another field in which poetry has played an indispensable role is mysticism. From the tenth century, mystics have used poetry to communicate mystical doctrines or to express their personal mystical experiences. Poetry proved to be an effective way to explain complicated spiritual concepts such as union and separation or the various stages on the mystical path to initiates.[204] Poets such as Amir Khosrow in India, Hakim Sanâ'i in Afghanistan, Farid al-Din 'Attâr in Iran and Rumi in present day Turkey wrote heavy volumes of poetry, explaining various aspects of Islamic mysticism. Poetry was also used in mystical rituals. As Leonard Lewisohn says in his article on *samâ'* practices among mystics, listening to mystical poetry accompanied by music and/or dance has become one of the obligatory (*wâjeb*) steps on the spiritual path towards God. The *samâ'* practice is a sort of meditation that the mystic uses to realize a certain spiritual state (*hâl*) in which he loses all consciousness of the self (*bi-khodi*). It brings the mystic closer to God and might eventually result in a state of ecstasy (*wajd*). Finally, in some cases the poem can also evoke visions. According to Lewisohn, a mystical poem can only be understood effectively in a *samâ'* setting, which means it is accompanied by music and possibly dance, because the metres of the poem and the rhythm of the music are designed to lead the practitioner to this state of ecstasy.[205]

In conclusion, one can agree that the role which poetry has played in the history of Iran has been of inimitable value throughout the course of Iranian history. It not only functioned as a form of identity that has been capable of connecting the people of Iran for ages, but in recent times it has also been an effective means to convey social and political messages. Lastly, poetry played and still plays an important role in the life of mystics as a means of spiritual communication.

2.6 Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Not long after Ahmad Khomeini introduced one of his father's poems to the public by publishing one of his poems in the Iranian newspaper Keyhân of June 14th 1989, many other poems apparently came to light that were attributed to Ayatollah Khomeini.[206] As the editor of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry collection indicates, most of them were handed over by family or friends after his death, resulting in the publication of his complete collection of poetry

[204] Ibid. See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," p. 442.

[205] Except for some branches of the Naqhsbandiyya order, almost all mystical orders know the practice of *samâ*. See L. Lewisohn, "The Sacred Music of Islam: Sama' in the Persian Sufi Tradition," in *The British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 6, 1997, pp. 1-22.

[206] The poem was published on page 16 of the editiorial of *Keyhân* of June 14th 1989.

(*Divân*), under the title *Divân-e Emâm*. Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* contains a total of 1535 couplets, composed in two periods: before 1936, during his studies in Qom; and after 1979, when he returned to Iran from exile. His older poems are almost all dated, while the most recent work often lacks any date. His oeuvre embraces the main poetic forms to be found in the medieval Persian poetic tradition. Lyrical poems (*ghazal*s) make up the major part of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*, a total of 149 poems. The longest *ghazal* has ten couplets and the shortest four couplets.[207] He has also composed 117 quatrains (*robâ'i*s), two stanzaic poems (*mosammat*s), 31 poetical 'fragments' (*qet'e*s), one strophe poem (*tarji-band*) and three panegyric poems (*qaside*s).[208] Ayatollah Khomeini was deeply inspired by poets such as Hâfez (d. 1389) and Sanâ'i (d. 1131).

Many of the later poems were written for his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, who was married to his son Ahmad and who lived in the same house as Ayatollah Khomeini, together with their children. Fâteme was a philosophy student, and often discussed her studies with Ayatollah Khomeini, who was an expert in this field. The discussions impelled Ayatollah Khomeini to write numerous pages on various mystical and philosophical subjects, which would later be published under the title *Râh-e 'Eshq* ('The Path of Love').[209] Later, Fâteme also inspired Ayatollah Khomeini to write poems again. While his earlier poems deal more with religious matters, his later poems show strong mystical influences. They deal with subjects such as wine, eroticism, antinomianism, love and reason, spiritual poverty, veiling and death or union with the Beloved. Other themes, such as the war between Iran and Iraq, religious concepts, and politics, occur repeatedly in Ayatollah Khomeini's poems.[210] In what follows, I will analyse Ayatollah Khomeini's *qaside*s, *robâ'i*s and *ghazal*s systematically in separate chapters.

[207] The shortest *ghazal* can be found on page 84 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* and the longest one on page 190.

[208] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 191-196.

[209] The Persian book was published in Teheran by Tahiyah va mo'asseseh tanzim o nashar-e âsâr-e emâm Khomeini emâm Khomeini in 1989.

[210] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 270-273.

3

Ayatollah Khomeini, the Topical Poet and his Quatrains (*robâ'i*s)

A considerable part of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* consists of *robâ'i*s: 117 of the 296 poems he composed. Ayatollah Khomeini wrote the *robâ'i*s in 1984 and 1985. The immediate occasion for his first *robâ'i* was the fifth anniversary celebration of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on February 11th 1984.[211] Ayatollah Khomeini wrote the poem "Our Republic" several weeks later, on March 31st 1984, together with three other *robâ'i*s in which he celebrated the Islamic Republic.[212] Within a year Ayatollah Khomeini composed another 107 *robâ'i*s on various subjects. As in most of his poems, mysticism plays an important role in his *robâ'i*s. Khomeini's poetry is interesting since it allows us to peak into the mind of one of the most influential political leaders of the twentieth century. Many of his *robâ'i*s contain biographical elements, details on his relationship with his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i and references to the war against Iraq. What makes Ayatollay Khomeini's *robâ'i*s in particular interesting, is his veneration of the controversial mystical figure of Mansur Hallâj, his references to the battle at Karbalâ and the figure of Imam Hoseyn, and his rejection of the Kaʿba in Mecca. It is the combination of these topics that make his *robâ'i*s interesting since it demonstrates how Ayatollah Khomeini is able to spiritualize Shia Islam for political purposes, by linking mysticism with Shia Islam, with martyrdom and politics.

3.1 *Robâ'i*s in Historical Perspective

The *robâ'i* genre is perhaps the best known Persian poetic form in the West, thanks to Edward Fitzgerald, who adapted *robâ'i*s attributed to 'Omar Khayyâm (d. 1123) to English which he published in 1859. The Persian *robâ'i*s consist of four hemistiches (*mesrâ'*s) laid out in two couplets (*beyt*s). They are short but terse poetic formulations, easily remembered and cited. Like the Japanese haiku, they often present witty statements. Usually the poet presents a thought in the first two lines. In the third line, which often has a different rhyme, the poet makes a point, and he confirms this statement in the last line and follows with a conclusion.[213]

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[211] The *robâ'i* is called "Our Republic" and can be found on page 195 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*. For the sake of convenience I have numbered the *robâ'i* 195b indicating that it is the second poem on the page. This same method I use to refer to the other poems in the *Divân*.

[212] These other *robâ'i*s can be found on pp. 193b, 197a and 206a.

[213] A.G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R.N. Frye, Vol. 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 612.

There are two variants on the *robâ'i*: the *do-beyti*, which is a two-couplet poem and which is often used in folk literature, and the *tarâna*, the musical *robâ'i*.

It is known that Persian poets often used *robâ'i's* as an entertaining interlude during ceremonies or speeches, but in the majority of the cases, we are not informed about the setting of the *robâ'i*s.[214] There are, of course, exceptions recounted, for instance, by Nezâmi 'Aruzi in his *Chahâr maqâle* (*Four Discourses*) about the position of Amir Mo'ezzi (d. 1120), the poet-laureate (*malek al-shoʿarâ*) at the Saljuq court. He had fallen from the king's favor, but he composed a *robâ'i* on the occasion of observing the new moon to indicate the end of the Ramadan and he received rewards from the Sultan.[215] A poet may treat various subjects in the *robâ'i*, such as love, the praise of a patron, or philosophical or mystical thoughts. According to J.T.P. de Bruijn, it is almost certain that the *robâ'i* genre was the first poetical form in which mystics expressed their mystical ideas. [216] Numerous Persian mystical *robâ'i*s have been found dating from the eleventh century, the century in which mystical poetry spread rapidly throughout the Persian-speaking world. Bâbâ Tâher (d. about 1055-1060), nicknamed 'the Naked' (*Oryân*) because he walked in as little clothing as possible, was probably the first mystical who composed *robâ'i*s. Hâfez (d. 1389), whom Ayatollah Khomeini has imitated in a variety of his poems, also wrote numerous mystical *robâ'i*s.

The *robâ'i* is still a very popular genre in Persian-speaking areas.[217] Poets often quote the *robâ'i*s of their famous predecessors. Classical *robâ'i* writers such as Sanâ'i (d. 1131) or Hâfez (d. 1389) also inspired Ayatollah Khomeini. Like them, he composed numerous qua *robâ'i*s on the mystical experience, and by doing so he places himself in the same tradition.

3.2 Structure of the Persian *Robâ'i*

One of the reasons why this poetic genre was and still is so popular in the Persian-speaking world might be its distinct metre, which unlike the other classical Persian poetic genres, is not based on the Arabic metric system. This suggests that this genre might predate the Islamic period in Iran.[218] Unlike other Persian poetical genres, the metre is the choice of the poet.[219]

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[214] J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry; An Introduction to the Mystical Use of Classical Poems*, Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997, pp. 7-9.

[215] Nezâmi ʿAruzi, *Chahâr maqâle*, ed. M. Qazvini, London and Leiden, 1910, pp. 40-43.

[216] J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, p. 13.

[217] A.G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," p. 612.

[218] L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "The "Rubā'ī" in Early Persian Literature," *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R.N. Frye, Vol. 4 (The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 636.

As Jan Rypka states, the metre of a Persian poem is extremely important for a correct understanding, so the reader is faced with identifying which of the possible two metres has been used in a particular quatrain.[220] Moreover the metrical rules allow one long syllable to be replaced by two short syllables, and other variations, which means that the syllable count can be quite variable. There are also two possible rhyme schemes: *aaaa* or *aaba*. Because of the brevity of this poetic genre, in many cases it is not easy or even possible to tell whether a four-line poem is a poem in itself or is part of a larger poem. Often it is the rhyme scheme that answers the question: poems with rhyming pattern *aaaa* are often *robâ'i*s, while poems with rhyming scheme *aaba* can be, but are not necessarily, *robâ'i*s.[221] Particularly in the eleventh and twelfth century the *robâ'i* was a very popular genre, especially in the East of Iran, where the New Persian language had emerged.[222] But even today, the *robâ'i* is very popular in Persian-speaking areas. Almost every poet has composed *robâ'i*s.

3.3 *Robâ'i*s by Ayatollah Khomeini

Ayatollah Khomeini started writing *robâ'i*s only towards the end of his life in two different time spans: between March 31st and July 17th of 1984, and between January 23rd and March 22nd of 1985. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i* are interesting not only because of their biographical elements, but also because of his references to mysticism and to the war against Iraq. One can detect in them the same predilection for mysticism as in his *qaside*s and *ghazal*s. However, while Ayatollah Khomeini has used the *qaside* genre to display his love and devotion to his teacher Hâ'eri, presenting him as a perfect man and the Mahdi's representative who can provide a solution for the political disarray in Iran during Reza Shah's reign, in the *robâ'i*s he communicates either complex mystical thoughts or biographical

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[219] J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, pp. 7-9.

[220] J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968, p. 93. L. P. Elwell-Sutton speaks of two possible robai-metres: – – ∪ ∪ / – – ∪ ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – and – – ∪ ∪ / – ∪ – ∪ – – ∪ ∪ – . See L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "The "Rubā'ī" in Early Persian Literature," p. 635. and J. Rypka, *op. cit.*, p. 92. Also see C.H. de Fouchécour, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Rubā'ī.

[221] L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "The "Rubā'ī" in Early Persian Literature," pp. 633-634.

[222] See J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, pp. 95-96. Especially in the Eastern parts of the region, which were far away from the ''Arabized centre,' the desire for a return to the Persian language was strong. Local rulers, particularly in Transoxiana, asked for praise poetry in their 'own' language. Iranians, unlike other populations under Arab rule, continued to communicate in Dari rather than Arabic. See A.G. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," pp. 595-632.

information. As we will see, in his *robâ'i*s, he synthesizes politics with Shia Islam and mysticism.

3.4 Biographical Elements: A Dialogue with Ayatollah Khomeini's Daughter-in-Law

Ayatollah Khomeini addressed at least thirteen *robâ'i*s to his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâi, the wife of his youngest son, Ahmad.[223] It was Fâteme who encouraged Ayatollah Khomeini to resume writing poetry. In 1984, when she was still a student of philosophy and theosophy, she asked Ayatollah Khomeini to write a treatise on gnosis for her. Sometime later, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote a twelve-page paper for her, which was published shortly after Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989 under the name *Râh-e 'Eshq* ("The Road of Love.").[224] The treatise was the beginning of a lively discussion between Ayatollah Khomeini and his daughter-in-law on philosophical, mystical and religious matters, often in the form of *ghazal*s or *robâ'i*s. These poems give the reader good insights into Ayatollah Khomeini's standpoint on Islamic mysticism. Often speaking in a personal voice, he advises his daughter-in-law, as in the following quatrain:

Fâti, do you want to travel to the Beloved's quarter? Woe to me!	فاطی تو و ره به کوی دلبر هیهات!
Do you want to look at the Beloved's face? Woe to me!	نظاره گری دلبر؟ هیهات!
This is not a road you can measure:	این راه رهی نیست که پیمانی تو
Gabriel lost his wing on that road, woe to me!	جبریل در آن فکنده شهپر هیهات![225]

In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini explains to his daughter-in-law that studying and fully understanding Islamic mysticism is not something everyone can achieve. It is a road full of hardship and exertion. The refrain of the poem, *Heyhât*, which means 'Begone!,' 'Away!,' 'Alas!,' or 'Woe to me!,' is a strong expression, pointing to the difficulties of the mystical path. It also has a personal undertone, as if Ayatollah Khomeini is reminded of his own experiences as a student of mysticism in his early years of study, when he followed private lectures at the feet of Mirzâ ʿAli Akbar Yazdi, Mirzâ Javâd Âqâ Maleki Tabrizi, Sayyed Abol-Hasan Rafi'i Qazvini and especially Mirzâ Mohammad ʿAli Shâhâbâdi).[226] The mystical path, in the Sufi tradition, is marked by a series of stations (*maqâmât*) . The mystic

[223] These *robâ'i*s can be found on pages 193a, 194b; 196a; 197b; 198a,1; 202b; 203b;204b; 205b; 209a; 232a; 237b and 244a.

[224] R. Khomeini, *Râh-e 'eshq,* Tehran, 1989.

[225] See *robâ'i Heyhāt* ("Begone") in *Divân*, p. 193a.

[226] See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009, pp. 42-43.

starts with the first station, which is usually renouncement and goes along several stations, commonly seven, till he arrives at the last station, where he annihilates his ego and finds union with the Beloved. Like other poets in the Persian mystical tradition, Ayatollah Khomeini compares the mystical journey to the ascension (*me'râj*) of the Prophet Mohammad. This is supposed to have taken place one night during Mohammad's life, around the year 621. During this journey the Prophet travels, accompanied by the archangel Gabriel, through the different heavens towards the throne of God, encountering the Creator. Gabriel cannot accompany the Prophet Mohammad to the throne of God since his wings would melt, so he waits for him in the seventh heaven.[227]

Ayatollah Khomeini's reference to Gabriel is a favorite literary motif which mystics often use, symbolizing that angels have no access to the divine realm. Only human beings can come close to God and can even be united with the Creator. Like other mystics, Ayatollah Khomeini gives human beings a higher position in the hierarchy of being than angels. Humankind is superior to angels because the essence of the first is mixed with love, which the latter lack.[228] The story of the nocturnal journey of prophet Mohammad also indicates that the Prophet stands before all human beings. He is higher than all other saints and prophets, excelling others in perfection. Prophet Mohammad's heavenly journey to meet God has become a model for mystics who aim at reaching perfection. By climbing the spiritual ladder, they hope to develop their human potential and to reach the state of perfection. Mystics call a man who has journeyed and encountered God a perfect man. This person has knowledge of both the physical and the divine world and, like the Prophet, is duty-bound to spread the divine secrets and to guide the community once he or she has returned to earth. A mystic can

[227] The interpretations of the Koranic verse (17:1) on this ascension differ. Some believe this ascension was merely a spiritual ascension. Others say that it was a real ascension in the physical sense of the word. It is said that one night archangel Gabriel lifted Prophet Mohammad from his bed in Mecca and brought him to Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem, sitting on the back of Burâq, a large white animal with wings. In Jerusalem, Mohammad meets all the prophets and leads them in prayer. Then Prophet Mohammad travels through the different heavens towards God. When the Prophet arrives at His throne, God advises him on how to lead the Islamic community. After that Mohammad returns to the seventh heaven where Gabriel waits for him to take him back to Mecca. On their way back they pass by Paradise and Hell and Mohammad speaks with a number of angels and Prophets. See B. Schrieke and J. Horovitz, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Mi'rādj.

[228] For a discussion of the position of angels see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizami's Epic Romance*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003, pp. 14-16; idem, "The Erotic Spirit: Love, Man and Satan in Hāfez 's Poetry," in *Hafiz and The Relgion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. L. Lewishon, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 115-121.

only reach this state of perfection by following all the steps on the mystical road. By referring to the nocturnal journey of the Prophet and to the minor position of the archangel Gabriel, Ayatollah Khomeini places himself in the mystical tradition.

Although the metaphor of burning the wing comes from Islamic mysticism, it has a profane dimension as well, referring to the criticism a mystic such as Ayatollah Khomeini would receive. In the following lines, Ayatollah Khomeini warns Fâteme of the difficulties of the road, and says that a person must pass by all the stations on the road before attaining to the Truth, or reality.

Fâti, you and the reality of gnosis? What does this mean?	فاطی! تو و حقّ معرفت یعنی چه؟
What does it mean, to discover the essence, transcending all qualities?	دریافت ذات بی صفت یعنی چه؟
Not having read the A, you cannot discover the road to Z.	ناخوانده «الف» به «یا» نخواهی رَه یافت
When you've not traveled (*soluk*) the road, what does Grace mean?	ناکرده سلوک، مُوهبت یعنی چه؟[229]

In this *robâ'i*, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the mystical journey through the term *soluk*, which mystics use to refer to the 'methodical spiritual progress' of the mystic. Mystics also use the term to denote proper spiritual conduct. Some mystical philosophers used the term in combination with *seyr* ('visionary voyage'), saying that a mystic needs to make methodical progress to reach the stage of spiritual vision, which leads to spiritual flight.[230] The mystical journey demands passing various stations such as repentance, followed by contentment, abstention, etc. The stations and their order differ considerably in the writings of various mystical masters. In one system, the first station is submission (*eslâm*), followed by "faith, virtue (*ehsân*), knowledge, independence, poverty, abasement, exaltation, variegation, and stability in variegation"[231] After the mystic has passed all these stages, he reaches his final goal of 'annihilation' (*fanâ*) and 'subsistence' (*baqâ*) in God. The mystic has to experience each of the mystical stages in that order and cannot leave any one of these out. The concept of divine Grace, or Bounty (*mowhebat*), in this poem, complements the effort and achievement of the disciple. Progress through the various stations is preparation for receiving God's gift.

[229] See *Divân*, p. 237b.

[230] See the article by L. Lewisohn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Sulūk.

[231] W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 218.

This *robâ'i* yields at least two readings. In the first reading, favoured in the translation, Ayatollah Khomeini advises Fâteme that one needs years of exertion and training to progress on the mystical path. So, not having read the first letter of the alphabet, and the other letters in subsequent order, which may symbolize the various spiritual stations on the mystical road, one cannot understand the mystical secret, which is symbolized by the final letter of the alphabet. Her questions are therefore premature. Another reading is that Ayatollah Khomeini humbly says that he is not yet in a position to answer such questions.

In the following *robâ'i* to his daughter-in-law, Ayatollah Khomeini again says that the mystic has to pass all the stations on the mystical road before he or she can attain to the divine truth:

Fâti, who studies philosophy,	فاطی که فنون فلسفه می‌خواند
Knows only the letters F, L and S of philosophy.	از فلسفه «فاء» و «لام» و «سین» می‌داند
I hope, that by the light of God,	اُمّید من آن است که با نور خُدا
She'll free herself from the veil of philosophy.	خود را ز حجاب فلسفه برهاند[232]

Ayatollah Khomeini indicates in this *robâ'i* that Fâteme knows only three letters (spiritual stations), of the mystical road and those are the consonants F, L and S, of the Persian word *falsafe* (philosophy). Ayatollah Khomeini tells Fâteme that rational knowledge, such as philosophy, is a veil, reflecting a belief that only mystical experience can bring a person closer to the light of God.[233] The word 'veil' (*hejâb*) is a recurring theme in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s; he uses it on thirteen occasions.[234] As in his panegyric to Fâteme Ma'sume, Ayatollah Khomeini uses the metaphor in his *robâ'i*s to refer to things standing between the mystic and God, hindering the mystic from attaining to true oneness with God. The mystic must free himself from all 'veils' because only then can the realization of the divine truth take place. The essence of this *robâ'i* is that, according to Ayatollah Khomeini, one cannot come to divine truth from books or through rational knowledge: it is an intuitive knowledge. In the tradition of mystics, Ayatollah Khomeini believes that the rational faculty (*'aql*) cannot penetrate to the divine essence hidden in the mystic's own heart. In his *Fotuhât*, Ibn 'Arabi tells the story of a mystic and a philosopher who both travel the mystical path of

[232] See *Divân*, p. 209a.

[233] For the mystics' aversion to philosophy, see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 4, 17-19.

[234] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the veil (*hejâb*) in *robâ'i* 197b; 206b; 209a; 209b; 212b; 219b; 235b; 236a; 240a; ; 247b and 248b.

divine knowledge.[235] He compares their travel to the heavenly ascension (*me'râj*) of the Prophet Mohammad and explains how the philosopher cannot approach God beyond the seventh heaven because he has not released himself from his intellect. The mystic, however, is successful and is able to attain to God.[236] Therefore, any form of rational knowledge must be avoided once the mystic has based himself on intuitive knowledge. Ibn 'Arabi's thought on the rational faculty is reflected in this *robâ'i* by Ayatollah Khomeini, who uses it to place himself in the mystical tradition. The *robâ'i*s addressed to Fâteme show that Ayatollah Khomeini supports the mystics in their view that a person can only tread the path when he or she puts away "the scriptures of science and philosophy"[237] because with philosophical knowledge a person "will not remove the thorns on the road of the traveler."[238] God's essence and attributes are manifest in the heart of the mystic, and each station the mystic passes brings him closer to realize a perfect reflection of God.[239] As the example of the mystic and the philosopher shows, every faculty relating to the Self, such as reason, prevents the mystic from attaining to oneness with God.

Another theme recurring in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s is withdrawal from the world. This is an old topic in Islamic mysticism. According to the mystics, any form of worldly attachment, including the material and emotional, is an impediment to full realization of the Divine. Ayatollah Khomeini advises his daughter-in-law to remove her heart "from being friends with this person or that person" because every sense of selfness must be removed from the heart.[240] If one does not do this, one would "smell polytheism."[241] In another *robâ'i*, he states that if a person has not renounced interest in the world, he will be "a demon on the road."[242] According to B. Moin, renunciation played an important role in Ayatollah Khomeini's life. Stories abound on Ayatollah Khomeini's modest and simple lifestyle, despite offers of money and gifts from his followers. Many will remember the picture of Ayatollah Khomeini sitting on a cushion under an apple tree in Neauphle-le-

[235] See *Fotuhât* by Ibn 'Arabi, pp. 356-375.

[236] B. Schrieke and J. Horovitz, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under Mi'rādj.

[237] See *Divân*, p. 205a.

[238] By thorns (*khâr/khârhâ*) are meant the divine wisdom you gain from experiencing affliction. See *Divân*, p. 245b.

[239] G. Böwering, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under ʿErfān (1).

[240] See *Divân*, p. 232a.

[241] See *Divân*, p. 215b.

[242] See *Divân*, p. 203b.

Château in 1978, looking more like a pious mystic than a world leader.[243] The way Ayatollah Khomeini, and his successor Khamenei, presented himself in public, fits in the mystical tradition of the perfect man (*ensân-e kâmel*, who has become merged with the *velâyat-e faqih*) who has destroyed all forms of egoism and material ties and focuses only on God.

Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s to Fâteme on self-abasement and intuitive knowledge show how deeply rooted Islamic mysticism was in Ayatollah Khomeini's belief system. Ayatollah Khomeini often advises his daughter-in-law not to study mysticism and philosophy, reflecting his wariness of institutionalized forms of learning. He preferred a private mode of spiritual training. It could also be that he feared the criticism of the conservative clergy. Ayatollah Khomeini was an Islamic scholar teaching *'erfân* (mysticism) for many years, believing that only intuitive knowledge could provide insight into the divine mysteries. This meant that knowledge could not be drawn from books, a symbol for discursive reasoning, but could only be achieved by experience at the hand of a spriritual teacher, In addition, the poems to his daughter-in-law on renunciation confirm the way Ayatollah Khomeini presented himself in public: as a pious and sober man who was wary of earthly matters and status, constantly fighting against the desires of his Self. When Ayatollah Khomeini adopted the position of *vali-ye faqih* (Guardian Jurist) in 1979, representing Imam Mahdi on all matters, he had reached a position in which he answered only to God, both as the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran and on a personal level.[244] The *robâ'i*s indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini's fight against 'oppression' took place on both the communal and worldly level, and on a personal level, as a struggle against his own lower soul.

[243] B. Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah,* London: I.B. Tauris, 1999, pp. 182-198. See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic,". and A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini en de Wijnschenker," in *Een Vis in een Fles Raki: Literatuur en Drank in verschillende Culturen*, eds. R. Kruk & S. Houppermans, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2005, pp. 115-130. See also B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Monographie Volume 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, pp. 191-293, A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," in *Middle East Journal*, 46:4, 1992, pp. 631-653 and J.G.J. ter Haar, "*Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de optiek van Khumaynī,"* in *Mystiek: het andere gezicht van de Islam*, eds. M. Buitelaar en J.G.J. ter Haar, Bussum: Coutinho, 1999, pp. 90-102.

[244] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic,"p. 441.

3.5 Mystical Love

The concept of annihilation (*fanâ*) is central in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s. It is mentioned in six, but present in more, as it is implied in the goal of attaining to the presence of God. Annihilation in this context means the death of the ego, a prerequisite if the mystical traveler is to be admitted to a spiritual realm.[245] Read, for example, the following quatrain:

Sufi! Purity is required, on the road of love.	صوفی! به ره عشق صفا باید کرد
You must keep any pledge you have made.	عهدی که نموده ای وفا باید کرد
As long as your ego is there, you will not become one with your Beloved.	تا خویشتنی، به وصل جانان نرسی
On the road to the Beloved, you must annihilate your self.	خود را به رهِ دوست فنا باید کرد[246]

Here, Ayatollah Khomeini describes the mystical path as a road of love, a trope going back to medieval times. As early as the ninth century, early ascetics described the whole of creation as a manifestation of love and the mystical path as a road of love. In their view, love was the principle of all existence. Mystics base their love theory on several Koranic verses and Islamic traditions (*hadith*).[247] A *hadith qodsi*, for example, states that God was a hidden treasure who wanted to be known, so he created the world and everything within it. Mystics interpret this tradition in terms of God's desire to be loved by humankind. Before creating Adam in his image, God made a bond (*'ahd*) or covenant (*mithâq*) with Adam in which the latter promised God to obey Him. Mystics base this theory on Koran 7:172, in which God asks Adam: "Am I not your Lord," to which Adam responds: "Yes, we witness that You are." Mystics interpret this as the beginning of a love relationship between God and man. Adam promises God to be loyal and to obey him as a lover obeys his Beloved. According to the mystical creation myth, humankind nevertheless committed a sin. He had no experience with love, and proved to be weak, which is why God threw him down the spiritual ladder. During life, it is the task of each person to regain his initial and pure love relation with God, by following the various steps on the mystical road. After a person has passed all these stations, his Ego will be annihilated and he will become one again with God, like a lover and his Beloved.[248] In the *robâ'i* translated above, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the mystical account

[245] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to annihilation in *robâ'i* 191a; 192b; 203a; 210b; 217b and 246a.

[246] See *Divân*, p. 203a.

[247] See for example verse 2:31, 5:54, 33:72, 38:75, 41:37, 50:16, 51:20, 53, 75 and 95:5.

[248] For an elaboration on this mystical creation myth see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun*, pp. 14-16.

of this covenant God, using the word *'ahd*, (translated as pledge), and by speaking of the annihilation of the Self "on the road to the Beloved."

Mystical stories abound on the effect of love on the mystic. Some early mystics connected the term 'love' to the *asheqa,* a climbing plant that wraps itself so tightly around a tree that it nearly smothers the tree. Love is said to have the same effect on the lover. The mystical is willing to accept any hardship that God bestows upon him. This is because only the hearts of those who have experienced affliction, and despite this have maintained complete trust (*tavakkol*) in God, will be granted access to divine knowledge. For this reason, mystics see affliction as an indispensable station on the spiritual road.[249] In relation to this absolute trust in God, mystics often refer to the biblical story of Joseph and his father Jacob in which the latter, despite the painful separation from his beloved son, continues to trust in God. In return for his unconditional love, God provides him with divine insights. Mystics interpret this story as evidence that only those who have faced ordeals and pass the test of complete trust in God can be freed from their Ego.[250]

The huge effect that love for God can have on the mystical lover is reflected in numerous *robâ'i*s by Ayatollah Khomeini. In the tradition of mystical love poetry, Ayatollah Khomeini on several occasions depicts mystical lovers as 'ill people' (*bimârân*) whose only remedy is the Beloved. Read for example the following *robâ'i* with the *radif* ('refrain rhyme') *bimârân*:

Ah! Your face is a candle in the gathering of those who are ill.	ای روی تو شمع محفِل بیماران!
Ah! Your memory is balsam for the hearts of those who are ill.	وی یاد تو مرهم دل بیماران!
O come like a physician to our death-bed.	بر بستر مرگ ما، طبیبانه بیا
The sight of you solves all difficulties, for those who are ill.	ای دید تو حلّ مشکل بیماران [251]

In this *robâ'i* Ayatollah Khomeini, presents love as an illness, those affected by love as ill, and the Beloved as the physician. As in his other poems, Ayatollah Khomeini is rejuvenating a trope popular in Persian classical love poetry. Only the physician, who has caused the wound, can release the patient from his pain. The physician in this couplet

[249] Y. Eshots, in *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia*, under 'Ishq, ed. O. Leaman, Oxon: Routledge, 2006, pp. 310-314.

[250] For a mystical interpretation of this story see A. Keeler, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Joseph ii. In Qur'ānic Exegesis.

[251] See *Divân*, p. 227a.

symbolizes the Beloved, God, who caused the ordeals and love-sickness and therefore is the only one who can put an end to them.[252] Some early mystics started presenting the end of the mystical path – the annihilation of the Ego in God's essence – as a symbolic death. Only when the mystic, like a dead man, symbolically gives up his soul can he find union with God.[253] This *robâ'i* indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini had also followed this classical poetical love tradition.

3.6 The Iran-Iraq War

Ayatollah Khomeini wrote several *robâ'i*s for special occasions, especially for certain moments during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). Reading the entire corpus of *robâ'i*s, including these occasional war poems, one tends to interpret the mystical poems in a different way. Terms such as annihilation, union, and love receive a different meaning in a military context. A *robâ'i* such as the following can both be interpreted as a purely mystical *robâ'i* or as a war poem, where Ayatollah Khomeini invites soldiers to offer their lives at the frontline:

Our Republic is guarding the seals of Islam	جُمهوری ما، نشانگر اسلام است
The impure thoughts of those who stir up disorder are premature.	افکار پلید فتنه‌جویان خام است
The people spur themselves forward on their own path.	ملّت به رهِ خویش جلو می‌تازد
In a hundred traps (*sad-dâm*) of his own making, Saddam.	صدام، به دست خویش در صد دام است[254]

Ayatollah Khomeini composed this poem, "Our Republic," on March 31st 1984, several weeks after the Islamic Republic of Iran celebrated its fifth anniversary. It is the first of his 117 *robâ'i*s, and refers to the war between Iran and Iraq. By 1984, Iran had already lost tens of thousands of war victims. The war started on September 22nd 1980, when Iraqi troops invaded Iran and captured Arvand Rud (*Shatt al-'Arab*), a disputed waterway on the Iran-Iraq border that had been the subject of a long dispute. But economic and strategic purposes were not the only reasons for Saddam Hussein to attack Iran. A year before the attack, the Pahlavi Shah, Mohammad Reza, had been deposed, and Ayatollah Khomeini had turned Iran into an Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Khomeini made it clear on numerous occasions that he wanted to

[252] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 136.

[253] The use of this symbolic love-death became extremely popular in the ninth century. Early mystics based this love-death theory on a prophetic tradition in which Mohammad had said: 'Die before you die.' Some took these words at face value and almost starved themselves to death. Others were more moderate and saw this mystical love-death as a merely symbolic expression. For the reference see the article by A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnūn,* p. 131.

[254] See *Divân*, p. 195b.

export the Islamic Revolution to other Muslim countries and hoped to unite all Muslims worldwide in one pan-Islamic state. Moreover, Ayatollah Khomeini had made it clear that he did not approve of the secular Ba'ath government of Iraq, or of monarchies such as those of Saudi Arabia.[255] He encouraged Muslims worldwide to overthrow their 'illegitimate' regimes. Saddam Hussein feared unrest among Iraq's majority Shiites. All these arguments led Saddam Hussein to decide to seize the Arvand Rud waterway. Most of the Persian Gulf states and Arab countries supported Iraq. Many, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, had large Shiite communities of their own and considered the Iranian Revolution a threat to their own regimes. Western powers such as the United States, France and Britain also substantially supported Iraq, by providing modern weapons. The Soviet Union and China also stood behind the Iraqi government. Iran had much less support and was boycotted by the West. The war would last for eight years, with hundreds of thousands on both sides dying on the battlefield.[256] One of the reasons why the Iranian troops eventually regained the lost territory was their extensive use of human shields. In November 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini established a special paramilitary force known as the *Basij-e Mostaz'afin* ('Mobilization of the Oppressed'), in addition to the government's armed forces and the elite army, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (*Sepâh-e Pâsdârân-e Enqelâb-e Eslâmi*). The *Basij* consisted of voluntary soldiers, many of them still young boys, who cleared minefields or launched suicide attacks. Their massive suicide attacks enabled the Iranians to achieve many victories over the Iraqis.[257]

The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote his first *robâ'i* during the war with Iraq gives the poem two interpretations: mystical and profane. The third line in which Ayatollah

[255] Concerning Ayatollah Khomeini's aversion of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq see B. Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah,* pp. 145-146. Concerning his rejection of monarchies such as those of Saudi Arabia I refer to his famous 1969/ 1970 lectures which were later published under the name "Islamic Governance " (*Hukumat-e Islami*), in which Ayatollah Khomeini for example says: "Islam…does not recognize monarchy and hereditary succession; they have no place in Islam." See R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941-1980),* ed. H. Algar, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981, p. 31.

[256] For an elaboration on the conflict see the article by S.M. Gieling, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* under Iraq ii. Iran-Iraq War. See also B. Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah,* pp. 235-269.

[257] Many articles and books have been written on the role of martyrdom in Iranian society during the 1970s and 1980s. See for example J.D. Swenson, "Martyrdom: Mytho-Cathexis and the Mobilization of the Masses in the Iranian Revolution," in *Ethos,* vol. 13, no. 2, 1985, pp. 121–149. See also the dissertation by M.A. Nematollahi-Mahani, *Do Not Say They Are Dead*: *The Political Use of Mystical and Religious Concepts in the Persian Poetry of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88),* Leiden: PhD dissertation, 2014.

Khomeini speaks of people who "spur themselves forward on their own path" can be seen as a reference to the mystic who must continue his spiritual journey. The line can also be read as a summon to the soldier to give up his life at the frontline. The fourth line can also be interpreted in both a mystical and a profane sense. When Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of Saddam Hussein "in a hundred traps of his own making," he may refer to the soul that is captured in the human body, which mystics describe as a 'trap' (*dâm*) from which they wish to free their soul. However, the couplet can also be interpreted in a profane sense, referring to the numerous Iranian soldiers who accepted martyrdom to lead Saddam Hussein and his troops into their traps.

In the following *robâ'i*, Ayatollah Khomeini's message oscillates between the actual war context, in which soldiers should march forward and offer their lives, and lovers attaining to union with the Beloved in a symbolic mystical journey:

All the travelers are on the road: arise!	بر خیز که رهروان براهند همه
All are forever underway to their destination.	پیوسته بسوی جا یگاهند همه
Where there's no thought of anything, except the Beloved,	آنجا که بجُز دوست ز کس یادی نیست
All whose hearts are frozen have blackened faces.	افسرده دلان، رویْ سیاهند همه.[258]

If one reads the *robâ'i* in a mystical sense, the poet urges the mystic to continue his journey, since all the other travelers are going to their final destination. The *robâ'i* reminds the reader of 'Attâr's *The Conference of the Birds*. In this story, birds assemble to find their king Simorgh. They choose a hoopoe as their guide during the journey to Mount Qâf, the residence of Simorgh at the end of the world. During the journey, many birds are unable to continue on, and every time the hoopoe tries to convince them to travel on because the destination is near and the journey is worthwhile. When the birds arrive at Mount Qâf, they call Simorgh but cannot find him and realize that they are the *Si-morgh* ('thirty birds'): the Self of all thirty birds are all part of the Beloved and the only way to achieve this realization is to go on a journey.[259] In the second and third line of Ayatollah Khomeini's poem, the poet encourages travelers to continue on, because those who are travelling have fixed their thoughts on the Beloved. It is this meditation on the thought of the Beloved that keeps them going. In the final line, the poet introduces an antithetical element: those who cannot love have frozen hearts, and therefore 'blackened faces,' meaning they are wrongdoers.

[258] See *Divân*, p. 239b.

[259] For the whole story see Farid ud-Din 'Attâr, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. D. Davis and A. Darbandi, London: Penquin, 1984.

If one reads the *robâ'i* from a profane perspective in its war context, it is as if the poet is addressing the soldiers, encouraging them to arise and attain their goal like those who preceded them "underway to their destination." The lines are reminiscent of the way Ayatollah Khomeini, in his speeches of the 1980s, encouraged young Iranians to go to the front and offer their lives to ensure Iranian victory. In these speeches, Ayatollah Khomeini often depicted soldiers as mystical lovers who would receive rewards beyond compare. Not only would the government financially support their family, but many great awards awaited them in the afterlife. In numerous prophetic traditions, mention has been made of the 'presents' that the *shahid* ('martyr') will receive once he has died 'in the path of Islam."[260] First of all, the martyr will not experience the 'pains of the grave' (an approximate equivalent of purgatory). All his blameworthy acts will be erased, so he will have immediate access to Paradise. Moreover he will be allowed to choose another seventy persons to whom access to Paradise will be granted, and 72 promised paradisiacal virgins (*huri*s) await him and will be made his wives.[261] One can imagine how attractive these rewards must have been for many disadvantaged people who had no chance of a bright future. Hundreds of thousands of people responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's calls for volunteers for martyrdom. Like the mystic, the *basij* soldier was prepared to surrender his soul (or his life, *jân*, the Persian word having both meanings). He was no longer afraid of death because, according to the Koran, martyrs are alive.[262]

During the war, the Iranian media constantly praised Iranian voluntary soldiers for their heroic deeds. Also, school children were overloaded with information on the rewards awaiting martyrs.[263] In one of his statements, Ayatollah Khomeini spoke of a soldier of this kind as "a perfect example of devotion, sacrifice, sincerity, and love for God and Islam."[264] In his speeches, Ayatollah Khomeini often coined mystical phrases relating to the 'school of love', known in Persian as *maktab-e 'eshq* or *madrase-ye 'eshq*, which is a metaphor for the spiritual training of the mystic, where he purifies and disciplines his soul for the sake of the

[260] E. Kohlberg, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam (2),* under Shahīd.

[261] Ibid.

[262] See Koranic verse 3:169-170.

[263] Iranian school books of the 1980s played a big role in transmitting the political and social ideas of the Islamic Republic of Iran. See G. Mehran, "Socialization of Schoolchildren in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 22, part I, 1989, pp. 35-50.

[264] R. Khomeini, *Pithy Aphorisms: Wise Sayings and Counsels*, ed. M. Limba, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works (International Affairs Department), 2006, p. 140.

Beloved, i.e. God. Suffering and martyrdom forms an important part of this training. [265] The topic of the mystical love death has been a popular theme in Persian poetry since the time of Rudâki (d. 941). Mystics have adopted this theme from the Banu ʻAdhra tribe who, in the first Islamic century, used it in their love stories and regarded it as the greatest virtue.[266] They often compared it to the death of a martyr in a holy war. Mystics in their turn adopted this idea to represent the mystic's rejection of the world and his selflessness: he is prepared to give up everything including his life for the Beloved, without expecting any reward. In mystical love poetry, this death may either be caused by love itself (*koshte-ye ʻeshq*) or by the Beloved (*koshte-ye maʻshuq*). Ayatollah Khomeini in his public speeches often referred to this mystical love death, saying that the soldiers, like those mystics, were aiming at being united with their Beloved: the soldiers by sacrificing their lives, the mystics by achieving the annihilation of their souls. Among the best known of these sayings is, "The *Basij* is the school of love and the classroom of unknown martyrs"[267] Many Iranian war poets adopted this motif, presenting the Beloved as God, as Imam Hoseyn, or as Ayatollah Khomeini himself. They often interpreted union with the Beloved as giving one's life for the object of love. Those who attained union were soldiers who were killed and were consequently considered martyrs.

There are other phrases by Ayatollah Khomeini from the 1980s that confirm that the *robâ'i*s just quoted have a military reading, in addition to their mystical reading. In the following statement, Ayatollah Khomeini addresses a group of soldiers: "O dear *Pâsdarân* ['revolutionary guards'] and O soldiers of Islam! Wherever you are, guard yourselves well so that by overcoming your ego you attain victory over all evil."[268]

In both these *robâ'i*s and in this public statement, Ayatollah Khomeini emphasizes that a person must discipline his soul, whether he is a mystic or a soldier. The first must annihilate his soul for the Beloved symbolically, while the second should do it literally by giving up his life. Therefore it seems very likely that, in both *robâ'i*s, Ayatollah Khomeini is

[265] See M.A. Nematollahi Mahani, *Do Not Say They Are Dead*, pp. 64-73, 203-238; A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety: Mysticism and National Identity in Iran-Iraq War Poetry," in *Der Islam*, Vol. 31, 2011, pp. 250-254.

[266] See R. Jacobi, "'Udhra: Love and Death in the Umayyad Period," in *Martyrdom in Literature: Visions of Death and Meaningful Suffering in Europe and the Middle East from Antiquity to Modernity*, ed. F. Pannewick, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004, pp. 137–148.

[267] Ibid., p. 140. For Ayatollah Khomeini's use of mystical ideas in a military context see also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martelaren: van Mystieke Weg tot Oorlogspad," in *Mededelingen*, deel 72, No. 4, Amsterdam: KNAW Press.

[268] R. Khomeini, *Pithy Aphorisms*, p. 141.

summoning Iranian soldiers to follow their predecessors and attain martyrdom on the battlefield for the sake of love. Realizing that Ayatollah Khomeini often compared the road of the soldier to that of the mystical lover in his public statements sheds a whole new light on poems such as the following, which at first glance seems to be purely mystical:

As long as He's your friend, you'll know no loss.	تا دوست بود تو را گزندی نبود
As long as He is, no quandary about quality and quantity.	تا اوست غبار چون و چندی نبود
Leave everything that is, choose Him.	بگزار هر آنچه هست و اورا بگزین
There's no better counsel than these two words.	نیکوتر از این دو حرف پندی نبود[269]

In this poem Ayatollah Khomeini reminds the reader that God is always with you because God is everywhere. Even if you have no possessions or family, as long as you trust in God, he will be at your side. If one interprets the poem in a mystical sense, the poet urges the mystic to withdraw from all worldly connections and to follow the mystical path, because the annihilation of the self in His essence is the best thing that a mystic can achieve. If one reads this *robâ'i* in a military context, the poet urges the soldier to turn his back on everything, or rather, to follow the path of martyrdom. Just as a mystic wants his Ego to symbolically die in God's essence, the soldier should give up his actual life for the sake of God, the nation, and the Shiite faith, the 'true' Islam. Ayatollah Khomeini presents martyrdom as the end of a long road, as the ultimate goal, and as the most wonderful thing one can achieve. In one of the publications from an institute propagating Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology, M.J. Noruzi states: "Under the shelter of the revivalist doctrine of Islam, death and killing that was always regarded as painful became a blissful ending and martyrdom came to be regarded as a great victory."[270] Not only was this thought spread by war poets of the 1980s. This is also confirmed in school books of this period in which the martyr is constantly praised for his heroic deeds and for his aid to the Republic of Iran and the well-being of Iranian society.[271] This propagation of martyrdom can also be noticed in some of Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s. Although Ayatollah Khomeini did not publish his poems, which are reflections of his private line of thoughts, during his life and thus did not use them for propaganda purposes, they do

[269] See *Divân*, p. 213b.

[270] M.J. Noruzi, "Role of Islam in the Occurrence and Victory of the Iranian Revolution," in *Imām Khomeini and The Islamic Revolution; A Collection of Articles*, ed. J.R. Khan, Tehran: International Affairs Department , The Institution for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 2008, p. 10.

[271] See G. Mehran, "Socialization of Schoolchildren in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 22, part I, 1989, pp. 38-39.

resemble the way he compared the 'selfless' martyr deaths of Iranian war soldiers to the love-deaths of mystical lovers in his public life. By presenting death in this way, Ayatollah Khomeini gave meaning to death and turned something so sad and awful into an ultimate token of love. Although the mystical notion of dying for love has been a popular theme in Persian mystical poetry and in Islamic mysticism since the ninth century, it seems that Ayatollah Khomeini has employed the concept militarily, to mobilize thousands of people to go to the front. In response to his love-calls, thousands of men, often still children, volunteered to clear minefields to make a path for the Iranian soldiers. Others would throw themselves before the enemy to distract them and to make Iranian victories possible. The following *robâ'i* is another example of the use of concepts from mystical love poetry to mobilize people for war:

Oh Sheikh, come, and act for my sake as the guide.	ای پیر! بیا به حق من پیری کُن
Grant me release, and enchain me in madness.	حالم دِه و دیوانه‌ی زنجیری کُن
The Friend cannot be found through knowledge and reason.	از دانش و عقل، یار را نتوان یافت
Make ignorance an assistance on this road.	از جهل، در این راه مددگیری کُن[272]

At first sight the *robâ'i* seems to be a purely mystical poem in which madness, or the turning off of reason, representing the world of the heart, is praised over reason and rational knowledge. As was noted earlier in this chapter, Ayatollah Khomeini constantly tried to make these thoughts clear to his daughter-in-law. The mystic often surrenders his rational faculty, symbolised by 'head' to eliminate his ego to the point where one can no longer speak of the mystic as a separate person, for he or she has attained to oneness with God through a symbolic death. Although Ayatollah Khomeini in this poem does not directly refer to death or the bestowing of the head, two words in these couplets are conspicious: 'release' (*hâl*) and 'ignorance' (*jahl*). The first term *hâl* literally means 'condition' 'ecstacy', 'mystical state' and here it refers to the wish of the mystic to have his soul released from captivation in 'otherness', to be one with the Beloved. In other words, the persona poetica asks for his soul to be annihilated in God. With the second term 'ignorance' the poetic persona asks for his reason to be turned off.

In addition to a mystical reading, the poems on 'turning off reason', may also deserve a profane reading. If one places these *robâ'i*s alongside the numerous poems composed during the war which compare the mystic's symbolic bestowing of the head and the soldier's

[272] See *Divân*, p. 233b.

martyrdom, one tends to place the *robâ'i* in a military context, as the 'bidding farewell' is a reference to being killed at the frontline. Think for example of poets such as Qeysâr Aminpur (1957-2007) who referred to beheading as the most rewarding thing a soldier can achieve, as in the following example:

از چشم تو دیدنی است بوم و بر یار	It is a spectacle watching the Beloved's body and dwelling from your eyes
زآن اوج بگو که چیست در آخر کار	Tell about the summit, what is at the end of the road
لبخند سلام واره درگاهِ وداع	A saintly smile at the moment of bidding farewell
ای یار مگو چه دیده ای بر سر دار	O friend! Tell! What did you see on the gallows?[273]

In this poem, Aminpur compares the martyrdom of an Iranian soldier to that of Mansur Hallâj, the famous mystic who was executed in 922 by the Abbasids for claiming he had reached spiritual perfection and thus had symbolically been annihilated in God. Such comparisons were very popular in Persian war poetry of the 1980s. In some of the *ghazal*s Ayatollah Khomeini composed during the war, he also connects the 'symbolic bestowing of the head' to the frontline and the soldier. For example, in his *ghazal* "The Secret of the Soul" Ayatollah Khomeini says: "Give your head on the road of the Beloved, take your life in your hand like a soldier. Whoever does not cast his head in the alley of the Beloved, is no soldier."[274] In this *ghazal*, Ayatollah Khomeini compares the life of the mystic to that of the soldier, using a Persian word for soldier which has the connotation of one who gambles with his life. Just as a mystic symbolically cuts off his head, by going beyond reason and through detachment from the Ego, the martyr-soldier literally gambles his life or has his head cut off at the front. Keeping these war poems and Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s in mind, one also tends to interpret Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s with topics such as 'detachment' and 'madness', which he wrote during the war, as a means to popularize the martyr-death of the soldier who literally gives up head and soul to defend his country.

Ayatollah Khomeini's use of mystical concepts such as the mystical love-death and the need for self-annihilation, in his speeches and statements to the Iranian nation, appeared to be effective ways to mobilize numerous Iranians to go to the front or to martyr themselves.[275]

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[273] From M. Akbari, *Naqd va taḥlil-e adabiyyāt-e enqelāb-e eslāmi*, part I, Poetry, vol. I, (Tehran: Sāzmān-e Madārek-e Farhangi-ye Enqelāb-e Eslami, 1371/1992), p. 196. Read more on Aminpur's poetry in N. Farzad, "Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence," in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2007, 34:3, pp. 351-374. See also M.A. Nematollahi Mahani, *Do Not Say They Are Dead*, pp. 70-73.

[274] See *ghazal* "The Secret of the Soul" in *Divân*, p. 65.

[275] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 248-273; See also A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited…," pp.

Soon numerous soldiers and poets adopted his mystical phrases and these motifs. Many war poets composed lines in which mystical concepts such as "turning off reason" on the mystical road were equated to the actual sacrificing of the head of the Iranian soldier.[276] Some of the *robâ'i*s Ayatollah Khomeini composed during the war indicate that he was engaged with the same line of thought in private, as these poems are self-documentation. However, the ingenious connection Ayatollah Khomeini made between the symbolic love-death and actual death was not the only means by which Ayatollah Khomeini stimulated people to go to war.

3.7 Martyrdom and Shiism In order to further contextualize the messages in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s, we must first sketch a historical picture of the political situation at the time Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these poems. When Iran had regained all its territory from the Iraqis in September 1982, Saddam Hussein asked for a cease-fire. Ayatollah Khomeini rejected Saddam's reconciliation gesture. Although Ayatollah Khomeini had achieved what he wanted, which was to recapture Iranian territories, he decided to take the war to the next level. Instead of accepting Saddam's proposal, Ayatollah Khomeini continued the war on Iraqi territory.[277] For Ayatollah Khomeini, the war was more than a defensive battle. As early as the 1960s, Ayatollah Khomeini adopted terms in his speeches and works that indicate that he divided the world into two camps: that of the oppressed (*mazlum*) and the oppressor (*zâlem*). Another pair that appeared frequently in his speeches is the weak (*mostaz'afin*) who are oppressed by the strong (*mostakberin*). Although Ayatollah Khomeini had used these terms before, it was not until the 1970s and particularly during the war in the 1980s that he used them on a regular basis in his speeches, and infrequently in his poetry.[278]

Traces of this 'war against oppression' also appear in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s. In the following example he uses the terms *setamkeshân* ('victims of injustice', translated here as 'the oppressed') and *setamgar* ('inflictor of injustice', 'oppressor'):

631-653.

[276] One can think of the poems by P. Beygi Habibābādī in *Gozide-ye ash'âr*: *she'r-e jang va defâ'-e moqaddas*, ed. H. Hoseyni, Tehran: Sura, 1381/2002.

[277] See S.M. Gieling, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Iraq ii. Iran-Iraq War. See also B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 235-269.

[278] For an extensive discussion of Ayatollah Khomeini's division of the world into an oppressive and oppressed camp see E. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993, pp. 26-32 and pp. 47-50.

Our Islamic Republic is eternal.	جمهوری اسلامی ما جاوید است
The enemy despair of their own lives.	دشمن ز حیات خویشتن نومید است
The day when the world is empty of oppressors.	آن روز که عالم ز ستمگر خالی است
Will be a festival for us, and all the oppressed.	ما را و همه ستمکشان را عید است[279]

Ayatollah Khomeini recited this poem in public at a celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1984. In the poem, he presents the war as a battle between the oppressed and the oppressors. By using the paradigm of 'us and them,' Ayatollah Khomeini implies that there is a division between the Shiites and the Sunnites and all those countries supporting them, such as the West, although he does not say this explicitly. It seems that Ayatollah Khomeini wanted the Iran-Iraq war to be a continuation of the battle on the day of *Âshura*, the tenth of the month Moharram, 680 AD, in which the supporters of Hoseyn ibn 'Ali, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, were defeated by the army of the Ummayad caliph. The battle was the result of a dispute that occurred after the Prophet Mohammad died in 642, as who should succeed him as the next Islamic ruler. Some believed that the best Muslim should be leader. Others believed that only his sons could do this. The differences of opinion between the two groups, who later became known as the Sunnites and Shiites, led to bitter disputes that have continued into modern times. Imam Hoseyn, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad, did not recognize the Ummayad caliph and rebelled against him. In 680 the armies met near Karbalâ, where Imam Hoseyn was killed by Shemr Ibn Dhil-Jawshan. Shiites consider Imam Hoseyn a martyr.[280] In his speeches of the late 1960s, Ayatollah Khomeini referred to *Âshura* and the month of Moharram, when Shiites around the world mourn the death of Imam Hoseyn:

> The month of Muharram is the month of epic action, the month in which blood triumphed over the sword; the month in which the power of Truth forever condemned falsehood and stamped the faces of tyrants and wicked government with the brand of vanity and falsehood; the month that teaches all generations throughout history, the way to victory over bayonet points; the month that registered the defeat of the arrogant powers vis-a-vis the Word of Truth; the month in which the Imam of the Muslims taught us how to fight history's tyrants; the month in which the clenched fists of the

[279] See *Divân*, p. 193b; Ayatollah Khomeini composed the poem on March 31st 1984, the fifth anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

[280] For the importance of this event to our topic, see B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 249-252.

> rightful, the seekers of freedom and independence must overcome the tanks, the machine-guns and the forces of the devil and the Word of Truth expurgate falsehood.[281]

For Ayatollah Khomeini, it was the duty of the Shiites to rebel against any form of oppression and falsehood by any means. In these sentences, Ayatollah Khomeini reminds his followers of their joint responsibility and connects martyrdom to Shia Islam. He suggests that all Shiites, just like Imam Hoseyn, should be prepared to give up everything, including life, to fight for the truth. In his lectures on the Ashura uprising, Ayatollah Khomeini believes that dying as a martyr is the highest proof of love for the Shiite faith, just as mystics consider the symbolic annihilation of the soul in God's essence to be a supreme gesture of love.[282]

Ayatollah Khomeini's emphasis on the struggle against any form of oppression, shown in the 1969 speech quoted above, was translated in the institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran some ten years later. One example is the *Basij-e Mostaz'afin* ('Mobilization of the Oppressed'), the special armed forces that Ayatollah Khomeini established, whose mission is to revive 'true' Islam. The *basij* soldier was to defeat the oppressor and free the Shiites who had been oppressed since the death of Imam Hoseyn in 680. The Iranian soldiers wanted to fight, like Hoseyn who fought Yazid till death. Ayatollah Khomeini presented the paradigm of Moharram, presenting Saddam Hussein and the Sunnite government of Iraq as the 'oppressors'. In such a war context, the fact that a large population of Iraq was Shiite was simply ignored. As B. Moin had also said, Ayatollah Khomeini used the war as a means to export his Islamic Revolution to other countries, such as Iraq, which had Shiite majorities.[283] Various statements by Ayatollah Khomeini support this view such as: "The war, while it was unpleasant and has devastated our towns, had the blessing of introducing Islam to the world" or "We have exported our Revolution to the world during the war."[284]

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[281] Ayatollah Khomeini delivered this speech on October 22nd 1969 during a meeting of clergy from Western Tehran. See R. Khomeini, *The Ashura Uprising in the Words & Messages of Imam Khomeini*, Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of the Works of Imam Khomeini, International Affairs Department, 1995, p. 26.

[282] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 135-136.

[283] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 236.

[284] For these statements see R. Khomeini, *Pithy Aphorisms: Wise Sayings and Counsels*, ed. M. Limba, Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works (International Affairs Department), 2006, p. 138.

The focus Ayatollah Khomeini placed on the active rather than passive role that Shiites should play in relation to injustice, had a huge effect on the attitude of the Iranians vis-à-vis the rest of the world. He was not the sole author of this active interpretation of the events at Karbalâ: Najafâbâdi's 1968 "The Immortal Martyr" (*Shahid-e Jâvid*) is one predecessor. The concept was extensively used by Ayatollah Khomeini in his military mobilization campaign.[285] By presenting Karbalâ as a battle for justice, rather than the martyrdom of the innocent, and the war as a continuation of that battle, Ayatollah Khomeini hoped to pull as many Shiite Muslims as possible into his camp. And this often worked, as hundreds of thousands of soldiers were prepared to follow Hoseyn's example, by offering their lives during the war.[286] With statements such as "All days are Âshura and all lands are Karbalâ,"[287] Ayatollah Khomeini reminded the Shiites of their duty to fight oppression, just as Imam Hoseyn had done, even if their "power or force be inadequate."[288] Ayatollah Khomeini had partly adopted this slogan from Ali Shari'ati, who in turn had been inspired by the famous nineteenth-century saying: "Every place should be turned into Karbalâ, every month into Moharram, and every day into Âshura."[289] Ayatollah Khomeini made extensive use of this slogan and popularized it. Many war soldiers recited it and Persian war poets even incorporated it in their war poems.[290] War poets such as Sayyed Hasan Hoseyni (1956-2004) composed numerous poems in which Imam Hoseyn served as a role model for active revolt against injustice and illegitimate rulership.[291] By referring to the event at Karbalâ, Ayatollah Khomeini reminded the Iranian people that they had not defended Imam Hoseyn in 680, but they now had the chance to make up for the past.

The events of Karbalâ were also emphasized more in every-day life. The passion-play (*ta'ziye*) during the month of Moharram, in which actors depict the martyrdom of Imam Hoseyn, experienced a strong revival after the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The

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[285] For an extensive study of the battle at Karbalâ and the re-examination of this event in the 1960s and 1970s, see chapter 5.10 in this study; see also the book by H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1982, pp. 183-194.

[286] B. Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 249-252.

[287] R. Khomeini, *The Ashura Uprising*, p. 49.

[288] Ibid., p. 49.

[289] See E. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1993, p. 29.

[290] For the use of the slogan in Persian war poetry see S.H. Hoseini, *Ham-sedâ bâ halq-e Esmâ'il*, Tehran: Surih-ye Mihr, 4th edition, 1387/2008, p. 40.

[291] On Imam Hoseyn as a role model in Persian war poetry see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 262-267.

Iranian government erected many theater-like-buildings, known as *hoseyniye* or *takye*, to commemorate the event of Karbalâ. They were accessible not just in the month of Moharram but throughout the year.[292] The Iranian government reminded Iranians of the fate of the Shiites daily in other ways. With this reinforcement, Ayatollah Khomeini was able to find tens of thousand of recruits who were willing to defend and spread the Shiite cause at any cost.

3.8 The Mystic Mansur Hallâj

In addition to the events at Karbalâ and the figure of Imam Hoseyn, the image of the medieval mystical Mansur Hallâj was instrumental in mobilizing people to defend the country. Ayatollah Khomeini mentions this mystical figure no less than seven times in his *robâ'i*s. The following *robâ'i* is an example:[293]

As we can't be obedient, we fall into sin.	طاعت نتوان کرد و گناهی بکُنیم
We turn from the madrase to a Sufi convent.	از مدرسه، رو به خانقاهی بکُنیم
The cry of "Ana l-haqq" was the way of Mansur.	فریاد اَنَاالْحَق، رهِ منصور بود
Oh Lord help us, so we may think of our way!	یا رب مددی که فکر راهی بکُنیم.[294]

In poems such as these, certain aspects of Mansur Hallâj's life and mysticism are emphasized while other elements are downgraded or entirely ignored. Mansur Hallâj was born around 858 in the town of Tur, in southern Iran. At a young age, Hallâj left Iran and moved to Iraq where his father worked in various places as a cotton-carder. From an early age, Hallâj was interested in Islamic mysticism. In Basra, famous mystics such as Amr Makki (d. 910) and Ibn Juneyd (d. 910) taught him the principles of Islamic mysticism. During his numerous travels abroad, Hallâj began spreading his mystical messages. He was expelled from the Sufi brotherhood he had followed, and subsequently wandered around the Middle East.[295] Hallâj became both famous and notorious for his statement: *"Ana al-Haqq"*('I am the Truth'), by which he implied that he had reached spiritual perfection. On saying this, Hallâj was sentenced to death by the court in Baghdad, accusing him of implying to be God himself. On

[292] P. Chelkowski, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ta'zia.

[293] See *Divân*, pp. 217b, 226b, 231b, 232b, 246a, 246b and 248b.

[294] See *Divân*, p. 226b.

[295] L. Massignon, *La Passion de Hoseyn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj; part I: La Vie de Hallāj*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, pp. 61-76;

the way to his execution, Hallâj is said to have "danced in fetters" so happy was he to soon be reunited with God.[296]

Many mystics condemned Hallâj for openly claiming to have arrived at the station of union because it was not appropriate for a mystic to reveal the divine truth. On the one hand, Ayatollah Khomeini places himself in line with these mystics that condemn him for his claim. But as the previous *robâ'i* demonstrates, Ayatollah Khomeini also partly identifies with him. Like Hallâj, the poetic persona in Ayatollah Khomeini's poem has distanced himself from orthodox institutes: he places the word *madrase* or college in contrast to *khâneqâh* or Sufi convent, emphasizing the difference between reason and love. While in the *madrase* people engage in philosophical discussions, in the Sufi convent, mystics abandon reason and try to perceive the reality of the Beloved through love. In line 3, he proposes following Hallâj's way, which is suggested to be a way of avoiding the dilemma of choosing a college or a convent. What is interesting in such allusions to Hallâj is that Ayatollah Khomeini shows in a personal document that he is wary of the school (*madrase*), a term which in its broader sense would include the theological seminary, where *'erfân* and philosophy were generally avoided. The dilemma the poet presents is given another dimension when we consider that Ayatollah Khomeini had problems in the seminary because of his interest in these two fields. Although the poetic persona in this *robâ'i* partly identifies himself in the third line with Hallâj's antinomian mysticism, in the same line the poet criticizes Hallâj for openly revealing the secret by shouting 'I am the Truth.' In line 4, the poetic persona wonders which direction he himself should choose, once he has attained to the annihilation of self, and he asks for God's assistance.

The problem Ayatollah Khomeini sees with Hallâj's open claims of spiritual perfection also appears in another *robâ'i* that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote on this mystic. The *robâ'i* is called *khod-bin*, 'self-admirer' or 'arrogance':

When there is no you, you will not sound the drum of "Ana al-Haqq."	گر نیست شوی کوس "انا الحق"نزنی
Do not get tied up by your own nonsensical claims.	با دعوی پوچ خود معلق نزنی
As long as you are seeing yourself, you are no more than a polytheist.	تا خود بینی تو مشرکی بیش نه ای
Be without self, then you will not boast of the absolute.	بی خود بشوی که لاف مطلق نزنی[297]

[296] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 136.

[297] See *Divân*, p. 246a.

Here, Ayatollah Khomeini condemns Hallâj for his famous statement, because had the mystic attained self annihilation he would not have claimed to be anything, let alone the Truth. The poet interprets Hallâj's reason for uttering such a statement as self-admiration or even arrogance. In the second line, the word *mo'allaq* translated as 'tied up' may refer to the gibbet upon which Hallâj was hanged while repeating "I am the Truth."[298]

It is interesting to see that Ayatollah Khomeini places Hallâj in the category of organized Sufis whom he condemned for their hypocrisy. In the entire *Divân,* Ayatollah Khomeini is not positive about these mystics, depicting them as hypocrites. Also in the following poem, he includes Hallâj among them:

Among the Sufis I have never seen purity.	از صوفیها، صفا ندیدم هرگز
Among these people I have never seen faithfulness.	زین طایفه من وفا ندیدم هرگز
Among these pretenders. who openly say "Ana l-Haqq,"	زین مُدعیّان که فاش «اَنَاالْحق» گویند
While seeing themselves, I have never seen annihilation.	با خودبینی، فنا ندیدم هرگز.[299]

As in his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of mystic pretenders who brag about themselves like Hallâj. Hâfez too, in his poems, regularly spoke of Hallâj, as in the following line:[300]

He said, "That comrade because of whom the gallows became exalted,	گفت آن یار کزو گشت سر دار بلند
His crime was this, that he was divulging the mysteries.[301]	جرمش این بود که اسرار هویدا می کرد

Hâfez, like Ayatollah Khomeini, blames Hallâj for "divulging the mysteries." According to Mehdi Hâ'eri (d. 1999), Ayatollah Khomeini's former student and son of Ayatollah Khomeini's former teacher, Ayatollah Khomeini believed he had reached the same spiritual state as Hallâj. But he argues that Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike Hallâj, did not make the mistake of openly revealing this. Mehdi Hâ'eri also considered Ayatollah Khomeini to have reached this state of perfection.[302] Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad Ayatollah

[298] Farid al-Din 'Attâr, *Tadhkerat al-owliyâ,* ed. H. Khalili, Tehran: Manuchehri, 1370/1991.

[299] See *Divân,* p. 217b.

[300] See the article by J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hafez iii. Hafez 's Poetic Art.

[301] Translation by P. Avery, *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz,* Cambridge: Archetype, 2007, p. 185, verse 6. *Divân,* p. 288, ghazal 136, l.6.

[302] B. Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah,* p. 51.

Khomeini (d. 1995) confirms that his father believed he had "a special relationship with God, with whom he was at one."[303]

Although numerous people, including mystics, condemned Hallâj for his open claims of perfection, over the centuries Hallâj had also become an embodiment of unconditional love for God. In Persian classical poetry and particularly in contemporary poetry, he has been presented as the martyr of love *par excellence*.[304] To quote A. Schimmel, he became for many people "the model for every loving soul who will gladly suffer and die for the sake of his love."[305] While Ayatollah Khomeini generally disapproved of Hallâj for presumption, or for revealing the divine secrets, in the following *robâ'i*, which is named *Sâye* ("Shade"), Ayatollah Khomeini speaks positively of Hallâj:

O glory of Homâ,[306] throw your shade over me.	ای فرّ هُما! بر سر من سایه فکن
Assist me and throw my existence from its feet.	فریادرس و وجودم از پایه فکن
I desire a rope thrown around my neck.	طوقی که به گردنم فکندست هوس
Oh Friend, throw it on the neck of this humble one.	یارا! تو به گردن فرومایه فکن[307]

In the poem, the poetic persona identifies with Hallâj by referring to the rope (*tawq*) by which he was hung. Like Hallâj, he wishes for the end of his existence, that is, for self-annihilation. In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini praises Hallâj for his willingness to be executed for the love of God, and wishes to attain the same state of spiritual perfection.

Although there are only two places in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* where he praises Hallâj for his extraordinary devotional love and his willingness to die for God,[308] Iran-Iraq

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[303] Ibid., p. 52. See also A. Khomeini, in *Sargodhashtha-ye vizhe az zendegi-ye hazrat-e Emam Khomeini be Ravâyat-e jam'i az fozalâ, ,* ed. R. Shaʿrbaf, Tehran, Vol. I, 1364/1985, pp. 1-4.

[304] See also J.T.P. de Bruijn, "De politieke betekenis van Perzische poëzie," in *De pen en het zwaard: literatuur en politiek in het Midden-Oosten*, eds. G.J van Gelder & E. de Moor, Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988, p. 89.

[305] A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 75.

[306] Homâ is a legendary bird from Iranian mythology and mystical stories. It flies constantly above the earth without ever landing. Homa is called the bird of fortune. Whomever it throws its shade upon will be fortunate. In classical stories it also meant kingship for the person which was touched by its shadow. See A. Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jallâloddin Rum*i, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 123.

[307] See *Divân*, p. 232b.

[308] The *robâ'i* 'Sâye' on page 232b. translated above, and the *ghazal* "Cheshm-e bimār" on page 142 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*. See also the comment on Hallāj as a role model in Persian war poetry by A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 254-262.

war poems by Iranian poets abound with such references.[309] One of several poems by the famous Iranian poet Qeysâr Aminpur (d. 2007) that refer to Hallâj reads:

The alphabet of hurt flows from my lips	الفبای درد از لبم می تراود
Not dew drops; it is blood that flows from my nights	نه شبنم، که خون از شبم می تراود
Three letters sum up the thirty chapters of the heart	سه حرف است مضمون سی پارهٔ دل
Alef, lâm, mim, is the chant that flows from my lips	الف. لام. میم. از لبم می تراود
So caught up in the swelter of love's delirium	چنان گرم هذیان عشقم که آتش
It is fire and not sweat that flows from my fever	به جای عرق از تبم می تراود
In the time it takes for prayer to soar from heart to my lip	ز دل بر لبم تا دعایی آید
It is acceptance that flows from my every call to God	اجابت ز هر یاربم می تراود
I have no need of the religion of hypocrisy	ز دین ریا بی نیازم، بنازم
I am proud of blasphemy that flows from my faith.	به کفری که از مذهبم می تراود[310].

In this poem, Aminpur makes a comparison between Hallâj and the Iranian soldier. Although Aminpur does not mention Hallâj by name in this poem, the first line speaks of the drops of blood that flow from the soldier's mouth, as it flowed from Hallâj's body before he was executed, and in which he is said to have performed his ritual ablutions.[311] In the last line, Aminpur states a preference for blasphemy over religious hypocrisy, again referring to Hallâj, who was a blasphemous person in the eyes of many, but is nevertheless praised for his ultimate act of sacrifice. Aminpur contrasts the soldier's upright sincerity to the enemy's hypocrisy, as Hallâj's love mysticism is often placed in contrast to the hypocritical orthodox Sunnite rulers of Baghdad, who executed him.[312] This poem is a good example of the way Iranian war poets use Hallâj as the martyr of love to represent the war soldier, prepared to die

[309] One can think of Sayyed Hasan Hoseyni. For his work see S.H. Hoseini, *Ham-sedâ bâ halq-e Esmâ'il*, Tehran: Surih-ye Mihr, 4th edition, 1387/2008.

[310] Translation by N. Farzad, "Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence; Iranian Intellectuals from 1997-2007," in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2007, p. 359. For the original Persian poem see Q. Aminpur, "Golhâ hame Aftâbgardânand*"* ('All Flowers are Sunflowers'), in *Majmu'e-ye kâmel-e ash'âr*, Tehran: Golshan, 9rd ed., 1391/2012, p. 104.

[311] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," p. 257.

[312] For an extensive discussion of Aminpur's poetical works see N. Farzad, "Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence; Iranian Intellectuals from 1997-2007," in the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2007, pp. 351-374.

for the sake of love without expecting a reward. Hallâj serves as a role model for the soldier, showing how one can ascend to the higher stages of sincerity and purity by fighting all forms of injustice, to the point of self-annihilation. The example of Hallâj teaches him not to fear death, and it ennobles death for those who lost fathers, husbands and sons at the front. But while Hallâj's road promoted peace and non-violence, the road of the Iranian soldier was one of blood and destruction. The Islamic Republic of Iran thus used the mystical lover Hallâj to amplify the division between the oppressed and the oppressor, all with the purpose of mobilizing people for the war.

Iranian war poets have made much of the fact that Hallâj was born in Tur, in the south of Iran, although he moved to Vasit, in Iraq, at a young age. They have presented him as a Persian mystic who preferred to be executed rather than to conform to the orthodox Sunnite rulers in Baghdad. This nationalistic stance should colour our reading of the references to the rope in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i* 'shade,' translated above, especially as he refers to the bird Homa, a famous character from Persian mythology, in the first line of the poem. By mentioning this mythological Iranian bird alongside an indirect reference to Hallâj, Ayatollah Khomeini links them, indicating that both have a Persian origin. This *robâ'i* indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini at times used the figure of Hallâj positively as an embodiment of Persian mysticism, adopting the anti-Arab stance that was purposely created in Iran to mobilize people for the Iranian cause.[313]

In conclusion, one can say that certain aspects of Hallâj's character were neglected during the war, such as his revealing of the divine secrets, while other aspects were overemphasized. Depending on the situation, either Arabs or the Sunni orthodoxy are presented as his enemies, to create an imagined 'other' for Shiite Iranians. In some cases this meant the 'oppressor' was defined as non-Persian, including the Arab countries and all the Western countries that were seen as an anti-Iranian or anti-revolutionary coalition. In other instances, the 'oppressor' was non-Shiite, placing the Shiites living in Arabic or other foreign countries in Iran's camp. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s, which are self-documents, indicate that he followed this trend to some extent. In many of his poems on Hallâj, he condemns the mystic for revealing secrets. However, in two of them he also identifies with Hallâj,

[313] For an extensive discussion of Hallāj as a role model in Persian war poetry see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 254-262. See also the article by A. Schimmel, "Das Hallaj-Motiv in der Moderne Islamitische Literatur," in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 23/24, Leiden: Brill, pp. 165-181; and M.A. Nematollahi Mahani, *Do Not Say They Are Dead*, pp. 134-154.

presenting him as a Persian mystic whom he praises highly for his unconditional and sacrificing love.

3.9 The Ka'ba, the Holy House of God Despised

Ayatollah Khomeini's identification with opposition to Arabs and to orthodox Sunnism shows in another way in his *robâ'i*s. Like many war poets Ayatollah Khomeini subordinates Mecca to Karbalâ. In his *ghazals*, and also in two *robâ'i*s, he refers to the Ka'ba, the holy building in the city of Mecca, pretending he prefers the 'Ka'ba of the Heart.'[314] How should unorthodox poems like these be interpreted? Should they not be taken at face value, as antinomian poems requiring a mystical reading? Or could it be that Ayatollah Khomeini used the antithesis between the Ka'ba of the Heart (*Ka'be-ye del*) and the Ka'ba of Clay in Mecca (*Ka'be-ye gel*) for political purposes? The question arises because the Iranian Islamic government, and Ayatollah Khomeini in particular did not have a friendly relationship with the Saudi Arabian government, and Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these *ghazals* in the eighties, when the tensions between the two countries were at their height. In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini is probably making a political point when he asks to be banished "from the Kaʿba and from the kingdom of Hejâz"? Although there have always been disagreements regarding religious doctrines and rituals between the Sunnite Saudi government and Shiite Iran, the two countries had a rather good, mutual bond after they established diplomatic ties in 1929. Relations began to deteriorate when an Iranian pilgrim was executed by the Saudi government in 1943 because, in the eyes of the Saudi government, he had shown disrespect to the holy shrine. The execution had far-reaching consequences, and for several years the Iranian government forbade Iranians to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. A few decades later, the ties between both countries declined again after Iran turned into an Islamic country in 1979.

Many countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia, were afraid that the Islamic revolution would be adopted by their own Shiite minorities, and undermine the stability of the region. As Ekhtiari Amiri points out in his article on Saudi-Iranian relations, the Iranian government believed it to be its right to defend "the rights of all Muslims of the world"[315] The constitution of the newly formed Islamic Republic of Iran stated that Iran wished to form an "Islamic world order," uniting all Muslims worldwide under Iranian command. The Iranian

[314] The *robâ'i*s in which Khomein refers to the Kaʿba can be found on page 195a and 212b of his *Divân*.

[315] R. Ekhtiari Amiri, K. Hasnita Binti Ku Samsu and H. Gholipour Fereidouni, "The Hajj and Iran's Foreign Policy towards Saudi Arabia," in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 6, London: Sage Publications, 2011, pp. 679.

government rejected all non-Islamic forms of government. Concerning the pilgrimage to Mecca, the constitution furthermore stated that it was the duty of the Iranians to hold "political demonstrations…[in order to claim]…liberation from/disavowal of infidels during the Hajj."[316] It is not surprising that the rulers of the countries surrounding Iran, which are home to large numbers of Shiites, at first feared Iran's new foreign political program. Saudi Arabia in particular, which hosted large numbers of Iranian pilgrims each year, was wary. Once the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, Iranians considered the pilgrimage to Mecca not only as a religious duty but also, as Ekhtiari states, as "an occasion for an 'Islamic uprising,' or to expose the 'misdeeds' of the pro-American Saudi regime."[317] Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iranian pilgrims have initiated large-scale demonstrations in Mecca, asking for 'liberation from infidels,' by which they mean Israel and America and all countries that support Saudi Arabia. Ayatollah Khomeini had even declared the pilgrimage of a pilgrim would be unacceptable (to God) if he or she did not join the demonstrations for liberation from the infidels.

As Ekhtiari *et al.* indicate, Ayatollah Khomeini on numerous occasions verbally attacked the Saudi government.[318] Ayatollah Khomeini had problems with Saudi Arabia's support for Iraq during the war, and disapproved of the fact that Saudi Arabia had a monarchy rather than an Islamic republic. He also believed that the country was too much dominated by America and Israel. Furthermore, Ayatollah Khomeini opposed Saudi Arabia's possession of the holy shrines in Mecca and Medina, which in the eyes of Ayatollah Khomeini belonged to all Muslims. On July 31st of 1987, tensions between the two countries came to a peak when fighting broke out between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi governmental forces, ending in the death of 275 Iranian pilgrims. The Saudi king responded by putting a ban on Iranian visas to Saudi Arabia. Ayatollah Khomenini, on his turn, responded by putting a ban on the pilgrimage to Mecca.[319] For the next three years, all bonds between the two countries were broken.[320] According to Ismael and Ismael, after this event Ayatollah Khomeini's hatred for

[316] Ibid., p. 679.

[317] Ibid., p. 680.

[318] Ibid., p. 680, 681.

[319] See M. Kramer "Khomeini's Messengers in Mecca," in *Arab Awakening and Islamic Revival*, New Brunswick: Transaction, 1996, pp. 161-87.

[320] Ibid., pp. 678-690.

Saudi Arabia exceeded even his dislike of Saddam Hussein.[321] Rafsanjani has said, of Iran's relation with Saudi Arabia, that: "the Saudi rulers have chosen an evil path, and we will send them to hell."[322] According to him, Ayatollah Khomeini had "dictated that Fahd (the Saudi King) would not remain alive."[323]

In the following *robâ'i* by Ayatollah Khomeini, one can read how the poetic persona prefers 'the place of sin' to the Ka'ba in Mecca, which Muslims are obliged to visit once in their lives if they are able to do so:

Oh Sheikh, I long for the monastery.	ای پیر! هوای خانقاهم هوس است
The rituals of worship bring me no profit, my sin is desire.	طاعت نکند سود، گناهم هوس است
The friends have all set out for the Ka'ba.	یاران همه سوی کعبه کردند رحیل
My cry is still, "my bawdyhouse is desire."	فریاد ز من، گناهگاهم هوس است.[324]

Ayatollah Khomeini's unorthodox poems on the Ka'ba fit into the context of mystical poetry by Persian poets such as Nezâmi 'Aruzi (d. 1209), Ahmad Ghazâli, 'Attâr (d. ca. 1221), Rumi (d. 1273) and 'Omar Khayyâm (d. 1131), who used the rejection of this holy Islamic building as a metaphor to stress the priority of spiritual sincerity over outward duties.[325] In a quatrain attributed to 'Omar Khayyâm, for example, we read:

Young wooer, charm all hearts with lover's art,	در راهِ نیاز هر دلی را دریاب
Glad winner, lead thy paragon apart!	در کُویِ حضور مُقبِلی را دریاب
A hundred Ka'bas equal not one heart,	صد کعبهٔ آب و گل بیکدل نرسد
Seek not the Ka'ba, rather seek a heart![326]	کعبه چه روی برو دلی را دریاب

Both Khayyâm's and Ayatollah Khomeini's poems indicate that the pilgrimage to Mecca will not be accepted, no matter how often you go, if you are not pure of heart.[327] Many

[321] J.S. and T.Y. Ismael, *The Gulf War and the New World Order*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994, p. 306.

[322] M. Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2003, pp. 94-95.

[323] M. Brecher and J. Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997, p. 657.

[324] See *Divân*, p. 195a.

[325] See the discussions on the Ka'ba in Mecca by A.A. Seyed-Gohrab's, in "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 267-269 and in *Layli and Majnun*, pp. 228-234.

[326] Translation of *robâ'i* 18 by E.H. Whinfield, in *The Quatrains of Omar Khayyám*, London: Trübner & Co, 1883, p. 14; For the Persian lines see ibid, p. 15.

[327] See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Rumi en de School van de Liefde: Antinomistische Motieven in Rumi's Werk," in *Tree voor tree naar Gods troon*, Leiden: Uitgeverij Quist, 2010, pp. 63-81.

mystical poems and works have been written in which antinomian mystics (*qalandar*s) purposely trespass Islamic laws by setting fire to the Ka'ba in Mecca or by disgracing this holy institution in other ways, as a way of saying that religion has to do only with purity of heart. It could be that Ayatollah Khomeini, who has written many antinomian poems, wrote his *robâ'i* in this tradition. However, if one places the previous *robâ'i* by Ayatollah Khomeini in the historical and political context in which it was composed (between 1984 and 1985) one can come to a completely different interpretation. From the early 1970s, Iranian pilgrims had been demonstrating in Mecca against Israel, the United States, and all their supporters. In the 1980s, the slogans that Iranian pilgrims shouted became more political. Slogans such as: "Allah is great, Khomeini is our Leader," were not at all appreciated by the Saudi government. The war with Iraq did not improve relations between Iran and the Arab countries, who massively supported Saddam Hussein. On July 31st 1987, several years after Ayatollah Khomeini wrote this *robâ'i*, the demonstrations in Mecca ended in a bloodbath, with almost four hundred people dead on both sides (Iranian and Saudi). Ayatollah Khomeini strongly condemned the Saudis for the killings, and for three years there was a ban on Iranian pilgrims going to Mecca.[328] Thus, when Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these *robâ'i*s, there was a lot of tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The fact that the poetic persona in these *robâ'i*s on the Ka'ba, like Ayatollah Khomeini a few years later in real life, rejects this most holy shrine may be no coincidence. *Robâ'i*s like these could be purely mystical poems but, given the historical and political context in which they were written, it is very likely that Ayatollah Khomeini purposely used this mystical metaphor to amplify the antithesis between the oppressor and the oppressed, 'us' and 'them,' to pull more people into his camp. As in his *robâ'i*s on Imam Hoseyn and the mystic Hallâj, his poems indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini used ingenious methods to recruit supporters. By projecting metaphors from classical mystical poetry onto contemporary situations, Khomeini created oppositional groups in the service of his Islamic ideological agenda.

Conclusion

The *robâ'i*s that Khomeini composed in 1984 and 1985 demonstrate that in Ayatollah Khomeini's life, everything revolved around love for God and a spiritual approach to religion. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s are embued with mystical ideas. At the same time, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote the *robâ'i*s in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war. Traces of the political situation

[328] R. Wright, *In the Name of God; The Khomeini Decade*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989, p. 126.

often appear in these poems. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâ'i*s, like some of his speeches, apply the mystical concept of love to the life of the Iranian soldier. Ayatollah Khomeini composed several *robâ'i*s in which he compares the road of the mystic to the road of the soldier, both seeking union with God. The first aims to do this in a symbolic way, the latter literally gives up his life to be united with God. The comparison between the lover and the war soldier also appears frequently in Ayatollah Khomeini's public statements and in war poems by other Iranian poets. By presenting the martyr's death as an ultimate token of love, the Iranian government mobilized thousands of people to go to war. Ayatollah Khomeini was not the first to interpret this mystical death in a literaly way but it is at least certain that never before had this literal interpretation of the mystical death received such a large-scale response with thousands of soldiers, often teen-agers, volunteering to die as a martyr. By presenting death as the end of the spiritual road of the soul and union with the Beloved, Ayatollah Khomeini gave purpose to the war and to the hundreds of thousands of victims who fell. In his *robâ'i*s, as in his public speeches and lectures, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the oppressed condition of the Shiites since 680, when Imam Hoseyn was killed. By changing the image of the battle at Karbalâ from a passive event, where Hoseyn and his troops accepted defeat in a spirit of self-abnegation, into an active if unsuccessful revolt against the illegitimate Sunnite enemy, Ayatollah Khomeini was able to effect drastic changes in the passive stance of the Shiite community. By presenting the war as a continuation of this struggle between truth and falsehood and between the Shiite and Sunnite faith, that every Shiite is expected to fight, Ayatollah Khomeini presents the war not only as a territorial war but also as a spiritual battle. Ayatollah Khomeini appealed to Shiite feelings of historical guilt for not defending Imam Hoseyn in 680 to effectively mobilize people to fight against oppression. Ayatollah Khomeini presented the Shiites and Iranians as the 'oppressed' (*mazlum*) who have a duty to fight the 'oppressors,' the Sunnites. By presenting the figure of Imam Hoseyn as the embodiment of ultimate love and sacrifice, thousands of soldiers were motivated to join the 'war of love.' Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in extending the story of Karbalâ into the modern era.

Ayatollah Khomeini's references to the antinomian figure of Mansur Hallâj, who was executed for the love of God, proved to be another effective way to promote martyrdom and anti-Arabism. The antithesis between the holy shrine in Mecca and the Ka'ba of the heart, which he used in both his *robâ'i*s and in lyrical poetry, was an ingenious way to amplify the dichotomy between the 'oppressed' Shiites and the oppressors, in this case the Sunnite Saudis. The fact that, in 1987, Iranian pilgrims massively responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's manifesto in which he urged Shiite pilgrims in Mecca to curse the Saudi kings, proves that

Ayatollah Khomeini's 'mystical' messages led to a political response. By prioritizing the Ka'ba of the heart over the actual Ka'ba in Mecca, Ayatollah Khomeini 'spiritualized' orthodox Islam during a time of war for political purposes.

The fact that soldiers at the front very commonly wrote and recited mystical poems in which they presented themselves as lovers and mystics who were prepared for annihilation in their Beloved, indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical messages, that were based on a century old antinomian poetic tradition, had a broad resonance. Thus, Ayatollah Khomeini used mystical concepts both to mobilize people for war, and to export his ideas on the revolution and to plea for the unity of all Muslims worldwide under one banner. Knysh already argued, in a 1999 study, that Ayatollah Khomeini "tried to employ his extensive knowledge of *'erfân* for propaganda purposes."[329] He suggests that Ayatollah Khomeini may have seen himself as the perfect man of his time who believed it was his task to guide the Islamic community and to protect it against any form of injustice. The *robâ'i*s that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote support this view, and demonstrate that he applied mystical concepts to everyday events. His *robâ'i*s illustrate that he used mystical messages of love, which are usually peaceful and non-violent, for the opposite purpose, to persuade Iranians to offer their lives to defend Iran and Islam.

[329] A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited…," p. 652.

4

The Antinomian Ayatollah Khomeini: Lyrical Poems (*ghazal*s)

Ayatollah Khomeini composed 296 poems in different poetic forms. Of these, 149 are *ghazal*s, or love lyrics. By composing *ghazal*s and applying the form, themes and motifs of this well-known genre in his poems, Ayatollah Khomeini places himself in the millennium-old tradition of Persian literature. He is imitating great masters such as Hâfez, and elaborating on mystical themes used by poets such as Sanâ'i. Before starting an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s, I will give a brief history of the Persian *ghazal*, its usage, form and contents and of the contexts in which the *ghazal* has been used.

4.1 Structure of the *Ghazal*

*Ghazal*s are poems of between five and fifteen couplets with a single rhyme. The same rhyme often appears internally within the first couplet. The last couplet often contains the poet's pen-name, or, *takhallos.*[330] A *ghazal* sometimes contains a *radif*, which means that each rhyme word is followed by a recurring personal suffix, word, or phrase.[331] All metric forms can be used for the *ghazal* except for the metre that is used for the *robâ'i* form. Each line of the *ghazal* is formed from two half-lines or hemistiches (*mesrâ*`s) and constitutes an independent poetic 'statement,' with its own specific theme, which is often expressed in the first half-line and emphasized or exemplified in the second hemistich. This variety of themes was not the case for the early *ghazal*s, in which all the lines of the *ghazal* developed the same subject. Although the themes in the various lines of the *ghazal* are different, a *ghazal* is unified by a strict poetic meter and rhyme. Because each theme is expounded in a brief scope, compact metaphors are often used.[332]

4.2 Themes and Motifs in the *Ghazal*

'Love' is the most common theme in the *ghazal* genre. In classical Persian *ghazal*s, the Beloved is generally depicted as a distant and unreachable person who is indifferent to the lover's gestures. A clear distinction can be made between the Beloved in the Arabic *ghazal* and in the classical Persian *ghazal*. While the Beloved in the Arabic *ghazal* is, as a rule,

[330] See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Takhallus ii. In the Sense of Pen-Name and see J. Rypka, *History of Iranian literature*, Dordrecht: Springer, 1968, p. 99.

[331] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. History.

[332] E. Yarshater, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. Characteristics and Conventions.

female, in the classical Persian *ghazal* the Beloved is almost always male.[333] In many cases, he is a young soldier whose signs of manhood are just beginning to appear in the form of a *khatt*, 'down' or 'moustache' above his lips. This youth is an idealized beauty, whose features are extremely exaggerated and generalized. The Beloved in a poem by Hâfez, for example, cannot be distinguished from the Beloved in a poem by Sanâ'i.[334] The Beloved (whether earthly or spiritual) is referred to as the poet's friend *(dust, yâr*), Beloved (*mahbub, ma'shuq*), soul (*jân*), heart-ravisher (*delbar*) or heart-keeper (*deldâr*), moon or moon-face (*mâh-ru*) or even idol (*bot*) or Turk (*tork*). The figure of the Turkic male became extremely popular from the ninth century onwards. During that period, Turkic male slaves were the most desirable slaves. They were known for their stunning beauty. They often came as war prisoners and served at court as pages for a patron. So, unlike in the Arabic *ghazal*, the love in Persian *ghazal*s is homo-erotic. The lover does not want to show his love because it is 'a forbidden passion.' Therefore he tries to hide his 'scandal' (*rosvâ'i*) because it might cause him 'blame and shame.' But often his love is evident from his face. A pale face and weeping eyes all betray him, showing the pain he feels from the separation (*ferâq*) from his Beloved. In general, the poet presents himself as the lover who begs for some attention from the Beloved. He does everything to draw the attention of the Beloved, whose beauty has 'taken him over' at first sight. The lover is often depicted as a victim of love who sacrifices everything including his own life for the Beloved.[335]

The subject of love that is described in *ghazal*s can be both profane and divine. Since the twelfth century, mystics have used the theme of love in *ghazal*s to communicate mystical thoughts and to convey difficult mystical concepts. Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s fit into this mystical tradition. Like numerous classical poets, he has adopted many mystical motifs in his

[333] Ibid.

[334] To the why men and not women were lauded in classical Persian *ghazal*s, Yarshater says that this was because of the norms of Islam. But then, why was the depiction and praise of women accepted in the Arabic speaking Islamic world, and why was wine-drinking, which is certainly against Islamic norms, a popular theme in Persian poetry? The question requires further examination. See E. Yarshater, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. Characteristics and Conventions.

[335] Yarshater suggests this 'sacrificing' feature of the lover might have been influenced by Islamic mysticism in which the mystical also devotes himself entirely to God, to the point of having nothing but love for God. See E. Yarshater, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. Characteristics and Conventions. For a discussion of the concept of love in Persian poetry see also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety: Mysticism and National Identity in Iran-Iraq War Poetry," in *Der Islam*, Vol. 31, 2011, pp. 250-253 and idem, *Layli and Majnun: Love, Madness and Mystical Longing in Nizami's Epic Romance*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003.

*ghazal*s, themes such as the 'annihilation of the soul' or the antithesis between earthly love and divine love. This is not to say that every *ghazal* with a mystical motif is to be read as a mystical work. Many classical poets adopted mystical elements in their *ghazal*s, although they were not mystics. Rudaki (d. 941), for example, wrote several *ghazal*s, which can be interpreted in a mystical sense.[336] Mystical metaphors such as 'wine' for divine knowledge, or the 'moth' that flies into the candle-flame, representing self-sacrifice, became generally current for both mystical and non-mystical poets in the Persian-speaking world. [337]

The range of motifs used in a *ghazal* is diverse, including asceticism (*zohdiyyât*), antinomianism (*qalandariyyât)* and springtime *(rabi'iyyât)*. Ayatollah Khomeini follows this millennium-old tradition but, as we will see, he leans more on ascetic and *qalandari* motifs. The *qalandar* figure is a deviant mystic, whose unconventional public wine-drinking and homo-erotic behaviour provokes an orthodox religious establishment. His behaviour questions the value of superficial piety, showing how easily piety can turn into hypocrisy when it is rewarded by praise. True piety is achieved when the mystical conceals his religious life behind a disreputable exterior. Great Persian poets such as ʿAttâr (d. 1220), Hâfez and Sanâ'i wrote many *qalandariyyât* (*qalandar* poems) containing antinomian motifs such as the *kharâbât* ('ruin' or 'tavern'), *qalandar* ('beggar' or 'vagabond'), or *rend* ('rogue').[338] To contextualize Ayatollah Khomeini's qalandari *ghazal*s, certain core doctrines of antinomian mysticism should be explained.

Antinomian behaviour appeared among mystics in the twelfth century as a reaction to the institutionalization of traditional Sufism, which had started in the ninth and tenth centuries and flowered under Seljuk rule.[339] The Seljuks hoped to control the mystical brotherhoods and therefore built many Sufi hospices and set strict rules and rituals. This had much effect on the lives of the mystics. The propagation of the concept of *vahdat al-vojud* ('oneness of being') by the famous mystical philosopher Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240) also caused a change of thought and attitude among mystics. Since Ibn ʿArabi stated that God permeated the whole universe and

[336] For an elaboration on the use of court literature by mystics see E. Yarshater, *Persian Literature*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.

[337] Mystics use the symbol of the moth that flies into the candle to explain the road of the mystical who also becomes one with God. With a reference to Asghar's article!

[338] J.T. P. de Bruijn, "The Qalandariyyāt in Mystical Poetry, From Sanā'ī Onwards," in *The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism*, ed. L. Lewisohn, London: Khanaqahi Publ., 1992, pp. 75-86.

[339] The Seljuk Empire was founded by the Seljuks, a tribe of Turko-Persian origins. Large parts of the Middle East and Central Asia were under their control from the eleventh till the fourteenth century. The Seljuks, who belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam, greatly supported Sufi groups.

therefore rejection of this world was no longer necessary, Sufis became more active and integrated in society. The antinomian mystics did not agree with this institutionalization and communalization of Sufism and purposely started to show deviating behaviour.[340] Unlike the 'traditional' mystics, they believed that voluntarily violating religious and societal norms was a necessary step to attain divine salvation. They thought to attain this goal by openly consuming religiously forbidden things, such as alcohol and hashish, or by breaching religious norms, for example by breaking the fast before sunset during Ramadan.[341]

The trend of antinomian behaviour in Sufism also affected Persian poetry. From the twelfth century onwards, Persian poets such as Sanâ'i, Attâr (d. 1220) and Hâfez started to adopt antinomian themes such as the adoration of non-Islamic figures and the consumption of forbidden things in their poems. These poems became known as *qalandariyyât*. The central figure in this poetry is the *qalandar* or *rend* (rogue). He is an antinomian mystical who, in search of wine and love, dwells on the edges of society in Christian and Zoroastrian taverns. He is also to be found in a Zoroastrian or Christian monastery, criticizing the most sacred tenets of Islam such as the pilgrimage to Mecca. The *rend* adores the Zoroastrian priest or Christian Elder because of his similar unconventional position in society and sees him as an embodiment of deviant behaviour. He recognizes himself in this un-Islamic figure since he, like him, does not respect the Islamic laws and openly drinks wine. He adores him as if he were his spiritual guide. The *rend* is dependent on him since only he has access to wine, which in mystical philosophy symbolizes divine knowledge. Another important figure in this antinomian poetry is the young wine-server who is often a young Zoroastrian (*moghbachche*) or a Christian boy (*tarsâbachche*) of stunning beauty. Like the Zoroastrian priest or the Christian Elder, the wine-server is a point of admiration for the antinomian mystic. In antinomian poetry, these 'good-hearted' unorthodox characters are placed opposite orthodox figures such as the religious preacher (*wâ'ez*), the sheikh, the scholar (*hakim*), the jurist

[340] This reaction to communalization had also taken place some centuries earlier when Islam was institutionalized at all levels of society. From that time on religious piety was no longer a private matter, but became a public affair. This became most clear with the adaption of the *ijma*'-practice as a 'source of legal authority' on which the laws could be based. The reaction of some believers to this development was that they started to turn away from society. These were the first tokens of renunciation in Islamized Iran. One of the first, or the first, to write on these ascetic practices was Shaqiq Balkhi (d. 809/10). Many ascetic poems, called *zohdiyyât*, were written during this period. The ascetics interpreted this world as being opposed to the other world. For consultation see A.T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994, pp. 1-30.

[341] Ibid.

(faqih), the judge (*qâdi),* the moral police *(mohtaseb),* the Sufi and the ascetic *(zâhed),* to show that religion and piety have everything to do with purity of heart and nothing to do with the observance of Islamic laws and rituals.[342]

Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s all fit into this antinomian poetic tradition. His broad adoption of this tradition raises several questions as to what he wanted to achieve by praising wine, homo-erotic relationships with the Beloved, and voiding the orthodox tenets of religion, when he was writing poetry, while upholding orthodox Shiite ideas in his political and religious *persona*.

4.3 The *Ghazal* in Historical Perspective

The *ghazal* is one of the most popular genres in the Persian literary tradition and is used in a wide range of contexts, from the amatory to mystic, religious, political and social fields. The Arabic root *gh-z-l,* refers to spinning yarn, while the word *ghazal* means flirting and courtship. By extension it was used to refer to a love poem in any form. Eventually, in Persian cultural areas, the term was used to denote a specific type of love poetry with a certain rhyme and metric pattern. The connotation of *ghazal* as a love poem probably developed out of the amatory passages in the introduction to a panegyric poem (*qaside*). As J.T.P. de Bruijn indicates, the development of the 'technical' *ghazal,* as some have termed this particular love poetry, started in the twelfth century when poetry expanded beyond the courtly environment and was used by mystics and in non-elite literary contexts. The *ghazal* form as we know it today was fully developed in the thirteenth century.[343] It contained both lyrical lines and didactic poetical themes. The oldest known 'technical' *ghazal* dates to the twelfth century and was composed by Sanâ'i, who introduced antinomian themes such as 'wine' and 'rogue' (*rend*) to the *ghazal*.[344] The introduction of mystical elements in the *ghazal* in the twelfth century, alongside the amatory connotations of the form, made the *ghazal* ambiguous, since it could have both a profane and a mystical connotation, a characteristic that continues today. A *ghazal* can usually be interpreted in terms of mystical or profane love, and sometimes in political or social senses, without downplaying other interpretative levels. The *ghazal*s of

[342] F. Lewis, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hāfez viii. Hāfez and Rendi and J.T.P. de Bruijn, "The Qalandariyyāt in Mystical Poetry…", pp. 75-86.

[343] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. History.

[344] I will treat the antinomian themes elaborately in chapter 4.6 of this study.

Hâfez (d. 1390) are particularly good examples of the mixing of profane and mystical elements.[345]

The *ghazal* has been used in a wide range of contexts, varying from mystical worship and instruction to courtship, and in political and social settings. In social contexts for instance, the *ghazal* has been used in bibliomancy (*fâlgiri*), the practice of consulting texts to foretell future events or get advice in difficulties. Bibliomancy has been popular in all layers of Iranian society for centuries, and remains so up to the present. The *ghazal*s of Hâfez have been among the favourite texts to be consulted for future-telling, as almost every Iranian home contains a copy of his *Divân*[346]

The classical *ghazal* has also been an important instrument to convey political ideas. Several *ghazal*s by Hâfez carry political messages and can be interpreted as pure political comments. In ghazal 41:1, Hâfez gives us a glimpse of the political and social climate in which he lived, saying:

اگر چه باده فرح بخش و باد گلبیز است	Although the breeze waft in the scent of roses and the wine bring on good cheer,
به بانگ چنگ مخور می که محتسب تیز است	beware: don't drink to the tune of the harp – for sharp is the Policeman[']s ear]. [347]

In the poem, Hâfez criticizes his Mozaffarid ruler Mobârez al-Din Mohammad (ruled 1353-1358), who was known for his orthodox way of living. Mobârez forbade all forms of cultural activities such as musical expression and put a strict ban on the consumption of alcohol.[348] In this verse, Hâfez responds to Mobârez's orthodoxy, by praising a libertine way of living. As L. Lewishon argues, "it was partly as a foil to this religious dictatorship that Ḥāfiẓ elaborated his most famous symbol– the inspired libertine (*rend*) – as a representative of the spiritual and intellectual counter-culture of the city."[349] In Hâfez's *ghazals*, the reader

[345] E. Yarshater, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ghazal i. Characteristics and Conventions.

[346] See J. Schmidt, "Hafiz and Other Persian Authors in Ottoman Bibliomancy; The Extraordinary Case of Kevefi Hüseyn Efendi's Rāznāme (Late Sixteenth Century)," in *Persica*, No. XXI 21, Leuven: Peeters, 2006-2007, pp. 63-74. See also the articles by I. Afshār, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Fāl-nāma and M. Omidsalar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Divination.

[347] Mohammad Shams al-Din Hāfiz, *Divân*, ed. P. Nâtel Khânlari, Tehran: Khârazmi, 1362/1983, *ghazal* 41:1. Translation is by L. Lewisohn, "Ḥāfiẓ in the Socio-historical, Literary and Mystical Milieu of Medieval Persia", in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. L. Lewisohn, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, p. 23.

[348] P. Avery, *The Collected Lyrics of Hafiz of Shiraz,* Cambridge: Archetype, 2007, p. 75.

[349] L. Lewisohn, "Ḥāfiẓ in the Socio-historical, Literary and Mystical Milieu of Medieval Persia,*"* p. 23.

finds not only words of praise and religious or mystical messages. His poems also serve as important historical documents and reflect the political and social climate which surrounded him.[350]

Although early classical *ghazal*s such as those of Hâfez also contain political messages, it was not until the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) that poets began to write for a new audience, after losing their position in court. Poets such as Mohammad Farrokhi Yazdi (d. 1939), Mohammad Taqi Bahâr (d. 1951), and Abu 'l-Qâsem ʿÂref Qazvini (d. 1934) used the *ghazal* to picture the social unrest and express political critique or to spread revolutionary ideas such as Iranian national identity and independence amongst the population.[351] The Constitutional poetry written during this period differed radically from the generalizing neoclassical poetry of the previous decades.[352] Classical themes such as 'the Beloved' were replaced by themes such as 'the motherland' (*vatan*). In numerous poems, constitutional poets praised their motherland as if it were their Beloved.[353] *Ghazal*s published in new print media, and widely recited, communicated messages of modernity, patriotism, the position of women and human rights to people from all layers of society. Persian poets have continued to use the *ghazal* to depict social and political realities to the present day.[354] Simin Behbahâni (1927-2014), for example, used the *ghazal* to condemn the political and social situation in Iran shortly after the Islamic Revolution (1978-79):

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[350] For Hâfez's poetic skills see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hafez iii. Hafez's Poetic Art. For Hâfez's Life and Work see *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. L. Lewisohn.

[351] For articles on political literature see A. Karimi-Hakkak, "Iran's Literature 1977-1997; Selections from the Literature of Iran," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3-4, 1997, pp. 193-213 and N. Farzad, "Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence; Iranian Intellectuals from 1997-2007," in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2007, pp. 351-374. For articles on Farrokhi see A. Gheissari, "The Poetry and Politics of Farrokhi Yazdi," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1-2, 1993, pp. 33-50. For articles on Bahâr see J. Matini, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Mohammad Taqi Bahār ii. Bahār as a Poet. For articles on Aref see A. Karimi-Hakkak, "Iran's Literature 1977-1997…," pp. 193-213 and A. Karimi-Hakkak, *Recasting Persian Poetry: Scenarios of Poetic Modernity in Iran*, London: Oneworld Publications, 2012, pp. 88-96.

[352] During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Iran experienced a *bâzgashti*, a 'return,' to classical court poetry.

[353] An interesting book on *vatan* as a theme in Persian poetry was written by A. Najmabadi, "The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and To Protect," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 1997, pp. 442-467.

[354] See A. Karimi-Hakkak, "Iran's Literature 1977-1997…," pp. 193-213 and N. Farzad, "Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence…," pp. 351-374.

I can't look: a corpse lies on the ground

its horrifying outline punctuated by bullets,

the swamp bubbles that were his eyes expelled from their sockets,

emptied of all joy and sadness,
separated from all hatred and love.[355]

نمی توانم ببینم ِ جنازه یٔ بر زمین است؛

که بر خطوط مهیبش ِ گلوله ها نقطه چین است:.حباب مرداب

چشمش؛ ز حفره بیرون جهیده

تهی ز اندوه و شادی ِ گسسته از مهر و کین است

Behbahâni gives an awful description of the body of a soldier killed in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Only the rhyme and meter reveal that the poem is actually a *ghazal*. Nothing is left of the classical *ghazal* depicting love and the Beloved's flirtations. Instead, Behbahâni uses the *ghazal* to depict the situation in Iran.

In conclusion, one can say that the *ghazal* has been used in a wide range of contexts to convey erotic, philosophical or mystical ideas, but also to spread political messages. On the one hand, Khomeini's poetry can be place in the antinomian poetic tradition dating from the twelfth century. One of the questions that will be examined in this chapter is as to why Ayatollah Khomeini adopted antinomian elements in his poetry while in public he accepted no trespasses of the Islamic norms and rules? Another question that will be examined is whether his *ghazal*s can be read as historical documents reflecting the political and social climate in which he lived? Did Ayatollah Khomeini use poetry to depict the socio-political situation in Iran? And if so, why would he use poetry for this purpose? These and multiple other similar questions will be addressed in this chapter.

4.4 Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry inspired by Hâfez

Ayatollah Khomeini wrote several *ghazal*s in imitation of Hâfez's poems. From the fourteenth century onwards, Hâfez had been imitated by a wide range of poets in the extensive area in which Persian was a language of literature, from the Ottoman courts to the Mughals in the Indian subcontinent.[356] By composing several *ghazal*s after Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini places

[355] First three couplets of the poem named "I can't Look" from 1980, composed by Simin Behbahâni and translated by F. Milani. See S. Behbahani, *A Cup of Sin: Selected Poems*, eds. & trs. F. Milani and K. Safa, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999, p. 89. For the original Persian lines see S. Behbahâni, *Khatti ze sor'at wa az ātash*, Tehrān: Zawwār, 1370 (1991), pp. 101-102. In 2008, the *Journal of Iranian Studies* devoted an issue (Vol. 41) entirely to Simin Behbahâni.

[356] For a specific example of imitation of one of Hâfez's *ghazal*s in the Ottoman language see K. Silay, *Nedim and the Poetics of the Ottoman Court*, Bloomington: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1994, p. 33. For the imitation tradition in general consult the six volumes on the history of Ottoman poetry by E.J.W. Gibb, *History of Ottoman Poetry*, Vol. I-VI, ed. E.G. Browne, London: Luzac, 1900-1909.

himself in this firm and long-established literary and mystical tradition. To contextualize one of these 'imitations' by Ayatollah Khomeini, I will give a translation of Hâfez's first *ghazal* in his *Divân*, which was imitated by Ayatollah Khomeini:

1	O cup-bearer, bring the cup around, bring it to me, while love at first seemed easy, difficulties appeared.	الا یا ایّها السّاقی ادر کأساً و ناولها که عشق آسان نمود اول ولی افتاد مشکل ها
2	By the fragrance of the musk, Zephyr will at last unknot the locks; her musky curls making the hearts bleed.	به بوی نافه ای کاخر صبا زان طرّه بگشاید ز تاب جعد مشکینش چه خون افتاد در دل ها
3	What safety and ease can we have in the Beloved's inn, while the incessant bell proclaims: "Bind on your burdens."	مرا در منزل جانان چه امن عیش چون هر دم جرس فریاد می دارد که بربندید محمل ها
4	Dye your prayer-mat with wine if the Magian commands it, for he who has travelled knows the road and the customs of the stations.	به می سجاده رنگین کن گرت پیر مغان گوید که سالک بی خبر نبود ز راه و رسم منزل ها
5	A dark night, the fear of waves, and such a monstrous maelstrom: what can unencumbered souls ashore know of our predicament?	شب تاریک و بیم موج و گردابی چنین هایل کجا دانند حال ما سبکباران ساحل ها
6	Because I pleased myself, all I have for thanks, is infamy. When it's the subject of assemblies, how can a secret stay hidden?	همه کارم ز خود کامی به بدنامی کشید آری نهان کی ماند آن رازی کز آن سازند محفل ها
7	Hâfez, if you wish to attain her presence, be not the unseen, when you attain your wish, forsake all else, forget the world.	حضوری گر همی خواهی از او غایب مشو حافظ متی ما تلق من تهوی دع الدنیا و اهملها[357]

This *ghazal* consists of seven couplets. Hâfez begins with a hemistich in Arabic, *alâ yâ ayyohâ al-sâqi* (Oh Cupbearer) and finishes with another Arabic hemistich.[358] In this poem, Hâfez uses the metre *hazâj-e sâlem mosamman*. Each of the seven couplets ends with a word ending on -el, followed by the *radif* –hâ, which is the Persian plural form *moshkelhâ* (difficulties), *delhâ* (hearts) *mahmelhâ* (burdens) *manzelhâ* (stations) *sâhelhâ* (ashore), *mahfelhâ* (assemblies)). In addition to these Persian plurals, in two places Hâfez uses an

[357] First *ghazal* in Hâfez's *divân*, pp. 18-19.

[358] My treatment of this *ghazal* is entirely based on J.T.P. de Bruijn's insightful analysis which Seyed-Gohrab further discussed with me during one of our PhD-sessions.

Arabic plural form which consists of the suffix – *ân nâwelhâ* (to bring / to offer) and *ahmelhâ* (to forget).

Hâfez presents his *ghazal* as if it were a monologue by a poet lover. Although there is no question of a clear I-form in the poem, it is as if one follows the complaints of the lover who is separated from his Beloved. In addition to the lover and the Beloved for whom the lover laments, the 'cup-bearer' (*sâqi*) is invoked, and the Zoroastrian (Magian) Elder or spiritual guide appears in couplet three. Couplet seven contains the *takhallos*, the pen-name of the poet Hâfez, which means one who remembers. The poet is addressed in the third person by an unknown voice, who cannot be identified as the lover, and who tells him to forsake the world. So a total of six characters can be found in this first *ghazal* by Hâfez: the lover, the Beloved, the cup-bearer, the Magian Elder, Hâfez, and an unidentified voice.

The main theme in this *ghazal* is the antithesis between easy, safe love and dangerous, uncomfortable love. Another important theme is the 'journey', whether physical or spiritual. To explain these themes, Hâfez uses various motifs and imagery that have their origin in 'love poems' (*ghazaliyyât*), 'antinomianism' (*qalandariyyât*), 'praise of wine' (*khamriyyât*) and 'asceticism' (*zohdiyyât*). Wine motifs can be found throughout the poem: Hâfez speaks of 'wine' (*mey*) and 'assemblies' (*mahmelhâ*) at which the wine drinkers meet. In the first couplet, the poet mentions the 'cup-bearer', the *sâqi*, whom the poet lover addresses to fill his glass with wine. Some of these wine motifs also fit into the antinomian tradition (*qalandariyyât*). For example, the metaphor of 'staining the prayer-carpet with wine' (*be mey sajjâde rangin kon*), in couplet four, may both be found in *khamriyyât* and in antinomianism. In couplet four, Hâfez introduces the *pir-e moghân*, the leader of the Zoroastrians or Magians, who in antinomian literature has become a metaphor for the spiritual guide of the *qalandars*. In addition to these wine and antinomian motifs, numerous elements can be found in this *ghazal* that belong to asceticism. Hâfez speaks of the secret (*râz*), of 'attaining the presence' (*hozur*) and of the unseen (*ghâyeb*). There is a polarity between being in His presence and belonging to this world (*donyâ*). To attain to oneness with God and to be in His constant presence, one must detach oneself from all earthly connections and say farewell to the world. Nature is also an important motif in this *ghazal*: Hâfez speaks of the 'dark night' (*shab-e târik*), of 'fear of waves' (*bim-e mawj*) and of a 'monstrous maelstrom' (*gerdâbi chonin hâyel*). He contrasts a description of the sea to the safety of the shore (*sâhelhâ*). The nature elements help to explain the dangerous and uneasy road of the *qalandar*.

The opening couplet of Hâfez's *ghazal* starts with the theme of wine. The unidentified lover is probably at a *majles*, a drinking gathering, for he calls on the *sâqi*, the cup-bearer, to

give him wine. His desire for wine is also given in this first couplet: "while love at first seemed easy, difficulties appeared." The lover seems to be in need of wine because he is separated from his Beloved and is feeling love-sick. In this situation, wine might serve to ease the pain and expel the sad feelings from his heart and thoughts. Two polarities can be found in this first couplet that reoccur later on in the poem. On the one hand, one can find the antithesis 'easy' (*âsân*) versus 'difficulties' (*moshkelhâ*). The couplet implies that a polarity between an easy predictable love and a love accompanied by hardship and difficulties that can appear at any moment. The other contrast in the couplet is the antithesis between 'to seem' (*nemudan*) and 'appeared' (*oftâdan*). The Persian verb *nemudan* has various meanings: 'to show,' 'to seem,' or, in compound verbs, 'to do.' In this couplet *nemudan* is placed next to 'easy' (*âsân*), meaning that things 'seem easy.' It is contrasted to the verb *oftâdan* which literally means 'to fall' and often means 'actually occur.' In this couplet it is connected to 'problems' (*moshkelhâ*), that appear in the sense of actually materializing.

In the second couplet we see that the lover is not alone in his love-sickness, which afflicts numerous hearts (*delhâ*). The lover uses images common in amatory poems to describe the Beloved, referring to the 'fragrance of the musk' (*bu-ye nâfe*) and his, or her, 'musky curls' (*ja'd-e moshkin*). The couplet again incorporates a polarity, the blood of the lovers' hearts is red, while the *moshkin* means both musky in odour and black.

In couplet three, the poet speaks of the Beloved's inn (*manzel*), a travellers' hostel or staging-post, which is used metaphorically to refer to the stages attained on the mystical road towards God. But the traveller finds this is not a place to rest, as the bell that calls the caravan to load up the animals rings continually. It seems the traveller has packed his bags to continue his dangerous and insecure journey towards the next safe haven.

Couplet four again refers to the hostels on the road, with the same double meaning as in the previous couplet. The lover tells travellers to take the advice of one who has travelled himself: a Zoroastrian who may be the inn-keeper in this image. If the Magian commands it, the lovers should breach the laws of religious purity by washing the prayer-mat, the embodiment of religious purity, with 'impure' wine, which renders prayer ineffective. This *qalandari* image is one of the clearest examples of the contrast between an orthodox concern with religious rituals and rules, and an antinomian renunciation of all these rules to concentrate on purity of heart. It is not orthopraxy, but actual experience of the spiritual journey, that confers the authority to guide others.

In couplet five, we follow the lovers on a sea journey by night. It is dark, and the lovers are afraid of waves. Out of nowhere, a huge *gerdâb* (whirlpool) appears. The condition

of the travellers at sea is contrasted to those on the shore (*sâhelhâ*). The term unencumbered, or literally 'light-burdened' (*sabokbârân*), which Hâfez uses for those on shore might refer to a Koranic verse in which God wants to give responsibility or trusteeship (*amânat*) to the mountains and the earth and heavens, but none of these are willing to accept it. Only the human is willing to accept responsibility.[359] In this couplet, the lover implies that those who are unencumbered on the shore' (*sabokbârân sâhelhâ*) are afraid to get into the water and are therefore unable to take their responsibility: they carry no cargo. The sea travelers on the other hand have taken up the trust by entering on the journey, despite of all its dangers and difficulties.

In couplet six, two compounds immediately require attention: 'self-gratification' (*khodkâmi*, to please oneself) and 'infamy' (*badnâmi*). The internal rhyme between them indicates that they are connected. *Khodkâmi* usually refers to someone who focuses only on himself and the gratification of desires, which naturally leads to disrepute. But infamy that is deliberately invited is part of the mystical journey. By voluntarily looking for ways to attract censure, such as walking around naked or drinking alcohol in public, which at first sight seem to be mere self-gratification, the mystic will destroy his reputation and his attachment to the opinion of others. This is one of the steps towards the annihilation of the Self. The concept of achieving 'disrepute through self-gratification' is at the heart of the antinomian love tradition. A classical literary work that exemplifies this thought perfectly is the famous story by Farid al-Din ʿAttâr (d. 1221) in his "Conference of the Birds" (*Manteq al-teyr*) on Sheikh Sanʿân.[360] In the story, Sheikh Sanʿân holds the keys to the Kaʿba in Mecca, the holiest building in the eyes of the Muslims. One day, he falls in love with a young Christian woman, to the extent that he forsakes everything, including his religion, to please her. Since the girl is not at all interested in the Sheikh, she asks him to do the most repulsive things, expecting him to lose interest in her. But, contrary to her expectations, the Sheikh is prepared to do anything for her. When she asks him to burn the Koran, he does so. When she asks him to become a Christian, he does so. Sanʿân lowers himself to the most blameworthy acts, all in the name of love. ʿAttâr's story exemplifies the lover's willingness to accept and undergo anything the Beloved imposes on him, just as the sea-going lovers in this *ghazal* by Hâfez are willing to suffer any hardship on their road of love. In the second hemistich of couplet six, the lover refers to a

[359] See Koranic verse 33:72: "We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of doing so; but man carried it".

[360] Farid ud-Din ʿAttâr, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. D. Davis and A. Darbandi, London: Penquin, 1984.

secret that cannot remain hidden. Mystics who have experienced nearness to God, known as 'witnessing,' are unable to hide this. It causes a visible change. Similarly the profane lover who has attained to the Beloved reveals it, and becomes a subject of scandal, through changes in behaviour, such as blushing.

In the last couplet, an unidentified voice addresses Hâfez. He speaks of the Beloved's presence (*hozur*) and the lover's absence (*ghâyeb*). The first connotes a formal audience, such as petitioners who are brought into the presence of the king. The second means to be absent, to be invisible, and also the mysterious and unseen world. In order to be constantly in the presence of the Beloved, one has to forsake the world and everything in it, including the self. The mundane world is the polar opposite to the court of the Beloved, the mundane self is the polar opposite of the Beloved, and also of the lover's true self, which is attained through complete detachment.

4.5 Ayatollah Khomeini's Imitation of the *Ghazal*

Having analyzed Hâfez's *ghazal*, it is time to examine Ayatollah Khomeini's imitation. The device of literary emulation (*esteqbâl*) has a long history in the Persian literary tradition. Ever since the tenth century, Persian poets have adopted the rhyme, metre, or images from famous poems to place themselves in a certain literary tradition. Some, even copied whole couplets from another poem. This last device is called *tazmin* in Persian. This fusion between old textual elements and new texts not only brings past and present together, it can also lead to new insights or new interpretations of a text.[361]

Ayatollah Khomeini's imitation of Hâfez' poem is called "The Monastery of Love" (*Khâneqâh-e del*, literally, the Monastery of the Heart) and can also be placed in this literary emulation tradition. To show where Ayatollah Khomeini has copied elements from the *ghazal* by Hâfez I will again present a translation, and discuss the form and stylistic features of Khomeini's *ghazal*, followed by an analysis.

[361] For the devise of esteqbâl see P. E. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation & Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1998, pp. 12, 107-108.

1	Oh cup-bearer, expel the grief from our hearts, for your cup immediately resolves all the secrets of our problems.	ألا یا أیها السّاقی! برون بر حسرت دلها که جامت حل نماید یکسره اسرار مشکلها
2	Block the road from reason to the monastery of love, with wine, that the home of folly may never be a place for wise men.	به می بر بند راه عقل را از خانقاه دل که این دارالجنون هرگز نباشد جای عاقلها
3	If you find any heart closed to love of the Lovely, expel that person, for this house of wine is home for none but those who have lost their hearts.	اگر دل‌بسته‌ای بر عشق جانان، جای خالی کن! که این میخانه هرگز نیست جز مأوای بیدلها
4	And you, if for one moment you come to your senses, from the wine's intoxication, depart without delay from the bounds that harbour the lotus eaters.	تو گر از نشئه‌ی می کمتر از آنی، به خود آیی برون شو! بیدرنگ از مرز خلوتگاه غافلها
5	If you see the colour of that idol in the flowers of the garden of the friend, You separated the seas and coasts from the garden of the friend.	چه از گلهای باغ دوست رنگ آن صنم دیدی جدا گشتی ز باغ دوست دریاها و ساحلها
6	You, who saw the road to heaven and paradise before you, have departed from the road of Truth and clung to falsities.	تو راه جنت و فردوس را در پیش خود دیدی جدا گشتی ز راه حق و پیوستی به باطلها
7	If you give your heart to the world of being, or to what is even higher, you tie yourself with the threads of a spider or, in truth, with chains.	اگر دل داده‌ای بر عالم هستی و بالاتر به خود بستی ز تار عنکبوتی بس سلاسلها.[362]

Like Hâfez's poem, Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* consists of seven couplets. In imitation of Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini starts his *ghazal* with the same half-Arabic, half-Persian invocation *alâ yâ ayyohâ al-sâqi* ("O cup-bearer"). This tells the reader from the beginning that Ayatollah Khomeini is inspired by Hâfez. Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini uses the metre *hazâj-e sâlem mosamman.* As in Hâfez's *ghazal*, each couplet finishes with the rhyme –el, followed by the Persian plural form *–hâ* (*moshkelhâ, 'âqelhâ, bidelhâ, ghâfelhâ, sâhelhâ, bâtelhâ, salâselhâ*), forming a *radif* rhyme.

Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini presents his *ghazal* as a monologue by an unidentified poet lover, who first addresses the cup-bearer. The lover implies that he belongs to a larger group of lovers who adore one Beloved, when he speaks of "our hearts" in the first couplet. In couplets two and three, the cup-bearer, or some other person, is called on to bar

[362] See Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*, p. 46.

‘wise men’ from the house, and expel from it those whose hearts are closed to love. In couplet four, and again in couple six, the lover speaks to an unidentified “you,” a half-hearted lover. The first sign of the half-hearted lover is that he comes to his senses: his spiritual inebriation is not complete and constant. The ‘lotus eaters’ in the translation of couplet four are a western equivalent of the Persian idiom, *ghâfelhâ,* those who are heedless of the world. The purported lover who comes to his senses should know he is unworthy, and leave. He also twice speaks of a ‘friend’ (*dust*) in couplet five, in whose garden one can glimpse the colour of that idol (the Beloved). This could be the friend or spiritual guide of the ‘you’ whom the lover addresses, such as an orthodox religious leader or preacher, but it is probably a reference to God himself, who has gardens in this world.

Couplet six again addresses the ‘you,’ the half-hearted lover. This person has begun to think of the rewards of heaven, instead of giving only selfless love, and in doing so has joined partners with God. This reminds one of the mystic and saint Râbeʿa ’l-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801) who has become famous for her saying that she did not worship God for the fear of hell or the reward of paradise but for God himself. The concept of selfless love is associated with her. Couplet seven appears to be addressed to the same ‘you,’ as it has the same theme: attachment to ‘what is even higher’ is just as much an encumbrance as attachment to the world. The structure in this line suggests that attachment to the world is as a spider’s thread, while attachment to what is higher is as chains.

The lover speaks negatively of three groups of people: the ‘wise men’ (*‘âqelhâ*) in couplet two, the ‘heartless people’ (*bi-delhâ*) in couplet three, and the ‘you’ who is an unworthy lover, or at least a pilgrim in need of a stern reminder. The main theme in Ayatollah Khomeini’s *ghazal* is the polarity between the ‘road of love’ and the ‘road of reason.’ The first is the path of lovers and ‘lotus eaters,’ while in the opposite group one finds the ‘wise men’ and those with closed hearts. Another theme in this *ghazal* is the antithesis between captivation through attachment and freedom through detachment. Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini explains his themes using various metaphors and motifs from the genres of ‘antinomianism’ (*qalandariyyât*), ‘love poetry’ (*ghazalliyât*), ‘asceticism’ (*zohdiyyât*) and ‘praise of wine’ (*khamriyyât*).

As in Hâfez’s *ghazal,* wine motifs abound in Ayatollah Khomeini’s lyrical poem. On five occasions Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted motifs that fit into the wine-praising tradition: the ‘cup-bearer’ (*sâqi*), ‘wine’ (*mey*), ‘the home of folly’ (*dâr al-jonun*), and the ‘house of wine’ (*meykhâne*). The ‘home of folly’ may refer to a place where people drink wine, although the word for folly here also connotes madness. As such it may also refer to a place

where antinomian mystics gather. They look as if they have lost their minds and are completely mad but, for themselves, they concentrate on their love for God by abandoning the community of men and taking refuge in the home of folly. This contact with God can only be made through the heart and not with the mind. In this sense, the house of folly belongs to the antinomian tradition. Another antinomian motif can be found in couplet four in which Ayatollah Khomeini says that a person who comes to himself for a moment cannot remain among those who have forgotten all. Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to his conviction that self-gratification leads to disrepute and then to annihilation. Several motifs in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* can be placed in an 'ascetic' setting. Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of 'secrets' (*asrâr*), although Hâfez used the Persian term *râz*. In couplet six, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the pilgrimage on the 'road of Truth.' The final couplet further emphasizes this focus on withdrawal from the world when Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the lover's task to free himself from his chains by cutting the 'threads of a spider' in which the soul is captivated.

In addition to this strong reference to captivation in the final couplet, the resolution of problems in the first couplet also implies a situation of entanglement. In couplet two Ayatollah Khomeini refers to blocking the road of reason, and in the following couplet, in a negative sense, to the closing of the heart. The following couplet refers to boundaries (*marz*). As in Hâfez's *ghazal*, numerous elements from nature can be found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*. In couplet five, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of 'flowers' (*golhâ*), a 'garden' (*bâgh*) and of 'seas' (*daryâhâ*) and 'coasts' (*sâhelhâ*).

Ayatollah Khomeini, like Hâfez, opens his poem with the theme of wine. The poet lover asks the cup-bearer to give the lovers relief from their grief. The plural form indicates that the lover is in a larger group of lovers. The cup-bearer in this couplet represents the spiritual guide of the lovers. As the rest of the couplet indicates his cup (forgetting oneself) is the remedy to all of love's problems.

As in the poems of Hâfez, the Zoroastrian priest or 'Magian Elder' plays a central role in Ayatollah Khomeini's antinomian poetry. It is common, in this genre, to favour non-Islamic religions over Islam. In several of his other *ghazal*s, (but not explicitely in this poem), Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of the Zoroastrians, whom he calls 'fire worshippers' (*moghân*)[363] and 'wine-sellers'(*mey-forushân*).[364] In several *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini refers to this

[363] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *moghân* in *ghazal* 73,3; 83,2; 131;138,2;138,4;155,6 and 167,2.

[364] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *mey-forushâ n* in *ghazal* 99,5; 116,3 and 131,1.

person as the *mowbed* (‘Zoroastrian priest’),[365] the *pir-e moghân* (‘the Elder or spiritual guide of the fire worshippers’),[366] the *pir-e kharâbât* (‘the Elder of the Tavern’),[367] the *pir-e sawme‘e* (‘the Elder of the Monastery’),[368] the *pir-e meykade* (‘the Elder of the Wine-house’),[369] the *pir-e meyforush* (‘the Elder of the wine-seller’),[370] and the *pir-e râh* (‘the guide on the mystical road’) or just the *pir (*‘spiritual guide or Elder’).[371] An example of these allusions in Ayatollah Khomeini’s *Divân* is the following:

The Sufi has his cloak, the ascetic his prayer-mat, while I have come to the fire-temple of the Elder, singing sweet melodies.	صوفی و خرقه‌ی خود، زاهد و سجّاده‌ی خویش من، سوی دیر مُغان نغمه‌نواز آمده‌ام.[372]

The way Ayatollah Khomeini venerates the Zoroastrian priest in his *ghazal*s perfectly suits the antinomian poetical tradition. His positive reference to the Magian elder in these lines corresponds with what we have seen in Hâfez’s first *ghazal* in his *Divân.* As in Hâfez’s poetry, in Ayatollah Khomeini’s *ghazal*s the poetic persona is completely at the service of the Zoroastrian priest. In the antinomian poetical tradition, the Zoroastrian priest functions as a spiritual guide who leads the mystic towards the divine mysteries. Another example of this in Ayatollah Khomeini’s *ghazal*s reads:

1	Kiss the hand of that sheikh who called me an infidel, Caress the police for putting me in chains.	دست آن شیخ ببوسید که تکفیرم کرد محتسب را بنوازید که زنجیرم کرد
2	From now on, I’m devoted to worship at the door of the Magian elder. For he took me beyond this world and the next, through one draught of wine.	معتکف گشتم از این پس به در پیر مغان که به یک جرعه می از هر دو جهان سیرم کرد
3	I drink no water at the Fountain of Kawthar, I owe no debt to the gardens of Paradise: The light that shines from your face, O Friend, has made me a world-conqueror.	آب کوثر نخورم، منّت رضوان نبرم پرتو روی تو ای دوست! جهانگیرم کرد

[365] *Ghazal* 132, couplet 7.

[366] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir-e moghân* in *ghazal* 83; 83,2; 83,5; 110,6; 131; 138,2;155,6 and 167,2.

[367] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir-e kharabât* in *ghazal* 39,6; 122,7; 142,5 and 157,3.

[368] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir-e sawm'e* in *ghazal* 40,8.

[369] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir-e meykade* in *ghazal* 85,1; 85,6; 122,2 and 129,5.

[370] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir-e meyforush* in *ghazal* 131,1.

[371] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the *pir*, in *ghazal* 79,2; 79,4; 130,3; (139,7;140,3;161;161,3;) and 173,1.

[372] *Ghazal* 138, couplet 4.

4	Seize on the heart of the dervish, for he unveiled the secret of the day of alast, and showed me my destiny.	دل درویش به دست آر که از سرّ الست پرده برداشته، آگاه ز تقدیرم کرد
5	Let me sing the praises of the Elder of the wine-house who, with the blow of one hand, annihilated me, made me naught and made me a captive.	پیر میخانه بنازم! که به سر پنجه‌ی خویش فانیم کرده، عدم کرده و، تسخیرم کرد
6	I am the slave at the gate of the Elder who for his own satisfaction Made me forget myself and turned me upside down.	خادم درگه پیرم که ز دلجویی خود غافل از خویش نمود و زبر و زیرم کرد.[373]

In several *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini pretends to be completely obedient to a Zoroastrian priest or mystical guide or Elder. Like the mystic, the Zoroastrian priest has a marginal position in Islamic society. Both figures oppose orthodox Islam. In the eyes of the orthodox Muslims, the Zoroastrian priest is the embodiment of unconventional religiosity, so admiring him is an indirect critique on orthodox Islamic society.[374]

Ayatollah Khomeini's praise of non-Islamic figures such as the cup-bearer or the Zoroastrian priest in his *ghazal*s does not mean that he actually admired these persons. It is merely a metaphor copied from classical mystical poets to criticize society. This use of the antinomian religious figure in Persian poetry became popular from the twelfth century onwards. Iran had a large community of Zoroastrians and Christians. Both groups were known for their gentleness and hospitality.[375] As Aryân Qamar says, Christians have been fairly well tolerated by Muslims in Iran, despite their differing opinions on various religious thoughts, such as the trinity of God.[376] Motifs and metaphors from these religions abound in medieval Persian poetry and in the *ghazal* genre, but one can question how far these motifs and metaphors reflect real life in the medieval period. It is a fascinating subject, which goes beyond the scope of this study. One can think of the poems in which Sanâ'i praises the Christians and Zoroastrians for their gentle character.[377] Soon, other mystical poets adopted these religious figures as metaphors for their similar unconventional position in society. For example, the Christian monastery (*deyr*) became a metaphor for the Sufi lodge or hospice

[373] *Ghazal* 83.

[374] J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāda.

[375] A. Schimmel, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Christianity vii. Christian Influences in Persian Poetry.

[376] A. Qamar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Christianity vi. In Persian Literature.

[377] On Christians in Persian poetry see article by S.S. Soroudi, "On Jesus' Image in Modern Persian Poetry," in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 69, No. 4, 1979, pp. 221-228.

(*khâneqâh*) because it too was an unorthodox place of worship. And a young Zoroastrian (*moghbachche*) or Christian boy (*tarsâbachche*), found in the Zoroastrian temple or Christian monastery, represented the mystical guide (*morshed*). His beauty, just like the knowledge of the sheikh, was a focus for the aspirant mystic's admiration. When lost in admiration, the pupil might escape the earthly world.[378]

In couplet two of The Monastery of Love, the lover indicates how the problems of the lovers can be solved: 'by blocking the road from reason with wine.' The couplet shows that the lovers are in a 'monastery of love,' which the poet lover also calls the 'home of folly,' another indication that it is a gathering-place where wine is served. There is a polarity between the 'road of reason' and 'the place for wise men' on the one hand, and the 'monastery of love' and the 'home of folly' on the other hand.

In couplet three the lover gives advice to an unidentified listener, perhaps the cup-bearer or the landlord of the tavern: he should keep the tavern exclusively for those who have lost their hearts. The couplet demonstrates that the gatherings are only accessable for initiated mystics, and those mystics that have reached a certain spiritual level. In couplet four the lover explains how the drinking of wine leads to disrepute and consequently to total purity of the heart. Once the lover has passed this stage of disrepute and has gotten rid of all forms of otherness, he will reach his pure Self ('you come to your senses), which is in essence the same as God. A contrast can be found between 'impurity' (wine's intoxication) and 'purity' (coming to your senses), where the first leads to the latter. In the next part of the couplet the lover urges the unidentified listener to join the lovers and to take distance from the 'lotus eaters', the moment he does no longer experience this 'spiritual intoxication' and has come to his senses. The couplet implies that the addressed might be a novice on the 'road of love.' The central thought in this couplet that impurity leads to purity, or disrepute leads to purity, can also be found in couplet six of Hâfez's *ghazal*, perhaps indicating that Ayatollah Khomeini purposely places himself in the same antinomian poetic tradition as Hâfez.

On various occasions in the poem, Ayatollah Khomeini's refers to wine drinking. The poetic persona that Ayatollah Khomeini introduces in this poem is completely at the service of this Zoroastrian priest, because he gives access to wine. Christian monasteries and Zoroastrian temples in medieval Iran were popular, especially amongst mystics, because wine was served there, which was an extremely uncommon practice in an orthodox Islamic

[378] A. Qamar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Christianity vi. In Persian Literature.

society.[379] In his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini connects the *rendân* and the travellers on the path of love to the drinking of wine and to the tavern where they often dwelled. Wine has always been a popular theme in Persian poetry.[380] Although the consumption of wine was forbidden on religious grounds, wine was nevertheless a central theme from the outset of Persian poetry in the ninth and tenth centuries, as it is connected to feasts and formalities at the court. Wine also had a medical function. In the famous eleventh-century *Shah-name,* or 'Book of Kings,' wine is not only served at festivities, it is also used as a treatment for pain.[381] In the twelfth century, when Sufism spread rapidly throughout Iran, mystical elements were added to this wine poetry so that the wine terminology could be interpreted in a spiritual way. In this mystical poetry, life no longer revolves around the court, but rather, around the Sufi lodge, *khâneqah*, which is presented as the "diametric opposite of court and mosque." [382] The wine in this poetry symbolizes the mystic's rejection of orthodoxy. It also symbolizes his "irrational behaviour" [383] and shows that he concentrates on the soul instead of the intellect. Moreover, according to the mystic, wine "silences his rationality, which in mystical theory is an obstacle on the path of love"[384] Wine transports the mystic to another spiritual state in which he has access to divine knowledge. Wine drinking, which mostly takes place in a company of people, also symbolizes the mystical brotherhood. So, under the influence of mysticism, from the twelfth century onwards wine was presented as an adjunct to religious piety rather than as a religiously forbidden good.[385] Often in Persian poetry, the mystic's relationship with God is presented as a love relationship. In such a connection, wine is often extolled in Persian *ghazal*s as the 'medicine' for the heart-ache of the lover who is devastated by separation from his Beloved, i.e. God. The lover longs for this liquid because it can help him deal with his pain. He not only admires the beloved, but also tries to seduce the cup-bearer, the *sâqi*, who has the 'medicine' for his heart-ache. This *sâqi* is often a beautiful

[379] J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāda.

[380] See P. Losensky, in *Encylopaedia Iranica,* under Sāqī-nāma and see J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* under Bāda.

[381] See J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāda. See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *The Mirror of Meanings*, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2002, pp. xxxix-xlii, and E. Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine and Wine-drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry," in *Studia Islamica,* No. 13, 1960, pp. 43-53.

[382] J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāda.

[383] Ibid.

[384] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," p. 454.

[385] J.W. Clinton, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāda.

young Zoroastrian or Christian boy. Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted these antinomian themes in his poetry, in that his *ghazal*s are filled with '*rend*-like' figures, 'wine,' and 'cup-bearers', as in his imitation of Hâfez's *ghazal*. For uninitiated readers, it may be rather surprising to read that the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran begs, in his poems, for a glass of wine from a beloved male cup-bearer. Two words for wine, *bâde*[386] and *mey*[387], are the most frequently recurring words in his *ghazal*s. On numerous occasions, Ayatollah Khomeini presents himself as a drinker of wine who frequents the Magian monastery:

از آن می ده جانم را، ز قید خود رها سازد
به خود گیرم زمامم را، فرو ریزد مقامم را.[388]

Give me of this wine, that it may release my soul from its chains,
That it may seize my reins in its hands and throw me down to infamy.

Ayatollah Khomeini, like Hâfez, in his poetry, prefers the tavern to the mosque. By doing so, he criticizes the hypocritical behaviour of the orthodox. While the *rend* drinks wine in public, the clergy condemns it but, he might drink it in secret, Ayatollah Khomeini prefers the first to the second as they avoid hypocrisy. Hâfez considered the drinking of wine a means of avoiding hypocrisy (*tazwir/riyâ*) and washing away the desires of the selfish ego.[389] Ayatollah Khomeini uses the tavern to represent avoiding the hypocrisy of the orthodox in mosques, and also avoiding the Sufi lodge, which he says is full of 'deceitful games.'[390] The wine from this tavern is a metaphor for divine knowledge, bringing its drinker to another spiritual level:

آنچه روح‌افزاست، جام باده از دست نگار است
نی مُدرّس، نی مُربّی، نی حکیم و، نی خطیب است.[391]

That which sets the soul on fire is a cup of wine from the hand of a friend,
Not from the hand of a mentor, or teacher, a wise man, or preacher.

[386] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to *bâde* ('wine') in *ghazal* 51,1; 56,2; 56,5; 64,6; 67,2; 69,1; 75,3; 77,1; 79,6; 82,7; 86,3; 109,3; 109,5; 113,6; 115,3; 116,1; 116,3; 88,2;121,5; 117,6;121,7;121,4; 122;162,3;122,7;124,3; 130,2; 173; 173,3; 137,3; 137,4;145,4; 173,6; 149,5; 155,4; 164,5; 177; 177,5;166,6 and 170,6.

[387] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to *mey* ('wine') in *ghazal* 39,4; 40,1; 40,2; 40,3; 40,4; 43,6; 46, 4; 51,1; 51,6; 56,6; 57,5; 64,6; 64,7; 73,4; 79,5; 80,3; 80,4; 83,2; 89,5; 97,2; 99,6; 100,3; 106,3; 117,2;121,2;121,7; 123;125,1;131,8;142,6;151,1;157,2;161,7;162,2;163,4;164,3;168,4; 171;171,6;171,5;184,4 and 131,1.

[388] *Ghazal* 40, couplet 3.

[389] F. Lewis, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hāfez viii. Hāfez and Rendi.

[390] *Ghazal* 140, couplet 1.

[391] *Ghazal* 51, couplet 2.

The ‘wine’ in Ayatollah Khomeini’s poetry should not be interpreted literally, although there have been numerous mystics who did consume wine. Ayatollah Khomeini emphasizes this in one of his *ghazal*s by saying: “These sober ones, knowledge sellers and Sufis, do not use wine as we use it in our daily language,”[392] implying that these three groups consider the wine which is lauded in mystical poetry to be real wine. By ‘sober ones,’ Ayatollah Khomeini means those believers who have not (yet) been in touch with or ‘intoxicated’ by real divine knowledge. In one of his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini also mentions these sober ones in connection to his opponents:

آنچه دیدم ز حریفان، همه هشیاری بود
در صف می زده، بیداری من خواب من است.[393]

What I have seen from my opponents is that they all were sober,
As for me, it is the drinking of wine which keeps me from sleep.

It is not clear whether Ayatollah Khomeini, in this particular couplet, refers to actual opponents. We know that from the very beginning of his studies in Qom, Ayatollah Khomeini had a strained relationship with the orthodox clergy. Even later in life, when he was the highest Islamic authority of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini remained unappreciated by many Islamic clerics because of his mystical affiliations. One reading of this poem is that Ayatollah Khomeini refers to those who actually condemned him for his unconventional ideas, while according to him, they were the ones who had no real knowledge.

Couplet five addresses the pilgrim’s need to leave behind his first spiritual inspirations: the reflection of the Beloved seen once in a garden should prompt the lover to set out in search of the reality. Ayatollah Khomeini calls the Beloved an ‘idol’ (*sanam*), which is a common metaphor for one’s lover. At a first reading, Ayatollah Khomeini says that if you see even the colour of a polytheist idol, put the seas behind you, that is, escape from that place. But because the colour of the idol is seen in the friend’s garden, and this is a mystical poem, and the idol could be a beloved mistress, we understand that he is telling the aspirant lover to set out and cross the seas in a quest for the loved one. The strong contrast between escape and quest, in the first and second reading, gives the reader a sense of discovery. In couplet six, the lover explains that the road towards divine salvation is not about merely following the religious rules and rituals and focusing on a place in Paradise. Divine salvation can rather be found by focusing on the heart and on the disciplining of the soul and annihilation of the Self.

[392] *Ghazal* 55, couplet 6.

[393] *Ghazal* 57, couplet 3.

In the last couplet, the lover explains the last stage on the road of love. It is the point at which the mystic has freed himself of all possible attachments of the world. As A. Schimmel explains, at this stage "the spirit sees what is beyond all vision."[394] His soul will return to his initial state in which he was one with God.[395] Ayatollah Khomeini explains this thought with the image of one who is a captive in the web of a spider. After he has broken all the threads of the web that have kept him in captivity, he is able to fly to freedom. Likewise, the soul of the lover will return to its original state of union with God, once he has purified his soul of all forms of otherness.

It is not the poetical value of Ayatollah Khomeini's imitations of Hâfez's *ghazal*s, such as the one above, that demands our attention. As I explained earlier, any Iranian could have written such a poem, since poetry plays a prominent role in Persian society. It is rather the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini, in his position as an Ayatollah and later as the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, composes antinomian poetry and purposely places himself in this 'unorthodox' poetic tradition. As we will shortly see, Ayatollah Khomeini wrote many similar poems with antinomian themes.

4.6 Antinomian Elements in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Ghazal*s

The previous poem is only one example of Ayatollah Khomeini's 149 *ghazal*s.[396] He composed these poems in two different periods: before 1936, during his time as a student and teacher in Qom, and then from 1979 to March 1984, and from April 1985 until his death in 1989.[397] Ayatollah Khomeini finished many of his older *ghazal*s with the penname 'Hindi,'[398] by which he referred to his forefathers who had lived in India from the beginning of the eighteenth century, but who returned to Iran in the 1830s.[399] While Ayatollah Khomeini's oldest *ghazal*s have been preserved with a date of composition, a large part of his more recent poems were found on loose papers, and the majority of them are dated between 1984 and 1988 (1363-1367). These poems are gathered by his son and later by his followers. Each of

[394] See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 4, 16, 58.

[395] Ibid., pp. 4, 16, 58.

[396] Together the 149 *ghazal*s comprise 986 couplets.

[397] See B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte", in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Monographie Vol. 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, pp. 232-233.

[398] These are the *ghazal*s on pp. 50, 68, 78, 81, 92, 131, 139, 156 and 128.

[399] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 232-242.

the words is explained in notes that give a mystical interpretation, removing any secular meaning. It is because of this uncertainty that many Iranians doubt the originality of the *ghazal*s. An attempt to relate these poems to historical events during the 1980s remains purely speculative as these *ghazal*s do not describe or even allude to historical events, rather focusing on the poet's spiritual piety and modes of religiosity, quite in line with medieval Persian mystical *ghazal*s.

The character of his oldest *ghazal*s [400] is quite different from his younger ones. Most of the later *ghazal*s in his *Divân* are, like his imitation of the *ghazal* by Hâfez, antinomian. In his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini frequently rejects Islamic orthodoxy and organized Sufi institutions. When reading these poems, a clear distinction must be made between Ayatollah Khomeini as a mystical poet and Ayatollah Khomeini as a politician and religious leader, because he is adopting a stance and vocabulary typical of antinomian poetry that does not necessarely has to conform with his political and theological convictions. In the tradition of classical poets such as Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini contrasts orthodox religious figures such as the theologian, the Islamic judge, and the organized Sufi to figures at the margins of society, such as the beggar (*gedâ*), the *qalandar*, the *rend*, the wine-drinker, the Magian elder and the Christian boy. Ayatollah Khomeini attacks the former group and praises the latter. Although Ayatollah Khomeini himself had become the highest political authority, his *ghazal*s give the reader the impression that he could not find religious satisfaction in the mosque or other religious institutes. For example in *ghazal* 186 he writes: "The problems have not been solved in the *madrase* or by the talks of the sheikh."[401] In another *ghazal* he writes: "In the *madrase* we have not read one book about the friend, in the place where the call to prayer is sounded, we have not heard one sound calling the Beloved."[402] It appears from Ayatollah Khomeini's poems that he sees Islam's public representatives as incapable of understanding the deeper meaning behind creation. According to him, the clergy and the preacher command people to observe the religious laws but do not practice what they preach. In his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini pretends to search for spiritual satisfaction amongst the drinkers of wine, because it is only here that his soul can be 'set on fire.' He openly says that he is not at all attracted by Islamic or mystical institutions, saying: "My love for you has driven me away

[400] According to B. Reinert the oldest *ghazal*s can be found on pp. 50, 78, 92, 128, 156, 299, 296-298, 303, 305b, 306a and 307b. See B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 222-223.

[401] *Ghazal* 186, couplet 3.

[402] *Ghazal* 187, couplet 2.

from *madrase* and Sufi fraternity. He has made me a slave[403] of the wine."[404] In several of his *ghazal*s he states that he has turned away from the orthodox institutions in order to go to the lands of the Beloved.

The way Ayatollah Khomeini has composed his *ghazal*s fits into the antinomian love tradition; the force of the mystic's love for the Beloved is so strong that he abandons everything including the religious school and Sufi fraternity to look for reunion with God. He does this by taking refuge to wine, symbolizing divine knowledge, and that can be found in the heart. Ayatollah Khomeini confirms this thought by writing: "The Islamic scholar has his institute and the Sufi has his place of seclusion, we belong to the 'lands of the idol,' and wander astonished. I have left the *madrase* and temple and tavern, So I could serve (or beg) at the door of Meeting."[405] Instead of tolerating the "deceiving games of the Sufis", the poet-lover in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s chooses to join the lovers, who are connected to the tavern.[406] In the tradition of classical Persian poets, Ayatollah Khomeini has used antinomian themes such as wine and erotic love to condemn false piety. This does not mean that Ayatollah Khomeini actually drank wine or adored the Zoroastrian priest. He has adopted these metaphors to express the idea that a true Muslim should not merely observe the Islamic rules, but should -- more importantly -- discipline the soul to be true of heart.

4.7 Censure of the House of God in Mecca in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Ghazal*s

Another antinomian topic that can be found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s, in addition to the wine theme and honouring non-Islamic figures, is the rejection of the Kaʿba in Mecca. For Muslims, a visit to the House of God is compulsory once in their life time, if they are financially and physically able to do so. In an orthodox context, there is only one Kaʿba, the physical building in Mecca. Ayatollah Khomeini, on the other hand, distinguishes between two Kaʿbas: the Kaʿba of clay (*Ka'be-ye gel)*, which is situated in Mecca and the 'Kaʿba of the heart' (*Kaʿbe-ye del*). Like classical Islamic mystics, Ayatollah Khomeini demonstrates in numerous *ghazal*s his preference for the spiritual experience of travelling to the House of

[403] It literally says: *'a person with a ring in the ear',* which refers to slaves, who could be recognized by their pierced ears, or to beggars.

[404] *Ghazal* 82, couplet 6.

[405] *Ghazal* 130, couplet 4-6.

[406] See for example *ghazal* 140, couplet 1, in which he says: "I have arrived at the door of the wine-house with sighs and cries, I am fed up with the deceitful games of the Sufis."

God, renouncing the physical Kaʿba.[407] Ayatollah Khomeini has dedicated four of his *ghazal*s to the Kaʿba. Their titles suggest that Ayatollah Khomeini uses the word Kaʿba in the spiritual sense of the word: he speaks of the Kaʿba of Love (*Kaʿbe-ye ʿeshq*),[408] the Kaʿba of the Goal (*Kaʿbe-ye maqsud*),[409] the Kaʿba of the Heart (*Kaʿbe-ye del*)[410] and of the Kaʿba in Chains (*Kaʿbe-ye dar zanjir)*.[411] I will translate and analyse the Kaʿba of Love:

1	No sign, no name of my Beloved in the temple of the idols, Nor was his splendour contemplated in the Kaʿba.	از دلبرم به بُتکده نام و نشان نبود در کعبه نیز، جلوه‌ای از او عیان نبود
2	No mention of that rose-cheeked beauty in the Sufi lodge, No word speaks of him in the monastery or church.	در خانقاه، ذکری از آن گُلعِذار نیست در دیر و، در کنیسه، کلامی از آن نبود
3	In the school of law, there's nothing but disputes and discussions. In the courtroom, no one spoke of him.	در مَدْرسِ فقیه، به جُز قیل و قال نیست در دادگاه، هیچ از او داستان نبود
4	I attended the salon of the cultured man, but only so that I might find the Beloved, I found the conversation was of nothing more than the ideas on figures of speech.	در محضر ادیب شدم، بلکه یابمش دیدم کلام جُز ز «معانی بیان» نبود
5	I was astonished by the rows of *qalandar*s: There, there was nothing but the praise of the ruffians.	حیرت‌زده، شدم به صفوف قلندران آنجا به جُز مدیحتی از قُلدران نبود
6	One drop of wine from your cup, O heart-beguiling Beloved, gives what cannot be gained in all the world's kingdoms.	یک قطره می، ز جام تو ای یار دلفریب! آن می‌دهد که در همه ملک جهان نبود
7	He flirted, pouring in the soul such sparks, the like of which the holy court gives not to any angel.	یک غمزه کرد و ریخت به جان یک شرر، کز آن در بارگاه قُدس برِ قُدسیان نبود.[412]

[407] Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the Kaʿba in *ghazal* 60,5; 71,1; 108; 108,1; 137,7;140,5;145,8;147; 147,4;164;164,2;164,5;171,4;176 and 176,5.

[408] *Ghazal* 108.

[409] *Ghazal* 147.

[410] *Ghazal* 164.

[411] *Ghazal* 176.

[412] *Ghazal* 108.

Like a medieval wandering mystic, the persona in this poem travels to all places to find the Beloved. He realizes that the Beloved cannot be found in a holy place such as a mosque or Sufi lodge, and that He cannot even be found in God's House, the Kaʿba. Instead, the lover finds the Beloved in his own heart. The message conveyed in mystical *ghazal*s such as this has given rise to the dual motif of 'Kaʿba of the heart' and the 'Kaʿba of clay,' found in the writings of classical mystics, who declared that worshipping at the Kaʿba is not about the building but about the Reality it represents, which is God. According to these mystics, undertaking the journey to Mecca could be interpreted as flaunting one's piety, which they considered to be a pitfall on the mystical path. This is also why *qalandari* mystics avoided pious acts; in reality, they purposely drew criticism to protect themselves from becoming self-centered. As world-denying lovers, they should stay far away from worldly entanglements which could pollute the soul. Renouncing the pilgrimage to Mecca is part of this, for *qalandaris* as for the classical mystics.[413] As the previous *ghazal* demonstrates, Ayatollah Khomeini has followed this antinomian trend in his poetry.

While in the previous poem Ayatollah Khomeini says only that the Beloved is not to be found in the Kaʿba in Mecca, in the following poem he is more critical:

1	Oh Sâqi, open the door of the tavern before me,	ساقی بروی من در میخانه باز کن
	take me beyond the need for lessons, debates, asceticism and hypocrisy.	از درس و بحث و زهد و ریا بی نیاز کن
2	Place a strand of your wavy hair in my way.	تاری ز زلف خم خود در رهم بنه
	Release me from scholarship and the mosque, from lessons and from prayer.	فارغ ز علم و مسجد و درس و نماز کن
3	Bring me a bowl and croon a song, like David,	داوود وار نغمه زنان ساغری بیار
	Make me forget the pains of glory, of descending and ascending.	غافل ز درد جاه و نشیب و فراز کن
4	Remove the veil from the beautiful face and hair of the Beloved.	بر چین حجاب از رخ زیبا و زلف یار
	Banish me from the Kaʿba and from the Kingdom of Hejâz.	بیگانه ام ز کعبه و ملک حجاز کن

[413] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Layli and Majnun*, pp. 227-34, and idem, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," pp. 455-457; See also Farid al-Din 'Attâr, *Tadhkerat al-owliyâ*, ed. H. Khalili, Tehran: Manuchehri.

5	Fill my jug to the brim with that pure wine. Turn [my] heart from Mount Safa [at Mecca] to that ravishing idol.[414]	لبریز کن از آن می صافی سبوی من دل از صفا بسوی بت ترکتاز کن
6	Sorrow at separation, from the face of the friend, leaves me broken. Call me to that goblet of the wine that restores.	بیچاره گشته ام ز غم هجر روی دوست دعوت مرا بجام می چاره ساز کن.[415]

In the fourth couplet, the poet lover asks to be banished from the Kaʿba, and from the 'kingdom of Hejâz,' the region of Saudi Arabia that includes Mecca and Medina. This does not mean that Ayatollah Khomeini would not go to Mecca in reality. In line with the tradition of antinomian mystics, he is using the Kaʿba as a metaphor for outward religion, to indicate his own high spiritual piety. While the 'average' Muslim merely focuses on the observance of the Islamic rules and rituals, Ayatollah Khomeini focuses on disciplining the soul, which is the next stadium on the mystical road. His rejection of the Kaʿba in Mecca indirectly indicates that he believes he is more pious than the 'average' Muslim.[416]

The poem raises the question of what piety actually means. How have mystics approached piety? And how can we interpret piety in a broader context? As L. Lewisohn indicates, the term *taqwâ*, the Arabic equivalent for piety, God-fearing obedience, and for abstinence, has a central place in the Koran. There are numerous references to the duty of the believer to be pious and God-fearing. There have been multiple interpretations of *taqwâ*. In the exoteric sense, it refers to the believer's observance of religious practices. In an esoteric sense, it refers to the piety of the believer's heart. In a mystical context, the term *taqwâ* is often used to refer to abstinence. Early mystics used it to refer to the duty of the believer to physically abstain from everything but God. In another sense it referred to the condition of the heart of the mystical lover, which should contain nothing but God. Medieval mystics rejected the previous interpretations of the term, and began highlighting the pitfall of piety, pointing to the self-consciousness which it could generate. Many classical poets such as Hâfez and Saʿdi responded to this reinterpretation of piety. They considered *qalandariyyât* to be true piety.[417]

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[414] The line also means: "Turn [my] heart through purity to that ravishing idol."

[415] *Ghazal* 171.

[416] For articles on piety see the article by L. Lewisohn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Taḳwā. See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," pp. 248-266 and idem., *Layli and Majnun*, pp. 227-34. See also J.T.P. de Bruijn, "The Qalandariyyāt in Mystical Poetry…," pp. 75-86.

[417] See L. Lewisohn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Taḳwā.

Certain elements in the previous *ghazal* by Ayatollah Khomeini require closer examination. Was Ayatollah Khomeini simply adopting this antithesis found in classical mystical poetry, because he writes in that poetical tradition, or did he have other reasons for placing the Kaʿba of the heart in opposition to the physical Kaʿba in Mecca? Given the political context in which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these *ghazal*s on the Kaʿba, it is possible that he wrote of banishment from the Kaʿba not only in the symbolic sense, in the tradition of antinomian mystics and as a way of showing his piety, but, as I also argued in my chapter on Khomeini's *robâ'i*s, also in a more literal sense, referring to the frustrated relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia at the time of writing. Why, in couplet four for example, does Ayatollah Khomeini refer to Saudi Arabia as the 'Kingdom of Hejâz.' He could for example have said, 'from Mecca and Medina.' Is it because of his refusal to recognize their monarchial government? Could political problems with Saudi Arabia in actual life also have been at the basis of these anti-Kaʿba poems? Might the anti-sentiments towards the Kaʿba be a reflection of the ban on Iranians to Saudi Arabia by the Saudi government, after the massacre amongst Iranian and Saudi pilgrims of July 31st 1987, which was followed by an actual ban on the pilgrimige to Mecca by Khomeini in 1988? We will probably never know, but it is striking to see a similar tone in Ayatollah Khomeini's public stance towards Saudi Arabia and in his private documents, such as in his *robâ'i*s and in these *ghazal*s.

The antinomian motif of the two Kaʿbas has been popular in Iranian culture since the twelfth century. During the Iran-Iraq war, when Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these *ghazal*s, mystical aspects of the classical *ghazal*s on this subject were often put to music. Numerous popular pop musicians, such as Sattâr and Hâyede basing themselves on classical poems, sang these songs, advising people not to go to the physical Kaʿba but to attain to the Kaʿba of the heart. By using this motif, Iranians were both spiritually and politically encouraged to offer their lives for a symbolic Beloved. God as the owner of the Kaʿba had become more important than the House itself. Using such motifs, poets popularized martyrdom during the Iran-Iraq war. As Seyed-Gohrab indicates "Iranian soldiers hurried to the front lines, shouting words of blasphemy like mystics."[418] Antinomian themes and motifs, which could essentially be characterized as blasphemy, were thus exploited on a large scale through Iranian war poetry. Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s also fit into this tradition. Unfortunately, we do not know whether his *ghazal*s were known to a larger audience and encouraged people to go to the front lines, but such antinomian elements in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s are indicative

[418] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Martyrdom as Piety…," p. 267.

of Iranians' attitude and sentiments towards the holy tenets of Islam.[419]

Conclusion

One of the questions repeatedly posed after the publication of Ayatollah Khomeini's collected poetry was how to read these unorthodox poems on love, wine and intoxication. Was Ayatollah Khomeini a libertine, like a medieval *qalandar,* or should these poems be interpreted purely as metaphors? In my view, Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted *qalandari* motifs in his poetry to demonstrate piety. Like numerous classical poets before him, Ayatollah Khomeini followed the antinomian poetic tradition to show that he had attained a certain spiritual level that transcended that of the average Muslim. It is striking to see the similarities between the attitudes of Hâfez and Ayatollah Khomeini to religious piety. Mystical concepts such as the spiritual master, annihilation and non-existence abound in his youngest *ghazal*s. However antinomian themes such as wine, love, the tavern, drunkenness and the rogue are even more prominent. In fact, while 'love' is the most common key term in Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s, it is followed by 'wine' and 'drunkenness.' To show his superior spirituality, Ayatollah Khomeini presents the poet lover in his *ghazal*s as a follower of the tavern and the Magian Elder. He has adopted the Kaʿba theme for the same purpose. The fact that his poetic *persona* rejects the most holy building of the Muslims does not mean that he would not go to Mecca in actual life; it is merely an antinomian thought used to indicate that true piety transcends the observance of Islamic rules.

By imitating the classical poet Hâfez in one of his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini tries to place himself in a certain poetical tradition. The images which Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted in his *ghazal*s are not novel, but fit into the mystical poetical tradition. Like Hâfez, Ayatollah Khomeini has used antinomian elements such as love and wine to emphasize that observance of the Islamic law is not the sole condition for salvation. In his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini wanted to demonstrate that a Muslim should focus on sincerity of the heart. His expressions of praise and love for the Magian elder or the Christian cup-bearer, who both occupy an unconventional position in an Islamic society, should not be read as reflections of actual life experiences, but rather as a perpetuation of 'protest' poetry against religious insincerity originating from the twelfth century. For ages, the figure of the *rend* has been used in antinomian poetry to highlight preference of "honest sin to hypocritical piety."[420]

[419] For articles on the use of mystical images in Iranian war poetry see ibid., pp. 248-266.

[420] J. Scott Meisami, "The Ghazal as Fiction: Implied Speakers and Implied Audience in Hafiz's Ghazals," in

By identifying himself in his poetry with this unconventional *rend* figure, Ayatollah Khomeini criticizes religious hypocrisy, which is one of the greatest pitfalls on the road of the mystic. Khomeini's poems demonstrate that from an early age he was interested in mystical poetry and that his interest in mysticism increased even further as he grew older. One can only guess as to why the amount of mystical topics in his poetry grew over the years. It could be that he was disappointed in many clerics who condemned him for his mystical prelediction. While one should be cautious and separate literary and mystical activity from political views, it is interesting to note that Ayatollah Khomeini's censure of the physical Kaʿba in his *ghazal*s corresponds with his political views on Saudi Arabia. Although we may never discover why Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these unorthodox poems, we can conclude that Ayatollah Khomeini was very familiar with the antinomian mystical tradition. As we have seen in the comparison between Hâfez's and Khomeini's *ghazal*s, the literary and artistic merits of Khomeini's poetry are limited. Modelling himself on Hâfez helps to borrow the antinomian mystical frame to create layers of meanings, but what makes Khomeini's *ghazal* and his poetry interesting is the ideology, and the kind of thoughts that can often only be found in his poetry.

Intoxication, Earthly and Heavenly; Seven Studies on the Poet Hafiz of Shiraz, eds. M. Glunz and J.C. Burgel, Bern: Lang, 1991, pp. 94.

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Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shiite Philosopher and his Panegyric Poems (*qasides*)

Ayatollah Khomeini wrote four panegyric poems (*qasides*), each with a specific religious subject, in the early 1920s when he was a student in the city of Qom. The first *qaside* from 1922, is a 44-couplet poem called "Praise on the two bright Lights, Fâteme Zahrâ and Fâteme Ma'sume, may God Bless them". It is dedicated to Fâteme Ma'sume (d. 816/817), patron of the city of Qom, whose shrine in the city is a major centre of pilgrimage.[421] The *qaside* is full of theological and mystical themes and motifs referring to gnostic knowledge, mystical perfection, the 'Mohammadan light' and other themes central to Islamic mysticism, such as prophethood and sainthood. *Qaside* II also dates from 1922 and is called "The Expected Spring." It consists of 46 couplets and describes the celebrations surrounding the birthday of the twelfth Shiite Imam, Mohammad Mahdi. *Qaside* III "On the Praise of the Guardian of the Age (*Vali-ye 'Asr*)," dates from 1923 and is also dedicated to the Mahdi. It consists of 44 couplets. *Qaside* IV, composed in 1924, is called 'Imam Zamân' (Imam of the Age) and, like the previous two, celebrates the birthday of the twelfth Shiite Imam. This panegyric is actually a *mosammat* ('stanzaic poem'), which is a variation on the 'traditional' *qaside*, being structured in groups of five hemistichs that rhyme.

The *qaside*s which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote are significant as they give insights into the stage of his life when he was a young man in search of knowledge. They reveal Ayatollah Khomeini's search for a political ideology and personal attitude to life: how he wants to link politics with religion, the central role he accords to the clergy, his views on foreign powers (especially England), and his rejection of monarchy or any political philosophy other than a Shiite political structure. The poems reveal that these and many other subjects which he elaborated in his works some fifty years later were already present in Ayatollah Khomeini's mind in the 1920s.

The form that Ayatollah Khomeini chose is the classical Persian panegyric. One of the first questions that arises is why he chose poetry to express his thoughts? How familiar was he with the conventions of the *qaside*? Had he mastered the classical rules and forms of this genre so well that he preferred to write poetry instead of prose? Was he a 'non-poet,' as he described himself later in his life, or did he say this out of modesty? To answer these and

[421] This *qaside* can be found on pp. 253-257 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* and will for the sake of convenience be referred to as *qaside* I.

similar questions I will focus briefly on the formal characteristics of the *qaside* such as length, metre, rhyme scheme, rhetorical figures, themes, and metaphors, before beginning a detailed analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's *qaside*s.

5.1 The *Qaside* in Historical Perspective

Ayatollah Khomeini composed all of his panegyric poems in a style typical for Persian *qaside*s. Since the ninth century, panegyric poetry has played a crucial role in Persian society. The *qaside*, which is initially of Arabic origin, developed into a Persian variant from the tenth century onwards, which relates to an existing tradition of courtly poetry in Persian.[422] Before the seventh century, minstrel poetry was used mainly for entertainment at Persian courts. After the introduction of written poetry in the seventh century, poetry also became an important means to give a patron and his family practical and ethical advice, for example on how to behave in matters of love, or how to hunt or conduct a war.[423] While panegyric poems could contain subtle forms of critique, they were used mainly to glorify and legitimize the rule of the poet's patron. [424] The Persian *qaside* thus developed a strong propagandistic character, serving not only the patron, but also the poet, who often included his name in the last lines.[425] Unlike the Arabic *qaside*, in which the introduction focuses on desert scenes, the classical Persian *qaside* starts with lively depictions of exquisite gardens, depictions of wine and convivial gatherings and lavish life at court.[426] Ayatollah Khomeini continued this tradition since his *qaside*s, as we will see, are also filled with nature descriptions.[427]

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[422] Rudaki (d. 936) was among the poets who gave the Arabic *qaside* a Persian twist. See J.S. Meisami, "Poetic Microcosms: The Persian Qasida to the End of the Twelfth Century," in *Studies in Arabic Literature: Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa; Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, Vol. I, Leiden: Brill, 1996, p. 140.

[423] J. Scott Meisami, "The Uses of the "Qaṣīda": Thematic and Structural Patterns in a Poem of Bashshār," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 16, Leiden: Brill, 1985, pp. 56-59; J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry.

[424] J. Scott Meisami, "The Uses of the "Qaṣīda"…," pp. 56-59.

[425] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry.

[426] Traditionally the Arabic *qaside* begins with the poet stopping at a desert campsite where he thinks about his beloved (metaphor for patron) who has just left the site. This is followed by poetic descriptions of the desert environment and the unhappy life of the poet, who describes his unrequited love. The poet then ends his poem with the actual praise of his patron. Nature themes have already been found in Turfan-manuscripts dating from Parthian times (247 B.C.-224 A.C.) and are typical for Persian poetry. See J.Scott Meisami, "Poetic Microcosms…," pp. 137-181; See also J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iran.

[427] On nature imagery in *qaside* see J.S. Meisami, "Poetic Microcosms…," pp. 137-182.

From the twelfth century, the panegyric poem was also used in a non-courtly setting, to eulogize religious figures, including Shiite saints and Sufi sheikhs.[428] Such *qasides*, conveying mystical and religious ideas, reached a much wider public, yet the *qaside* continued to be strongly connected to court life until the beginning of the twentieth century.[429]

Persian literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was dominated by the style of *bâzgasht-e adabi* ("return to classical literary forms"). Court poets revived the classical ways, writing poetry full of classical imagery and well-known themes. During and after the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) the *qaside*, like other poetic forms, was revolutionized.[430] Poets were fed up with age-old images and themes that lacked any originality. As censorship relaxed, and poets were freed from their courtly environment, the *qaside* was used effectively to spread political and social ideas in innovative forms. The public was no longer limited to readers and listeners of royal or bourgeoisie background, it consisted largely of average citizens. Poets adopted colloquial language to reach this public and the classical themes in the *qaside* were abandoned, since they were no longer connected to the interests of the intended audience. Poetic forms such as *qaside*, *ghazal* and *robâ'i* remained the same but poets used novel contemporary themes related to social and political situation in such poems. Themes such as the motherland (*vatan*) became popular, replacing the Beloved, who could previously represent the patron or a religious figure. Poetry was an effective form in which social and political messages could be conveyed, as poems, because

[428] Iran, which was officially Sunnite until the sixteenth century, had a Shiite minority. The differences between these two groups caused a sort of 'poetic battle' (*manâqeb-kh$_w$âni*), in which poets tried to promote 'their' religion, especially in the twelfth century. Famous religious poets from this period were Naser-e Khosrow (d. 1088) and Sanâ'i of Ghazna (d. 1130). Both promoted the Shiite faith. See J.T.P. de Bruijn, "The Religious Use of Persian Poetry," in *Studies on Islam, Symposium of Islamic Studies*, Amsterdam/London: North Holland Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 63-71.

[429] The enrichment of Persian poetry with mystical terms has continued, and they have become an important element of Persian poetry today. The ambiguity of mystical terms makes them perfect for expressing concealed critique. But, as we will see, they also make poetry more difficult to understand. See further J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1968, pp. 82-83, 231-232; M. Glünz, "Poetic Tradition and Social Change: The Persian Qasida in Post-Mongol Iran," in *Studies in Arabic Literature: Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa; Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, Vol. I., Leiden: Brill, 1996, pp. 189-203.

[430] On the *bâzgasht-e adabi* style see W.L. Hanaway, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāzgašt-e Adabī.

of their rhyme, were easy to remember and could spread by word of mouth.[431] Often government officials wrote poetry to reflect on political and social events. And poets had a high social status as intellectuals of society. They were often given political positions. Mohammad Taqi Bahâr (d. 1951), who was one of the famous poets of the period, was also a politician, a member of the parliament.[432]

5.2 Ayatollah Khomeini's *Qasides*

The metre and rhyme that Ayatollah Khomeini used in his *qasides*, and his inclusion of nature scenes, show that he was well aware of the traditional poetic rules and forms of the *qaside* genre. Three of his panegyric poems (*qaside* I, II and III) have different meters but have the same aa/ba/ca rhyme scheme, which is typical for the classical qaside.[433]*Qaside* IV, as already noted, is a variation known as a *mosammat,* containing refrains.[434] Another characteristic of a Persian *qaside* is that it comprises at least fifteen couplets.[435] The four *qasides* that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote consist of 44, 46, 44 and 26 couplets (*beyt*s) respectively. Ayatollah Khomeini wrote *qaside* II, III and IV at the time of the Persian New Year (*Nowruz*) on March 21st, which continues the practice of the classical panegyric poets, who often wrote praise poems on such special festivals, or to mark the birth or death of a member of the royal family, or when a patron set out or returned from travelling.[436]

What did Ayatollah Khomeini want to achieve with writing panegyric poems? Given the range of purposes that the *qaside* has had over the centuries, he could have adopted the form for genteel entertainment, to give moral advice, to instruct rulers or teach ethical lessons, to teach piety, or to critique or legitimise a certain person's rule. What he actually did will be clear as we turn to a detailed discussion of his four *qasides*.

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[431] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poets; S. Soroudi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Constitutional Revolution vii. The Constitutional Movement in Literature. See also chapter 4.3 of this study in which I elaborate on socio-political poetry.

[432] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iran.

[433] M. Glünz, "Poetic Tradition and Social Change…," p. 183.

[434] In addition to the *mosammat* there is another variation on the *qaside*, the *tarji',* which has a single metre and sections ivided by a distich, which resembles a refrain. Each of the sections has its own rhyme. See C.H. de Fouchécour, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Ḳaṣīda 2. In Persian.

[435] Ibid.

[436] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2), under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry.

5.3 The Concept of the Mohammadan Light

Ayatollah Khomeini deals with several key concepts of Islamic mysticism in his *qasid*es. These poems are mainly spiritual, rather than praising a king. If there is any praise, the poet is praising spiritual masters and Shiite saints. He combines mysticism and Shiism through the concept of *nur Mohammadi*, as we shall presently see. The first panegyric already shows that Ayatollah Khomeini's thinking and interests went far beyond normative Shia Islam. Ayatollah Khomeini dedicated this poem, written in 1922, to Fâteme Ma'sume (d. 816/817), 'patron saint' of the city of Qom.[437] The last three couplets indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote the panegyric in 'response' (*javâb*) to two other poems devoted to Fâteme Ma'sume. The first was written by Qâ'âni (d. 1854), a famous nineteenth-century 'poet laureate' (*malek al-sho'arâ*) at the Qajar court (r. 1785-1925), whom Ayatollah Khomeini describes as the 'poet from Shiraz' (*shâ'er-e shirâz*).[438] The other poet that dedicated a poem to Fâteme Ma'sume and whom Ayatollah Khomeini refers to as an '*adib-sokhanvar*' (eloquent man of letters) has not been identified.[439]

In the poem, Ayatollah Khomeini makes a comparison between the female patron of Qom, Fâteme Ma'sume, and another Fâteme, Fâteme Zahrâ (d. 632), who was the daughter of the prophet Mohammad and the wife of the first Shiite Imam, ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb. Although Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of both Fâtemes, his focus is on Fâteme Ma'sume. Fâteme Ma'sume was the daughter of the seventh Shiite Imam Musâ al-Kâzem (d. 799) and sister of the eighth Imam ʿAli al-Rezâ (d. 818). During a journey from Medina to Khorasan to visit her brother, Fâteme, at that time only a young girl, fell ill and was taken to the nearby city of Qom

[437] The formal characteristics of this poem are its structure, rhyme and metre. The poem can be divided into an introduction (*nasib*), a transition couplet (*gorizgâh*) and the praise (*madih*). Usually the opening is a description of nature, of love or other courtly elements, but this poem starts with praise. The poem is written in the metre *monsareh mothamman matvi-ye makfuf-e manhur* (-0 0 - / - 0 – 0 / - 0 0 - / -, based on Persian prosody *(aruz*), with a rhyme scheme of aa/ba/ca.

[438] Qâ'âni's poem can be found in his *Divân* named *Divân-i Hakim Qâ'âni Shirâzi*, ed. M.J. Mahjub, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336/1957, pp. 217-219. For background information on Qâ'âni, see A. Karimi-Hakkak, "Preservation and Presentation: Continuity and Creativity in the Contemporary Persian Qasida," in *Studies in Arabic Literature: Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa; Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, Vol. I, Leiden: Brill, 1996, p. 253; See also A. Gabbay, "In Praise of One of the Deeply Learned 'Ulamā": A Mysterious Poem by Qājār Court Poet Mirzā Habiballāh Shirāzi "Qā'āni"," in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: studies in Persian literature presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th birthday,* eds. F.D. Lewis and S. Sharma, Leiden: Leiden University Press, pp. 131-148.

[439] See the comments of B. Reinert on these two poets in "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Vol. 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, p. 204.

where she died shortly after, in 816/817.[440] Fâteme owes her nickname Ma'sume ('the sinless') because it is said she was very modest and innocent.[441] After her death, several miracles took place near her shrine. For this reason, she was considered a saint, and people attribute miracles to her to this day.[442]

In his panegyric, Ayatollah Khomeini compares Fâteme Ma'sume to Fâteme Zahrâ (d. 632), her ancestor. As Venzlaff has stated, it is supposed that Fâteme Ma'sume inherited her "purity and praiseworthiness" from Fâteme Zahrâ.[443] Although there are few sources on Fâteme Zahrâ's life dating from the eighth to tenth centuries, many stories were written about her in later periods.[444] She was probably born in the year 606 in Mecca. When she was between fifteen and twenty-one years old, she married ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb (d. 661), the first Shiite Imam, who was 25 years old at the time. They had five children together: Hasan, Hoseyn, Mohsen, Umm Kolthum and Zeynab. She died in Medina in 632.[445] Fâteme Zahrâ, along with ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb, the Prophet Mohammad, Hasan and Hoseyn constitute the five *Ahl al-bayt*, the people of the house of Mohammad, who have a pre-eminent station. She is also one of the fourteen 'immaculate beings' (*ma'sum*), who are believed to be free from sin and error. She is known as the Eternal Weeper. [446] At the End of Times, Fâteme Zahrâ will

[440] J. Calmard, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam (2)*, under Ḳum.

[441] H. Venzlaff, "Gebetssiegel und Gebetstuch aus Qum," in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 39, Issue 2, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 218-220.

[442] Ibid., p. 219.

[443] Ibid., p. 220.

[444] See S. Rosiny, "The Tragedy of Fāṭima al-Zahrā' in the Debate of two Shiite Theologians in Lebanon," in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times; Religious Culture & Political History*, eds. R. Brunner and W. Ende, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 206-219. Also interesting to read is Susan Sered's comparative study of Fâteme Zahrâ, Mother Mary and Rachel: see S. Sered, "Rachel, Mary, and Fatima," in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Blackwell Publishing, 1991, pp. 131-146. For detailed information on her life see L. Veccia Vaglieri, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Fāṭima; A. Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, tr. Laleh Bakhtiar, Tehran: Shariati Foundation, 1983: H. Lammens, *Fāṭima et les Filles de Mahomet; Notes Critique pour l'Étude de la Sīra,* Romae: Sumptibus Pontifich Instituti Biblici, 1912.

[445] It is not certain where she was buried. Some sources say in her house in Medina, others say in the Baqi and again others say near her father's tomb in the Great Mosque. See L. Veccia Vaglieri, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Fāṭima.

[446] She is said to have cried continuously after the death of her father and her sons Hassan and Hoseyn. See S. Sered, "Rachel, Mary, and Fatima," in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Blackwell Publishing, 1991, p. 134. L. Veccia Vaglieri indicates that she is the person that visited the graves of the persons that were killed

allegedly advise God in judging the people. She is often compared to the Virgin Mary and is called the *'*woman of Paradise par excellence.' As Roswitha Badry states in her article on female Islamic role models in Iran, the model of Fâteme Zahrâ as the cornerstone of the family was very popular, especially in the course of and during the Islamic revolution.[447] During the 1960s and 1970s, Marxist groups and modern Islamists such as 'Ali Shari'ati (d. 1977) used Fâteme Zahrâ as an example of the ideal Iranian mother and ideal wife: modest, courageous, educated but at the same time veiled.[448] Although Fâteme Zahrâ holds a very important place within Shia Islam and Iranian culture, Ayatollah Khomeini only devotes a few lines to her in this poem, focusing most of his attention to Fâteme Ma'sume. The first couplet of this poem immediately reveals the unorthodox view that Ayatollah Khomeini has of Fâteme Ma'sume. He states: "O you, through whose dust eternity becomes intoxicated. O you, through whose splendour eternity is created." In this couplet, Ayatollah Khomeini links Fâteme to the Mohammadan Light, the *nur Mohammadi*, which plays a central role in Islamic mysticism and in Twelver Shiism.[449] The Mohammadan light recurs later in this poem and becomes a key motif. It is believed to be the essence of Prophet Mohammad, who existed in the form of light before the creation of Adam. According to this idea, which has its origin in the beginning of the eighth century, God created a light from His own light, which was the light of Mohammad.[450] This light passed through Mohammad's progenitors until it finally reached the 'bodily' Mohammad. Mohammad's direct derivation from the Light of God makes him infallible and a perfect being, reflecting all of God's attributes. It also implies that Mohammad was the first of all prophets.[451].

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during the battle at Uhud. For further reading see L. Veccia Vaglieri in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Fāṭima.

[447] R. Badry, "Zum Profil weiblicher 'Ulamā in Iran: Neue Rollenmodelle fur "islamische Feministinnen," in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 40, Issue I, Leiden: Brill, 2000, p. 39.

[448] 'Ali Shari'ati dedicated a whole book to Fâteme Zahrâ. See A. Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, tr. Laleh Bakhtiar, Tehran: Shariati Foundation, 1983. 'Ali Shari'ati wanted to change the image of Fâteme Zahrâ as the embodiment of suffering, presenting her as the brave and educated mother and wife who could be a role model for Iranian women. See further G. Nashat, "Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1/4, 1990, pp. 165-194.

[449] Twelver Shi'ism is the form of Shi'ism prevalent in Iran, getting its name from the twelve Imams it recognizes, who will be discussed below.

[450] For the idea of the *nur Mohammadi* see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, pp. 214-227.

[451] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, *Soefisme*, pp. 140-41.

Islamic mystics believe that each person also contains a portion of this light, which is equal to that person's share of divine knowledge (*maʿrefat*). By following the various steps on the mystical path, then disciplining the soul, and finally by removing all evil from the heart, the mystic obtains more access to this divine knowledge, to the point at which his Ego becomes one with God. The mystic is now a perfect reflection of God's attributes, a perfect being. Islamic mystics have elaborated widely on this concept. A very useful and unique mystical work that treats the concept of the Mohammadan light elaborately is the *Kernel of the Kernels* (*Lubb al-Lubâb*) which was originally published in 1987, and rendered into English in 2003.[452] It is based on the private teaching on the mystical path given in the years 1949 and 1950 by Sayyed Mohammad Hoseyn Tabâtabâ'i, one of the greatest Iranian religious scholars of the twentieth century. One of his students, the well-known 'Allâme Sayyed Mohammad Hoseyn Hoseyni Tehrâni (d. 1995), decided to record and publish the oral teachings of his master, resulting in this highly interesting work which gives a detailed description of the various stages the mystic has to pass through to achieve spiritual perfection. It is interesting since it allows the reader to enter a 'hidden' spiritual world that is normally accessible only to a select group of initiated mystics, such as Ayatollah Khomeini. The book is filled with mystical concepts such as the unity of being (*vahdat al-vojud*) and the Mohammadan Light.

Twelver Shiites have adopted the concept of the Mohammadan Light. They believe that ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb, his wife Fâteme Zahrâ and the other eleven Imams have inherited this primordial light from Prophet Mohammad, but that no one beyond them has access to this light and is free from sin and error. They consider these fourteen to be infallible persons (*maʾsum*), free from sin and error.[453]

In his first panegyric, Ayatollah Khomeini connects Fâteme Ma'sume at various points to this primordial Mohammadan light, although in the orthodox view she does not have the same infallible position as Fâteme Zahrâ. For example in couplet five, Ayatollah Khomeini writes:

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[452] S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, *Kernel of the Kernel; Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect, A Shīʿī Approach to Sufism* [*Risāla-yi Lubb al-Lubāb dar Sayr wa Sulūk-I Ulu'l Albāb*], comp. and ed. and exp. S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, tr. M.H. Faghfoory, ed. S.H. Nasr, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

[453] U. Rubin, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Nūr Muḥammadī; M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Cosmogony & Cosmology: In Twelver Shi 'ism.

جلوه‌ی تو، نور ایزدی را مَجْلیٰ	Your beauty is the place where the light of God manifests itself.
عِصمت تو، سِرّ مُختفی را مَظهر	Your chastity is a manifestation of the hidden secret.

By stating that the light of God ‘manifests itself in Fâteme Ma‘sume, Ayatollah Khomeini implies that she also possesses this Mohammadan light.[454] As couplets eleven to thirteen demonstrate, Ayatollah Khomeini believed that Fâteme Ma‘sume inherited her Mohammadan light from the Prophet Mohammad, from Fâteme Zahrâ and from ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb, whose nickname is Lion (Heydar):

وین نه عجب، زانکه نور اوست ز زهرا	And this is not surprising because her light comes from Zahrâ.
نور وی از حیدر است و او ز پیمبر	Her light comes from the Lion (‘Ali) and from the Prophet Mohammad.
نور خُدا در رسول اکرم پیدا	God’s light is visible in the honourable Messenger (Mohammad).
کرد تجلّی ز وی به حیدر صفدر	Who transmitted the light to the courageous Lion.
وَز وی، تابان شده به حضرت زهرا	And from Mohammad it was transmitted to holy Zahrâ.
اینک ظاهر ز دُختِ موسی جعفر.[455]	This light is now visible in the daughter of Musa Jaʿfar.

Ayatollah Khomeini accords her an immensely high station, equal to that of Fâteme Zahrâ. This can be deduced from couplet 31, where Ayatollah Khomeini says: “If the words “He did not procreate” had not shut my mouth, I would say: “these two pure lights are God’s daughters””. The fact that Khomeini would consider both Fâtemes to have been ‘daughters of God,’ had God not said that “He did not procreate”, also seems to be a comment on the Christian concept of the trinity of God, which states that God consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Although Ayatollah Khomeini rejects the idea that God fathered anyone, this couplet contradicts the orthodox Shiite view of the Mohammadan light, implying that certain persons, not only the immaculate Fâteme Zahrâ but also Fâteme Ma‘sume, have reached the highest spiritual level, in which they are constantly in the presence of God. In the

[454] Qâ’âni, the poet who had also composed a panegyric on Fâteme Ma‘sume and to whom Ayatollah Khomeini refers in this poem, also implied that Fâteme Ma‘sume contained a part of this primordial light. See B. Reinert’s discussion in “Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte,” pp. 204-206.

[455] This is a reference to Musâ ibn Jaʿfar al-Kâzem (d. 799), the seventh Shi’ite Imam and father of Fâteme Ma‘sume . See E. Kohlberg, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

mystical treatise the *Kernel of the Kernel*, ‘Allâme Tabâtabâ’i explains how the mystical traveller can develop this primordial light or ‘divine knowledge’ within himself in stages, as he travels through the various Divine realms of light to the point at which the mystic has annihilated his Self completely and is nothing more than a reflection of the Divine essence. At this point there is no multiplicity and the mystical experiences nothing but God. Tabâtabâ’i says that there are two groups of individuals who have travelled through all these realms: the prophets and “a number of individuals who, by following the path of the prophets are blessed and honoured with a perception of these realities and Divine effusion in accordance with the degree of their intellect and preparedness.”[456] The latter group are the mystical travellers who have completed their journey and attained spiritual perfection. In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini clearly places himself in the same mystical tradition as Tabâtabâ’i, by connecting non-immaculate persons, in this case Fâteme Ma‘sume, to this primordial light, allowing them to reach a point of spiritual perfection and elevating them to the level of the prophets and the immaculate ones.

In the poem Ayatollah Khomeini explains Fâteme Ma‘sume’s position in the world by relating her position to the Necessary Being (*vâjeb al-vojud*) and to contingent or possible reality or existence (*momken al-vojud*).[457] The two terms are central to Islamic metaphysics and have been extensively discussed by philosophers such as Ibn Sina (d. 1037).[458] According to Ibn Sina, only God exists unconditionally and therefore He is a necessary being. Everything other than God is a contingent or possible reality, since it does not necessarily have to be. By making use of these metaphysical terms, Ayatollah Khomeini explains, in couplets eight to ten, how Fâteme Ma‘sume’s being transcends all “contingent realities,” having the highest possible state of perfection, above all contingent beings. She has, metaphorically speaking, “climbed the ladder of perfection” to the highest possible step. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, because she has reached this stage, Fâteme Ma‘sume may be called the possessor of God’s knowledge, and of the Mohammadan light, and can therefore mediate between the divine and visible world. In the poem, Ayatollah Khomeini describes

[456] See S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, *Kernel of the Kernel; Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect, A Shī'ī Approach to Sufism* [*Risāla-yi Lubb al-Lubāb dar Sayr wa Sulūk-I Ulu'l Albāb*], comp. and ed. and exp. S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, tr. M.H. Faghfoory, ed. S.H. Nasr, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. 27-28.

[457] See couplets 6-11.

[458] For an elaboration on Avicenna’s view of contingent and necessary reality see M.E. Marmura, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Avicenna iv. Metaphysics.

how all prophets and saints from Moses to Jesus are at Fâteme Ma'sume's service, for the first is the "obedient guardian at her door" while the latter is the "door-keeper at her court".[459] Ayatollah Khomeini even implies that Jesus was crucified so that he could better keep watch at Fâteme Ma'sume's door, saying: "Jesus, son of Mary, is the door-keeper at her court."[460]

How should these words of the future leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran be interpreted? In what setting can these couplets be placed? These lines certainly do not fit into the orthodox Shiite belief system, in which only the fourteen immaculate ones possess this Mohammadan light. Ayatollah Khomeini's linking of Fâteme Ma'sume with the Mohammadan light can only be explained from a mystical point of view: he considered it possible for any person to reach a state of perfection, in accordance with the Islamic mystical idea that every individual contains a portion of divine light. The amount of Mohammadan light a person possesses relates to his or her level of divine knowledge, *ma'refat*.[461] As W. Chittick explains, divine knowledge is often described as a light, and one that 'enlightens the darkness of ignorance.' God discloses himself in the heart of the mystic in the form of knowledge, in the sense of a consciousness or realization, rather than a sum of propositions and facts. On his path towards God, the mystic receives more knowledge and is able to see more of the unseen divine world. According to S.H. Nasr, the essence of a human "is pure consciousness and knowledge".[462] Therefore, those who seek mystical knowledge must cleanse their souls of all evil and return to their own essence.[463] Next, a perfect person, an *ensân-e kâmel*, is one who reflects God's essence in all aspects, a person who has unravelled all divine mysteries and passed through all the stages on the path towards divine realization. The more divine knowledge a person attains, the more his divine essence comes forth, and he reflects God's attributes. Finally, a person who reflects God's attributes in all senses is called a perfect being. While Twelver Shiites believe that this state of perfection was reserved for the fourteen immaculate ones, mystics believe that each person can attain to it.[464] Hence, when

[459] *Qaside* I, couplets 19-20.

[460] *Qaside* I, couplet 20.

[461] W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 215.

[462] S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981, p. 29.

[463] Ibid.

[464] For an elaborate discussion of the *ensân-e kâmel* see M. Takeshita, *Ibn 'Arabi's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought,* Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1987.

Ayatollah Khomeini links Fâteme Ma‘sume to this pure light, it indicates that he sees her as a perfect being and that the poem should be read in a mystical context.

There are other indications in this poem that Khomeini opts for a mystical interpretation of Islam. In the poem Ayatollah Khomeini connects the Mohammadan light to the story of Eblis (Satan), saying:

Satan would have become a wise man if he had not said to this light:	شیطانْ عالِم شدی اگر که بدین نور
“Adam is made of clay and I from fire.”	ناگفتی آدم است خاک و من آذر.[465]

According to tradition, Eblis refused to prostrate himself before Adam at God’s command and was therefore expelled from Heaven and separated from God eternally. Some mystics interpret Eblis’ refusal as a sign of ultimate love, since Eblis’ focus was entirely on God, so he was prepared to bear any burden in order not to violate his monotheism.[466] However, most mystics see Eblis’ act as a sign of pride and egocentrism. The story of Eblis shows the lesser position of the angels as compared to humankind. Whereas man was made of clay mixed with God’s love, angels were made of fire.[467] By saying that it would have been better if Eblis had obeyed this light (God), Ayatollah Khomeini sides with the majority of mystics who interpret Eblis’ refusal as a sign of haughtiness.[468] Ayatollah Khomeini sees himself as part of this mystical tradition.

Ayatollah Khomeini’s linking of Fâteme Ma‘sume to the Mohammadan light shows itself in another way in this *qaside,* at the points at which he highlights her saintly character and the mystical knowledge she carries within her. In couplets 28 and 29 Ayatollah Khomeini states:

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[465] *Qaside* I, couplet 16.

[466] A.J. Wensinck & L. Gardet in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iblīs; P.J. Awn, *Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology*, Leiden: Brill, 1983.

[467] A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, “The Erotic Spirit: Love, Man and Satan in Hāfez 's Poetry,” in *Hafiz and The School of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, eds. L. Lewisohn & J. Morris, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 115-121.

[468] The traditions differ on whether Eblis was an angel or jinn, since it was believed that angels were made of light while jinns were made of fire. Some say that Eblis was a fallen angel whose jealousy had changed his essence into fire. Others say that Eblis had a fire nature from the beginning and therefore was not an angel but a jinn. See A.J. Wensinck & L. Gardet, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Iblīs.

Fâteme Zahrâ is created through His command that came to manifestation; Fâteme Ma‘sume is annihilated through His hidden seclusion;	آن یک، موجود از خطابش مَجْلیٰ وین یک، معدوم از عقابش مُسْتَر
Fâteme Zahrâ is the crown on the prophets’ heads, Fâteme Ma‘sume is the diadem on the saints’ heads.	آن یک، بر فرق انبیا شده تارک [469] وین یک، اندر سرْ اولیا را مِغفر.

In these couplets, Ayatollah Khomeini is connecting Fâteme Zahrâ to mystical ideas on prophets and saints. Prophets only transfer exterior knowledge of God’s Will whereas Fâteme Ma‘sume, as a saint, explains the hidden divine mysteries. Mystics refer to the inner and outer dimensions as *bâten* and *zâher*. *Bâten* connotes the idea that all things have an interior, hidden meaning. *Zâher* refers to outer, visible meanings. Both terms are commonly connected to knowledge (‘*elm*). In this reading the Koran has, for mystics, an inner, hidden meaning and an outer, visible meaning.[470] The revelation (*tanzil*) of God’s words by the Prophet is referred to as the outer exoteric meaning, while the explanation of the Koran (*ta’vil*) by the twelve Shiite Imams (or, in the case of the mystics, by saints), is its inner, esoteric meaning. Thus Ayatollah Khomeini is connecting Fâteme Zahrâ to outward manifestation, and Fâteme Ma‘sume to hidden mystical knowledge. He connects the former to the messengers of God (s. *nabi*/pl. *anbiya*) who merely convey God’s message, while he reckons Ma‘sume among the saints (s. *vali*/pl. *âwliyâ*), who are close to God because of their esoteric knowledge, and who therefore possess some of His authority and capacities.[471] Twelver Shiites believe that saints are exempted from sin.[472] Like the prophets, they can perform miracles *(karâmat)* and receive inspiration *(elhâm)*. They are also seen as mediators between man and God, and their supernatural powers can even be drawn on for ‘blessings’ (*baraka*) after their death. Most Twelver Shiites believe that only the Shiite Imams may be called saints, for only they have the ability to understand the inner meaning of the Koran and the Sharia.[473] Mystics, on the other hand, believe that each person has the ability to reach this hidden knowledge by following a

[469] *Qaside* I, couplets 28-29.

[470] B. Radtke, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāṭen.

[471] Although this last meaning cannot be found as such in the Koran or *Hadith*, the majority of the Islamic community from the eighth century onwards have accepted this interpretation. See B. Radtke, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Walī 1. General Survey; H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Awliā’.

[472] Ibid.

[473] For the difference between Shiite and mystics’ interpretation of the terms *bâten* and *zâher* see the article by B. Radtke, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Bāṭen.

thorough training to discipline the soul. In the *Kernel of the Kernel*, Tabâtabâ'i gives an extensive overview of the qualities that a perfect man must possess. He speaks of: 'abandoning conventionalism, habitual practices, and customs,' 'steadfastness,' 'compassion and forbearance,' 'loyalty,' 'stability and perseverance,' 'constant attention,' 'calling oneself to account,' 'self-condemnation,' 'expeditious action,' 'devotion,' 'proper manner,' 'intention,' 'silence,' 'abstaining from indulgence in food consumption,' 'spiritual retreat,' 'morning wakefulness,' 'constant observance of ritual cleanliness,' 'extreme humility,' 'curbing desires for worldly pleasures,' 'guarding the mysteries [of the path],' [the relationship between] 'spiritual master and teacher,' 'litany,' 'control of intruding thoughts, meditation, and invocation.'[474] According to the mystical worldview, knowing one's Self means knowing the inner meaning of the Koran and the Sharia. Every person who has attained to this level of inner knowledge may be called a saint. Ayatollah Khomeini's reference to Fâteme Ma'sume as the "diadem on the saints' heads" and his focus on her saintliness are further indications that the poem can only be interpreted from a mystical point of view.

5.4 Veiling and mystical Unveiling

There are more mystical elements in Ayatollah Khomeini's panegyric. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini connects Fâteme Ma'sume to the 'veil' and on at least nine occasions uses terms that are connected to 'seclusion' or 'veiling.'[475] In couplet five, Ayatollah Khomeini says:

Your beauty is the place where the light of God manifests itself.	جلوه‌ی تو، نور ایزدی را مَجْلیٰ
Your chastity is a manifestation of the hidden secret.	عِصمت تو، سِرّ مُختفی را مَظهر

And in couplet 33, he states:

The veil of Fâteme Zahrâ is the *hejâb* of God's purity;	چادر آن یک، حِجابِ عصمت ایزد
The veil of Fâteme Ma'sume is the *neqâb* of God's purity.	مِعْجَرِ این یک، نقابِ عفّتِ داور

The terms *esmat* ('chastity') and *effat* ('purity'), commonly associated with women, which Ayatollah Khomeini uses in these couplets, both mean chastity and refer to one of God's attributes, i.e. His purity. Ayatollah Khomeini uses several similar terms that are

[474] See S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, *Kernel of the Kernel*, pp. 83-130.

[475] *Qaside* I, couplets 4, 5, 7, 28, 32 and 33.

connected to His purity: the 'cloak,' the '*maghna'a'* (face-veil), the 'chador' and the '*hejâb*.' Veiling, or rather unveiling (*kashf*), plays a central role in Islamic mysticism. The word is often used in combination with the word *shohud*, which means 'witnessing.' On the mystical road towards union with God, it is the mystic's task to reveal all possible divine mysteries. Each divine secret the mystic solves brings him closer to the Essence of God. The unsolved secret that stands between the mystic and God's essence is often presented as a veil. Only when the mystic has lifted this veil can he 'witness' God's pure essence.[476] As 'Allâme Tabâtabâ'i puts it: "interest in material possessions and love for multiplicities become a veil for this primordial love and prevents this eternal light from manifesting itself. Through *murāqaba* ['constant attention'] the veils gradually become thinner and eventually disappear, and that primordial love manifests itself in one's heart and guides him to that Source of Beauty and Perfection."[477] Ayatollah Khomeini's numerous references to the veil and other female body coverings in this panegyric can be put in this same mystical context. In couplet 32, for example, Ayatollah Khomeini says that "The terrestrial world depends on Fâteme Zahrâ's veil [*maghna'a*]… [while] the heavenly world depends on Fâteme Ma'sume's veil [*me'jar*]. Both *maghna'a* and *me'jar* are veils covering the face. When one reads this couplet from a mystical perspective, one can conclude that Ayatollah Khomeini not only compares Fâteme Zahrâ to God's essence, which is also separated by a veil from the 'ordinary' people, he also implies that Fâteme Ma'sume is a reflection of God's essence. By connecting the two women to veiling in this panegyric, Ayatollah Khomeini implies that both Fâtemes were pure reflections of God's essence, when understood in a mystical context.

Ayatollah Khomeini may have had another reason for expressing his mystical thoughts on Fâteme Ma'sume in terms of veiling. In 1921, just a few months before Ayatollah Khomeini wrote this poem, Reza Khan, the head of the Cossack Brigade, successfully executed a coup to displace the Qajar regime. With the help of the military and the Iranian secret service, Reza Khan became first the Minister of War, then Prime Minister, and then, in 1926, he crowned himself Shah of the new Pahlavi dynasty. One of the first changes the new government implemented was the separation of religion and state in 1921. The Iranian clergy were furious and organised huge demonstrations, together with Iranian merchants.[478] It is very likely that Ayatollah Khomeini, like his colleagues in Qom, feared the new secular regime's future modernization plans. By linking the veil to Fâteme Zahrâ, Fâteme Ma'sume and God's

[476] C.A. Zargar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* under Kašf o Šohud.

[477] See S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, *Kernel of the Kernel*, pp. 19-20.

[478] See also my discussion of this period in chapter 1.6 and 1.7 of this study.

own purity, Ayatollah Khomeini attempts to strengthen the sacred status of women's veiling at a time when the practice was under heavy criticism from the secular government. If this reference to actual veiling is intended, the panegyric reflects the earliest thoughts of the future leader of Iran about secular modernisation.[479]

While it is difficult to prove that Ayatollah Khomeini's references to veiling in this panegyric served a political purpose, the poem certainly shows that, from an early age, Ayatollah Khomeini tried to combine Shiite ideas with mystical thoughts. By extending the concept of the Mohammadan light to Fâteme Ma'sume, Ayatollah Khomeini clearly places himself in a mystical tradition and shows that his ideas on perfection and sainthood deviated strongly from the orthodox Shiite view.

5.5 Mohammad al-Mahdi, The twelfth Shiite Imam

Ayatollah Khomeini wrote another three *qasides*, all dedicated to Mohammad al-Mahdi, the twelfth Shiite Imam. According to the Twelver Shiites, twelve rightly guided Imams followed the Prophet Mohammad, and Imam Mohammad al-Mahdi was the last.[480] The Imams came to this world to guide the Muslim community in both political and spiritual matters.[481] The son of the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-Askari (d. 874), is said to have been born on the 22nd of July

[479]As Kian has analysed, in his *Kashf al-Asrâr* (written in 1943) Ayatollah Khomeini criticized the unveiling law of 1936. See *Kashf al-Asrâr*, Tehran, 1943, pp. 1-66. See A. Kian, "Gendered Khomeini", in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, p. 172.

[480] These twelve Imams are: Imam 'Ali (d. 661), Imam Hasan (d. 680), Imam Hoseyn (d. 680), Imam 'Ali Zeyn al-Âbedin (d. 712), Imam Mohammad al-Bâqer (d. 732), Imam Ja'far al-Sâdeq (d. 765), Imam Musâ al-Kâzem (d. 799), Imam 'Ali Rezâ (d. 817), Imam Mohammad al-Javâd (d. 835), Imam 'Ali al-Hâdi (d. 868), Imam Hasan al-Askari (d. 874) and Imam Mohammad al-Mahdi, who is supposed to be living in concealment. There is considerable variation, within Twelver political theology, regarding the political role of the Imams.

[481] The concept of 'Imâmat' (*Imâmiyyeh*), the belief in the authority of the twelve Imams, forms the basic principle of the Twelver Shiite faith and has divided the Muslim community in two major groups: the Sunnites who worldwide form the majority of the Muslim community and the Shiites who can be found in Iran and in parts of Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and some gulf countries. The cause of the dispersion is placed at the time of the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632. According to some Muslims, which would later be called the Sunnites, the Islamic community after the death of the Prophet had to be guided by the best Islamic leader. Another group of Muslims, who would later be called Shiites, believed that the Prophet Mohammad had appointed his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abi Tâleb to succeed him. They believed that the Islamic community should be governed by descendant of the Prophet Mohammad, starting with Imam 'Ali. For consultation see H. Halm, *Shiism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, pp. 13-14; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 147-159; H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1982, pp. 4-6.

870 (in the Islamic era: 15th of Sha'ban 256), in the middle of spring. Hardly anybody at that time knew of his birth, but when his father died in 874, the Mahdi became the twelfth Imam because Shiites believe that the Imamate is hereditary from father to son.[482] Only a few people claimed to have seen him. Twelver Shiites believe that the Mahdi never died but has gone into occultation (*ghaybe*). Although he is physically absent, Twelver Shiites believe that Imam Mahdi is the only rightful leader of the Muslims. When he comes out of hiding at the end of times, he will restore justice and peace in the world, bring about the completion of the faith and the end of the world.[483]

Ayatollah Khomeini has composed three *qasides* in honour of Mohammad al-Mahdi. All three *qasides* fall in the genre of 'Mahdi-poems,' which are hymns on the subject of the Imam of the Age, the earliest of which date back as far as the twelfth century.[484] Although many poems were written on the various historical Imams from the tenth century, such as the poem by Kisâ'i of Marv (b. 952), who wrote one of the first poems on the first Shiite Imam, 'Ali ibn Abi Tâleb, it was only in the twelfth century that poems on the Imam of the Age were composed. [485] Initially, only the worldly qualities of the Mahdi were praised, but from the end of the nineteenth century and particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a change of focus. In addition to praising his worldly powers, the position of Imam Mahdi in the history of the universe was emphasized. B. Reinert explains that many Mahdi-poems were written during this period in response to the modernization that Iran was experiencing. They emphasized the leading role that religion should play in society, and that only the Mahdi is allowed to guide the Islamic community, whereas all other forms of government are

[482] This is only a simplified version. For a more complete and detailed version I refer to M.A. Amir-Moezzi's article in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Islam in Iran vii. The Concept of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism.

[483] According to Twelver Shiite thought, the Mahdi went into a Minor Occultation at the time of his father's death in 874. From that period on he is said to have communicated with the people for 66 years through four successive intermediaries. In 940, the Mahdi went into a Major Occultation. Since then, nobody has communicated with him and no one will until his return at the end of times. See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Islam in Iran vii. The Concept of Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism.

[484] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 197-199.

[485] For parts of Kisâ'ī's poem see A.C. Hunsberger, *Nasir Khusraw: The Ruby of Badakhsan*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000, pp. 170-173. One of the first Mahdi poems was composed by Naser Khusraw, who adhered to the Isma'ili faith, a variant of Shi'ism. Naser Khusraw composed poems on Caliph Mustansir, who resided in Cairo and whom he considered the Imam of the Age. For consultation see A. Nanji, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Nāṣir-Khusraw.

illegitimate.[486] The three Mahdi-poems that Ayatollah Khomeini composed all combine politics with mysticism: the themes are oppression, secularization, governance and sainthood. The poems are interesting since they show the development of Ayatollah Khomeini's socio-political thinking, poured into the classical mould of the *qaside*-genre.

In *Qaside* II, the first of these Mahdi-panegyrics, which he wrote in 1922, Ayatollah Khomeini describes the yearly celebrations, surrounding the birthday of Mohammad al-Mahdi, who was born in 870 and supposedly went into occultation shortly after his birth, to return at the end of times.[487] The opening (*nasib*) of this panegyric, like most classical Persian poems, is about spring. The introduction often contains a correlative or metonym for the qualities of the praised person, which will be listed in the next section.[488] Ayatollah Khomeini starts the *nasib* (couplets one to fourteen) of his panegyric with a description of spring, which coincides with the pre-Islamic Persian New Year called Nowruz. In the first six couplets Ayatollah Khomeini sets the scene with a description of numerous flowers at the height of blossoming, which turn the world into "a sublime Paradisiacal garden". Both "life-giving wind" and "bounteous cloud" have helped to turn the earth into gardens that are "better than the garden of Eram". "Indian cress…creeping-plant...mirth and anemone" fill the air with the most pleasant scents. Like a classical poet, Ayatollah Khomeini follows the floral scenery with a description of various kinds of melodious birds. Each bird produces the most beautiful and 'heart-ravishing' songs. It is almost as if the reader can hear the songs of the birds and can smell the wonderful perfumes which the flowers produce. Then in couplets eleven and twelve, Ayatollah Khomeini introduces a "rosy-cheeked moon-faced one" who "smells like sweet basil" and whose body has the shape "of a jasmine".

How might these nature scenes be interpreted? What is the function of all these singing birds and fragrant flowers, and what do they tell the reader about the praised one? Everything in the opening couplets revolves around love: love for the "rosy-cheeked moon-faced one" whom Ayatollah Khomeini introduces in couplet eleven. All birds and flowers are in praise of this beautiful creature. Often in Persian court poetry, the poet compares the

[486] B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," pp. 199-201.

[487] *Qaside* II comprises 46 couplets and appears on pages 258-262 in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* in the Persian metre *rajaz-e mothamman-e sâlem* (- - 0 - / - - 0 - / - - 0 - / - - 0 -).

[488] The introduction of the classical *qaside* may also consist of elegies (*marthiya*) of Twelver Shiite figures, or of a debate (*munâzara*) or riddle (*chistan*). See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Courts and Courtiers; Court Poetry; J.S. Meisami, "The Uses of the "Qasida"…," pp. 45, 56.

relation he has with his patron to that of a lover and his Beloved.[489] This is because, just like the lover, the poet devotes himself completely to his 'Beloved,' his patron.[490] Both Beloved and patron, as Julie Scott Meisami says, "can do favors" and, "have power on life and death".[491] In this panegyric, because of the arrival of the Beloved, the "time of suffering has come to an end".[492] The theme of love was adopted in courtly poetry towards the end of the Umayyad Dynasty (r. 661-750) and has been a popular metaphor until modern times. Ayatollah Khomeini has also adopted the love-theme in this panegyric, as in couplet twelve, where all flowers and birds adore the 'jasmine-shaped' character that "has the hue of the Judas-Tree". The mixing of nature themes and eroticism has been popular in Persian poetry since its very beginning, although its origin cannot be traced exactly.[493] Ever since the tenth century, Persian poets have used flower and bird symbols to explain their 'symbolic' love-relationship with the *mamduh*, the praised one. Ayatollah Khomeini has followed the classical masters here, for in his introduction the birds and flowers represent the poet and the "rosy-cheeked moon-faced one" symbolizes the praised one. To be more specific, the nightingale represents the poet, in this case Ayatollah Khomeini, who has composed the poem in praise of the rose, the beloved Mahdi. Ayatollah Khomeini has chosen to introduce his poem with a Persian garden in spring, in which everything is in bloom and displays perfect harmony. The beauty and perfumes of the flowers are beyond comparison. The birds could not be more excited and livelier. As couplet eleven indicates, all the flowers and birds are happy that the rose has come into blossom because, with the appearance of the Beloved, the "time of affliction has come to an end" and the "time for pleasure and joy" has begun. There are numerous examples of classical Persian poems in which the imagery of flowers and birds correlates with the praised one, whether that be God or an actual person. Sanâ'i (d. 1131), for instance, wrote the "Litany of the Birds", a poem in which each bird praises God in his own particular way.[494] The dove for example repeatedly says *ku ku* ("where, where") because he

[489] See chapter 4.2 of this study where I elaborate on the lover and the beloved.

[490] J. Scott Meisami, "Poetic Microcosms…," pp. 137-182.

[491] J. Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, pp. 24-27.

[492] *Qaside* II, couplet 11.

[493] B. Reinert, " Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte…," pp. 195-196.

[494] Abu 'l-Majd Majdud Sanâ'i was a poet at the royal court in Ghazna, famous particularly for his mystical didactic poems, the *mathnavi*, a genre for which he laid the basis. His most important book is the *Hadiqat al-Haqiqa* ("The Orchard of Truth") in which he writes on themes in practical and mystical life. See further A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 301-303.

wants to know where he can find God.[495] Attâr (d. 1220) wrote a longer poem, the *Manteq al-Teyr* ("The Conference of the Birds"), in which a group of birds on a quest for the Simorgh, the king of the birds, represent the different stages of the mystic's spiritual journey.[496] In the *Kernel of the Kernel* Tabâtabâ'i connects the Simorgh to the last of the four realms the mystic witnesses, the phase in which he witnesses nothing but God's essence. Tabâtabâ'i describes this bird as "that Pure Essence and Absolute Being, which is called variously the world of Non-Being (*'ālam-i 'amā*), the Hidden Treasure (*kanz-i makhfī*), the Invisible of all invisibles (*ghayb al-ghuyūb*), and the Essence that has no name and no identity (*dhāt mā lā isma lahū wa lā rasma lahū*)."[497] Ayatollah Khomeini's bird references in this panegyric can be contextualised in this tradition of mystical bird symbolism. They help to explain Ayatollah Khomeini's relationship with the praised one. In the same way, the flower elements that dominate the first six couplets of the poem embody the virtues of the *mamduh*, their beauty and pleasant perfumes remind the reader of the beauty and excellence of the praised one. The symbolic garden was very popular in medieval Persian literature,[498] and has a metaphysical foundation in the belief that there is an analogy between the different levels of existence. For example, there is a parallelism between nature and man. Nature represents man on a microcosmic level, just as the wonderfully fragrant flowers in the first couplet of this *qaside* represent the *mamduh*'s beauty: "the flowers are smiling in the grass, like the face of the lovely Beloved". Zoroastrian and Manichaean documents also refer to the cultivated garden that represents not only Paradise, but also the cosmos.[499] The garden has a certain set of conditions: it is enclosed by a wall and has running water, shady trees, and colourful, fragrant flowers. Birds of all colours sing the most beautiful songs. Ayatollah Khomeini follows in this

[495]Ibid., p. 308. See also C.W. Ernst, "Vertical Pilgrimage and Interior Landscape in the Visionary Diary of Rūzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209)," in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 88(2), 1998, pp. 129-140.

[496] The Simorgh is used in mystical poetry to represent the Perfect Man, the *ensân-e kâmel*. It is a bird that looks like a phoenix and originates in pre-Islamic Iranian mythology. See A. Najm al-Din Râzi, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return,* tr. H. Algar, Delmar: Caravan Books, 1982, p. 141, For bird symbolism see A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* pp. 301-307.

[497] See S.M.Ḥ. Ḥusaynī Tihrānī, *Kernel of the Kernel*, pp. 124-125.

[498] The allegorical garden was also a popular theme in medieval Western and other Islamic medieval literature. See J. Scott Meisami, "Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*,Vol. 17, Issue 2, 1985, pp. 229-260.

[499] The word Paradise comes from the old Persian word 'Pairadaēza' and was the name for the garden of a Persian royal. See A. Bartlett Giamatti, *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 11.

tradition: each element in the garden is suggestive of the praised one's beauty, and a reflection of his essence. This personification is typical for Persian poetry.[500] The bird and flower elements in the opening part help to underline the central position of the praised one, and show why his coming has put an end to a period of pain and affliction.

In the transitional passage, or *gorizgâh*, of a *qaside*, the poet links the praised one of the introduction in a creative way to the patron in the actual praise section of the poem. In this *qaside*, the transitional passage is couplets fifteen and sixteen, where Ayatollah Khomeini says:

با اینچنین زیبا صنم، باید به بُستان زد قدم	With such a beautiful Beloved, you must walk through the garden.
جان فارغ از هر رنج و غم، دل خالی از هر مهر و کین	The soul is released from every pain and grief; the heart is empty of love and hatred.
خاصه کنون کاندر جهان، گردیده مولودی عیان	Especially now in this world, the birth of Mahdi is visible everywhere.
کز بهر ذات پاک آن شد امتزاج ماء و طین	Because of his pure Essence, water has become mixed with clay.

In these couplets the poet reveals the identity of the 'rosy-cheeked moon-face' one of couplet eleven. After a lively image of birds and flowers that have all 'bent' for the praised one, in couplet fifteen, the poet introduces the name of the Beloved by saying: "Especially now that in this world, the Mahdi's birth is visible everywhere." As was already clear from the title, Ayatollah Khomeini has written this panegyric for Imam Mahdi, the twelfth Shiite Imam.

The spring scene in this poem refers to the central role that the Mahdi plays in the universe. Ayatollah Khomeini metaphorically describes how all plants and birds have been waiting for his coming. Like a rose that appears for the first time in spring, the Mahdi was born in spring. In 1922, the fifteenth of Shaban in the lunar calendar fell on April 13, during the blossom time in northern Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini has probably written this poem during the Persian New Year, wishing the return of Mahdi, imagining how thriving the world would be under his rule.

[500] Numerous poems have been written on precious gems, such as the emerald or the pearl, each of them representing a particular attribute of God. This personification is typical for Persian poetry. Also, parts of the body such as the 'curl' (*chin*), 'mole' (*khâl*) or 'lip' (*lab*) are given generally accepted abstract correspondents. 'Curl' for example stands for the divine secret and 'mole' represents the point on which a believer focuses his attention. See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 300, 308- 309.

Next, Ayatollah Khomeini describes how the Mahdi forms the centre of the garden, and how he is praised by all, just as he is praised by the Shiites. After Ayatollah Khomeini has introduced the name of the Mahdi, the *mamduh*, in the transitional passage he arrives at the *madih*. This is the part of a *qaside* that contains the actual praise and in which, traditionally, the qualities of the Maecenas are sung. In this panegyric, the *madih* consists of thirty couplets. From couplet seventeen Ayatollah Khomeini starts with a description of the Mahdi's position in the universe. He describes how the prophets and the seventh heaven 'bow' for him, and how the light of the sun and moon are nothing in comparison to the 'brilliancy' of the Mahdi. The Mahdi is the axis of the world, and all the prophets and Imams are at his command because he is the last of the infallible ones. In couplet 24, Ayatollah Khomeini says that the angels are also at his service, stating:

His essence is by the command of God just, it has become the source of the graces of mankind.	ذاتش به امر دادگر، شد منبع فِیض بشر
The army of angels all together, chained to his favours, are his subordinates.	خیل ملایک سر به سر، در بند الطافش رهین

In these lines Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the Divine essence of the Mahdi, since he contains the primordial Mohammadan light.[501] He shows how every created being is at the Mahdi's service. As indicated by M.A. Amir-Moezzi, Twelver Shiites believe that the Mahdi, together with the Prophet Mohammad, is at the top of the hierarchy.[502] In couplets 28 and 29 Ayatollah Khomeini says that all the prophets are at his command, but especially Jesus, saying:

Noah and Abraham and Adam the father of mankind, Idris and David and David's son	نوح و خلیل و بوالبشر، ادریس و داوود و پسر
received benefits from the cloud of His Excellence, find assistance from his mine of knowledge.	از ابر فیضش مُستمِد، از کان علمش مُستعین
Moses, who has a staff in his hand, is waiting to be his door-keeper.	موسیٰ به کف دارد عصا، دربانیش را منتظِر
Jesus, in the fourth heaven, is waiting to follow him in prayer.	آماده بهر اقتدا، عیسی به چرخ چارمین

The last line refers to the belief that, shortly after the Mahdi has come out of occultation, Jesus will return to earth. Ayatollah Khomeini says that at the end of time,

[501] *Qaside* II, couplets 18 and 20.

[502] See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eschatology iii. Imami Shi'ism.

Islamic, Jewish and Christian religious figures will all show their respect to the Mahdi. [503] Not only Moses "is waiting to be his door-keeper", but also Adam, David, Noah, Abraham and Idris "find assistance from his mine of knowledge". However, this does not imply that Christians and Jews will convert to Twelver Shia Islam at the end of times: rather they will return to the essence of their own faith, which Shiites believe is the same as Shia Islam.[504]

5.6 Rejection of the Monarchy

Could it be that Ayatollah Khomeini was not only celebrating the birthday of Imam Mahdi, but also writing in reaction to the secularization trend Iran had experienced since the late nineteenth century? Could it be that Ayatollah Khomeini was condemning the monarchy and their anti-clergy program, and asserting that the twelfth Imam was the only legitimate ruler of Iran? As in the case of *qaside* I, where I opted that Ayatollah Khomeini composed the panegyric partly in reaction to the anti-veiling program that he feared would be introduced by Reza Khan, the panegyric by Ayatollah Khomeini also responds to the secularization trend that was taking place in Iran since the nineteenth century. Secularization and the political reform of Reza Shah limited the role of the clergy in society. It is in this context that Khomeini desires the return of Mahdi. Several clues support these hypotheses. At first Ayatollah Khomeini mainly describes the worldly qualities of the Mahdi. But throughout the poem, he emphasizes his political role, as in couplet 23, where he says:

سُلطان دین، شاهِ زَمَن، مالک رقاب مرد و زن	King of the Faith, ruler of time, Lord of Guarding men and women.
دارد به امرِ ذُوالْمِنَن؛ روی زمین، زیر نگین	The power to grant benefits is at his command, on earth as well as under the sky.

In couplet thirty, Ayatollah Khomeini calls the Mahdi the "Persian king" by which he implies that he is the only rightful king of the Persian nation. And then in couplets 32 and 33, Ayatollah Khomeini says:

ظاهر شود آن شه اگر، شمشیر حیدر بر کمر	If the king appears, with the sword of 'Ali on his belt.
دستار پیغمبر به سر، دست خدا در آستین	wearing the turban of the Prophet Mohammad on his head, and the hands of God in his sleeves.

[503] According to Islamic theology, Jesus, Zakaria, Aaron and Lot were prophets, along with some other religious figures, while they were not prophets according to Christians and Jews.

[504] See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eschatology iii. Imami Shi'ism.

None of these unbelievers will remain in this world.	دیّاری از این مُلحدان، باقی نماند در جهان
It will be safe on earth from injustice and oppression of these oppressors.	ایمن شود روی زمین از جور و ظُلم ظالمین

All these couplets support the assumption that Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the monarchy and saw the Mahdi as the only legitimate ruler of the Iranian nation.

Another element that implies that Ayatollah Khomeini disapproves of the monarchical system is the prominent role of 'injustice' and 'oppression' in this panegyric. Ayatollah Khomeini depicts the world as a fight between believer and unbeliever, between the oppressor and oppressed, between paganism and 'down-trodden Islam' (*Eslâm mostaz'af*), between truth and falsehood. These terms are reflected in Ayatollah Khomeini's later public speeches and political works, which were also laden with the same dichotomies. In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini calls the enemy 'pagans' (*koffâr*[505]), 'unbelievers' (*lâ-madhhabân*[506]), 'enemy' (*i'dâ*[507]) or 'enemies of the faith' (*i'dâ'-ye din*[508]), 'unbelievers' (*molhedân*[509]), 'oppressors' (*zâlemin*[510]), and 'enemies of your [the Mahdi's] reign' (*doshmanân-e dowlat*[511]). In the poem he makes a sharp distinction between the believers and all those who rally behind the unbelievers.

As in his later speeches, the 'enemies of the faith' play a central role in this panegyric. It is not clear who Ayatollah Khomeini targets here in these couplets: it could be Russia or Great Britain that profited from Iran on an economic and political level. It could also be the Iranian government, which allowed these two European countries to profit from Iran's resources. The 'enemies' could also be theological opponents and deviants such as Sunnis and Bahais. Another possibility is that Ayatollah Khomeini refers to those Shiite clerics who disparaged him for his philosophical and mystical leanings, or who supported the Pahlavis or advocated political quietism. Although Ayatollah Khomeini does not mention these enemies by name, he is clear about how to end this period of affliction, for he sees a crucial role for the Mahdi, who will free humans from all forms of oppression and put an end to the "time of

[505] *Qaside* II, couplet 30.

[506] Ibid, couplet 31.

[507] Ibid., couplet 37.

[508] Ibid., couplet 31.

[509] Ibid., couplet 33.

[510] Ibid.

[511] Ibid., couplet 39.

suffering".[512] Ayatollah Khomeini asks the Mahdi to come and "cast a glance at the dominance of the pagans, [and to] look at down-trodden Islam".[513] Ayatollah Khomeini advises the believers to stick to their religion and not to line up behind the 'enemy,' by saying in couplets 36 and 37:

تا چنگل شاهین کند، صید کبوتر در هوا	As long as the falcon will catch the pigeon in the air with its claws,
تا گرگ باشد در زمین، بر گوسفندان خشمگین	As long as the wolf will be rabid with the sheep on earth,
بر روی احبابت شود مفتوح ابواب ظفر	The doors of victory will be opened to your lovers
بر جان اعدایت رسد هر دم بلای سهمگین	And immense disasters will overcome the souls of your enemy.

Then, in couplets 38 and 39, Ayatollah Khomeini compares the lives of the faithful to spring, full of blossoming and prosperity, whereas the lives of the unbelievers will be like the failing autumn, filled with decay and destruction, saying:

تا باد نوروزی وزد هر ساله اندر بوستان	As long as the breeze of Nowruz blows every year in the garden
تا ز ابر آذاری دمد، ریحان و گل اندر زمین	As long as the clouds of spring breathe, there will be basil and roses on earth.
بر دشمنان دولتت هر فصل باشد چون خزان	For the enemies of your reign, every season will be like autumn.
بر دوستانت هر مهی بادا چو ماه فروَدین!	For your friends, every month will be like spring.

The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini presents the Mahdi as a 'Persian king' who will guard men and women, and who has the power to give benefits on earth as well as under the sky, implies that Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the monarchical system and saw the Mahdi as the only legitimate king of the Iranians.[514]

5.7 Mahdi's Representative on Earth: A Predecessor to *Velâyat-e Faqih*.

Although the main part of Ayatollah Khomeini's second panegyric is about the Mahdi, an interesting shift of focus takes place towards the end of the poem, in couplet forty, where Ayatollah Khomeini introduces one of his teachers, 'Abd al-Karim Hâ'eri Yazdi (1859-1937), saying: "The world becomes empty of ignorance and full of knowledge through his coming, like the city of Qom after the coming of the great Sheikh, the grand commander [*Sheikh-e*

[512] *Qaside* II, couplet 11.

[513] Ibid., couplet 30.

[514] For an analysis of these lines see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," pp. 438-458.

Ajal]." ʿAbd al-Karim Hâ'eri, who was also known as the '*Sheikh-e Ajal,'* was one of the most influential *mojtahed*s in the 1920s and greatly admired by Ayatollah Khomeini.[515] He was born in 1859 in a small town called Mehrjard near the city of Yazd and was a *sayyed*, a descendant of the Prophet. After having completed the traditional religious education in a seminar (*madrase)*, Hâ'eri went to the city of Sâmarrâ in Iraq, to continue his religious education there.[516] Many Iranian religious students at that time went to Iraq to study in one either Karbalâ, Najaf or Samarra, which were then the most important Shiite scholarly centres in the world. After completing his studies, Hâ'eri taught and lived in both Iran and Iraq. In 1913 he returned to Iran for good, establishing a religious institute in Arâk. By then, his popularity had grown enormously among religious scholars within and outside Iran, and he was asked to teach at different religious institutes such as those in Mashad and Qom.[517] Hâ'eri became one of the leading *marja'-e taqlid*s ('sources of emulation').[518] This title is given by Twelver Shiites to the senior Islamic jurists who are allowed to interpret the *Sharia*, and make

[515] Hâ'eri was not only Ayatollah Khomeini's teacher but he would later also be connected to him by family ties when Ayatollah Khomeini's son Mostafâ married Hâ'eri's daughter. Next to that, Hâ'eri's son Mortezâ (d. 1986) was a close intimate of Ayatollah Khomeini and greatly approved of Ayatollah Khomeini's political program. Not many books or articles have been written on Hâ'eri. Some important Western contributions have been made by H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ḥā'eri, 'Abd al-Karim Yazdi; V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State; Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, pp. 15, 29, 30, 33, 48-49, 53, 80; A. Hairi, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam(2),* under Ha'erī, Abd al-Karīm Yazdī; S. Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980, pp. 27-28, 40-44, 62 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1999, pp. 22-36, 55, 57, 68 and 75.

[516] For consultation see H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ḥā'eri, 'Abd al-Karim Yazdi; M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 247-248, 261, 303, 312-313.

[517] It is said that Hâ'eri at first doubted whether to accept the invitation to teach in Qom but he was convinced to stay after somebody referred to the words of the sixth Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Sâdeq (d. 765) who had said that Qom would be an extremely important place at the end of times. The tradition says that the knowledge that disappears into the ground of Najaf like a snake, will around that time reappear in Qom. See H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ḥā'eri, 'Abd al-Karim Yazdi

[518] The *marja'* is the highest authority in Twelver Shi'ism after the Prophet and the imams. Although the idea of the *marja'-e taqlid* was developed in the nineteenth century, Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961) seems to have been the first *marja'* who was actually called this way. He was the sole *marja'* from 1947 up to his death in 1961. A *marja'* is not officially elected. More than one *marja'* can exist at the same time. Every person is obliged to follow the advice and opinion of the *marja'* of his own choice. Now a *marja'-e taqlid* is also called an Ayatollah. For consultation see R. Brunner, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Shiite Doctrine ii. Hierarchy in the Imamiyya. See also chapter 1.2 of this study.

legal decisions.[519] In 1922, the year in which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote this panegyric, Hâ'eri moved to Qom and started erecting a new religious institute called the *Hawze-ye 'Ilmiyyeh*. Within fifteen years, this institute would be attended by thousands of students and religious scholars from within and outside of Iran, including Ayatollah Khomeini.

In this panegyric, Ayatollah Khomeini has used Hâ'eri's move to Qom as a pretext to link his teacher in an original way to the Mahdi. The knowledge that each brought to the world, the first in Qom and the other worldwide, is the connection for Ayatollah Khomeini's shift of focus from Imam Mahdi to Hâ'eri. Ayatollah Khomeini also applies similar character traits, such as the bestowing of 'benefits,' to both the Mahdi and Hâ'eri.' In couplet 41, Ayatollah Khomeini calls Hâ'eri the "cloud of benefit" (*abr-e 'atâ*), while in couplet nineteen he compares the Mahdi's benefits to the moon and concludes that the latter is "only a small coin in a little purse" compared to the first. Also in couplet 41, Ayatollah Khomeini praises Hâ'eri for his "universal grace" (*feyz-e amim*), whereas in couplet 24 and 28 he had called the Mahdi "the source of the graces of mankind" (*manba'-e feyz-e bashar*) and the one who gives "benefits from the cloud of his excellence". Ayatollah Khomeini also connects both Hâ'eri and the Mahdi to 'benevolence' (*karam*).[520] And last but not least, Ayatollah Khomeini calls Hâ'eri "the treasure of knowledge from the past and ….the source of science for the coming… [holding]…the reins of Sharia and the Faith."[521] How should we interpret these couplets? And why would Ayatollah Khomeini compare Hâ'eri to the Mahdi, something that was very unconventional in the orthodox milieu of early twentieth century Iran? The linking of Hâ'eri's qualities to those of the infallible Mahdi and presenting him as a master of both past and future knowledge can only be placed in a mystical context. As explained before, mystics believe that not only the fourteen immaculate persons but also the mystic who has reached a state of perfection has knowledge of both worlds and reflects all of God's qualities. By attributing this ability to Hâ'eri, Ayatollah Khomeini presents his teacher as a 'perfect man,' an *ensân-e kâmel*, reflecting God's attributes in all senses.[522] This is similar to

[519] Hâ'eri shared this title with Mirzâ Hoseyn Nâ'ini and Sayyed Abu'l Hasan Esfahâni.

[520] The Mahdi in couplet 30 and Hâ'eri in couplet 41.

[521] *Qaside* II, couplets 42-43.

[522] According to Islamic mystical thought, each person reflects some of the qualities of God. A perfect man reflects all 99 'realities' of God, which are also called the 99 beautiful names of God. For consultation see M. Takeshita*, Ibn 'Arabi's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought,* pp. 106-109.

Ayatollah Khomeini's first *qaside*, where he attributes perfection to Fâteme Ma'sume, who in more orthodox thinking was an 'ordinary' person.

5.8 Spiritual Perfection and Leadership

It is not incongruous to see that Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike most of his fellow students in Qom, supported the mystical interpretation of 'perfection.' Some seven years after Ayatollah Khomeini wrote this panegyric, he discussed the concept of the perfect man in his *Mesbâh al-Hedâyat* (1929). In the same vein as the thirteenth-century mystical philosopher Ibn ʿArabi who became famous for his ideas on the 'oneness of being' (*vahdat al-vojud*), Ayatollah Khomeini believes that the whole of creation is a reflection of 'divine self-image,' meaning God. According to him, the goal of every human is to reflect this divine presence to the fullest. Ayatollah Khomeini elaborates on the fact that 'normal' entities only reflect one or some of God's divine names or attributes, while the perfect man represents them all. Also according to him, the prophets and saints are perfect men. But apart from this, and what differentiates Ayatollah Khomeini's opinion from the traditional Shiite view of the perfect man, he declares that every person has the ability to become perfect and to see the divine secrets. Both the panegyric that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote on Fâteme Ma'sume and *qaside* II in which he praises his teacher Hâ'eri support this view. In *Mesbâh al-Hedâyat* Ayatollah Khomeini writes extensively on the steps a mystic has to follow on his spiritual journey towards union with God. Ayatollah Khomeini explains that this journey takes place within a person. To attain to this union, the mystic has to cleanse his soul of all ego and all possible 'I-ness', i.e. any trace of one's ego and identity. After the mystic has reached this final stage and has become 'a perfect reflection of God,' he has to return to the community to share his divine knowledge with mankind. He explains how the perfect man represents both the created world and the divine world because he has knowledge of both the manifest world and of the hidden divine world.

As regards the duty of the perfect man, namely to share his divine knowledge, Ayatollah Khomeini was inspired by Mollâ Sadrâ. As B. Moin says, "For Khomeini, Mollah Sadra was the man who had enabled him to understand the path of perfection."[523] This seventeenth-century mystical philosopher became very famous for his book *Hekmat al-Mota'aliye fi-'l Asrâr al-'Aqliyye al-Arba'e* ("The Transcendent Wisdom in the Four Intellectual Journeys"), which for convenience will be called the *Four Journeys* here. Mollâ Sadrâ expanded on Ibn ʿArabi's theories and stated that the road to perfection consists of four

[523] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 48.

journeys. In addition to Ibn ʿArabi's theory on Unity of Being, Mollâ Sadrâ declared that the mystic, after he has finished his spiritual journey, has the duty of spreading the messages of God among the people.[524]According to Ayatollah Khomeini the perfect man can be called the ruler of the cosmos. He sees the perfect man as the representative of God, as his *khalife* ('vicegerent'), who has to guide mankind.[525] In his *Mesbâh*, Ayatollah Khomeini calls the perfect man the 'archetypal vicegerent' who is timeless and who has become manifest through the various prophets and saints.[526] In his panegyric on the Mahdi, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of his teacher Hâ'eri in a similar vein. For Ayatollah Khomeini, he is a perfect man who combines spiritual and profane, visible and invisible knowledge, saying in couplets 41 to 43:

ابر عطا، فیض عمیم، بحر سخا، کنز نعیم	The cloud of benefit, the universal grace, the sea of generosity, treasure of delight.
کانِ کَرَم «عبدالکریم»، پُشت و پناه مُسلمین	Mine of benevolence, 'Abd al-Karim, supporter and defender of Muslims.
گنجینه‌ی علم سَلَف، سرچشمه‌ی فضل خلف	He is the treasure of knowledge from the past and he is the source of science for the coming.
دادش خداوند از شرف بر کف زمام شرع و دین	Out of honour God has handed him the reins of Sharia and the Faith.
در سایه‌اش گرد آمده، اعلام دین از هر بَلَد	The religious scholars from all districts come together under his shadow.
بر ساحتش آورده رو طُلّاب از هر سرزمین	And from all corners of the world, religious students come to his presence.

In this part Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of Hâ'eri as possessing both past and future knowledge and as reflecting the most excellent features of God. Because of these qualities many religious scholars are 'under his shadow', which is to say he has a guiding role. According to both Mollâ Sadrâ and Ayatollah Khomeini, the state of perfection was not reserved solely for the Shiite Imams. By comparing Hâ'eri's extraordinary qualities to those of the Mahdi, it is obvious that Ayatollah Khomeini is depicting Hâ'eri as an infallible person,

[524]In addition to Ibn ʿArabi's theories, Mollâ Sadrâ developed a metaphysical philosophy for the road to perfection that synthesized theoretical and metaphysical ideas. Mollâ Sadrâ not only adopted illuminationist philosophical theories from Sohravardi and *ʿerfâni* thoughts from Ibn ʿArabi, he also made use of Avicenna's rational philosophical theories and of Islamic theological (*kalam*) ways of thinking, and by doing so explained the road to perfection as both a spiritual and a physical one. See further B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 48-51.

[525] See J.G.T. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en politiek gezag. Het begrip wilāyat in de optiek van Khumaynī," in *Mystiek: het andere gezicht van de islam*, eds. M. Buitelaar and J.G.J. ter Haar, Bussum: Coutinho, 1999, pp. 97-98. See also A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," *Middle East Journal* 46 (1992), pp. 636-653.

[526]A. Knysh, "Irfan Revisited" pp. 635-645.

a perfect reflection of God. Ayatollah Khomeini's reference in couplet 42 to Hâ'eri as a person of whom God "out of honour has handed the reins of Sharia and the Faith" is strong evidence that Ayatollah Khomeini believed that Hâ'eri should fulfil the highest religious position in society. In other words, that Ayatollah Khomeini saw Hâ'eri as the representative of Imam Mahdi, both at a religious and political level, a role which he would fulfil himself after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This panegyric of 1922 shows that Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas of the 'governance of the jurist' (*velâyat-e faqih*), according to which there should always be one leading jurist (*faqih*) to implement religious and governmental matters in society, while the Mahdi is in occultation, the ideas that he presented to the public in the 1970s and made the basis of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, were already present in his early years.

5.9 Anti-British Tendencies in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Qasides*

The idea that Ayatollah Khomeini sees his teacher Hâ'eri as the representative of the Mahdi comes out even more strongly in *qaside* III, the second panegyric on Imam Mahdi, which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote one year later, in 1923.[527] Ayatollah Khomeini again composed the poem on the commemoration of the birthday of the Mahdi, to whom he dedicated the poem. It is called 'In Praise of the Guardian of Time (*vali-ye 'Asr*). It too links the Mahdi with Hâ'eri. Once again, following the traditional rules of the *qaside*, Ayatollah Khomeini begins with a depiction of a garden filled with flowers and birds, introducing the Beloved, i.e. the Mahdi, in a classical way. The world is in the midst of spring and life could not be more pleasant. In the manner of classical poets, Ayatollah Khomeini depicts the world as a 'mirror' that "after the union of a drop of rain in pure water…has become like a serving-plate of water that is full of Yemenite pearls".[528] One drop of rain has turned "plain and desert... [into] …carpets of dark-green brocade".[529] The idea of the world as a 'mirror' reflecting the other world, i.e. the Divine, is based on Ibn 'Arabi's concept of *vahdat al-vojud* ('oneness of being') and is a recurrent theme in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. As in *qaside* II, Ayatollah Khomeini shows how the whole of creation aims at reaching union with the 'rose,' representing the Beloved or the praised one, in this case Imam Mahdi. All birds sing love

[527] I will refer to the second Mahdi panegyric as q*aside* III. It consists of 44 couplets and appears on pages 263-267 in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*. It is in the Persian metre *ramal-e mothamman-e sâlem*: - 0 - - / - 0 - - / - 0 - - / - 0 - -.

[528] *Qaside* III, couplet 4.

[529] Ibid., couplet 5.

songs on the rose, and as A. Schimmel explains, their songs are 'complaints' about not having attained union with their Beloved. The features of the different flowers again indicate their relation to their Beloved.[530] For example, in couplet nine, Ayatollah Khomeini mentions the red celandine, which is like a "lover who bows his head to see his Beloved" with half of his face "red-coloured and half of it…yellow". The fact that half of its face is pale means that this part is still in affliction for it has not achieved union with the Beloved. However, the other side has already witnessed him and therefore has turned completely red, like a lover in the presence of his Beloved. The whole of nature reminds us of the Beloved's beauty. In couplet eleven Ayatollah Khomeini explains that "the dew on the lily is heart-ravishing like the beauty-spot on the Beloved's face" while the "narcissus and hyacinth are stealing the hearts like eyes and hair-locks". The whole of nature is happy that the Beloved will return to the world, and to use Ayatollah Khomeini's words, "God has brought together this world of pleasure, to receive His friend in this feast in a hundred ways".[531]

In the transitional passage, in couplets nineteen and twenty, Ayatollah Khomeini mentions Imam Mahdi for the first time, referring to him as "the Mahdi of the end of times." His birthday is celebrated on the fifteenth of the lunar month Sha'ban. In the year 1923, when Ayatollah Khomeini composed the poem, the day of his birth, took place on April 4, on the twelfth day of the Persian month *Farvardin* (Spring), that is based on the solar calendar. This is also the twelfth and last day of Nowruz. So it coincided with the festivities of Nowruz, taking place during springtime. The birthday of the Mahdi is the reason behind the felicity and happiness of the flowers and birds in the opening passage. The flowers that are at the height of their bloom in the springtime have metaphorically put on their best clothes and finest perfumes to celebrate the Mahdi's entry in the world, because he is the centre of the world. It is to him that the world and its creatures owe their existence, and it is to him that all will return. The return of Imam Mahdi will take place on Nowruz. According to Shiites, many important events took and will take place on this day.[532] So they say that Nowruz coincided with the Day of Alast on which the souls of mankind, before God brought them into existence, promised to obey God as their Lord. It supposedly also coincided with the day on which prophet Mohammad appointed Imam 'Ali as his successor at Ghadeer-e Khom. Ayatollah Khomeini also refers to this event in couplet 28, saying:

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[530] A. Schimmel, "Rose und Nachtigall," in *Numen*, Vol. 5, Fasc. 2, Leiden: Brill, 1958, pp. 88-102.

[531] Ibid., couplet 18.

[532] See A.S. Shahbazi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Nowruz ii. In the Islamic Period.

May the feast of Ghadeer-e Khom with a Solomon like splendour and glory come,	عید «خُم»، با حشمت و فرّ سُلیمانی بیامد
So I can place the Kayanid crown on His head because of the birth of the king Mahdi.	که نهادم بر سر از میلاد شه تاج کیانی

In this couplet Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the date on which the birthday of the Mahdi and the first day of Nowroz (1 *Farvardin*) will take place on the exact same day. The conjunction of these two special days, which both have important value within a Shiite context, must be of superior value for the Shiites. But as Ayatollah Khomeini then indicates in couplet 30, the conjuncture of these two dates will not occur any time soon:

It will be centuries before such a feast comes to this world.	قرنها باید که تا آید چنین عیدی به عالم
This year's feast is a token of an auspicious.	عید امسال از شرف زد سکه‌ی صاحبقرانی

Although it is in the far future that both days will take place on the exact same date, it is exceptional that in 1923 the birth of the Mahdi took place during the 12-day long Nowruz festivities. Ayatollah Khomeini uses the pretext of 'king Mahdi' in couplet 28 to turn the attention to the political situation in Iran, saying in couplet 31:

Reason says: "Be silent! How long do you want to praise a king?	عقل گوید: باش خامُش، چند گویی مدح شاهی
Who has sung the praise of his qualities through a tongueless tongue.	که سُروده مدحتش حق، با زبان بی‌زبانی

Although Ayatollah Khomeini became famous for his political reading of Islam from the 1960s, he would not openly mingle in political affairs prior to that period. This does not mean that he was not concerned with the threats that imperialism and secularization posed to Islam. However, in this couplet, Ayatollah Khomeini is very clear in his rejection of the Iranian monarchy, condemning their empty achievements.[533] He condemns the Iranian monarchs for cooperating with the British, whom he describes in couplets 34 to 37 in the following way:

How long will these unbelievers drink the blood of the believers,	تا به کی این کافران نوشند خون اهل ایمان؟
For how long will these wolves be the shepherds of these sheep?	چند این گُرگان کنند این گوسفندان را شبانی؟

[533] See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab's analysis of this *qaside* in his "Khomeini the Poet Mystic", pp. 447-449.

How long will these worthless people be our commanders,	تا به کی این ناکسان باشند بر ما حکمرانان؟
How long will these thieves watch over these uncivilized people?	تا کی این دزدان کنند این بی‌کسان را پاسبانی؟
How long should we endure the British oppression?	تا به کی بر ما روا باشد جفای انگلیسی؟
The British who are matchless in their oppression and tyranny.	آن که در ظلم و ستم فرد است و او را نیست ثانی
The British who, because of their greed, the world have become poor.	آنکه از حرصش نصیب عالمی شد تنگدستی
The British who incurred faults on the Islamic tenets.	آن که بر آیات حق رفت از خطایش آنچه دانی

From the use of the first-person plural "we" and "our," it is evident that Ayatollah Khomeini intends these couplets to mirror the socio-political situation at the time. Although the allusions to the British refer to the imperialist designs of Great Britain, Ayatollah Khomeini may also have been referring indirectly to the Iranian government, which cooperated with the imperialist forces and wished to model Iran on British lines ("The British who because of their greed, have become the rest of the world"). Ayatollah Khomeini shows how the British dominate the country, depriving the Iranian people of all their possessions and threatening their Islamic institutions.

As in his previous panegyric, oppression (*zolm*) is an important theme in this poem. Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of the oppressors as 'unbelievers' (*kâferân*[534]), 'wolves' (*gorgân*[535]), 'ill-wishers' (*badkh^{w}âh*[536]), 'thieves' (*dozdân*[537]) and 'worthless people' (*nâ-kesân*[538]) who continue in their practices of tyranny (*setam*[539]) and oppression (*jafâ* or *zolm*[540]). Unlike the previous poem, in this panegyric Ayatollah Khomeini is specific about whom he connects to oppression, in this case the British. In his view, the British are the greatest oppressors of all. The way in which Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the British in this poem is similar to the way he speaks of the West in his *Islamic Government* of 1970. In that book, Ayatollah Khomeini frequently uses the term *zâlem* (oppressors) to denote the Western

[534] *Qaside* III, couplet 34.

[535] Ibid.

[536] *Qaside* III, couplet 42.

[537] Ibid., couplet 35.

[538] Ibid.

[539] *Qaside* III, couplet 36.

[540] Ibid.

powers and Iranians who support the westernization of Iran.[541] Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of them as people who want "to keep us backward, to keep us in our miserable state so they can exploit our riches, our underground wealth, our lands, and our human resources."[542] The bad image of the British that prevailed in Iran since the end of the nineteenth century, reflects in this panegyric in which Ayatollah Khomeini connects the British to oppression and injustice. His hostile depiction of the British reflects the frustrated and disturbed relation between Iran and the West at the time of writing. [543] Iran had experienced years of Western penetration, in particular by British and Russian forces that had both been able to contract various lucrative concessions with the Qajar Shahs that were devastating for the country's economic and socio-political stability.[544] In 1923, the year that Ayatollah Khomeini composed this poem, Reza Khan was paving the way to promote himself from Commander of the Cossack Brigade to Minister of War, Prime Minister, and then, in 1925, to Shah of Iran. Reza Khan was able to pull Iran from its weak and dependant position. Through various reforms in the military, economic, judicial, educational, religious and cultural field, Reza Khan succeeded in modernizing the country on various levels and in strengthening it against foreign penetration. However, the clergy, and with them Khomeini, rightly feared that the modernization campaigns of the Shah would have great consequences for the religious institutions.[545]

In this particular panegyric of the early 1920s, Ayatollah Khomeini reflects the anti-British sentiment common in Iran since the late nineteenth century. Ayatollah Khomeini particularly blames Britain for being opportunistic. He depicts the country as an oppressing force that has made Iranians totally dependent on her. The ideas discussed in this poem come back in several of Ayatollah Khomeini's speeches delivered much later, in 1978 in Neauphle-le-Chateau. This poem gives a good insight into Ayatollah Khomeini's objections to the West

[541] Sometimes Ayatollah Khomeini used the word 'oppressor' to refer to the Sunnites. At other moments, he would use it to denote the Qajar or Pahlavi rulers or the imperialist forces such as Britain, Russia or America.

[542] R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, p. 34. In Islam and Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini accuses the West, particularly America, of using Iranian rulers as puppets, making Iran totally dependent on them. See also R. Khomeini, *Kauthar: an Anthology of the Speeches of Imam Khomeini (s.a.) including an Account of the Events of the Islamic Revolution 1962-1978*, Volume 2, Tehran, 1995, pp. 35-38.

[543] See further A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Conspiracy Theories; also R.W. Ferrier, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Anglo-Iranian Relations.

[544] For an extensive discussion of anti-British and anti- Russian sentiments in Iran see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Poetry as Awakening: Singing Modernity," in *Literature of the Early Twentieth Century From the Constitutional Period to Reza Shah*, Vol. XI, London / New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015, pp. 90-97.

[545] For the reforms in the religious field under Reza Shah, see chapter 1.6 and 1.7 of this study.

and in particular to England and Russia. Ayatollah Khomeini argues that from the beginning of the Western presence in Iran, it has been their goal to exploit Iran's natural resources and to establish a presence in a strategic country. The anti-British ideas presented in the poem are combined with other elements. For instance, in these speeches Ayatollah Khomeini first blames the British and then the Russians for exploiting Iran's oil and gas supplies. He produced evidence in the form of detailed British and Russian maps showing where these natural resources can be found.[546]

Panegyrics like these by Ayatollah Khomeini are interesting since they demonstrate that he was already at a young age concerned with socio-political matters and wanted to combine religion with politics and social issues. The terms 'oppression' and 'suffering' which he uses regularly in this panegyric but also in future speeches and books are integrally linked to the Shiite community. Shiites believe that they have been suffering ever since the early days of Islam.[547] They feel that ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb was unjustly bypassed as the successor to the Prophet, and the killing of Hoseyn, the third Shiite Imam, in 680, and the brutal treatment of his followers is seen as a great defeat for the Shiite community.[548] Shiites believe that only the Mahdi can put a definitive end to the suffering the Shiite community experiences. As indicated by M.A. Amir-Moezzi, the Mahdi's return will be heralded by several signs. One is that the earth will be filled with oppression and injustice. In this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini points out the oppression and tyranny afflicting Iran. The return of Imam Mahdi and the ensuring end of the world is described as the culmination of a period in which most people have lost their faith in God, their sense of morality and religious obligation towards God and towards the community. Ayatollah Khomeini frequently refers to the 'unbelievers' and 'uncivilized people' that dominate the country in this panegyric. According to the Shiites, the Mahdi's main role would be to exact revenge for the continuous suffering and oppression of the Shiite community. The Mahdi is also expected to restore religious awareness among the people. However he will not convert the whole world to the Shiite faith, but rather will return

[547] For a detailed discussion of the event at Karbalâ and its re-examination see H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1982, pp. 183-194.

[548] Hoseyn openly protested against Yazid, the ruling caliph whom the Sunnites considered to be the legitimate ruler. On the tenth of Moharram (tenth of October 680), Hoseyn and his troops met the troops of Yazid on the plain of Karbalâ. After a bloody fight, Hoseyn and his troops were killed. See H. Halm, *Shiism*, pp. 13-16 and J. Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam*, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 105-116. See also M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eschatology iii. Imami Shi'ism.

Christians and Jews to the true essence of their own faith, which according to some traditions is the same as Islam. The Mahdi will show the people the spiritual wisdom (*hekmat*), which is seated in their heart but which most people are unable to see. Like the Imams before him, the Mahdi will explain the hidden secrets of the universe. He will be accompanied by an army, because oppression and injustice can only be extinguished through the use of violence.[549] After the Mahdi has carried out all of this, he will rule for several years, the exact period being unknown. Others believe that the Imam Zaman will die, after which the world will be ruled by 'initiates' until the day of Resurrection.[550] Thus the Mahdi's main tasks are to put an end to the continuous suffering of the Shiite community and revive religious awareness among the people.

5.10 The Shiite Interpretation of Oppression

In *qaside* III, Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted some interesting terms whose connotations have changed. To understand the passive posture vis-à-vis injustice that has typified the Shiite community for ages, we must examine the meanings of oppression from a Shiite point of view, for its connotations have changed significantly over the past few decades and give the panegyric a strong political loading. So does he use the term *mazlum*, which Ayatollah Khomeini connects to the effects of British interference, and which he also frequently used in his speeches during the Islamic Revolution. The term has been translated in this poem as 'oppressed' but it has various meanings. Hamid Enayat defines *mazlum* in the literal sense of the word as "injured, oppressed or sinned against".[551] But the term also has a rather positive connotation in colloquial Persian, as it is also used for a person who is "associated with incurring injustice" or "who is unwilling to act against others even when he is oppressed, not out of cowardice or diffidence but because of generosity and forbearance."[552] In the last sense, *mazlum* is a noble quality and has nothing to do with weakness. Shiites consider Hoseyn to be the embodiment of *mazlum*, and as H. Enayat says, he allowed "himself to be killed on the plains of Karbalā' to purify the Muslim community of sins".[553] Enayat emphasizes Hoseyn's image amongst the Shiites as a person who had "an almost masochistic wish for

[549] This army will consist of 313 militants who carry black banners, by angels and by fear (*ro'b*), a frightful 'entity.'

[550] M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eschatology iii. Imami Shi'ism.

[551] H. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 183.

[552] Ibid.

[553] Ibid.

martyrdom".[554] The result of this interpretation of the Karbalâ story is that for centuries the Shiites, in the image of Hoseyn, have adopted a rather quietist attitude towards opposing forces.

In the 1960s and 1970s there was a real change in this rather passive stance of the Shiite community towards injustice. The change related to a re-examination of the events at Karbalâ. Although over the ages many Sunnite and Shiite works have been written on the defeat of Imam Hoseyn and his troops in 680, the Islamic scholar Ni'matullah Sâlihi Najaf-Âbâdi wrote a crucial book, *The Immortal Martyr* (*Shahid-e jâvid*) in 1968. Najaf-Âbâdi ignited a discussion on why Hoseyn, who like all the Imams supposedly had knowledge of the future, would deliberately choose to be defeated in 680 on the plain of Karbalâ? To answer the question whether Hoseyn really did have prescience of his own and his family's defeat, Najaf-Âbâdi re-examined all the popular stories and traditions about the event at Karbalâ and compared them to historical reports from historians such as Tabari and Sheikh Mofid. Najaf-Âbâdi states that only the popular stories support the supposition that Hoseyn had foreknowledge of his defeat, but this is not confirmed in the official trustworthy traditions. Moreover, Najaf-Âbâdi shows that some details from the popular stories could not have taken place because they do not match historical facts. Najaf-Âbâdi concludes that Hoseyn did not know he would be defeated, and revolted against Yazid and his troops simply to prevent them from establishing an illegitimate monarchical system. Therefore, as Najaf-Âbâdi argues, the defeat of Hoseyn and his followers should not be seen as conscious self-destruction, but rather as a courageous attempt to safeguard the Islamic ideals, which unfortunately did not turn out positively. By presenting the tragedy at Karbalâ in this way, Najaf-Âbâdi gives the event a strong political character because he indirectly implies that all Shiites should follow Imam Hoseyn's example in fighting any form of political or religious injustice, even if a victory appears to be far from reach. In this way, the tragedy at Karbalâ is not an "inimitable event in history, above the capacity of the common run of human beings", but can happen to any person who rebels against illegitimate rule or oppression.[555] By presenting the story like this, Najaf-Âbâdi turned the earlier, rather passive and forbearing role of Hoseyn into one of active revolt against oppression and deviation from Islamic norms.

[554] Ibid., p. 184.

[555] Ibid., p. 194.

Najaf-Âbâdi's change of focus in the Karbalâ story had a widespread effect on Shiites worldwide.[556] At first it was only discussed within religious circles, but Ayatollah Khomeini in particular repeatedly presented this new image to the public during the Islamic revolution and after the instalment of the Republic of Iran. In his book *Islamic Governance* of 1970, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of the event at Karbalâ in the vein of Najaf-Âbâdi, as a revolt against the illegitimate rule of the Umayyad monarchy and a defence of the values of an ideal Islamic state. He says specifically that hereditary succession "prompted the Lord of the Martyrs (peace be upon him) to rise up in revolt and seek martyrdom in an effort to prevent its establishment. He revolted in repudiation of the hereditary succession of Yazid, to refuse to give him the oath of obedience. In this view, monarchy and the hereditary succession of rulers have no place in Islam."[557] In this particular speech, Ayatollah Khomeini uses the story of Karbalâ and the revolt of Hoseyn against the illegitimate rule of the Umayyad monarch to indicate that the rule of Mohammad Reza Shah is equally illegitimate. The sentence also implies that, as in the case of Karbalâ, the monarchy should be removed to defend Islamic values.

Other sayings by Ayatollah Khomeini from the 1970s and 1980s, such as "Every day is Ashurâ and every land is Karbalâ," also imply that he interprets the event at Karbalâ as a conscious attempt by Hoseyn to fight injustice. By presenting the battle at Karbalâ in this way, Ayatollah Khomeini reinforced the political and active interpretation of *mazlum*, to project the events at Karbalâ and the figure of Hoseyn onto everyday life and to mobilize Shiites to act against the oppression of the Shiite community and violations of Islamic values.[558]

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[556] See also Evan Siegel's article "The Politics of Shahid-e Javid, in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political History*, eds. R. Brunner and W. Ende, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 150-77.

[557] See R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, p. 31.

[558] For various discussions on the re-interpretation of the event at Karbalâ see the article by P. Khosronejad, "Introduction: Unburied Memories," in Unburied Memories, Visual Anthropology, 25, 1-2, 2012, pp. 1-21; A.A. Seyed-Gohrab's "Martelaren: van Mystieke Weg tot Oorlogspad," in *Mededelingen*, deel 72, No. 4, Amsterdam: KNAW Press, 2009 and "Martyrdom as Piety, Mysticism and National Icon in Iran," in *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*, issue 1-2, 87, 2012, pp. 248-73; H.E. Chehabi & F. Christia, "The Art of State Persuasion**:** Iran's Post-Revolutionary Murals, " in *Persica*, Vol. 22, 2008, pp. 1-13; C.J. Gruber, "The Message is on the Wall: Mural Arts in Post-Revolutionary Iran", in Persica, Vol. 22, 2008, pp. 15-46; P. Karimi, "Imagining Warfare, Imagining Welfare: Tehran's Post Iran-Iraq War Murals and their Legacy", in *Persica*, Vol. 22, 2008, pp. 47-63.

The picture of life as a continuous battle between good and evil is strongly rooted in Iranian culture, and is central to the Twelver Shiite faith, and has also played a key role in the lives of numerous mystics. While for Shiites, the resurrection (*entezâr*) of the Mahdi will herald the end of oppression, mystics believe that the end of the spiritual path will herald a 'personal' resurrection and will mean the end of the soul's suffering. In this sense the battle against oppression thus takes place on both a communal and personal level.

5.11 Islamic Governance

There is evidence in this panegyric that the young Ayatollah Khomeini was already at a young age engaged with the thought of adopting an Islamic form of governance that could replace any form of 'illegitimate' rule and that would actively defend Islamic ideals, protecting the Shiites against any form of oppression, intrusion or injustice. So he writes in couplets 38 to 42:

خوار کُن شاها! تو او را در جهان، تا صبح محشر	Oh God, humiliate these unbelievers in this world till the dawn of the Judgement Day.
آنکه می‌زد در بسیط ارض، کوس کامرانی	Those who have struck the drum of success based on their worldly possessions.
تا بدانند از خداوند جهان این دادخواهی	So that they will realize how the God of the world judges.
تا ببینند از شه اسلامیان این حکمرانی	So that they will see how the king of Muslims rules.
حوزه‌ی علمیّه‌ی قم را، عَلَم فرما به عالم	Make the Hawze-ye 'Elmiyyeh in Qom the banner of the world,
تا کند فُلک نجات مُسلمین را بادبانی	So that it can sail the boat of salvation for Muslims.
بس کرم کن عمر و عزّت بر «کریمی» کز کرامت	Grant 'Abd al-Karim a long life and respect, so that, by blessing him,
کرده بر ایشان چو ابر رحمت حق، دُرفشانی	God's mercy may rain like pearls.
نیکخواهش را عطا فرما بقای جاودانی	Give his well-wishers eternal life.
بهر بدخواهش رسان هر دم بلای آسمانی	Give his ill-wishers every moment heavenly affliction.

In this passage Ayatollah Khomeini reflects a contemporary discussion that took place in Sunni Egypt about Islamic governance. Ayatollah Khomeini first makes it clear that governance belongs to God, introducing the topic of *velâyat* in the political sense of the word, which is usually translated as 'temporal authority.' Ayatollah Khomeini does not use the

literal term *velâyat* in couplet 39, but rather *hokmrâni* ('governance'). Immediately after, he moves his attention to the Islamic institution that his teacher Abd al-Karim Hâ'eri had established one year earlier in Qom, hoping that God will make it "the banner of the world." Then Ayatollah Khomeini adds a second transitional passage, introducing Hâ'eri in the following couplet. The sequence of subjects in this passage implies that Ayatollah Khomeini connects his teacher Hâ'eri to governance, to *velâyat*, a topic that has been the cause of ongoing debates between Islamic scholars since the Major occultation of the twelfth Imam in 940.[559]

Velâyat has particular meanings in the Shiite world. In Islamic law, *velâyat* is used to refer to 'the power of an authorized person to perform an action,' such as having custody of a child or a disabled person. In the religious and political sphere, *velâyat* is used to denote spiritual or temporal authority. In the Shiite world, the term is also used to describe the devotion that is due to the Twelve Imams, whom they believe to have been the rightful successors to the Prophet. It is one of the pillars of the Shiite faith, proclaiming that God will only grant access to Paradise to those who acknowledge the authority of the Twelve Imams.[560]

In mysticism, the term *velâyat* is used to refer to the spiritual authority or sainthood of a mystic who has reached perfection. Such a mystic is called a *vali*, a 'friend' or person who is close to, and therefore protected by, God. However, mystics do not agree on this matter. The famous ninth-century scholar and mystical writer Hakim-e Termedhi (d. ca. 910) paid an important tribute to the development of the mystical interpretation of *velâyat*. In his treatise *Sirat al-awliâ*, he elaborates on the distinction between two sorts of friends of God. First, there is the *vali haqq Allah* ('The Friend of the Truth of God'). Second, there is the *vali Allah* ('The Friend of God'). Both are travelling the mystical path *(tariqat)* towards God. They do this on the one hand by exploring their inner self, and on the other hand by making an ascension *(me'râj)* through the macrocosms. While the *vali haqq Allah* has to endure all sorts of difficulties on his journey towards God, the *vali Allah* is exempted from all these hardships

[559] For different stances see M.A. Amir-Moezzi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Islam in Iran x. The Roots of Political Shi'ism; S. Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shi'i Law on the Doctrine of Wilāyat al-Faqīh," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. ¾, 1996, pp. 229-237; A. Kazemi Moussavi, "ANew Interpretation of the Theory of Velayat-e Faqih," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1992, pp. 101-107; B. Moin, "Questions of Guardianship in Iran," in the *Third World Quarterly* , Vol. 10, No. 1, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1988, pp. 191-200; A. Zysow, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ejtehād.

[560] For consultation see M.Y. Izzi Dien and P.E. Walker, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Wilāya; B. Radtke, "The Concept of Wilāya in Early Sufism," in *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. L. Lewisohn, London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993, pp. 483-496.

because he is 'chosen by God.' While the ascension of the *vali haqq Allah* stops at the end of the created cosmos, the latter is able to reach the spheres of light of the divine Names of God and is able to know all the Names of God. When he has traversed all His names, his soul (*nafs*) will disappear since he is now one with God's Essence.[561]

Couplets 38 to 42 of Khomeini's third *qaside* support the thought that in his young years, Ayatollah Khomeini was engaging with the question of the ideal form of governance, an on-going discussion in Twelver Shia Islam since the occultation of the Mahdi in 940 and which experienced an upheaval both inside and outside of Iran, to be particular Egypt, during the early 1920s. According to Twelver Shiites, only the immaculate Shiite Imams had the right to temporal and spiritual authority and, contrary to Sunnite Islam, this has become one of the principles (*osul*) of the Twelver Shiite religion, as we will see below.[562] However for centuries the Shiite community left the discussion as an abstract question, and accepted the temporal rule under which they lived.

In the eighteenth century the discussion on *velâyat* rose again, after the adoption of the *ejtehâd*-practice in the early modern times.[563] According to this concept, only specific high-ranking Islamic jurists (and not the Shah) are allowed to interpret Islamic law by issuing independent jurisprudential opinions. Moreover every member of the Shiite community was supposed to choose one of the *mojtaheds* as a 'model of imitation' (*marja'-e taqlid*), following him in religious, social, political and private affairs. The *ejtehâd* practice greatly affected the hierarchy within the Twelver Shiite community, enlarging the authority of some Islamic jurists enormously. Although the *ejtehâd* practice had been a point of discussion since the ninth century, the change of rulership in Iran in the eighteenth century provided an immediate reason for adopting this practice. Safavid rulers, who had ruled Iran since the sixteenth century, had claimed to be descended from Imam Ali. This blood linkage to Imam Ali made their rule divinely inspired and unquestionable.[564] The clergy accepted the Safavid kings as rulers on both earthly and spiritual levels. In 1722, the Safavid Dynasty fell apart and gave way to other Persian dynasties, such as the Afshar Dynasty (1736-1796) and the Zand

[561] B. Radtke, "The Concept of Wilāya in Early Sufism," pp. 483-496.

[562] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'a Islam*, pp. 147-160.

[563] See further A. Zysow, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ejtehād; W.L. Cleveland, A *History of the Modern Middle East*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2000, pp. 30, 108-109; M, Momen , *An Introduction to Shi'a Islam*, pp. 194-195 and W.L. Cleveland, A *History of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 30, 108-109. See also my discussion of this position in chapter 1.3 of this study.

[564] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 101.

Dynasty (1750-1794) who ruled in different parts of Iran.[565] When the Qajar dynasty came to power in 1785, the clerics questioned the religious authority of the Qajar rulers because they did not descend from the Shiite Imams. The majority of the clerics supported the opinion that only certain Islamic jurists were authorised to interpret Islamic law, and not the Qajar Shah. Shortly after, the *ejtehâd* practice was again adopted by the Iranian clergy.[566] The Qajar rulers did not object since they needed the approval of the Iranian clergy, to implement their own political authority. The rulers and the clerics accepted each other in return for certain privileges. The Qajar rulers dominated the political arena, while the clergy dominated the religious, educational and judicial domains.[567]Another, possibly indirect, reason for again adopting the *ejtehâd* practice was to respond to social and political change.[568] This is also evident in section 6a of article 2 of the 1979 constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran which states that the *ejtehâd* practice "is one of the means of securing human dignity and freedom along with progress in science and technology and opposition to tyranny".[569] One important event that prompted the nineteenth-century discussion on what role the Islamic jurist should play was a fatwa issued by Sheikh Jaʿfar al-Kabir Kâshef al-Ghetâ (d. 1813), giving the ruling monarch Fath 'Ali Shah (d. 1834) the right to proclaim a 'holy war' against the Russians. Not long after that fatwa, Ahmad b. Mohammad-Mahdi al-Narâqi (d. about 1831/2) wrote a book in which he supported the idea that the *marja'-e taqlid* could represent the Imam on both a legislative and a political level.[570] According to Vanessa Martin "Naraqi argued that only a qualified jurist could be the legitimate ruler in the absence of the Imam,

[565] R. Matthee, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Safavid Dynasty

[566] See S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown,* pp. 13-15.

[567] As Arjomand states the Qajar ruler kept the right to appoint the most important prayer leaders and the leading cleric (sheikh al-Islam). See S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown,* p. 15.

[568] W.L. Cleveland, A *History of the Modern Middle East*, p. 30.

[569] A. Zysow, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ejtehād.

[570] Although many disagreed with Naraqi, this idea of the Islamic jurist as the general deputy (*nâ'eb-e amm'*) of the Mahdi was not new. Sachedina claims that the idea of the *faqih* as the 'general deputy' prevailed right after the Mahdi disappeared in 874, although his claim has been heavily critiqued because of lack insufficient proof. In the sixteenth century, Zayn al-Din al-'Amili al Jaba'i (d. 1558/9) wrote an important book in which he stated that the jurist could represent the Imam on all matters, except in the case of declaring *jihâd* ('holy war') merely to expand territory. Many scholars disagreed with Amili al Jaba'i and supported the idea that the temporal *velâyat* could only be exercised by the Imams, and not by the jurists. See further S. Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shi'i Law on the Doctrine of Wilāyat al-Faqīh," pp. 229-268. On Naraqi, see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state,* pp. 117-118.

and that government by the jurist was the only legitimate kind."[571] Martin says that Narâqi "argued that the foqahâ had authority in all the same matters as the Prophet and the Imams, except in a few instances specifically excluded by the Sharia on the grounds of consensus or established texts." [572] Despite a few instances of support for the concept of *velâyat-e faqih*, the general stance of the Iranian clergy vis-à-vis both legislative and authoritative power for the Islamic jurist was negative. Most nineteenth-century Islamic scholars disagreed with the ideas of Narâqi and al-Ghetâ. Furthermore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, many great ayatollahs such as Mohammad Hoseyn Nâ'ini (d. 1936), and Mohammad Kâzem Khorâsâni (d. 1911) rejected the idea that Islamic jurists could represent the Imam on all matters.[573]

The connection that Ayatollah Khomeini makes in couplets 38 to 42 of *qaside* III, between his teacher Hâ'eri and governance, implies that from his early years Ayatollah Khomeini, like Narâqi, supported ideas similar to what he would later present as the principle of *velâyat-e faqih.* It is as if Ayatollah Khomeini had a temporal leadership role for the Islamic clergy in mind from his early twenties. As in the previous panegyric, Ayatollah Khomeini ascribes the most wonderful qualities to Hâ'eri, even comparing his teacher to the Mahdi, which implies that Ayatollah Khomeini saw in Hâ'eri a perfect man. Thus Ayatollah Khomeini is combining the views of Shiite clerics such as Narâqi, on governance, with the mystical doctrine of the *ensân-e kâmel*. While the rule of clerics in political matters remains an open question in Shiism, and controversial, in mysticism the 'perfect man' is considered to be the source of inspiration in all matters. It is not specified whether or not a 'perfect man' is allowed to engage in political affairs. The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini connects the term *velâyat* to the perfect man in his 1929 mystical work *Mesbâh al-hedâyat* therefore implies that Ayatollah Khomeini may have had the position of the *vali-ye faqih* in mind for his teacher Hâ'eri, although the possibilities for free religious discussions had been narrowed under Pahlavi rule, and although most Islamic scholars rejected the idea of *velâyat-e faqih.*

Although Ayatollah Khomeini presented his ideas on *velâyat-e faqih* to the larger public in 1969, this panegyric demonstrates that he was entertaining ideas on the representative role of the Islamic jurist during the Mahdi's absence in his early years. This panegyric, together with his early mystical work *Mesbâh al-hedâyat* and his descriptions of the ideal *vali-ye faqih* in *Islamic Governance* indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini has imported mystical views on perfection and on *velâyat* into Twelver Shiite thought. Ayatollah

[571] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic state,* p. 117.

[572] Ibid.

[573] S. Akhavi, "Contending Discourses in Shi'i Law on the Doctrine of Wilāyat al-Faqīh," pp. 229-237.

Khomeini's later description of *velâyat-e faqih* in *Islam and Revolution* shows that his political ideas were influenced by *'erfân*.[574] Although this is not immediately clear, it becomes obvious in his description of the qualities of the ideal *vali-ye faqih*:

> government evolves … upon one who possesses the qualities of knowledge and justice".[575] "whoever wishes to assume such a weighty responsibility to administer the affairs of the Muslims and to act as the deputy of the Commander of the Faithful (upon whom be peace)...such a person must be totally disinterested in the world and devoid of worldly ambition". [576] "*fuqaha* … are just and austere and … fight in God's way to implement the laws of Islam." [577] "it is the *faqih* who refuses to submit to others or fall under the influence of foreigners, and who defends the rights of the nation and the freedom, independence, and territorial integrity of the Islamic homeland, even at the cost of his life. It is the *faqih* who does not deviate either to the left or to the right.[578]

Ayatollah Khomeini's description of the *vali-ye faqih* appears to be based on a combination of qualities from both a Shiite and a mystical context. In order to see this connection, it is necessary to explain the term *vali* in both settings. A. Schimmel defines a *vali* in the Shiite context as a 'saint,' a 'friend,' or "someone who is under special protection", from God.[579] The term also means 'guardian.' As I mentioned in my analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's *qaside* on Fâteme Ma'sume, before the introduction of the doctrine of *velâyat-e faqih* in Iran, most Ayatollahs believed that only the twelve imams may be called *vali*, since only they are authorized to represent God and guide or govern the Islamic community, however mystics also use the title *vali* to refer to a mystic who has attained to spiritual perfection. The qualities of the ideal *vali-ye faqih* that Ayatollah Khomeini describes in *Islamic Governance* are inherent not only to the Imam but also to the *ensân-e kâmel* of Islamic mystical thought. In Ayatollah Khomeini's eyes, the ideal *vali-ye faqih* is knowledgeable and just. He leads a simple and ascetic life and is wary of worldly status and position. The *vali-ye faqih* does not bend to the demands of anyone but God, and is willing to defend Islamic values with his life. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, he has full control of his *nafs* or lower desires, which tempt man into worldly interests and ambitions. Ayatollah

[574] See also J.G.J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag…," pp. 90-102.

[575] Ibid., p. 62.

[576] Ibid., p. 143.

[577] Ibid., p. 149.

[578] Ibid., p. 137.

[579] See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 199.

Khomeini maintains that such ideal qualities are also attainable by ordinary men and are not reserved for the Imams. [580] All the qualities that Ayatollah Khomeini describes here are also applicable to the mystic who has attained to perfection: a mystic does not care for worldly status, he leads a withdrawn life and focuses on disciplining the soul. The influence of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical background on his political ideology is therefore evident. From a mystical perspective, Ayatollah Khomeini considered perfection to be attainable for everyone, and not just for the Prophet, his daughter Fâteme Zahrâ and the twelve Imams. And Ayatollah Khomeini believed that the perfect man, in the absence of the twelfth Imam, was allowed to represent the Mahdi.

The two *qasides* about the Mahdi that I have analysed thus far imply that Ayatollah Khomeini saw a perfect man in his teacher Hâ'eri, and that initially he had a position like *vali-ye faqih* in mind for Hâ'eri, the position he was to hold himself, from 1979 to his death in 1989. This thought is further confirmed by his last panegyric, *qaside* IV, which dates from 1924 and is titled *On the Description of Spring and the Praise of Abâ Sâleh Emâm Zamân and his name who is Named Ayatollah Hâjj Sheikh Abd al-Karim Hâ'eri Yazdi Qoddisallah Serru-hu*.[581] For convenience, I will refer to it as the panegyric for Imam Zamân.[582] This last panegyric is important since it clearly shows a development as regards the leading role Ayatollah Khomeini ascribes to clerics, particularly his teacher Hâ'eri, in politics. In *qaside* II and III, Hâ'eri is named only towards the end of the poems, but in *qaside* IV Ayatollah Khomeini mentions Hâ'eri in the heading, and the contents differ greatly from the previous *qasides* to the Mahdi. While nature scenes dominate in *qaside* II and III, in this panegyric themes of war constitute most of the poem. Ayatollah Khomeini is much more assertive and direct than in the previous two *qasides*, while all three describe the celebrations surrounding

[580] In his book *Islamic Governance,* Ayatollah Khomeini emphasizes the fact that the authority of the Islamic jurists is slightly different from that of the Shiite Imams, since according to him the authority of the jurist is a function while the authority of the Imams is a status *(maqâm*). See J.G.J. ter Haar, "*Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag…,"* pp. 90-102.

[581] *Qaside* IV appears on pages 263-267 in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*. Its form differs completely from *qasides* I, II and III. The poem belongs to the genre known as *mosammat* poems, which has a different rhyme scheme, in this case bbbba/cccca/dddda. Moreover each couplet in consists of five hemistiches instead of two. Ayatollah Khomeini has written the panegyric in the metre *ramal-e mothamman-e sâlem*: - 0 - - / - 0 - - / - 0 - - / - 0 - -.

[582] According to the editors (the organization for collecting and spreading The works of Imam Ayatollah Khomeini), the poem was composed between 1930 and 1945. However Hâ'eri died in 1937, and internal evidence suggests a date around 1924.

the birthday of the Mahdi. In 1924, the birthday of Imam Mahdi on the fifteenth of Sha'ban, took place on the second day of Nowruz, i.e. 2 *Farvardin* 1303 and in the Gregorian calendar on March 22nd 1924.

Unlike *qaside* II and III, Ayatollah Khomeini starts the introduction of *qaside* IV with a war scene. Ayatollah Khomeini compares the Persian month *Farvardin* to an army's commander whose "army has conquered the world from the West to the East." [583] His empire, stretching from Antwerp to Ethiopia to Bulgaria, has become glorious like the state of "the Sassanids."[584] The comparison to the glory of pre-Islamic Persia is interesting, as Ayatollah Khomeini was against the reign of Reza Shah, who claimed descent from pre-Islamic kings. Another pre-Islamic element can be found in couplet three, in which Ayatollah Khomeini says: "It gave the commanders of the army a banner made of the radiant sun, giving the thunder the order 'be ready,' as King Jamshid would order." In these couplets Ayatollah Khomeini compares the army commander to Persian mythical kings, who also gave audience for the New Year. Every created being is in service of this army commander. Even thunder plays a role in this violence:

Blood flows on the dark earth due to the army's shootings;	از شلیک لشکری بر خاک تیره خون بریزد
Hearts are pierced, shedding blood on the deserts' soil.	قلبها سوراخ و اندر صفحه‌ی هامون بریزد
He will bring down two hundred million heroes on the dark earth,	هم به خاک تیره از گُردان دو صد میلیون بریزد
tearing Caesar's guts, tearing Napoleon's heart.	زَهْرَه‌ی قیصر شکافد، قلب ناپلئون بریزد
Yet these bombardments make the world an eternal Paradise.	لیک زین بُمباردمان، عالم بهشت جاودان شد. [585]

The word 'bombardments' would be out of place in classic Persian poetic diction, but it is found in other modern Persian poems. From the beginning of the twentieth century, Iran's parliament and other political and religious sites were bombarded by Russians. Ayatollah Khomeini hopes that the bombardments will "make the world an eternal Paradise." Ayatollah Khomeini describes how the world is again "rejuvenated" and how "sun and moon are in joy, the Pleiades are dancing, making pleasures." [586] It is as if Ayatollah Khomeini is saying that unjust rule and the killing of innocent people would generate new resistance to the enemy,

[583] *Qaside* IV, couplet 1.

[584] Ibid., couplet 2.

[585] Ibid., couplet 5.

[586] Ibid., couplet 6.

and when the Mahdi, the just ruler comes, he will exact revenge and rule with justice over the whole world. Then Ayatollah Khomeini introduces erotic elements by describing how all the trees and flowers become fructuous and eventually give life:

The virgins of the orchard are all like newlywed girls,	سر به سر دوشیزگان بوستان چون نوعروسان
Seizing a moment of the gardener's absence,	داشته فرصت غنیمت در غیاب بوستان‌بان
Sharing a private moment with the fresh rains in the rose-garden	کرده خلوت با جوانهای سحابی در گُلستان
Going together into one shirt like a lover and the Beloved.	رفته در یک پیرهن با یکدگر چون جان و جانان
I do not know exactly what happened there.	من گزارش را نمی‌دانم دگر آنجا چسان شد[587]

This erotic imagery fits perfectly in the classical Persian poetic tradition. The passage functions as a metaphor for the burgeoning of the world. Ayatollah Khomeini calls the period after the bombardments, the beginning of "the time of joy" and the end of mourning.[588] Every created being is "having a joyful feast, because this New Year coincides with the birthday of the Mahdi."[589] The state of war that Ayatollah Khomeini describes at the beginning of the poem should be read as the battle at the end of times. According to Twelver Shiites, once the Mahdi has come out of occultation, he and his army will put an end to all injustice in the world. Ayatollah Khomeini describes the role that the Shiites will play after the coming of the Mahdi, and how they will sacrifice themselves for Islam. The Mahdi will save the Shiite faith from its enemies. As explained earlier, the most important task of the Mahdi is to put an end to the injustice in the world and to take revenge for the maltreatment of Twelver Shiites that began with the killing of Imam Hoseyn at Karbalâ in 680. Although many Shiites will be killed during these 'last battles,' Ayatollah Khomeini calls the world during this time "an eternal Paradise".[590] Just as the flowers will flourish, the Twelver Shiites will enjoy victory. 'Victory' however includes the belief that dying at the side of the Mahdi makes one a martyr and ensures eternal salvation. The end of the world also entails the fulfilment of the Twelver Shiite religion, which has attained to its perfection just as the cycle of nature has reached completion.

A change of focus can be seen from couplet eighteen, in which Ayatollah Khomeini introduces Hâ'eri, whom he characterises as "The mirror of the lights of God, the place where

[587] Ibid., couplet 7.

[588] Ibid., couplet 8.

[589] Ibid., couplet 14.

[590] Ibid., couplet 5.

the Prophet's qualities are manifest," and then compares his manners to those of Imam Mahdi. Ayatollah Khomeini describes how all Muslims accept his decrees and orders. Ayatollah Khomeini then turns to the socio-political situation in Iran, saying:

O king [i.e., the Mahdi]! Islam and Muslims are dispirited	پادشاها! کار اسلام است و اسلامی پریشان
In a feast in which everyone is supposed to cheerfully recite love poems.	در چنین عیدی که باید هر کسی باشد غزلخوان
If I look, I see people in all directions, who have lost their hearts, holding their heads in their collars.	بنگرم از هر طرف، هر بیدلی سر در گریبان
O king! Rise from your place and help the people of the faith.	خسروا! از جای برخیز و مدد کن اهل ایمان
Especially this miracle that has become the support and refuge for the Muslims.	خاصه این آیت که پشت و ملجأ اسلامیان شد
Surely, if this 'miracle of God' (Ayatollah) were not in this world,	راستی! این آیت آلله گر در این سامان نبودی
the boat of Islam would not have a loving Captain.	کشتی اسلام را، از مِهر پُشتیبان نبودی
If the enemies did not have the sword of splendour in their soul,	دشمنان را گر که تیغ حِشمتش بر جان نبودی
no name of the Muslims, no tradition of the faith would remain.	اسمی از اسلامیان و رسمی از ایمان نبودی
Happily that from Yazd, the sun rose and became the soul of this sun.	حَبّذا از یزد، کزوی، طالعْ این خورشید جان شد
It is right if heaven wants to place her face on his resting-place.	جای دارد گر نهد رو آسمان بر آستانش
The army of victory and triumph always sacrifices herself for him.	لشکر فتح و ظفر، گردد هماره جانفشانش
The greatest light (Sun) and his planets come to serve him.	نیّرِ اعظم به خدمت آید و هم اخترانش
The nine heavens will become servants at his royal court and slaves of his command,	عبد درگه، بنده‌ی فرمان شود نُه آسمانش
for he has become the only captain of the ship of Islam.	چون که بر کشتیّ اسلامی یگانه پُشتبان شد
The domain of Islam was weak because of the tyranny of the oppressors.	حوزه‌ی اسلام کز ظلم ستمکاران زبون بود
The body of Islam was without spirit and her holy spirit had left her body.	پیکرش بی‌روح و روح اقدسش از تن بُرون بود
Her soul was depressed because of the injustice of the ill-minded tyrant.	روحش افسرده زِ ظلمِاندیشان دون بود
And the hearts of the Prophet and ʿAli were in grief because of this oppression.	قلب پیغمبر، دلِ حیدر ز مظلومیش خون بود
Then out of favour for him the soul once again went to his friend.	از عطایش باز سوی پیکرش روح روان شد.[591]

[591] *Qaside* IV, couplets 21-24.

As in *qaside* II and III, oppression and tyranny play an important role in this *qaside*. As the first of these couplets indicates, Ayatollah Khomeini blames the Islamic community for 'holding their heads in their collars,' meaning they are passively watching how Islam is threatened. Instead of adopting this passive stance in the Mahdi's absence, Ayatollah Khomeini suggests that his teacher Hâ'eri is the one who should lead the community, since he is the "mighty possessor of his [the Mahdi's] splendour" and "the continuer of the holy grace".[592] In this couplet Ayatollah Khomeini implies that the Mahdi transmits divine knowledge in the form of the Mohammadan Light to Hâ'eri, just as the twelfth Imam had inherited it, through the previous Imams, from the Prophet Mohammad. By projecting the concept of the Mohammadan Light onto an 'ordinary' person, in this case Hâ'eri, Ayatollah Khomeini again breaks with orthodox Shiite doctrine. Like in the panegyric on Fâteme Maʿsume, Ayatollah Khomeini is drawing on a Shiite mystical interpretation of the Mohammadan Light, in which the *ensân-e kâmel* is in constant contact with the Hidden Imam. As couplet 18 indicates, where Ayatollah Khomeini refers to the spiritual power of Hâ'eri in terms of his "limitless favours of mercy", he considers this power to have been inherited personally from Imam Mahdi, who on his turn inherited it from Prophet Mohammad. Ayatollah Khomeini sees Hâ'eri as "the only captain of the ship of Islam" who has made an enormous contribution to the Islamic world.[593] Not only has he brought justice to the Muslims worldwide. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, Hâ'eri also provides people with spiritual and divine knowledge just as his ancestors the Imams had done. Hâ'eri was a *sayyed*, a male descendant of the Prophet Mohammad. *Sayyed*s are often asked for their blessing during marriage or at the birth of a child because they are said to possess supernatural powers.[594] Although they are not necessarily religiously educated, they share in the profit of the religious tax (*khom*s) because of their link to the family of the Prophet. The way in which Ayatollah Khomeini speaks of Hâ'eri in this panegyric implies that in Ayatollah Khomeini's eyes, Hâ'eri had inherited spiritual knowledge from the Mahdi. There are many stories of clerics and mystics receiving messages from the Mahdi in their dreams.[595] In 2004, the President of the Assembly of Experts, Ayatollah ʿAli Meshkini (d. 2007) declared that in a

[592] *Qaside* IV, couplet 18.

[593] Ibid., couplet 23.

[594] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shia Islam,* pp. 199, 207, 235; See also A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam,* pp. 82, 199.

[595] See *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 20th 2004.

dream the Mahdi had approved his list of parliamentary candidates.[596] This panegyric supports the assumption that Ayatollah Khomeini believed that his teacher Hâ'eri was also in contact with the Mahdi.

Conclusion

What can be concluded from these four *qaside*s is that Ayatollah Khomeini was strongly engaged in combining mysticism with Shiite doctrines and with social and political events of the 1920s. His *qaside*s also demonstrate that he was very concerned with Iran's socio-political well-being and well aware of the threat that European powers and institutions and those who supported them could pose for Iran and its Islamic institutions. Already at this early period, it turns out, Ayatollah Khomeini was looking for ways to protect Islam from secular and modernist ideas, coming from the West. Ayatollah Khomeini found his solution in the return of the Mahdi, but since the time of his return was unclear, Ayatollah Khomeini imported the mystical concept of the 'perfect man' into orthodox Shi'a Islam, promoting the idea that any 'perfect man' could represent the Mahdi during his absence, by taking on in his role as the religious and political leader of the community. His *qaside*s show that Ayatollah Khomeini applied the idea of perfection, which according to orthodox Shiite tradition is only applicable to the fourteen immaculate persons, to the female city-patron of Qom. His last three *qaside*s show that he applies this same state of perfection to his own teacher, Abd al-Karim Hâ'eri. Most importantly the *qaside*s show how Ayatollah Khomeini, interpreted Hâ'eri's personality in a mystical sense, according him the rank of a perfect man. In this capacity, he could represent the Mahdi during his absence and lead the Islamic community on both a spiritual and political level. Ayatollah Khomeini's *qaside*s demonstrate that his revolutionary ideas on the governance of the jurist (*velâyat-e faqih*) which he presented to the public from 1969, were already present in his early years as a student in Qom. His *qaside*s contain strong evidence that Ayatollah Khomeini initially did not have the role of *vali-ye faqih* in mind for himself but for his teacher Abd al-Karim Hâ'eri. The active stance against oppression, which Ayatollah Khomeini promoted during the Islamic revolution and for which he became famous, can already be noticed in these poems of the 1920s. While Ayatollah Khomeini in his second *qaside* is rather prudent about naming his teacher as the representative of the Mahdi, one sees a development of his thoughts in his poems. In his last panegyric he openly connects

[596] See M. Ourghi, "Ein Licht umgab mich …" – Die eschatologischen Visionen des iranischen Präsidenten Maḥmūd Aḥmadīnežād," in *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 49, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 177.

Hâ'eri to Islamic governance, even calling him the "pseudonym" of the Mahdi. In 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini's unorthodox ideas on the perfect man, in these *qaside*s of the 1920s and in his later works and speeches, ended the long-running discussion on whether Islamic jurists could represent the Imams, for Ayatollah Khomeini accepted the position of *vali-ye faqih*. These *qaside*s show that Ayatollah Khomeini mixed mystical theories with Twelver Shiite ones and by so doing has politicized Islam. By importing mystical concepts into the Twelver Shiite religion, Ayatollah Khomeini changed the course of Iran and of the Shiite faith dramatically. In his eyes, this was all done to save the Shiite community from its oppressors and from all forms of injustice. According to others, it was to draw the power towards himself.

6

Reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry in Iran and Abroad

When Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, replete with unorthodox topics such as wine and homo-erotic love, were published after his death in 1989, Iranians living inside and outside Iran responded in very diverse ways. Some, including many of his followers, took them as symbolic expressions to be read in the framework of a literary genre and a mystical context. Others denied the authenticity of the poems. Many conservative clerics criticized them for their unorthodox content, while some critics of the conservative clerics also took the poems at face value, and used the references on wine and erotic love as evidence of the hypocrisy of the clerical class.

Most Iranians in the Diaspora did not respond positively to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry or his claim to be a poet. M. Legenhausen, an American scholar who works for the Islamic government in Iran and who has translated a number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, says of Ayatollah Khomeini's first published poem:

> the mystical nature of the poem caught many, even among Imâm's most ardent devotees, by surprise. In one couplet, Imâm wrote, 'Open the door of the tavern and let us go there day and night, For I am sick and tired of the mosque and seminary.' The surprise is generated by the contradiction between the literal and symbolic uses of the images. Imâm Khomeini was a great supporter of the religious institutions of the mosque and seminary, but in the poetic genre of which his poem is an instance, the mosque and the seminary are symbols of insincerity and pretentiousness.[597]

Although M. Legenhausen was aware that Ayatollah Khomeini was using mystical motifs, he says that "there is something shocking in the fact that such a person should talk about wine at all."[598] Such reactions demonstrate that it is not the motifs found in mystical poetry that shocked Iranian readers, since they were familiar with mystical poetry, but rather the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini wrote these words, in his role as an Ayatollah and the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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[597] R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*, eds. M.R. 'Azimi and M.L. Limba and trs. G-R. Aʿwāni and M. Legenhausen, Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2003, p. xi.

[598] Ibid., p. 78.

To understand these different interpretations of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, we must approach the poems not only from a textual and historical perspective, but also from the reader's responses. The poems have a literary and mystical context, and the readers too have their contexts, their relations to the poet. In their literary reception theory and reader-response theory, H.R. Jauss and W. Iser emphasize that the meaning behind a literary work is not inherent in the text itself but comes to life once it is read, in response to the reader's personal experiences and the context in which the text is used. Meaning results from the interaction between the text and the reader, and depends on the reader's 'horizon of expectations.'[599] Every reader has a certain amount of prior knowledge of literary works, so that particular genres or themes are accompanied by particular expectations. A reader who has read Persian *robâ'i*s, such as those of 'Omar Khayyâm (d. 1131), has a picture of what topics are treated in this genre and what purposes it serves. When the same reader reads the *robâ'i*s of Ayatollah Khomeini, he or she already has a certain set of expectations. Each reader also has certain ideas about Ayatollah Khomeini as a politician and as a religious leader. This 'horizon of expectations' influences a reader's evaluation and interpretation of a text. However, horizons can change over time and place, so interpretations are not timeless. Khayyâm's poetry is a good example of how perception of the real nature of a text are influenced by time and place. Khayyâm's *robâ'i*s are replete with hedonistic topics such as love and wine and with pessimistic themes of death and suffering, but they have been interpreted in many diverse ways.[600] During his lifetime Khayyâm was highly appreciated in the Persian-speaking world for his scientific achievements as a mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, but the few people who were aware of his poems disapproved of them as 'blasphemous,' since they did not fit into the orthodox Islamic climate in Iran at that time. Khayyâm's world fame as a poet only came when the English poet Edward Fitzgerald (d. 1893) rendered his *robâ'i*s into English, turning Khayyâm into a hedonist figure who enjoyed the pleasures of the world. Although this epicurean image of Khayyâm has been dominant ever since, a great group of scholars, such as the Dutch poet P.C. Boutens (d. 1943) and the French poet. J.B. Nicolas (d. 1875), saw purely mystical messages in Khayyâm's poems, in which unorthodox themes such as wine and love have a deeper spiritual meaning.[601] This mystical reading of Khayyâm's

[599] H.R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973.

[600] For the reception of Khayyâm's poetry see *The Great 'Umar Khayyām; A Global Reception of the Rubāiyāt*, ed. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012.

[601] For Boutens' interpretation see M. Goud, "Umar Khayyām's Impact on Dutch Literature," in *The Great 'Umar Khayyām; A Global Reception of the Rubāiyāt*, pp. 115-127; See also M. Goud, "Honger naar

poems is also dominant in contemporary Iran. As R. de Groot states, during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami, "Khayyām's *rubā'īyāt* were re-read in a way completely different from FitzGerald's Epicureanism. Some defenders praised Khayyâm's freedom from prejudices and his rejection of hypocrisy. However, his poems were now mainly conceived in an Islamic mystical way, and great pains were taken to soften the sharp edges of the *rubâ'iyât* through the mediation of Quranic interpretation."[602] The mystical interpretation of Khayyâm's poems enabled the Islamic Republic to adopt Khayyâm as a national hero, without undermining Islamic values in which earthly pleasures such as wine drinking and love-making outside of marriage are forbidden by law, and sinful.

The reception of Khayyâm's *robâ'i*s demonstrates that every person sees in a text what he wants to see. Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, likewise, are interpreted by some as unorthodox declarations and by others as mystical poems with a strong symbolic loading. The diversity of responses to both poets' work supports the idea that readers actively give their own meanings to the poems. I will treat Ayatollah Khomeini as the author, his poetry as an autonomous object, and the readers' responses to his poetry, as three separate objects of study. In line with the reception theory, I will pose questions such as: How does interpretation depend on place and time? Why and how do Iranians living in the West approach Ayatollah Khomeini's poems differently? Based on those findings, I will define the "horizons of expectations" of various readers and propose a broader interpretation of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry within a social, political and literary context.[603]

I have used a two-part typology of readers in studying the various responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. This typology is derived from the books, articles and poems written in response to Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, particularly *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, his first published poem. The first group are the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. I will focus especially on a glossary of his collected works that promotes a mystical reading, and on *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*, published in English in Iran in 2003. This contains several of Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s and *robâ'i*s accompanied by 'mystical' explanations by M. Legenhausen (b. 1953).

Kwatrijnen: P.C. Boutens en de Perzische Literatuur," in *De Perzische Muze in de Polder: De Receptie van Perzische poëzie in de Nederlandse Literatuur,* eds. M. Goud and A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, 2006, pp. 93-114.

[602] R. de Groot, "The Legacy of 'Umar Khayyām in Music of the Netherlands," in *The Great Omar Khayyām; A Global Reception of the Rubāiyāt,* p. 156.

[603] H.R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*.

The second group of readers are the opponents of Ayatollah Khomeini, in this case Diaspora Iranians. I will examine two parodies of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems: one by the famous Iranian author and satirist Hadi Khorsandi (b. 1943), who has written poems both supporting and attacking Ayatollah Khomeini, and the other by an anonymous Iranian poet in the Diaspora. I will examine the responses of these two groups to see what factors have influenced their differing reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry.

6.1 Responses of Followers to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Although it was hard for many Iranians to believe that Ayatollah Khomeini had composed poems on love and wine, the responses were not all negative. Some followers recognized the authenticity of his poems and highly praised Ayatollah Khomeini for his poetic talents, trying to place him alongside classical mystical poets in the Islamic spiritual tradition. Some composed books, without overtly praising him but analysing several of his mystical poems and the role of mysticism in Ayatollah Khomeini's life. One of these is *Bâde-ye 'Eshq* (The Wine of Love) which contained poems composed by Ayatollah Khomeini that were translated into English and published, in 2003, with an introduction on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical inclinations by M. Legenhausen.[604] In 1993, V. Adabiyyat compiled an entire glossary which promotes a mystical reading, the Glossary of the Collected Poetry of Imam Khomeini (*Farhang-e divân-e ash'âr-e emâm Khomeini*) for the Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works.[605] Adabiyyat provides detailed interpretations of the terms Ayatollah Khomeini used in his works. I will first give a general outline of both books, followed by an analysis of the definitions they give for some of the terms used by Ayatollah Khomeini. To facilitate later comparisons with the responses of Diaspora poets, I will focus on terms used in the poem *Cheshm-e Bimâr*.

6.1.1 Response 1: *Glossary of the Collected Poetry of Imam Khomeini*

The *Glossary*, which comprises 505 pages, is a modern version of mystical hermeneutics. The codification of mystical terms in Persian literature began in the thirteenth century, when mystical terminology had developed so many connotations that it was necessary to interpret the terms for novices. One such codification is Mahmud Shabestari's (d. 1320) *Golshân-e Râz* (The Rose-garden of Mysteries); another is Jamâli's (d. 1542) *Mir'ât al-Ma'âni* (Mirror of

[604] R. Khomeini, *The Wine of Love.*

[605] *Farhang-divân-e ash'â-e emâm Khomeini*, ed. V. Adabiyyat, Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1993.

Meanings).[606] Adabiyyat's glossary can be placed in the same tradition. It consists of four sections. The first, 'Poetic Genres' (*Anwâ'-e ash'âr*), gives a general description of the poetical genres found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*, accompanied by extracts. The genres are the quatrain (*robâ'i*), fragment or occasional poetry (*qet'e*), panegyric (*qaside*), epic (*mathnavi*), lyrical poem (*ghazal*), stanzaic poem (*tarji'band*) and a specific type of panegyric (*mosammat*). The second section deals with the 'Arts of Poetry and Eloquence' (*Honarhâ-ye she'ri va balâghi*), explaining several features of Ayatollah Khomeini's use of rhetorical figures such as amphibology (*ihâm*), metaphor (*este'âre*), hyperbole (*mobâleghe*) and allegory (*majâz*). In section three, 'Terms and Metaphors' (*estelâhât-o este'ârât*), which forms the central part of the book, the author interprets all the terms that Ayatollah Khomeini has adopted in his poems in alphabetic order. Examples include cloud (*abr*), eyebrow (*abru*), wine (*bâde*) and annihilation (*fanâ*). The last part of the book is a 'Glossary of Persons,' (*farhang-e e'lâm*), which introduces the historic and mythical persons that Ayatollah Khomeini mentions in his collected works. These include religious figures from the Shiite tradition, pre-Islamic Persian heroes such as Rostam, and famous characters from classical Persian literature such as Farhâd and Shirin.

In the introduction to the book, Adabiyyat calls Ayatollah Khomeini an Islamic jurisprudent, a *mojtahed*, and the leader of the Islamic revolution, and also describes him as a philosopher and mystic. The author explains the important role poetry played in Ayatollah Khomeini's life from an early age. The author believes that poetry was a means for Ayatollah Khomeini to deal with his mystical experiences and his personal feelings, which he could not express openly in daily life. Poetry's indirect message gave him the opportunity to express his ideas on the love of God and union with the Beloved. More importantly, he wanted to be part of the rich mystical tradition of Persia. Adabiyyat mentions two collections, *Âsâr al-Hojje* (The Secrets of Sound Reasoning, 19XX) and *Âyene-ye Dâneshvarân* (Mirror for the Wise, 1330/1951), which mention Ayatollah Khomeini's poetical activities, indicating that his poetic activities were known to some of his followers prior to the publication of his collected

[606] See A.H. Zarrinkoob, "Islam Entry," in The Great Islamic Encyclopedia, Vol. 8, ed. K. Musavi Bojnourdi, Tehran: The Center of Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, 1989, pp. 483- 484. For the work of Shabestari see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in the Encyclopeadia of Islam, under

Maḥmūd B. 'Abd al-Karīm b. Yaḥyā Shabistarī. For an English translation of Jamâli's work see Jamali-ye Dihlawi, *The Mirror of Meaning*, trans. A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, Persian edition by N. Pourjavady, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2002.

poems shortly after his death.[607] The author refers to the enormous influence of Hâfez (d. 1389) and Jalâl al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), stating that Ayatollah Khomeini imitates these poets several times in his poetry and prose. In his poems Ayatollah Khomeini uses the same idiom as Hâfez and Rumi, and also imitates great classical poets such as Farid al-Din ʿAttâr (d. 1221) and Fakhr al-Din ʿErâqi (d. 1289). In Adabiyyat's view, Ayatollah Khomeini's symbolic language fits within the mystical tradition, but is often misunderstood because people take his words at face value.

Adabiyyat's mainly metaphorical interpretation of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems can again be seen in his explanation of the terms and symbols in the ghazal *Cheshm-e Bimâr,* which centres on a passionate mystical lover who, to alleviate the pain of his separation, has taken refuge in a wine-house, forsaking all worldly contacts while praising the *pir-e moghân* (Zoroastrian Elder).[608] Wine is a central theme in this ghazal, as in many of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems. It refers to the *meykhâne* (wine-house), the *meykade* (wine-house), and the *rend mey-âlude* (the drunken rogue). The Elder of the Zoroastrians is also associated with wine, as a functional equivalent in poetry of the *pir-e kharâbât* (Old man of the tavern) and because Zoroastrians were (and are) one of those groups in Iran who may drink wine. Adabiyyat says that Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*s on love and wine resemble those of Hâfez, fitting perfectly into the antinomian Persian poetic tradition. In a mystical context, wine symbolizes the divine knowledge that brings the mystical closer to God. It is provided by the *pir* (literally, old man or Elder, but in this context the sheikh who guides the novice on the mystical path). The *pir* appears as the *pir-e moghân* (Zoroastrian Elder, or priest) or more often as the *pir-e kharâbât* (Old man of the tavern). As Adabiyyat indicates, the *pir-e kharâbât* guides mystics who have not yet reached perfection. Adabiyyat defines this figure as a perfect human being who guides the mystical lover towards annihilation in God (*fanâ*). According to Adabiyyat, Hâfez introduced the term *pir-e kharâbât* in poetry. In his view, the Zoroastrian Elder in this poem represents the first Shiite Imam, ʿAli ibn Abi Tâleb.

Adabiyyat responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's positive presentations of wine and drunkenness ("I asked for help from the breath of the rogue who is overcome with wine") by placing his poem in an Islamic mystical context, where the figure of the rogue (*rend*) who is overcome by wine (*mey-âlude*) plays a central role, representing a person who understands "love with heart and soul". Adabiyyat also explains drunkenness as the "bewilderment

[607] The author does not give any bibliographical data of these two collections. (source: V. Adabiyyat, *Farhang-divân-e ashʿâr-e emâm Khomeini*, p. xxi).

[608] See my analysis of this poem in chapter 4.5 of this study.

(*hayrat*) the mystical experiences when he sees the beauty of the Beloved". Adabiyyat's glossary can be seen as a continuation of mystical hermeneutics, following the example of famous mystical masters such as M. Shabestari (d. 1320) and H. Jamâli (d. 1542), who had composed similar works before him.

6.1.2 Response 2: "*The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini"*

Another positive response to Ayatollah Khomeini's poems is the book *The Wine of Love: Mystical Poetry of Imām Khomeini*, which was translated from Persian into English in 2003 and published by the International Affairs Department in Tehran to promote Ayatollah Khomeini's ideologies. The Persian text was compiled in 1990 and consists of a small number of poems attributed to Ayatollah Khomeini and several letters he sent to his daughter-in-law Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i in the 1980s. M. Legenhausen (b. 1953), one of the American translators, added an elaborate introduction on Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical affiliations and an appendix explaining the symbolism of religious poetry. Legenhausen obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy from the American Rice University and has worked in Iran since 1990, where he has taught Western Philosophy of Religion at various universities and institutes, such as the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Iran. He is fully convinced of Ayatollah Khomeini's 'holy' position, and translated Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry as a means of exploring a personal side of Ayatollah Khomeini, giving access to his hidden world. Translating these poems also helped him to "understand Iran, the Islamic Revolution, contemporary Islamic mysticism, or Imām Khomeini." [609] As the title of the book indicates, Ayatollah Khomeini's poems are treated as mystical lyrics.

In the Preface, Legenhausen elaborates on the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, depicting him as a true mystic who "was assimilated in Allah."[610] Legenhausen was convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini "presented to humanity, by his pen and tongue, all he had received from the divine source of grace."[611] He depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as a mystic who had reached the stage of *fanâ* or 'annihilation in God' and who had access to the divine secrets through his mystical experiences.[612] In his view, Ayatollah Khomeini promoted both Islamic and mystical values. For example, Legenhausen sees the Islamic Revolution as a way "to reveal Islamic mysticism to the public," to merge mystical ideas in an Islamic society and

[609] *The Wine of Love*, p. xiii.

[610] Ibid., p. i.

[611] Ibid., p. ii.

[612] Ibid., p. iii.

in political life.[613] Legenhausen also refers to the letter Ayatollah Khomeini wrote to Gorbachev, indicating the essential role mysticism played in Ayatollah Khomeini's life, both on a personal and on a political level. He describes Ayatollah Khomeini as a selfless person, who did everything in the name of God and never for his own benefit. In his view, some people did not appreciate Ayatollah Khomeini fully, because they did not understand him and could not grasp the meaning behind his symbolic language. This, according to Legenhausen, is why Ayatollah Khomeini often tried to speak in a language as simple as possible. In response to Ayatollah Khomeini's rejection of Islamic institutions such as the mosque and Sufi brotherhood in poems such as *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, Legenhausen says that Ayatollah Khomeini's spiritual station transcended that of ordinary persons. He says these lines on unorthodox behavior should not be taken literally, they indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini had actually encountered God and had, therefore, direct knowledge of and insight into the divine secret. Legenhausen indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike most of his contemporaries, wrote his poems in classical styles, such as that of Hâfez and therefore fits in the antinomian poetic tradition of Iran. As Legenhausen indicates, modernists and the orthodox often do not have a problem with Ayatollah Khomeini's poems in themselves, since there are many poems with similar mystical language in the rich Persian literary tradition. People rather have a problem with the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini, as a religious leader, composed these poems. As Legenhausen states:

Perhaps these poems, by a man so hated by his enemies and so loved by his supporters, in Iran and abroad, can serve as an introduction to the tradition in which he participates. The role Imām plays in this tradition is ambiguous. He has been criticized by conservatives for his departures from tradition, while Western detractors have deplored the rigidity of his 'fundamentalism'.[614]

One of the 'departures from tradition' that the Iranian clergy condemned was dabbling mystical poetry, and using wine and love themes in poetry, which did not accord with the expected behavior of an Ayatollah. Promoting a mystical reading of Islam, whether within a poetic tradition or in actual life, was a thorn in the eye of the traditionalists, and had for ages been condemned by the orthodox clergy. Other readers – but not the traditionalists – found it incongruous for Ayatollah Khomeini to preach love and peace in his poems, when he had

[613] Ibid., p. xvii.

[614] Ibid., p. xxiv.

motivated thousands of Iranians to give their lives during the Iran-Iraq war. Legenhausen responds to this charge by stating that Ayatollah Khomeini did not encourage Iranians to go to war for his own sake but rather out of love and to save Islam from downfall.

The Wine of Love starts with a contribution by Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, Ayatollah Khomeini's daughter-in-law.[615] Like the introduction, this gives a biased insight into the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini. At the request of the Publishing House, Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i explains how Ayatollah Khomeini composed his mystical poems. She begins her essay with a 'letter' addressed to Ayatollah Khomeini, who died some three months earlier, expressing her sadness. Fâteme explains the way some of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems addressed to her have come to life. She ends her essay with a personal letter Ayatollah Khomeini sent to her around the end of November 1986. In this letter, Ayatollah Khomeini explains that it was only in his older days that he was able to understand the inner secrets of Islam. As he says:

> In my youth, when I had vigor and ability, die [sic. due] to the machinations of Satan and his minion, the commanding self, I became preoccupied with various notions and grandiose expressions by which I acquired neither concentration nor a spiritual state, because I never took in the spirit of these things. I didn't go from the exoteric to the esoteric, from the earthly domain to the angelic domain. I finally realized that I did not gain anything from all the clamor of the casuistry of the seminary but some heart-rending words. I was sunk so deeply among such expressions and such regards that instead of seeking to lift the veils, I collected books as if nothing else mattered in the entire world but a handful of papers. …. When I reached old age, with every step, I was gradually drawn from that misfortune, until I reached senility, and what is beyond senility, with which I am now wrestling.[616]

In her personal note, Fâteme defines Ayatollah Khomeini's death as a "spiritual journey" indicating the mystical reading she gives of life and death.[617] On several occasions Fâteme addresses Ayatollah Khomeini as her '*pir*' or spiritual guide.

The book continues with 31 *ghazal*s and 41 *robâ'i*s by Ayatollah Khomeini, occasionally accompanied by interpretations and remarks. The publisher of the Wine of Love

[615] For Fâteme's and Ayatollah Khomeini's letters see *The Wine of Love*, pp. 5-15.

[616] Ibid., p. 11.

[617] Ibid., p. 6.

has also included the poem *Cheshm-e Bimâr,* the first poem by Ayatollah Khomeini to be widely published after his death, which aroused widespread criticism for its unorthodox content. The only elements in this ghazal that are explained by a footnote are the figures of Mansur Hallâj and the tavern's *pir*.[618] In the introduction, Legenhausen refers to the role Mansur Hallâj played in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. He indirectly compares the blasphemous behavior of this medieval famous mystic to that of Ayatollah Khomeini. As he states "Ḥallāj was charged with blasphemy and with claiming to have the authority to free the pious from the requirements of Islamic law." Shortly after that, Legenhausen says: "According to Imām Khomeinī's doctrine of Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist …..the Guardian-Jurist has absolute authority, even to the point of abrogation of the laws of Islam if he deems that such measures are required for the defense of the Muslim polity."[619] The implication is that Ayatollah Khomeini had reached spiritual perfection like Hallâj and therefore, from a mystical perspective, he was allowed to deviate from Islamic Laws and even to change them if thought it necessary. The image of Hallâj that Legenhausen reflects in these sentences was supported by classical Persian poets and became extremely popular in Iran-Iraq war poetry, where Hallâj is presented as the model martyr of love and praised rather than condemned for his blasphemous behavior.[620] Ayatollah Khomeini composed seven *robâ'i*s referring to this famous mystic.[621] In most of these, Ayatollah Khomeini speaks critically of Hallâj, condemning him for revealing secrets by openly claiming perfection, but on two occasions Ayatollah Khomeini praises him for his unconditional love and willingness to die for God.[622] Legenhausen has adopted the contemporary positive image of Hallâj, comparing his deviance from Islamic law to that of Ayatollah Khomeini, in his role as the Governing Jurist. Not all orthodox clerics agreed with the right of the Governing Jurist (*Vali-ye faqih*),

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[618] Ibid., p. 53.

[619] Footnote 40 in *The Wine of Love*, pp. 30, 31.

[620] A famous poet who used the image of Hallâj in a positive sense is Sayyed Hasan Hoseyni. For his work see *Ham-sedā bā Halqi-yi Ismā'īl*, Tehran: Sūrīh-yi Mīhr, 4th edition, 1387/2008. For further consultation on both the classical and modern images of Hallâj see J.T.P. de Bruijn, "De Politieke Betekenis van Perzische Poezie," in *De Pen en het Zwaard*: *Literatuur en Politiek in het Midden-Oosten*, eds. G.J van Gelder & E. de Moor, Muiderberg: Coutinho, 1988, p. 89; See also A.A. Seyed-Gohrab's comment on Hallâj as a role-model in Persian war poetry in "Martyrdom as Piety: Mysticism and National Identity in Iran-Iraq War Poetry," in *Der Islam*, Vol. 31, 2011, pp. 254-262.

[621] See the poems in Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* on pp. 217b, 226b, 231b, 232b, 246a, 246b and 248b.

[622] These two occasions are in the *robâ'i* "Sâye" on page 232b and in *ghazal* "Cheshm-e bimâr" on page 142 of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân*.

which Ayatollah Khomeini introduced. For them, both Hallâj and Ayatollah Khomeini were guilty of blasphemy.

In the last part of *The Wine of Love*, which is called 'On the Symbolism of Religious Poetry' and which Legenhausen has added to the original Persian version, Legenhausen elaborates on the purely symbolic language that Ayatollah Khomeini uses in his poetry. It seems very paradoxical that Ayatollah Khomeini, an exoteric leader if not a populist in public, should use such esoteric language in private. However, as Legenhausen argues "…the method of poetry involves taking liberties with language, and using images, sounds and rhythms, and other techniques, such as allusion to the writings of earlier poets."[623] Ayatollah Khomeini did this and, in imitation of poets like Hâfez, made use of mystical symbols from classical poetry to express "his intense love for Allah."[624]

6.1.3 Discussion of the Responses

It is not surprising to see that the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, including the authors of *The Wine of Love* and *The Glossary on the Divân of Imâm Khomeini*, who supported him unconditionally, acknowledged the authenticity of his poems after his own son Ahmad Ayatollah Khomeini presented one of them to the public. Both authors confirm that Ayatollah Khomeini's poems should be placed in a mystical context. By writing dictionaries, such as the one compiled by V. Adabiyyat, Ayatollah Khomeini's followers integrate Ayatollah Khomeini into the vivid mystical poetic tradition which has typified Persian culture since the twelfth century. By showing the resemblance between Hâfez's poetry and Ayatollah Khomeini's lyrics, the authors of both works aim to indicate that Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry is not much different from any other 'classical-styled' Persian poem. Both books pay ample attention to Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical background, indicating how well educated he was in the mystical tradition. The question whether or not these 'mystical' poems have really been composed by Ayatollah Khomeini has not been my main focus in this research. One of the main questions has been why his followers attributed these poems to Ayatollah Khomeini, placing him in a mystical context. Why did Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad publish one of his father's mystical poems in the daily newspaper *Keyhân*, displaying the mystical side of his father? Why did Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i contribute to a publication on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, by introducing it with an essay on how Ayatollah Khomeini's

[623] *The Wine of Love*, p. 79.

[624] Ibid., p. 80.

mystical poems came into being? Before answering these questions I will focus on two responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry amongst Iranians in Diaspora.

6.2 Responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry in the Diaspora

Among the varied responses to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry and the mystical aspirations they displayed, a number of authors chose to criticise him in a satirical way, wrapping their message in forms that people of all walks of life could understand and appreciate. Humour has played a prominent role in the history of Persian poetry and has been used by poets for various purposes. In a courtly setting, Persian poets entertained the circle of intimates around their patron at drinking gatherings with funny sketches and humorous poems.[625] As J.T.P. de Bruijn has indicated, this type of humorous poetry, which is known as *hazl* ('light verse'), was purely entertaining and mild in nature. However Persian poets occasionally composed critical satires intended to harm a person's reputation. This type of literature, known in Persian as *hajw* ('satire'), will be the focus of this chapter. Before examining the satires of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, I will outline the nature of literary satire and how it has been used in the Persian literary tradition.

Satire is a literary genre used as a verbal weapon by authors all over the world.[626] As Abrams states, it aims at "diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn and indignation."[627] Satire has always been present in one form or another in Persian literature, within firm literary rules. Persian poets have used various techniques in polemic debates to scorn a person, a whole group, or any other subject, often by exaggerating or parodying a person's character traits.[628] Sometimes a poet creates an ironic situation by saying less than he means.[629] Other techniques are to focus on a single character trait of a person or group.[630] M.A. Jamâlzâde (d. 1997), the

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[625] For the role of humour and satire in the Persian literary tradition see J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor and J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw. See also H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988.

[626] See the article on satire by W.R. Jones, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Satire, eds. A. Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 1114-1117.

[627] M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, Heinle & Heinle, 7th edition, 1999.

[628] R.P. Falk and F. Teague, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Parody, Princeton: Princeton University Press ,1993, pp. 881-883.

[629] See W. V. O'Connor and E.H. Behler, in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under Irony, pp. 633-635.

[630] H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 28, 43-58.

pioneer of the Persian short story, like several of his contemporaries, mocked with the Persian-Arabic language which was often used by the clergy and which was often not understandable for the average Iranian. But Jamâlzâde also made fun of the Iranians that had studied abroad and who had added so many foreign words to their vocabulary that they were likewise hard to follow for many Iranians. [631] His *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time) was the first Persian short story collection and was condemned by the clergy because of its satirical content.[632]

Persian poets have had diverse reasons for writing satires. In a courtly setting, poets often attacked their rivals, who competed for the patron's good-will and a privileged position at court. Occasionally, poets would attack their own patron, if they were dissatisfied with their responses and rewards.[633] The most famous example is perhaps Ferdowsi's (d. 1025) *hajw* on his patron Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna, who had promised to pay him well for the composition of the *Epic of the Kings* (*Shâhnâme*), but who broke his promise.[634]

The clergy have been another popular target in both classical and modern Persian satire.[635] Several classical poets have included anti-clerical themes in their poetry. The most famous is probably Hâfez, who often criticises the clerics.[636] He condemns their religious hypocrisy in an open but sometimes ironic way, criticising them for pretentious religious behaviour and abusing their positions to gain power and wealth, as in the following couplets:

[631] See H. Katouzian, "Jamalzadeh's Fiction," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, pp. 246-256 and J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor.

[632] For the life and work of M.A. Jamâlzâde see H. Kamshad and N. Mozaffari, in *Enyclopaedia Iranica*, under Jamalzadeh, Mohammad-Ali: ii. Work. See also H. Katouzian, "Jamalzadeh's Fiction," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, pp. 246-256.

[633] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

[634] See Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ferdowsī, Abu'L Qāsem ii Hajw-nāma. See also Dj. Khalegi-Motlagh, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Ferdowsī, Abu'l Qāsem: i. Life.

[635] See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor. See also H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 59-98.

[636] For the background of religious satire see L. Lewisohn, "The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam: Sufi Sources of Ĥāfiż's Anti-clericalism," in *Hafiz and The Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 59-196.

Preachers who flaunt in prayer-niche and pulpit,	واعظان کاین جلوه در محراب و منبر می کنند
Practice another thing when they are in private.[637]	چون به خلوت می روند آن کار دیگر می کنند

Such verses have led many poets, including Ayatollah Khomeini, to an awareness of the dangers of religious status and false piety. The influence of Hâfez can also be seen in both classical and modern painting.[638] The famous sixteenth-century miniature painters Soltan Mohammad ‘Erâqi and Sheikh-zâde produced a beautiful miniature on the above couplet by Hâfez.[639]

The anti-clerical strand in Persian literature reflects continuous polemics between the clergy and the mystics, from early Islamic times. L. Lewisohn argues that most Iranians are no longer able to interpret these anti-clerical satirical poems and ignore the metaphysical and symbolic meanings behind the lyrics. Iranian readers may be astonished to hear that someone like Ayatollah Khomeini also composed anti-clerical poetry in which he presents himself as a mystical lover, criticising the clergy for their hypocrisy. Readers may not realise that Ayatollah Khomeini adopted this ironic anti-clerical stance to place himself in a certain literary tradition in which poets criticised the sincerity of some members of the clergy, although Ayatollah Khomeini belonged to this group himself.[640] His poetry, like that of Hâfez, should not be interpreted as an overall critique on the clergy. This mocking of the clergy is merely a metaphor adopted from the classical period in which the hypocritical behaviour of certain members of the clergy is generalised and attacked. This popular metaphor is used by poets to highlight the importance of both outer and inner pious behaviour.

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[637] Mohammad Shams al-Din Hāfiz, *Divân*, ed. P. Nâtel Khânlari, Tehran: Khârazmi, 1362/1983, *ghazal* 194: 404.

[638] For the influence of Hâfez on figurative art see P. Soucek, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hafez: xii. Hafez and the Visual Arts; For miniature paintings based on Hâfez’s lyrics see M. Barry, “The Allegory of Drunkenness and the Theophany of the Beloved in Sixteenth-Century Illustrations of Ĥāfiż,” in *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 213-226.

[639] See L. Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and B. Gray, Persian Miniature Painting, New York: Dover Publications, 1971, p. 128 and plate lxxxiv-B. 127, c: A moving Sermon by Shaykh-zade.

[640] For the anti-clerical trend in Persian poetry see L. Lewisohn, “Overview: Iranian Islam and Persianate Sufism,” in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, London: KNP, 1992, pp. 19-24 and L. Lewisohn, “The Religion of Love and the Puritans of Islam…,” pp. 159-196.

In addition to the anti-clerical use of satire, Persian poets use satire to convey their opinions on social or political events in a disguised way.[641] As far back as the classical period, Persian poets have composed satirical lyrics with a socio-political content. The well-known *Mush-o Gorbe* (The Mice and the Cat) by Obeyd-e Zâkâni Shirâzi (d. 1370) uses animals to depict the socio-political climate of his time.[642] The mean cat in his fable represents the cruel king Mobârez al-Din, a contemporary of the poet. In the story, the cat kills numerous mice (citizens), including the patron of the poet, Abu Eshâq Inju. *Mush-o Gorbe* is not only a socio-political fable, it is also a parody on the Shâhnâme, through which Zâkâni critiques the arrogant and scandalous behaviour of the ruling class in the Shahnâme.[643] *Mush-o Gorbe* is only one of many classical Persian satires with a socio-political layer.

Persian satire received a new life from the onset of the twentieth century, when the socio-political situation in Iran changed and people pleaded for a constitutional form of government.[644] Poets, affiliated with the court, who had written for a courtly audience turned instead to writing for the people. As they were no longer connected to the court they did not limit themselves to mild humorous pieces.[645] Instead of pleasing his patron, the poet was now concerned with his own inner feelings and the concerns of society, such as social and political problems.[646] Iraj Mirzâ (d. 1924), who started his career as a court poet, became one of the best and best-known Constitutional poets, addressing socio-political issues in a light and humorous way.[647] Satirists such as Iraj Mirzâ played an invaluable role during this period. With the help of the constitutional press, which was no longer controlled by the state, poets could reach all layers of society and were able to generate political awareness amongst the Iranian population.[648] Often humour was used to express hidden messages of critique, for

[641] See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

[642] For an elaboration on Zâkâni's work see L. Lewisohn, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ 1 - Socio-historical and Literary Contexts: Ḥāfiẓ in Shīrāz," in *Hafiz and The Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*, p. 10.

[643] H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 110, 111.

[644] Ibid., pp. 116, 136, 137.

[645] J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Hajw.

[646] H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 136, 137.

[647] For Mirzâ's life and work see H. Katouzian, "Iraj, the Poet of Love and Humour," in *Iran: Politics, History and Literature*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 220-232.

[648] For the function of satire during the constitutional period see A. Gheissari, "Despots of the World Unite! Satire in the Iranian Constitutional Press: The *Majalleh-ye Estebdad*, 1907–1908," in *Comparative Studies of*

example, on the inequality between men and women or on the corrupt and oppressive rule of the Qajars. During this period, newspapers and journals entered the literary and political arena, containing columns for political satire. The *Charand o Parand* (Fiddle-Faddle) column by ʻAli-Akbar Dehkhodâ (d. 1956), in the famous newspaper *Sur-e Esrafil*, was very popular, although the newspaper was banned on numerous occasions because of its critical tone [649] Several other newspapers and journals containing only satirical cartoons and texts were published. The most important of these was *Tawfiq*. The symbolic language of poetry proved to be a perfect tool in which to embed socio-political critique. Rhyming poetry made satirical poems easy to remember, even for illiterate people, who would hear the poems recited in public places such as coffee-houses. The satirical cartoon was another effective medium for reaching the illiterate. Together, the satirical poems and cartoons communicated socio-political messages to a wide audience.[650] Those responsible for them did not always escape punishment.

While socio-political satire thrived during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), and in some periods during the reign of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and his son Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), it has been under censorship pressure in Iran, especially since the 1953 coup, when the democratically chosen Prime Minister Mosaddeq was toppled by General Fazlollâh Zâhedi with the help of the CIA and the British.[651] Under the current Islamic government in Iran, socio-political satire is strictly forbidden. Most of the political satire is composed by Iranian poets in the Diaspora, since they do not suffer from censorship. By setting up Iranian periodicals or newspapers in their 'new' country, which are accessible through the World Wide Web and other social media, they ensure their socio-political satires reach Iranians in their homeland. Contributions by Iranian poets to Persian language radio and

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South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Volume 25, Number 2, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 360-376.

[649] Due to bans, the weekly newspaper was only published 35 times between May 30 1907 and June 20 1908 and between January and March of 1909. See S. Soroudi, "Sur-e Esrafil, " in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1988, p. 231. For the socio-political character of *Chand o Parand* see Gh. H. Yusofi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Čarand Parand. See also H. Katouzian, "Private Parts and Public Discourses in Modern Iran," in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 28, Number 2, 2008, pp. 284-285.

[650] See J.T.P. de Bruijn, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Humor.

[651] For the 1953 coup see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the making of a new Iran,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, pp. 18-20 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, p. 66. See also chapter 1.8 in this study.

television programs transmitted from outside Iran have also contributed to the continuation of this literary genre.[652]

6.2.1 Satire of Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry and Mystical Affiliations

Satire was also used when Iranians in the Diaspora discovered that Ayatollah Khomeini had written mystical poetry referring to wine and homo-erotic love, praising the Christian and Zoroastrian monasteries, etc. Several poets composed satirical poetry in response. I will present the satirical responses of two Iranian Diaspora poets: Hadi Khorsandi, a well-known author, poet and stand-up comedian who lives and works in the West, and a poet who has chosen to remain anonymous, but this particular poem by him was very popular with Iranians abroad. In the tradition of various classical poets, both poets have clothed critical messages in humour to draw attention to a wide range of social and political issues. Before focusing on Khorsandi's satirical response to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, I will introduce a satirical poem he composed in 1978, several months before Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran.

6.2.2 Satirical Poetry by Hadi Khorsandi

Hadi Khorsandi is a famous contemporary Iranian poet, comedian and writer who has written on Ayatollah Khomeini in a satiric fashion. He has been forced to live in exile since 1979, after he published a satirical poem in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* in which he criticised Mohammad Reza Shah and supported Ayatollah Khomeini.

The articles and poems Khorsandi has composed are mostly humorous literary pieces in which he draws attention to socio-political questions. He has been a prolific author, but the literature contains little bibliographical and biographical information on him.[653] In *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession,* H. Shahidi mentions the incident that led to Khorsandi's exile.[654] H. Javadi, in his *Satire in Persian Literature,* refers to Khorsandi and his work often, characterising him as "one of the most talented satirists of Iran…[displaying]…a variety of techniques and an incredible resourcefulness in his writings."[655] Khorsandi was born in 1943 in Fariman, in the North-East of Iran. While he was still a teenager he became known for his

[652] For censorship on socio-political satire in Iran during the twentieth century see H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 136-171, 290, 291.

[653] Due to a lack of literature on Khorsandi's life and work I contacted Khorsandi on several occasions for additional information. On May 10th, 18th, 21st, 31st 2012 and on June 2nd 2013 Hadi Khorsandi kindly supplied me with first hand information.

[654] H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, p. 26.

[655] H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, p. 286.

satirical critique of political and social life. At high school he founded the journal *Tawfiq*, a 'satirical weekly.' During the 1970s, Khorsandi worked as a journalist for the national daily newspaper *Ettelâ'ât* (Information), the oldest newspaper of Iran, which was founded in 1925 and run mostly by journalists who were also connected to the state.[656] In addition to *Ettelâ'ât*, Khorsandi worked for *Zan-e Ruz* (Today's Woman), a weekly magazine for women which was founded in 1965 and which was part of the famous newspaper *Keyhân*.[657] Khorsandi also became widely known for his contributions to various television and radio programs.[658] Because of the political content of his work, Khorsandi's columns in Iranian newspapers were often censored. In 1978, while he was living in London, Khorsandi wrote a critical poem in the newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* (The London Keyhân) which was published there as an oppositional counterpart to the *Keyhân* newspaper published in Tehran. His poem sharply attacked the Shah, who was about to be deposed by the opposition, and praised Ayatollah Khomeini as the hero and saviour of the Iranian people. When Khorsandi returned to Iran in early 1979, after the Shah had fled the country, he was condemned by Hezbollah sympathisers for the poem. Shahidi indicates that the poem had led to large-scale protests since "the *Keyhān* pieces… were critical of the post-revolutionary conditions."[659] Khorsandi received death threats from Hezbollahis and has been forced to live in exile in London since then. Khorsandi has also experienced death-threats in exile and, as the translator of one of his books indicates, in 1984 Scotland Yard discovered 'an unsuccessful plot to assassinate Khorsandi".[660]

Shortly after Khorsandi's arrival in London in 1979, he founded the satirical newspaper *Tâghut* (Idol). The word is Koranic and refers to the story of Pharaoh who was a tyrannical and corrupt ruler. During the Islamic revolution Pharaoh was used as an archetype and was often applied, also by Ayatollah Khomeini, to the Pahlavi government. J. Show and B. Arezoo, the translators of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's books, have translated several speeches in which Ayatollah Khomeini uses the term. In their Introduction they define *tâghut* as "the illegitimate ruling power" and as "One who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself, whether explicitly or

[656] H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran: from Mission to Profession*, pp. 3-6, 168, 281 and 286.

[657] Ibid., pp. 40, 82.

[658] H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, tr. Ehssan Javan, London: Readers International, 1987, Introduction.

[659] H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran; from Mission to Profession*, p. 26.

[660] H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.

implicitly."[661] In many of his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini applied the term to the Shah and his regime and to the opponents of an Islamic regime, implying that they were followers of the Shah's monarchy.[662] When Khorsandi named his newspaper *Tâghut*, in 1979, it implied a strong condemnation of the government of the day, the Islamic regime, although it does not say anything about whether he also supported the Shah. Only a year after Khorsandi established *Tâghut*, he changed its name to *Asghar Âghâ* (Mister Asghar), after one of the characters in his columns in *Ettelâ'ât*.[663] In the journal, Khorsandi regularly ridicules the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran in short stories and poems. Like many Iranian intellectuals, he had been a convinced supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini, but after his forced departure from Iran in 1979 he became one of the renowned satirists of the Islamic regime, writing numerous satirical stories on Ayatollah Khomeini. In 1983 for example, Khorsandi wrote a parody in Persian of the imagined testament of Ayatollah Khomeini, who was still alive.[664] It is important to mention that in his stories and articles Khorsandi not only makes fun of Iranian officials, he also frequently ridicules the opponents of this government, for example those Iranians in exile who keep failing to overthrow the regime despite their attempts and promises. Even today, Khorsandi writes poems and parodies and performs as a stand-up comedian all over the world.

I have chosen to comment on a poem on Ayatollah Khomeini by Hadi Khorsandi because it is representative of how the Iranian diaspora responded to Khomeini. Khorsandi's case is interesting as he was an active poet before and after the Revolution. In addition, to my knowledge, his poem has never before been the subject of a scholarly study in the West. Khorsandi is a living poet with a great impact on the Iranian community, and active as a satrical poet during various periods, up to the present day. Khorsandi's poetry shows that he was critical of both supporters and opponents of the Islamic regime. The same goes for his

[661] Several statements by Ayatollah Khomeini in which he uses the term *taghut* have been adopted in the book *The Position of Women from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, trs. J. Shaw and B. Arezoo, Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Words, 2001, pp. 20, 23, 37, 43, 69, 76, 84, 91, 96, 101, 106, 123, 132, 143 and 144.

[662] H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.

[663] See H. Javadi, *Satire in Persian Literature*, pp. 285-287.

[664] Several of Khorsandi's parodies from the newspaper *Asghar Agha* have been translated in English and have been published in his book *The Ayatollah and I*, tr. Ehssan Javan, London: Readers International, 1987.

poems on Ayatollah Khomeini, whom he praises but also criticizes. His utterly serious messages are able to reach an enourmous public just because of the satirical form in which Khorsandi pours his words. Its rhyme, the often vulgair language, the multiple hyperboles and exaggerations, are not easily forgotten and have made this poet extremely popular, both in and outside of Iran.

6.2.2.1 Khorsandi's Satirical Poem "The Dream of the Shah"

Khorsandi has written several satirical poems and literary pieces on Ayatollah Khomeini. Before turning to these, I want to focus on a satire that Khorsandi wrote in 1978, before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which he supports Ayatollah Khomeini. The target of the satire in this poem is not Ayatollah Khomeini but Mohammad Reza Shah. It is called *Khâb-e Shâh* (The Dream of the Shah). Khorsandi wrote the poem while living in London and published it in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan*. The word *khâb* in the title of the poem is ambiguous in Persian, meaning both dream or sleep. The poem consists of 83 couplets depicting the Shah's downfall and Ayatollah Khomeini as a saviour, the right hand of God, who has come to free Iranians from the sufferings inflicted by the Shah. For the sake of convenience I will cite only several parts of the poem in my own translation, followed by an analysis:

	The Dream of the Shah	خواب شاه
1	One night, God entered the Shah's dream, and Khomeini came with God.	خدا یک شب به خواب شاه آمد خمینی با خداهمراه آمد
2	The king of kings, the chivalrous, the fortunate, fell from his bed to the floor in consternation.	شهنشاه جوانمرد جوانبخت زوحشت بر زمین افتاد از تخت
3	It was as if, at the divine command, he fell from the royal throne.	توگویی طبق فرمان الهی فرو افتاده است از تخت شاهی
4	With much toil, he raised himself again saying to the exalted Lord:	به صد زحمت دوباره رفت بالا چنین فرمود با باری تعالی
5	"Didn't you know that we were sleeping? Why have you sought audience with me, at this time of night?	نمی‌دانم که ما هستیم در خواب چرا این وقت شب، گشتی شرفیاب؟
6	You, who bestow grace on the King of kings, why do you bring Khomeini with you?	تو که لطفی به شاهنشاه داری خمینی را چرا همراه داری؟
7	If you want to visit me, From now on, come alone.	اگرخواهی سراغ ما بیایی ازاین پس سعی کن، تنها بیایی

8	Since this man has brought me ill-fortune. Making kingship hard for me.	که این آقا مرا بدبخت کرده به ما شاهنشهی را سخت کرده
9	You can't imagine what he's done to me. So much that I could fart on my life.	نمی‌دانی چه آورده به روزم که می‌باید به روز خود بگوزم
10	Bit by bit, people tear apart my pictures, All of my family has become homeless.	یکایک عکس‌هایم پاره گردید همه فامیل من،آواره گردید
11	All power has slipped from my hand, Now my dear sister Ashraf has left me again.	تمام اختیارات ازکفم رفت دوباره بازآبجی اشرفم رفت
12	He has lit such a fierce fire in my body and soul, That smoke comes out from my ancestry.	چنان آتش زده بر جسم وجانم که دود آید برون از دودمانم

The prominent role played by Ayatollah Khomeini in this poem is evident from the opening line in which he appears next to God in the Shah's dream. There may be an allusion here to Ayatollah Khomeini's first name, *Ruh-Allâh* or 'Spirit of God,' which is also an appellation of Jesus. The lines also play on the Persian homonym *takht*, meaning both throne and bed, so that falling out of bed is a precursor to falling from the throne. Physical and psychological unease is indicated through several images based on the word *takht*, to say that neither sleep nor quiet rule is granted to the Shah. In the first couplets of the poem, the poet allows the reader to read the mind of Mohammad Reza Shah. Khorsandi presents the Shah as an arrogant and egocentric person. As couplet five indicates, even God has to arrange an audience (*sharafyâb*) with the Shah. The Shah is highly offended that anyone, even God Himself, would dare to disturb his sleep. What is more, he is outraged that God has brought Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah asks God to come alone next time. The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini accompanies God implies that Ayatollah Khomeini is closely related to God. Ayatollah Khomeini is an Ayatollah, literally meaning a sign or miracle of God, but his name, the Spirit of God, implies an even closer relationship. The Shah falling from his bed or throne in consternation (*wahshat*) indicates how threatened he is by Ayatollah Khomeini.

6.2.2.1.1 Religio-Political Climate under Mohammad Reza Shah: the Shah and the Ayatollah

If we place couplets one to eleven in a socio-political context, we can see that Khorsandi's satire describes the gradual weakening of the Shah's power after Ayatollah Khomeini's appearance on the political scene in 1963. Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary ideology claimed that monarchy was illegitimate in itself, and he advocated a theocratic political system. As couplet eight indicates, the Shah lost complete control of the people, once Ayatollah Khomeini began "making kingship hard for me." Until the early 1960s, the Shiite

clergy, including Ayatollah Khomeini, took a rather quietist attitude vis-à-vis politics. This was influenced by Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961), the highest authority in the Shiite world, who for sixteen years had been the only *marja'-e taqlid*. As V. Martin indicates, Borujerdi and the Shah had agreed that the latter would not interfere in religious affairs as long as the clergy did not mingle in politics. Since Borujerdi set the norm, most Shiites, including Ayatollah Khomeini, followed his example.[665] Among the exceptions was Ayatollah Shâhâbâdi, Ayatollah Khomeini's mentor in Qom, who like Ayatollah Khomeini was strongly influenced by *ʿerfân* (literally, gnosis) and believed that the clergy should be much more critical of the Pahlavi government and much more politically active, if they wanted to diminish the influence of foreign powers in Iran. In his role as the Leader of the Friday Prayers in Teheran and as teacher of ethics for members of the Tehrani guilds, Shâhâbâdi was able to spread his message amongst many Iranians, both amongst the visitors of the Friday Prayers and amongst his students.[666] As V. Martin has indicated, Shâhâbâdi's political activism went so far as to promote martyrdom to protect Islam.[667] B. Moin states that Shâhâbâdi's critique on the government sometimes put him in danger, such as the incident in which "he had to take refuge in the golden shrine of Shah Abdolazim in Rey, to the south of Tehran, to avoid arrest."[668] Although Ayatollah Khomeini would openly promote ideas like those of Shâhâbâdi later in his life, he was, like most of the clerics, rather quietist while Ayatollah Borujerdi was alive.

Although generally speaking, Ayatollah Borujerdi stayed aloof from political affairs, one incident in 1955 had a huge effect on the previous close clergy-state relation. It was in this year that Borujerdi himself turned against Mohammad Reza Shah, and moved those supporting him to do likewise, after the Shah refused to continue the heavy anti-Bahai pogroms, which were initiated by clerics in the 1940s and were initially supported by the Shah. Ever since the rise of the Bahai faith and the Bahai movement, which was founded by Sayyed 'Ali-Mohammad the Bab in Iran in the 1840s, the followers of this 'new' religion have been condemned by the Iranian government and the Shiite authorities. After a large group of Baha'is were exiled to Baghad during the second half of the nineteenth century, they

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[665] For information on Borujerdi see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* pp. 1-56 and H. Algar, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Borūjerdī, Ḥosayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī.

[666] For information on Shâhâbâdi see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* pp. 32-33, 39, 44 and 202 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* pp. 42-44.

[667] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State,* p. 33.

[668] See B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah,* p. 43.

founded an important Bahai centre in Israel in 1890. While the anti-Bahai campaign was rather quiet under the regime of Reza Shah, the Baha'is were heavily persecuted during the early reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. It was during this period that the Shiite clergy, headed by Borujerdi, tried to unite all Iranians under the banner of Twelver Shia Islam. All religions that delineated from Shia Islam, such as the Bahai faith, were considered a threat to the unity, both national and religious, of Iran. Shortly after a verbal attack on the Bahai movement on Iranian radio by Shiite authority Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Taqi Falsafi in 1955, the Iranian military launched an attack on an important Bahai centre in Tehran shortly after. Many countries greatly condemned the anti-Bahai actions in Iran. While the clerics, headed by Borujerdi, tried to seek a 'final solution' to eliminate the Bahai-movement, the Shah was alarmed at the international reaction and the lawlessness that had accompanied the pogroms and refused to continue the anti-Bahai campaign. Borujerdi was deeply offended by the Shah's withdrawal and consequently the previous close relation which he had with the Shah would not recover before Borujerdi's death in 1961.[669]

The death of Ayatollah Borujerdi in 1961 led to a resettlement of the religio-political climate. Many Ayatollahs, including those with more political aspirations, hoped to succeed him as the pre-eminent Shiite Ayatollah. A group of leading clerics was intended to appoint a successor. Amongst the candidates were Ayatollah al-Hakim who resided in Iraq, and several Ayatollahs in Qom, including Ayatollah Golpâyegâni, Ayatollah Shari'atmadâri and Ayatollah Mara'shi Najafi, but no one seemed appropriate for the position.[670] Ayatollah Khomeini, then only fifty-nine years old, was much too young to succeed Ayatollah Borjurdi, and B. Moin argues that Ayatollah Khomeini indicated that he did not want to succeed Ayatollah Borujerdi at that time.[671] As no appropriate successor could be found, the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi led to a period of religious instability in which local clerics could operate

[669] For the role of the clergy and the Pahlavi government in the anti-Bahai pogroms of 1955 see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran," in *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*, eds. D.P. Brookshaw and S.B. Fazel, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 220-231; see also R.A. Cohen, *The Hojjatiyeh Society in Iran; Ideology and Practice from the 1950's to the Present*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 49-95.

[670] As B. Moin indicates, there were a total of seven or eight senior Ayatollahs. See B. Moin, *Khomeini:Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 70.

[671] Ibid., p. 70.

rather independently, since the religious power was not centralised and was no longer strongly controlled by Borujerdi.[672]

It was in this climate that the Shah implemented an ambitious national modernisation plan known as the "White Revolution," which included land reforms, a literacy corps and allowing women to vote.[673] On a religious level, the Shah set up government-based religious institutions to control the religious masses and decrease the influence of the clergy. The Shah's attempt to replace the *din-e mellat* ('religion of the people') with a *din-e dowlat* ('state-sponsored religion) was strongly condemned, in particular by the clergy who feared losing their influential position.[674] The estrangement of the Shiite clergy from the Pahlavi governement, which had its roots in the withdrawal of Mohammad Reza Shah from the anti-Bahai pogroms of 1955, only increased with the implementation of these state-sponsored religious institutions. The Shah began to severely suppress the Shiite clergy, who increasingly opposed the Shah.[675] Of all clerics, Ayatollah Khomeini was the most critical of the Shah's policies. In 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini headed demonstrations against the Shah's reforms. His speech of June 3rd 1963 in the Islamic Institute Feyziye, in which he criticised the Shah and his government, could be heard throughout Qom and made him instantly famous.[676] Fearing that his critique could lead to more demonstrations, the Shah imprisoned Ayatollah Khomeini two days later, and sentenced him to death. However, his arrest led to protests by his followers, so that under the influence of the clergy, the Shah was forced to release him in August. Ayatollah Khomeini continued his attacks on the Shah, leading to his exile from Iran in 1964. He went first to Turkey, and a year later to Iraq. He stayed there until 1978, when Saddam Hussein asked him to leave. Ayatollah Khomeini spent his last year of exile in France, in Neauphle-le-Château. Ayatollah Khomeini continued his attacks on the Pahlavi government from exile.[677] In his view, only a government controlled by the clergy was a

[672] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 254-255.

[673] For more information on the White Revolution see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 62-64. and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 71-73.

[674] For more information on the opposition *din-e mellat* versus *din-e dowlat* see M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 255-257.

[675] For the Shah's suppression of the clergy see S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 84-86.

[676] Parts of Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-government speech are quoted by R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2009, pp. 190-193. For Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-government movement see ibid., pp. 188-191, 244-245, 308.

[677] For Ayatollah Khomeini's critique of the regime from exile see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 69-

legitimate form of governance.[678] Although Ayatollah Khomeini had presented his ideas on the ideal form of governance in 1970, when his book Islamic Governance (*Hokumat-e Islami*) was published, it was not until 1977 that he promoted these revolutionary ideas openly on a large scale.[679]

Ayatollah Khomeini's rejection of the Pahlavi monarchical system and promotion of an Islamic government became much more pronounced during the sixties and seventies. In addition to his rejection of the monarchy as a whole, Ayatollah Khomeini, like the majority of the Iranian population, condemned the Pahlavi regime on many grounds. Corruption, political and social repression, unemployment and a bad economy led to much unrest amongst all levels of Iranian society. Protests took a serious form in 1977, when a large group of lawyers and members of the National Front spread letters amongst the population in which they complained of the corrupt and repressive regime of the Shah. In 1978, supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini joined the open protests against the Pahlavi government after Ayatollah Khomeini's son Mostafa died under mysterious circumstances in Iraq. In the same year, an article on Ayatollah Khomeini was published by Tehran newspapers, referring to his possible Indian origin.[680] As V. Martin has pointed out, in this article Ayatollah Khomeini was depicted as "an agent of colonization," implying that he was a marionette of the English.[681] Shortly after the publication of this letter, open revolt broke out in religious circles in Qom, followed by other cities in Iran. The clergy and merchants were able to mobilise people to revolt against the Pahlavi government, since they, of all social groups, had the most contact with the population, both educated and illiterate. This was the beginning of mass mobilisation, organised by the clergy.[682]

During his stay in France, Ayatollah Khomeini closely followed all the developments in Iran, by listening to the radio and by reading a wide variety of newspapers. It was from there that he coordinated protest movements against the Shah and succeeded in attracting a

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[678] For an elaboration on Islamic Government see ibid., p. 25 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 380-382.

[679] R. Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of Jurisprudent*, Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2005. See also V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 115-124.

[680] For the conspiracy theories about Ayatollah Khomeini's putative connections with England and India, see A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Conspiracy Theories.

[681] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 149.

[682] Ibid., p. 149.

large group of followers in- and outside of Iran.[683] Ayatollah Khomeini's presentation in the media as the 'Imam,' a title which in a Twelver Shiite context had only been applied to the twelve infallible imams, the successors to the prophet Mohammad, greatly contributed to his popularity.[684] It was very significant that the title was, for the first time, applied to a person other than the twelve infallible imams.[685] The title gave him an almost saintly character, confirmed by his pious and modest way of life. B. Moin states that, when Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran in 1979, shortly after the Shah's departure, "it was almost as if the Hidden Imam of the Shi'a, their Messiah, had reappeared, albeit not in Mecca as tradition would have it, but on an Air France charter flight from a city long associated by the faithful with little else but sin.[686] The enormous impact Ayatollah Khomeini had on the Iranian population is also evident in this poem by Khorsandi. Couplets one to twelve, in which the poet presents Ayatollah Khomeini as the right hand of God, as his 'representative,' demonstrate that Khorsandi too was very much impressed by Ayatollah Khomeini's spirituality and person.

In the following couplets Khorsandi jumps to an undefined time when the Shah has left the country and is looking back at what he was:

13	I had a really good place and position, I was a king of stature.	مرا معقول جایی بود وجاهی برای خویش بودم پادشاهی
14	I had a position, a high position. I had a territory, which was fully respected.	مقامی داشتم، والا مقامی حریمی داشتم، با احترامی
15	What a character I had, Oh God! Oh God, what a highness I was!	عجب شخصیتی بودم، خدایا! چه اعلی‌حضرتی بودم، خدایا!
16	The king of Jordan had always wished, To be like me, but the bosses did not allow it.	همیشه شاه اردن آرزو داشت که مثل من شود، ارباب نگذاشت
17	This very sultan Hassan, the king of Morocco, this pimp imitated me.	همین سلطان حسن، شاه مراکش زمن تقلید می‌فرمود جاکش
18	In every respect, I was better than Feysâl Only his nose was bigger than mine.	همه چیزم ز فیصل نیزسر بود فقط قدری دماغش گنده‌تر بود

[683] Ibid., p. 152.

[684] For the use of the term 'imam' see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 153 and M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 289.

[685] In Persian, the word Imam is applied to the twelve Shiite Imams. It is also used when it is preceding and modifying a noun such as *Emâm jom'eh* (The Friday Preacher). Sunnites use the Arabic word Imam to refer to a religious leader of the community.

[686] B. Moin, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 199, 200.

19	I had become the favourite of all kings, Especially the queen of England.	شدم محبوب جمله پادشاهان خصوصاً پادشاه انگلستان!
20	But in wearing chic clothes, in gallantry, Elizabeth envied me.	ولی در شیک‌پوشی، دررشادت !به من می‌کرد الیزابت، حسادت!

The use of the past tense from line thirteen onwards implies that the Shah has been removed from his throne, yet Khorsandi wrote this poem in 1978, several months before the fall of the Shah on January 16th 1979 as it appears from massive demonstrations that Khorsandi saw the fall of the Shah coming, with a Shah that was immensely impopular and Ayatollah Khomeini that had generated an enormous group of supporters.[687] In these couplets, the Shah reflects on his life as a ruler of Iran. He boasts about his superior position and considers himself to have been the centre of the world. The poet ridicules the Shah's title of *shâhanshâh*, King of Kings, a title used by various Iranian rulers since the Achaemenid Empire (700 – ca 330 BC) and which the Shah bestowed upon himself in 1967.[688] He and his father Reza Shah promoted the idea that Iran had its political origin in the Achaemenid era, the time of the Arians, some twenty-five centuries earlier. During the Pahlavi period, numerous scholarly works were written to highlight the pre-Islamic Persian glory, emphasising that Persians were an Arian race, cementing a new identity.[689] The idea that the king had been chosen by God to be the ruler of the kingdom was often promoted during the Pahlavi period. It gave the Shah a semi-divine character, untouchable and unquestionable. As M. Momen states, the Shah considered himself "the true representative of the Hidden Imam," although he never explicitly said this.[690] Khorsandi agrees with Momen in this respect, and ridicules the Shah's haughty behaviour in couplets thirteen to twenty by showing him recalling how all rulers, including King Feysâal of Egypt and Sultan Hoseyn of Jordan, wished to be like the Shah.

The Shah's relationship with America is also treated in the poem. As the poet indicates in couplet sixteen, the *arbâb*, 'the masters' decided how a ruler in the Middle East should behave. The word implies a servant to master relationship in which America is the master and

[687] For the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 27.

[688] See the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under Shāh. For information on the Achaemenid Dynasty see the article by R.Schmitt, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Achaemenid Dynasty.

[689] For the use of the term 'Arian' during the twentieth century see R. Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the Aryan Discourse in Iran," in *Iranian Studies*, 44:4, pp. 445-472. See also A. Ashraf, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Iranian Identity iv. 19th-20th Centuries.

[690] M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 256.

the Middle East its servant, although Iran is the master of the rest of the Middle East. All the other rulers, who are also servants of America, are mere servants and should follow the example of Iran. In these couplets Khorsandi refers to America's prominent role in Iranian politics. Iran's strategic position close to America's Cold War enemy, the Soviet Union, was an important factor in the American presence in Iran from the 1940s. In 1953, their presence in the country increased even further after the CIA, together with the British, supported general Fazlollâh Zâhedi in his coup against Prime Minister Mosaddeq.[691] After that, Iran was filled with American 'advisers.' The Americans also played an important role in the oil industry during the 1970s.[692] The presence of the Americans, and in particular the privileges the Pahlavi government gave them, often led to popular unrest. One of the most famous incidents was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1964, when he objected to the Shah's decision to give diplomatic immunity to certain American diplomats residing in Iran.[693] Iranians felt that Iran was being exploited by the Americans. However, as R. Mottahedeh indicates, "it can be questioned who [of these two] was using whom. [For] Often the Shah's desire to be a regional power exceeded any ambition the U.S. had for him".[694] After all, many Iranians believed that the Shah depended too much on America.[695] This feeling also emerges in couplet sixteen, were the poet characterises America as the 'boss.'[696]

6.2.2.1.2 Persian Kingship versus Islamic Governance

In Khorsandi's poem, the reader can clearly see the tension between Ayatollah Khomeini and the Shah, since the latter's position as the *shâhanshâh* is threatened by the coming of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah's reaction to Ayatollah Khomeini's appearance in his dream shows how deeply he was preoccupied with Ayatollah Khomeini. Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as arriving alongside God, thus associating him with the Divine as opposed to the mundane and earthly kingdom of the Pahlavi regime. Khorsandi portrays Ayatollah Khomeini as a kind of divine messenger as opposed to the king. These two positions have long been a source of tension in Persian history. Persian kingship is an ancient institution going back to the pre-Islamic period. In Persian tradition, the kings are appointed

[691] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 18-20 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 66.

[692] R.P. Mottahedeh, The *Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 333.

[693] For discussion of this incident see R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 245-246.

[694] Ibid., p. 334.

[695] Ibid.

[696] For a discussion of the influence of America on Mohammad Reza Shah's policy see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 23.

by God and are the shadows of God on earth.[697] The Persian creation myth is based on the first man who is also the first king, Keyumars, while the Islamic creation myth starts with Adam as a prophet and leader of mankind. With the arrival of Islam in Iran in the seventh century, these opposing views of leadership could not be easily solved. As M. Tavakoli-Targhi indicates, for several centuries there was a tension as to how to integrate the Persian kingly tradition into the Islamic tradition which was based on the line of prophets. Often historians transformed the original pre-Islamic stories and characters to harmonise them with the Islamic stories, usually starting their historiography with the glorious Persian kings of the past and ending with the victory of Islam. Mohammad Ghazâli (d. 1111), a great religious philosopher, integrated the two traditions by presenting both King Keyumars and Prophet Seth as sons of Adam. He argued that Keyumars and his successors had been chosen by God to guide the state (*dowlat*) and preserve kingship, while Seth and the other prophets had been appointed by God to safeguard religion (*din*). Ghazâli's interpretation of the two antigorical figures as brothers who were both appointed by God to have a leading and guiding function allowed the successive monarchical and religious authorities to accept one another's position and to work side by side, albeit on a different level.[698]

From the sixteenth century onwards a change of focus can be noticed in Persian historiographies. Instead of connecting and adapting the pre-Islamic Persian historical reports to align with Koranic stories, under Safavid rule historians focused mainly on the glorious and impressive character of the pre-Islamic period. As M. Tavakoli-Targhi indicates, "Juxtaposing Iran and Islam, … prompted the emergence of new schizophrenic social subjects who were conscious of their belonging to two diverse and often antagonistic cultural heritages."[699] The antithesis, which was purposely created, was used for various purposes. During the constitutional revolution, historians and writers used this antithesis to create imaginary camps between secular and Islamic groups of people. Both camps gave their own meaning to historical events. While Islamic groups focused on the superiority of the Islamic culture in historical reports, secular groups used historical events from the pre-Islamic past to highlight their cultural superiority.[700] Khorsandi has used this opposition in this poem to create a chasm between Ayatollah Khomeini and the Shah. By doing so, the poet promotes Ayatollah

[697] M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1-2, 1996, pp. 149-175.

[698] Ibid., p. 159.

[699] Ibid., p. 151.

[700] Ibid., pp. 174, 175.

Khomeini's reading of governance, according to which the leading jurist functions as the representative of Imam Mahdi and has superior authority on both a spiritual and a governmental level.[701]

In the following couplets the poet again criticises the Shah's claim to divine endorsement, by ridiculing his approach to political freedom:

21	In all respects I ruled with splendour, I had an eternal splendour around me.	به هر صورت، جلالی داشتم من شکوه لایزالی داشتم من
22	I have founded one political party, To protect the constitution.	علم کردم یکی حزب سیاسی برای حفظ قانون اساسی
23	What a wondrous party, better than the Tudeh Party, It was better than all the parties before.	عجب حزبی، ز حزب توده بهتر ز هرحزبی که قبلا بوده، بهتر
24	All government employees joined it, For it was better than going to prison.	شدند عضوش تمام کارمندان که بهتر بود از رفتن به زندان
25	Oh, I have established something good, What a great Resurgence party I have established.	دریغا، چیز خوبی ساختم من چه رستاخیز خوبی ساختم من
26	These past few years I've made it progress, I dose the people with it daily, in the arse.	ترقی دادمش این چند ساله به مردم کردمش هر روز، اماله
27	But at the end I let it go, Khomeini said so, and I cancelled it.	ولیکن آخر آن را ول نمودم خمینی گفت و من "کنسل!" نمودم

Khorsandi emphasises the Shah's despotic nature by pointing to his approach to political parties, or rather preventing political parties. He braggs about himself and speaks in vulgar language. In a mocking fashion, especially by using hyperbols, the poet describes how the Shah allowed only parties initiated and supported by the regime, giving no chance to oppositional voices. The mocking lies in how just, progressive, liberal and democratic these parties were, while in reality the parties were created to support the Shah. This resulted first in the establishment of a two-party political system. In 1957 a rather progressive opposition party, named the People's Party (*Hezb-e Mardom*), was called into life, followed by the more conservative governmental Nationalist Party (*Hezb-e Melliyân*) in 1959. In 1964 the Nationalist Party was replaced by the New Iran Party (*Hezb-e Irân-e Novin*).[702] In 1975 this artificial two-party system made way for a single party, Iran Nation's Resurgence Party

[701] For an elaboration on the governance of the jurist (*velâyat-e faqih*) see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 119-120 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 243-244.

[702] See V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 23, 125.

(*Hezb-e Rastâkhiz Mellat-e Irân*).[703] V. Martin argues that all Iranians had to join the Resurgence Party.[704] The poet was aware of this fact and comments mockingly in couplet 24 that all government employees joined it, "for it was better than going to prison."

In couplet 23, the poet makes the Shah boast of 'his' Resurgence Party and says it was "better than the Tudeh Party." The Tudeh Party was founded in 1941 by a group of released Marxists prisoners "to unite the exploited classes and forge a party of the masses."[705] In 1949 the Shah banned the Tudeh Party after some of its members attempted to assassinate him. The party continued to operate underground. It was extremely popular among opponents of the Shah and played an important role during the Islamic Revolution.[706] Khorsandi highlights the popularity of the Tudeh Party, by placing it in opposition to Iran's Nation's Resurgence Party. By doing so, the poet contrasts Shah-supported institutions to opposition-supported institutions.

In couplet 26, the poet in a satirical fashion calls attention to the fact that modernisation was not something all people profited from. Why would people want progress, when it is administered like an enema? What is the purpose of offering all kinds of luxury goods in the shops, when most Iranians do not have the money to buy any? Ayatollah Khomeini also frequently calls attention to inequality and social injustices. Only a small group of Iranians profited from the enormous income from the oil-industry, leaving large groups of Iranians in poor conditions.[707] So not only on a political level, but also on economic grounds, people were dissatisfied with the Shah's regime.

In the following couplets Khorsandi makes the Shah beg Ayatollah Khomeini for his compassion:

28	He secured his position in such a way, That I had to annul my own history.	چنان کوبید محکم، میخ خود را که کردم منتفی تاریخ خود را
29	Everything that he said, I did, even destroying my own pride.	هر آن کاری که او فرمود کردم غرور خویش را نابود کردم

[703] R. F. Azimi, "On Shaky Ground: Concerning the Absence or Weakness of Political Parties," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1-2, 1997, pp. 65-71 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 68, 332.

[704] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 23.

[705] These are the words of I. Iskandari, the founder of the Tudeh Party. See E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 281.

[706] Ibid., pp. 281-325. See also S. Zabih, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism ii: In Persia from 1941 to 1953. See also Ṭ Haqšenâs, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Communism iii: In Persia after 1953.

[707] V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, p. 148.

30	On the radio I said emphatically: “It’s all shit that I have done, I made a mistake, forgive me.”	زپشت رادیو گفتم به تأکید که "گه خوردم، غلط کردم، ببخشید"
31	But he turned off the radio, not listening to my supplications and apologies.	ولی او رادیو را کرده خاموش نکرده لابه وعجز مرا گوش
32	I am dying of grief for he has afflicted me, So that I say a hundred times, may God’s mercy be on the late Mosaddeq.	چنان از دست ایشان کرده‌ام دق که صد رحمت به مرحوم مصدق
33	Oh God, ask the Ayatollah, What more does he want than the life of the king?	خداوندا! بگو با آیت‌الله چه می‌خواهی دگر از جان این شاه؟
34	In one action, he has humiliated me, Dragging me to the butcher’s like a buffalo.	مرا یک‌باره کرده "سنگ رو یخ" کشد چون گاومیشی سوی مسلخ

In these couplets, the Shah presents Ayatollah Khomeini as someone strong and persevering, who is not sensitive to any apologies, while the Shah is weak and pathetic. On several occasions the poet refers to historical events. In couplet 28, the word *tarikh* (history or date) points to the abolition of the imperial calendar in 1978, which the Shah had implemented only two years earlier in 1976. Year one in this calendar was 539 BC, when Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire. R. Mottahedeh calls the decision of the Shah to adopt this calendar “an act of defiance to religion” in reaction to the growing inflexibility of the clergy.[708] The calendar reference in the poem contrasts the Shah to Ayatollah Khomeini, who stands for the Islamic reading of time. The couplet might also be a look at the future, where the poet hopes that the Pahlavi dynasty will come to an end, which actually occurred one year after Khorsandi wrote this poem.

In couplet 32 the poet refers to the relationship between the Shah and former Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq. Mosaddeq was the Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 till 1953. Since 1944, Mosaddeq had been the leader of the National Front, one of the groups opposing the Shah, condemning him for giving Britain huge shares of the oil profits. One of his first acts as Prime Minister was to nationalise the oil industry. Two years later, in 1953, general Zâhedi, supported by the American CIA and the British, launched a coup and

[708] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 329.

unseated him. Mosaddeq lived under house arrest until his death in 1967.[709] Couplet 32 makes the Shah apologise for the way he treated Mosaddeq.

As the following couplets indicate, the Shah wonders what the benefits of being a king are:

35	Now that my days are so dark, my fate so black What benefit do I get from my crown and throne?	چنین که تیره روز و تیره بختم چه سودی می برم از تاج و تختم؟
36	He has made everything so difficult for me, What do I gain from being the Sun of the Arians?	چنین که کار ما را کرده مشکل مرا از آریامهری چه حاصل؟
37	I am sick from not sleeping for a week, While Cyrus the Great's still quietly asleep.	ز بی خوابی شدم یک هفته ناخوش هنوزآسوده خوابید هست کوروش
38	Cyrus, please return, I'm in shit over here, I haven't had a moment's quiet sleep here.	بیا کورش که ما ریدیم اینجا دمی راحت نخوابیدیم اینجا
39	If I told you: "sleep in peace," I'm sorry, come back, precious man.	اگرگفتم تو آسوده بخوابی پشیمانم،بیا مرد حسابی
40	Come and confront Khomeini, You, like me, will become a captive of his wrath.	بیا و با خمینی رو به رو شو توهمچون من اسیر خشم او شو
41	Come Cyrus, the time for sleep has passed, "I've seen a strange creature here."	بیا کورش که وقت خواب بگذشت "عجایب خلقتی دیدم در این دشت"

In these couplets the poet refers to a statement the Shah had in 1971 at the celebration of 2500 years of the Iranian empire. The Shah, like his father, promoted the idea that the Iranian nation originated in the Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great (d. 529 BC), which became known as the land of the Arians. This glorification of the pre-Islamic past has always played a prominent role in Persian historiography, but was intensified during the twentieth century under the influence of Nazi Germany, who believed that the white Nordic race originated in the land of the Arians. The Pahlavi regime devoted a lot of effort to reconstructing the Iranian past to prove its Arian origin. This focus on the glorious pre-Islamic period resulted in four important reforms. In 1935 Reza Shah changed the name of Persia to Iran. In 1965 his son adopted the title "*âryâmehr*" (Sun of the Arians), indicating his superior position. In 1971 the Shah organised huge festivities to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Iranian empire. Five years later he made a Persian calendar the official state calendar,

[709] On Mosaddeq see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 18-20 and R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 129-133.

indicating that the Iranian identity was not based on Islamic foundations, but on Arian origins.[710]

In couplets 37 to 41, Khorsandi refers to the moment when the Shah, accompanied by a large crowd of international royals and officials, stood at the tomb of Cyrus the Great and said: "Sleep easily, Cyrus, for we are awake."[711] This implied that Cyrus need not worry about the well-being of the Persian kingdom while the Shah was on the throne.[712] In couplet 40, Khorsandi makes fun of this statement by making the Shah implore Cyrus to come to assist him, but with the pessimistic warning that Cyrus, like him "will become a captive of his wrath". By presenting the Shah in this way, Khorsandi ridicules the apparent power and strength of the Shah, showing him to be a weak politician who could not manage by himself. The Shah asks Cyrus for help since he has seen "a strange creature here." The phrase comes from a children's riddling game that starts with the sentence, "I have seen a strange creature in this place". The Shah asks help from Cyrus to find out what this strange creature is. The Shah, then, gives clues about this creature:

42	He neither leans on England, Nor cozying up to the lefties world.	نه او را تکیه‌ای برانگلیس است نه با دنیای چپ، در لفت و لیس است
43	He doesn't take America as his support and refuge, He only leans against an apple tree.	نه آمریکا بود پشت و پناهش درخت سیب باشد تکیه گاهش!
44	Oh God! Oh Creator! Oh Almighty! Tell them to leave me in peace.	خدایا! خالقا! پرور دگارا! بگو آسوده بگذارند ما را
45	If he is the Sign of God (Ayatollah), okay, I accept this, But must he piss on the Shadow of God?	اگر او آیت‌الله است، باشد به ظل الله می‌باید بشاشد؟
46	I was neither murderer nor thief, To end up with this punishment.	نه قاتل بودم اینجانب نه دزدم که این شد دست آخر، دستمزدم
47	How many services I have offered, each one will make my good name last forever.	چه خدمت‌ها که کردم دانه دانه که ماند نام نیکم جاودانه
48	I have never disappointed the CIA, I sent the mafia their fair share.	نر نجاندم ز خود، یک دم "سیا" را فرستادم حقوق "مافیا" را

[710] See R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 311, 312, 326-329; A. Asgharzadeh, *Iran and the Challenge of Diversity: Islamic Fundamentalism, Aryanist Racism and Democratic Struggles*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 and M. Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity*, New York: Paragon House, 1993.

[711] R.P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 327.

[712] For the celebration of 2500 years of Iranian empire see Ibid., pp. 326-329.

49	I sent my wife to Baghdad, Conveying my message to Ayatollah Kho'i.	عیالم را فرستادم به بغداد به آقای "خوئی" پیغام ما داد
50	I gave barrels after barrels of oil, So that the well may be emptied quickly.	بدادم نفت‌ها را بشکه بشکه که هر چه زودتر چاهش بخشکه
51	I bought tanks by the handful, Spending money in abundance.	خریدم تانک‌ها را دسته دسته بدادم پول‌ها را بسته بسته
52	Despite all this political work, Despite all this intelligence and cleverness.	ولی با این‌همه کار سیاست ولی با این‌همه هوش و کیاست
53	I didn't understand one thing: O God, Are you a leftist? Or do you work for the CIA?	نفهمیدم شمایی که خدایی چپی؟یا این که مأمورسیایی؟
54	I have racked my brains, But in the end, I do not know you.	شعور خود به کار انداختم من شما را عاقبت نشناختم من

Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as the total opposite of the Shah. While Ayatollah Khomeini is a strong character who needs no help from anybody, the Shah cannot survive without the support of America. The image in couplet 43 to Ayatollah Khomeini needing only an apple tree for support refers to a well-known photograph of Ayatollah Khomeini in Neauphle-le-Château in 1978, in which he is sitting on a cushion under an apple tree, looking like a pious mystic. The differences between the Shah and Ayatollah Khomeini could not be greater. While the first spends money and is concerned only with luxury and worldly pleasures, the latter is engaged only with the Divine world and eschews all material and social bonds. R. Mottahedeh confirms this selfless image of Ayatollah Khomeini and depicts him as a "forbidding man who never offered more than a smile in public to express his pleasure in anybody or anything."[713] Another character trait of Ayatollah Khomeini that betrays his mystical disposition was his rejection of titles. He did not want to be addressed by any title, since it could lead to arrogance and selfishness, which are both pitfalls on the road of the mystic.[714] Unlike Ayatollah Khomeini, the Shah very much liked to use titles. In couplets 2, 36 and 45 of the poem, the Shah refers to himself as the 'King of Kings' (*shâhanshâh)*, the 'Sun of the Arians' (*âryâmehr*) and the 'Shadow of God' (*zellollâh*).

In a satirical tone, the poet refers to the Shah's arrogance and how he was convinced of his own innocence and kindness. In the poem, the Shah wonders why he is treated so badly by Ayatollah Khomeini, while in general he was on a good footing with the clergy. In couplet 49 the Shah refers to the friendly bond he had with Grand Ayatollah Kho'i (d. 1992), one of

[713] Ibid., p. 187.

[714] Ibid.

the most influential clerics in the Shiite world, and one of Ayatollah Khomeini's greatest opponents. Like the majority of the clerics, Ayatollah Kho'i strongly opposed Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas on the Islamic state in general and the governance of the jurist in particular. Kho'i objected to the political role that Ayatollah Khomeini had in mind for the Islamic jurist, and he believed that all Islamic jurists should have a share in authority, not just one or a few. In couplet 49 the poet refers to 1978, when Farah Diba, the Shah's wife, flew to Najaf where Kho'i resided to ask for his help in calming the opposition to the Shah. On this occasion, which was also attended by Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Kho'i gave a ring to the Empress, who in her turn handed it to the Shah. Kho'i strongly condemned the opposition to the Shah and defended him on many occasions. In their public speeches and statements, Kho'i and Ayatollah Khomeini condemned one another in a most offensive way. Ayatollah Kho'i was only one of the clerics who criticised Ayatollah Khomeini's politicisation of Islam. In general, the clergy were aloof from all political participation. Ayatollah Khomeini was one of the few clerics who promoted a political reading of Islam.[715]

In couplet 48, Khorsandi draws attention to the Shah's use of state money to give extremely high salaries to CIA informants. Couplet 51 refers to the large amounts of money he wasted on the newest tanks and other military equipment, while many Iranian people lived in poor conditions. In both couplets, Khorsandi places Ayatollah Khomeini in opposition to the Shah as the 'Shadow of God.' This title has been used by various Persian kings to highlight their semi-divine role as the representative of God on earth. The contrasting pair of the Ayatollah and Zellollâh (sign of God and shadow of God) in couplet 45, was a popular antithesis in the literature of the constitutional period (1905-1908). In an attempt to undermine the power of the state (*dowlat*) and to promote more political participation for the people (*mellat*), constitutionalists purposely created antagonistic camps such as *mellat-dowlat* and *Ayatollah-Zellollâh*. The separation of religion from state, which the constitutionalist promoted, resulted in a dissociation of the clergy from the governmental system. The clergy were now presented as the 'leaders of the people' instead of the 'protectors of the state.' By contrasting the Zellollâh (Shah) to the Ayatollahs, constitutionalist writers sought to undermine the sovereignty of the Shah. Khorsandi has used this image in the same way, by making the Shah say, "If he is the Sign of God (Ayatollah), okay, I accept this, but must he piss on the Shadow of God?" The poet gives the impression that the Shah would have allowed

[715] B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, pp. 84, 141, 151, 158, 159 and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 81.

Ayatollah Khomeini to be in power, if only he could still be called the Shadow of God and accepted as such.[716]

It appears from couplets 53 and 54 that the Shah cannot look objectively at the people. He divides the nation into two camps: the left and the right. There is nothing in between. In the following couplets God responds to the Shah's gibberish:

55	God said: Be quiet, you fool! I have never seen a king more stupid than you.	خدا فرمود، ساکت باش، ابله! ندیدم ازتو ابله‌تر شهنشه
56	Not all who were not on the left, were in the CIA, Not all the leftist activists were Godless.	نه هرکه چپ نشد،عضو سیا بود نه هرکه "چپ‌گرا" شد، بی‌خدا بود
57	It's not remarkable that you do not know me, It's in the nature of kings not to know God.	مرا نشناخت نازتو، عجب نیست خدا نشناسی شاهانطبیع است
58	In accordance with the diplomatic norms, you only know your own boss.	تو برطبق اصول دیپلماسی فقط ارباب خود را می‌شناسی
59	You were never left, or right, You followed the path your boss desired.	نه ازچپ رفته‌ای هرگز، نه از راست رهی رفتی که ارباب تو می‌خواست
60	Because of him, you got so much power. You wrapped a cord around the people.	به دست او، به این قدرت رسیدی طناب از گرده ملت کشیدی
61	You sit in this position at his command, You have broken the pens of your opponents.	به امراو بر این مسند نشستی قلم‌های مخالف را شکستی
62	At his command you've become an enemy of Palestine, And given oil and gas to Israel.	به حکم او شدی خصم فلسطین به اسرائیل دادی نفت و بنزین
63	It's not with petroleum that you shed the blood of the people but with the force of a bullet from the barrel of your gun.	نه نفت است این، که با زور گلوله نمودی خون مردم توی لوله
64	The earth is died red with the blood of the people, The homeland has become like a bloodbath.	زمین از خون مردم، لاله گون شد وطن، یک پارچه حمام خون شد
65	For the sake of pleasing your bosses, You have done an abundance of things, O king of the butchers.	از این خوش خدمتی‌ها بهر ارباب فراوان کرده‌ای، ای شاه قصاب

[716] For a discussion on the antithesis Zellollâh-Ayatollah during the constitutional period see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Refashioning Iran: Language and Culture during the Constitutional Revolution," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 3-4, 1990, pp. 96-97.

God is not surprised that the Shah cannot find out who He really is, since it's in the nature of kings not to know God (couplet 57). Here Khorsandi criticises monarchy as an institution as well as the Shah. The poet condemns him for focusing only on his boss (America), again pointing at the master-servant relationship the Shah had with this country, this time comparing him to a dog that has been chained by his boss and has to follow his orders. In couplet 63 and 64, the poet responds to historical facts, when he speaks of the day on which "the homeland has become like a bloodbath." The reference is to the slaughter of thousands of Iranian demonstrators on Jale Square in Tehran, on September 8th 1977, which is also known as Black Friday.[717] The poet harshly condemns the Shah and America for this massacre, saying that the Shah, "the king of the butchers," launched this bloody attack just to please his boss America. The reproaches of the poet towards the Shah in couplets 58-66, of being much too dependent on America and on its allies, reflect the general attitude of Iranians to Mohammad Reza Shah in the late 1970s. Like Khorsandi in this poem, Ayatollah Khomeini was also very clear about his dislike of the Shah and his bond with America. In the long set of speeches that he gave in Neauphle-le-Château from October 11th to November 11th in 1978, Ayatollah Khomeini explained in clear-cut language his objections to the Shah's interior and foreign policies. Ayatollah Khomeini's words were relayed by his followers to all parts of the world. In his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini argued that, since the beginning of the foreign presence in Iran some 300 years ago, the main intention of the 'imperialists,' has been to get hold of Iran's natural resources and to set up settlements in strategic Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini blamed the Shah for allowing these foreign forces to dominate the country. As Ayatollah Khomeini sarcastically said in one of his statements, "Iran has suffered under a government which has handed over the whole of the country's dignity and respect to the oil-devourers on a silver platter."[718] Ayatollah Khomeini had many problems with the Shah and his foreign allies using the resources of the country and living in extraordinary luxury, while the nation was suffering from hunger and hardship. In his speeches Ayatollah Khomeini sharply condemned the Shah's role in world politics, depicting him as the puppet of the West, in particular of America, in their war for oil and gas. Ayatollah Khomeini divided the regime of the Shah into three parties: the Shah, the army and America, who were all strongly dependent on one another.[719] He blamed America for turning Iran into "a consumer market for

[717] For the uprising on Black Friday see V. Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, pp. 149, 151, 178 and B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah*, p. 188.

[718] R. Khomeini, *Kauthar*, p. 78.

[719] Ibid., p. 147.

American surplus goods."[720] He also blamed the international community for not condemning the Shah for his involvement in the massacre on Jale Square. The failure of Western countries to rebuke the Shah for killing these people, and violating human rights, was evidence for Ayatollah Khomeini that the Shah was cooperating with the West.[721] Khorsandi's portrayal of the Shah's dependence on America fits completely with the picture of the Shah's relation to the West that Ayatollah Khomeini presented in his speeches.

The following couplets say that the people's time of oppression at the hands of the Shah has now, by God's will, "come to an end":

67	Oh king, now that your tail has been cut, The time of the power of the people has come.	کنون ای پادشاه دم بریده زمان قدرت مردم رسیده
68	Exile, exile is a pain without a remedy, The time of deceiving the people has come to an end.	"غریبی، درد بی درمان غریبی" سر آمد دوره‌ی مردم فریبی
69	Those sweet days have come to an end, When you spoke the words of faith and religion.	به پایان آمد آن ایام شیرین که می گفتی سخن از مذهب و دین
70	You have killed thousands of people in a clever way, And did not neglect to visit holy places.	هزاران قتل کردی با مهارت ولی غافل نبودی از زیارت
71	You were only a Muslim when it was necessary, Suddenly you went to Mashad.	مسلمان می‌شدی در وقت لازم به مشهد می شدی یک‌باره عازم
72	You fooled even God, When you called yourself Our shadow!	تو دست انداختی حتی خدارا خودت را خوانده بودی سایه ما!
73	Not one moment did you think that perhaps, God would not be pleased with these actions.	نکردی لحظه‌ای فکرش که شاید از این کارت، خدا را خوش نیاید
74	Now, O worthless shadow of mine, The people do not want my shadow.	کنون، ای سایه بی مایه من نمی خواهند مردم، سایه من
75	Both old and young are telling me: "Oh Lord, remove this shadow from us."	همی گویند با من پیر و برنا که یا رب، سایه بر گیر از سرما

In this part God criticises the Shah for deceiving God. According to Him the Shah has abused his title 'Shadow of God' for he was "only a Muslim when it was necessary." In couplets 74 and 75 the poet implies that all Iranians wanted the Shah to resign. In the poem, Khorsandi presents the Iranian nation as being in deep need of a person who is sincere, who does not fool the people or God. Iranians want to identify with their leader and they can

[720] Ibid., p. 78.

[721] Ibid., p. 29.

certainly not mirror themselves on the Shah, who is almost a stranger to them with his focus on the West and on luxury goods.

In the last part of the poem Khorsandi introduces Ayatollah Khomeini again:

76	Then God turned to Khomeini and ordered him, To blow gently on the poor creature.	خدا رو بر خمینی کرد و فرمود بکن فوتی بر این بیچاره موجود
77	Following God's orders, Khomeini blew a quick breath at the Shah.	خمینی در پی دستور "الله" به شاهنشاه فوتی کرد کوتاه
78	A typhoon arose, fierce and turbulent. The typhoon reached his honour the Shah.	یکی طوفان بر آمد، تند و بی‌تاب حضور شاه، طوفان شد شرفیاب
79	Out of fear the king of 'justice,' Constantly screamed in his bed.	زوحشت پادشاه "دادگستر" مرتب "داد" می‌زد توی بستر
80	As he was climbing down from his bed, The respected king became unlucky.	به بالا پرت شد از جانب تخت شهنشاه عظیم الشأن بدبخت
81	With the back of his head he hit the wall hard, And woke from that deep sleep.	سرش خورد ازعقب، محکم به دیوار از آن خواب گران گردید بیدار
82	He did not see Khomeini there, nor God, His ears heard only this sound:	ندید آنجا خمینی، یا خدارا فقط گوشش شنیدی این صدارا!
83	"Ask for mercy for your own bad acts! And say your last words, King of Kings!"	بکن تو به زاعمال بد خویش! بخوانای شاهشاهان، اشهد خویش!

In these last couplets, God asks Ayatollah Khomeini to help Him to remove the Shah, by blowing gently on him. Ayatollah Khomeini's prominent role becomes particularly clear in this last scene. The sharp difference between the Shah's weakness and Ayatollah Khomeini's strength is such that a gentle breath from Ayatollah Khomeini blows the Shah from his bed (which is also his throne). Throughout the poem Khorsandi shows the great discrepancy between the two characters and the monarchical and theocratic systems they represent. In the eyes of the poet, Ayatollah Khomeini, unlike the Shah, wants the best for the people and for Iran. He is a role model for the people: pious, strong and independent. The Shah on the other hand, is haughty, selfish and totally dependent on his boss America.

6.2.2.1.3 Discussion

Khorsandi's satirical "Dream of the Shah" clearly reflects the socio-political situation in Iran just before the Islamic government was established. The poem illustrates how secular intellectuals could be impressed by the courageous performance of Ayatollah Khomeini, a religious leader who seemed to be the complete opposite of the oppressive, egocentric, un-Islamic, materialistic and authoritarian Mohammad Reza Shah. Khorsandi's poem also touches on the religious climate in Iran under the Shah, where some Ayatollahs, such as Ayatollah Kho'i, sided with the Shah while others, in this case Ayatollah Khomeini, were wary of any cooperation with him.[722] Another main theme is the poet's rejection of the monarchical system. The poet has adopted the antithesis between the Shadow of God and the Sign of God, which was popular in constitutional poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century, to contrast God-given kingship from a government with a divine mandate, which was to be dominated by the clergy. By adopting this antithesis, the poet joined a debate that had been going on since the Islamic period began, on how to integrate the Persian kingly tradition into the Islamic tradition. By making fun of the Shah's titles and questioning the benefits of being a king, in couplet 32, Khorsandi attacks the monarchical institution and devalues it in comparison to a theocratic system. The fact that the poet associates Ayatollah Khomeini with the Divine in his poem, and imagines how angrily God would respond to the Shah's foolish behaviour, shows that he is not just opposed to monarchy, he supports Ayatollah Khomeini and a theocratic system.

Khorsandi's appraisal of Ayatollah Khomeini in this poem illustrates the Iranian people's susceptibility to religious sentiments, even after a long period of Westernisation. Under the Pahlavi Regime the power of the cleric had been greatly diminished. Once Reza Khan crowned himself the new Shah of Iran in 1925, he implemented some important changes that had major implications for the religious institutions. In his attempt to create a nation-state, Reza Shah brought the educational system, which had been dominated by the clergy, under state control. Reza Shah created a sharp distinction between religious and secular education. The judicial apparatus, which had again been dominated mainly by the clergy, also came under state control. Although the law was still based to a great extent on Islamic law, many clerics lost their jobs as jurists. Two changes to the laws had huge consequences for the religious class. The Conscription Law of 1925 meant that all men were

[722] See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 192-196 and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 81.

forced to join the national army, while the Dress Code of 1928 forbade Iranians to wear any sort of culturally or religiously defined clothing. Clerics and religious scholars and students who had passed studies in higher religious education were exempt from these two laws, but not those religious preachers who had not taken higher religious education. The demarcation which the Pahlavi government made between high-ranking 'educated' clerics and the low-ranking, often uneducated, 'popular' preachers had far-reaching consequences for religious life in Iran. It greatly diminished the power and influence of the popular preachers and allowed a small but well-organised group of Islamic clerics to gain independence from the Pahlavi governance. The 'crème de la crème' of the clergy were allowed a degree of power by the Pahlavi state and were able to develop autonomous institutions and influence. This may have contributed to the a-political stance of leading Ayatollahs such as Ayatollah Kho'i (d. 1936) and Ayatollah Borujerdi (d. 1961). As A. Keshavarzian states, perhaps the highest ranking clerics did not reject the 1925 Conscription Law or the 1928 Dress Code, which did not apply to them, since they wanted to separate the wheat from the chaff, that is, the elite clergy from the less educated popular preachers.[723] When the leading Ayatollah Borujerdi died in 1961, and there was a vacuum of religious authority, Mohammad Reza Shah seized the chance and started his White Revolution. It was also the beginning of a period of harsh oppression for religious groups. During this time of economic, political and social suppression, religious opposition groups headed by Ayatollah Khomeini won sympathy among the middle class. As S.A. Arjomand states "they readily accepted the religious party's portrayal of the Shah as the Anti-Christ and concomitantly took refuge in the comforting discovery of Khomeini as his messianic counter-image (and the only available one)."

Khorsandi's poem demonstrates that he was one of those attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini's promising words. The many historical elements which the poet has adopted and parodied demonstrate how Khorsandi, like many modern and classical poets, has used satire to comment on social and political affairs. Hadi Khorsandi's poetry is entertaining, but at the same time very serious. He wraps up his political messages and calls for justice in hilarious ways. Because of the poetic form, the contents and the use of language, his ideas and poems stick in the mind. Like other satirists, he uses various literary devices to respond to historical

[723] For a discussion of clergy-state relations during the Pahlavi Era see A. Keshavarzian, "Turban or Hat, Seminarian or Soldier: State Building and Clergy Building in Reza Shah's Iran," in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 45(1), 2003, pp. 81-112, and S.A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, pp. 80-87. See also M.M.J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, pp. 108-109.

facts and figures, blending reality with falsity, taking them out of their contexts, to create other perspectives. Khorsandi responds to Mosaddeq's house arrest and adds his own story, in which he makes the Shah apologize for his acts against Mosaddeq, to condemn the Shah's performance. In a satirical way, the poet tells us how the Shah should have dealt with Mosaddeq. Khorsandi also plays with the historical events of 1967 in which the Shah spoke to Cyrus at his tomb, indicating that he had everything under control. Again, the poet adds a new 'chapter' to the story, in which he makes the Shah admit that he is weak and cannot deal with kingship. By taking these historical events from their context, and mixing them with fiction, the poet is able to correct the Shah's behaviour and to highlight its injustice for the reader.

Hyperbole, which Khorsandi uses several times in the poem, is another device which satirists use to influence a reader's perception of historical events or figures. By exaggerating certain features of Mohammad Reza Shah, such as his use of titles, his egocentric behaviour, his excessive expenditures and his approach to political participation, Khorsandi pushes the reader in a certain direction, where he can no longer deny the Shah's multiple defects. He treats Ayatollah Khomeini in the opposite way, presenting him as a saviour and placing him next to God, in a position which cannot be condemned by the reader. In order to contrast Ayatollah Khomeini to the Shah, the poet uses the antithesis Ayatollah ('sign of God') – Zellolah ('shadow of God'). This was a popular antithesis in the poetry of the Constitutional Revolution. He shocks the reader with his vulgar version of this antithesis. ("Must he [Ayatollah] piss on the Shadow of God?") Another way in which Khorsandi creates antagonistic camps is by his use of the antithesis Ruhollah- Zellollah.

The setting of the poem is another device through which satirists, such as Khorsandi, try to influence the reader's perception. Khorsandi jumps forward in time, portraying the Shah, who has fallen from his throne, and who complaints about his destiny, reminiscing about all his 'good' deeds. In a sense, the poet shows the reader that a life without the Shah is possible, that the whole world will be better without his multiple trespasses. The presentation of God and Ayatollah Khomeini at the Shah's bedside illustrates the enormous difference in hierarchy between these persons. While God and Ayatollah Khomeini have a top rank, the Shah is somewhere down there, and even falls to the bottom, after falling from his bed, i.e. throne. Khorsandi purposely moves backward and forward in time, starting with a scene in bed, where the Shah is visited by God and Ayatollah Khomeini, followed by a scene where the Shah has fallen from his throne and again ending with the scene in bed, where the Shah meets Ayatollah Khomeini. By playing with time like this, the poet presents a problem, the tensions between Persian kingship and Divine kingship, that is followed by a scene in which

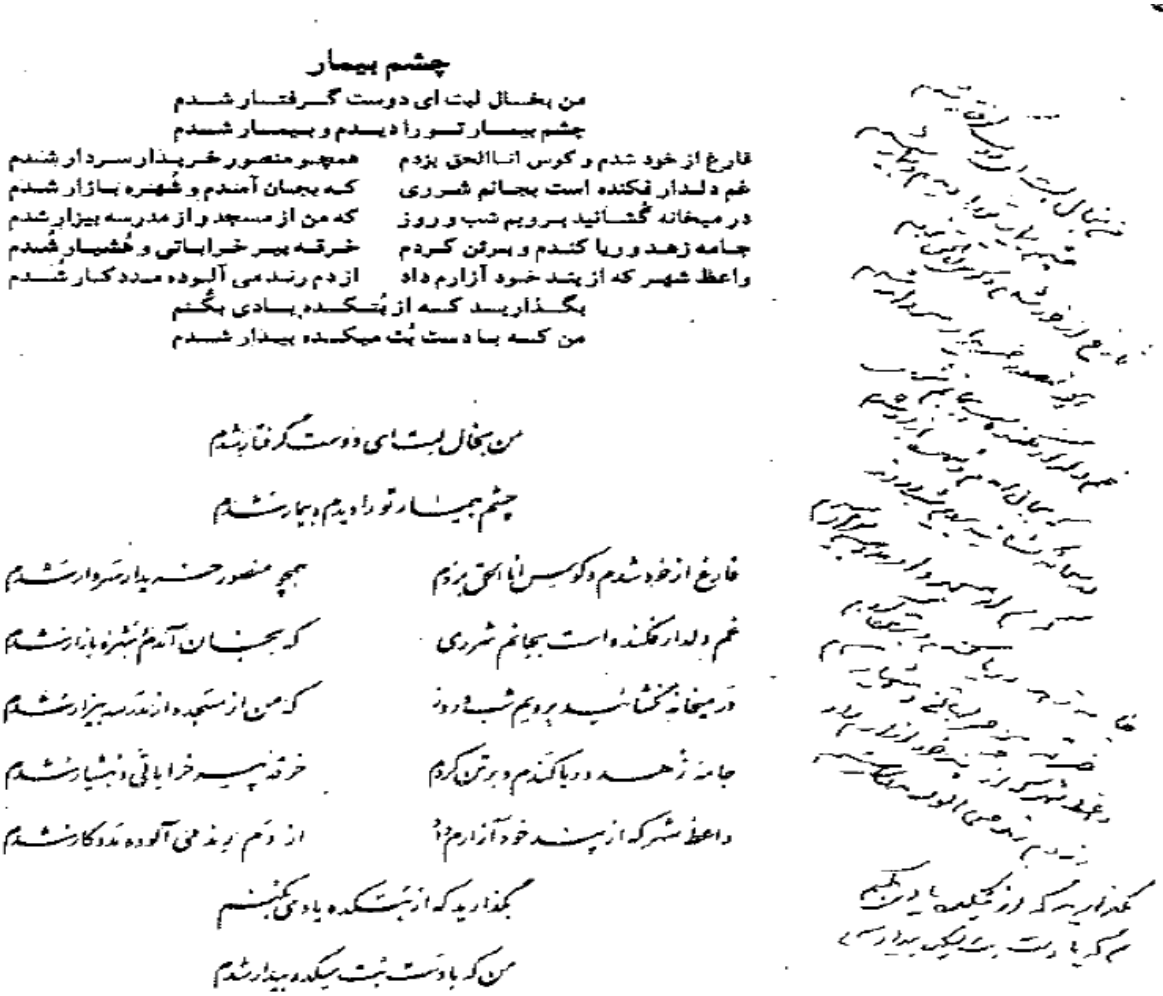
the world is presented as free from all the problems caused by Persian kingship, followed by a scene back-in-time, in which the reader is informed how to achieve this ideal world, i.e. through Ayatollah Khomeini. Satirical poems like these may at first sight look like mere humoristic pieces for entertainment, in which the poet shocks the reader with his vulgar language and absurd and hilarious scenes. However the devices the poet uses, such as hyperbole and antithesis, are well-chosen means to effect a change in the mind of the reader, who perceives reality from a different angle.

6.2.2.2 Khorsandi's Response to Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Although Khorsandi supported Ayatollah Khomeini in "The Dream of the Shah," its publication in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân-e Landan* led to Khorsandi's forced departure from Iran in 1979. One of the main reasons for chosing exile was that Ayatollah Khomeini was initially seen as a mystical and spiritual leader who did not want any political power for clerics. After the Revolution and especially during the Iran-Iraq war, the political power of the clerics increased. Ayatollah Khomeini progressively consolidated his power and position. During this early phase of the Revolution, government, cultural and educational organisations were cleansed from people with anti-Islamic Revolution tendencies. Many were executed and prisoned, while others fled the country. Several revolutionary organisations were established to maintain the ideas of the Islamic Revolution in daily life. Among these organisations were the Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah, who patrolled in the streets to warn or arrest people who would be suspected of an anti-Islamic revolutionary comport. As H. Shahidi indicates, Khorsandi was so much harassed by Hezbollah sympathizers who pleaded for his death, that he had no choice but to leave Iran.[724] Even in London, where he has lived and worked since then, he experienced several attempted assassinations.[725] His strained relations with the Islamic regime of Iran is reflected in his poems and short stories in exile. The tone of these works differs considerably from his earlier writing. Where he had been an active supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini, from 1979 he became one of his most notorious opponents, ridiculing him in poetry and in fictional stories. In 1989, when Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad published one of his father's *ghazal*s in the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân*, Khorsandi composed several critical quatrains in parody form on the poem. Before looking at Khorsandi's parodies, I will analyze the original poem by Ayatollah Khomeini.

[724] H. Shahidi, *Journalism in Iran*, p. 26.

[725] H. Khorsandi, *The Ayatollah and I*, Introduction.



چشم بیمار

من بخـال لبت ای دوست گـرفتـار شـدم
چشم بیمـار تـو را دیـدم و بیمـار شـدم

فارغ از خود شدم و کوس انـاالحق بزدم — همچو منصور خریدار سردار شدم
غم دلدار فکنده است بجانم شرری — که بجان آمدم و شهره بـازار شدم
در میخانه گشـائید بـرویم شب و روز — که من از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدم
جامه زهد و ریا کندم و برتن کردم — خرقـه پیر خـراباتی و هُشیـار شدم
واعظ شهر که از پند خود آزارم داد — از دم رند می آلوده مدد کار شـدم

بگـذارید کـه از بُتکـده یـادی بکُنم
من کـه بـا دست بُت میکـده بیدار شـدم

"Ill Eye"

1. Oh Beloved, I am possessed by the beauty spot above your lip.
   I became ill when I saw your eye.

2. I have become free from myself, I beat the drum of *Ana al-Haqq*.
   Like Mansur I have put my head on the executioner's block.

3. Anguish for the heart-ravisher set my heart on fire,
   so that I was overcome and became the talk of the bazaar.

4. Open the wine-house door for me, night and day,
   for I've turned my back on the mosque and seminary.

5. I cast off the robe of pious hypocrisy, pulled on
   the old dervish cloak of a tavern visitor, and so became sober.

6. The preacher of the town, with his exhortations, caused my illness.
   the breath of the drunken rogue succored me.

7. Allow me to recollect the temple.
   [for] I was woken by the hand of the idol in the tavern.[726]

[726] For Ayatollah Khomeini's ghazal *Cheshm-e Bimâr* see page 142 of his *Divân*.

The Persian text above was printed in *Keyhân* of June 14th 1989, p. 16.

Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* is a typical mystical antinomian poem, containing motifs of wine (*khamriyyât*), antinomian mysticism (*qalandariyyât*) and asceticism (*zohdiyyât*). In this and many of his other *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini presents himself as a mystical lover afflicted by separation from the Beloved. ("Anguish for the heart-ravisher set my heart on fire"). In couplets four and five, Ayatollah Khomeini indicates that, in an attempt to reach the Beloved, he has detached himself from all material goods and religious institutions. Instead, he dwells in the wine-house, praising the Zoroastrian guide on the mystical path, the Magian Elder (referred to here as "the idol in the tavern"), assisted by rogues who, like him, are drunk on wine. In couplet two, in the tradition of antinomian poetry, Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with Mansur Hallâj, the famous mystic who was executed in 922 in Baghdad by the Islamic authorities for proclaiming 'I am the Truth' (*Ana al-Haqq*), implying that he had reached a state of spiritual perfection. In both classic and modern Persian poetry, Mansur Hallâj has become the embodiment of unconditional love, often figuring as the 'lover par excellence' who is willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, for the sake of love.[727]

On June 14th 1989, only eleven days after Ayatollah Khomeini's death, the Iranian newspaper *Keyhân* published this *ghazal* at the request of Ayatollah Khomeini's own son, Ahmad Khomeini.[728] Its publication caused a furor among Iranians in Iran and abroad. Iranians in the Diaspora tended to react with denial and disbelief, since they could not reconcile the unorthodox character of the poem with their own hard experiences at the hands of Ayatollah Khomeini. Ayatollah Khomeini's followers acknowledged its authenticity. Others, including the majority of the reactionary clergy, criticized it. Soon after the publication of this poem, other poems by Ayatollah Khomeini came to light. Many of his later poems were handed over to the editor of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* by people in Ayatollah Khomeini's inner circle or by his supporters. As B. Reinert indicates, many of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems were lost, partly during relocations, but also due to SAVAK raids on Ayatollah Khomeini's property in 1967, during which SAVAK found some of his poems.[729] According to B. Reinert, Ayatollah Khomeini never intended to publish them:

Wahrscheinlich aber liegt der Grund für das Verschwinden seiner vielfach eigenhändig und ohne Kopie aufgeschriebenen Gedichte ohnehin tiefer. Wer an den Früchten seines Geisten hängt, bewahrt

[727] For an analysis of Ayatollah Khomeini's use of Mansur Hallâj, see my analysis in section 3.8 of this study.

[728] See editorial in *Keyhân* of June 14th 1989, p. 16.

[729] See B. Reinert, "Ḫumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte," in *Islamische Grenzen und Grenzübergänge*, Volume 4, Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007, p. 192, note 9.

sie so auf, dass sie nicht ohne weiteres verloren gehen. Ḫumainī war jedoch offenbar das Erlebnis seines Dichtens selbst wichtiger als dessen vorzeigbare Resultate. Man fragt sich, ob er damit überhaupt jemand ansprechen wollte, oder ob er eigentlich nur für sich schrieb.[730]

Probably there is a deeper reason for the loss of his poems, which were often written in his own hand without making any copies. Someone who values the fruits of his mind, preserves them in such a way that they are not easily lost. But for Ayatollah Khomeini, apparently, the experience of composing poems was more important than publishing them. One has to wonder whether he wanted to communicate with anyone through his poems, or whether he rather wrote for himself. In 1993 all these poems were collected in one volume of collected poems (*Divân*), consisting of some 1535 couplets in various poetical genres.

Among those who responsed to *Cheshm-e Bimâr* was Hadi Khorsandi, who before 1979 had supported Ayatollah Khomeini, but who became a fierce opponent of him after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He composed various *robâʿi's* in parody form, making slight changes to Ayatollah Khomeini's original couplets. What follows are my translations of several of these satirical poems:

I'm possessed by the beauty spot above the Beloved's lips,	«بر خال لب دوست گرفتار شدم »
but when I saw his eyes I fell sick.	لاکن چشمش دیدم و بیمار شدم
I've become happy like you, who have become happy in the bazaar.	مشعوف چو از گرمی بازار شدم
I've become without a religion, a dictator and a blood-drinker.	لامذهب و دیکتاتوز و خونخوار شدم.[731]

Khorsandi composed his *robâʿi*s in the same meter and rhyme as Ayatollah Khomeini used in his poem, to ensure they would be read as a response to Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal*. He uses the same antinomian themes, but adds an element of parody and satire that ridicules mystical motifs, metaphors and imagery, and the fact that they come from Ayatollah Khomeini. In the quatrain above, Khorsandi comments on at least two aspects of Ayatollah Khomeini's poem. First, the title of Ayatollah Khomeini's poem and its first line contain a phrase that literally means 'ill eye' (*cheshm-e bimâr*) but conventionally refers to the Beloved's magical eyes whose glance lures the lover to fall deeply in love.[732] Khorsandi makes fun of the convention by taking the phrase literally. Secondly, Khorsandi ridicules Ayatollah Khomeini's frequent use of the word *lâken* ('but') in his public appearances. Many

[730] Ibid., p. 193.

[731] H. Khorsandi, *Āyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, p. 110.

[732] For an analysis of the magic quality of the Beloved's eye see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "Magic in Classical Persian Amatory Literature," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. I, 1999, pp. 71-97.

Iranians made fun of Ayatollah Khomeini's excessive use of this word in a clerical version of the regional accent of Qom. By adding the word 'but' to the second hemistich in the first couplet, Khorsandi implies that the illness of which he is speaking differs from what Ayatollah Khomeini is saying, and that this is a negative experience. When Ayatollah Khomeini says 'I became ill,' he means it in the sense it has in mystical poetry, referring to the 'spiritual intoxication' of the mystical lover. But Khorsandi uses the modern and literal meaning of the term illness to ridicule Ayatollah Khomeini.

In the quatrain, Khorsandi also responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's reference to the annihilation of the soul (*fanâ*) in the Beloved. Ayatollah Khomeini implies in his poem that he has annihilated his ego ("I have become free from myself"), but Khorsandi states that he has not set aside his ego, but rather his religion. Instead of perfecting his soul by losing himself completely in the Beloved, Ayatollah Khomeini's love-sickness has corrupted his soul, turning him into a 'blood-drinker,' a 'dictator' and an apostate (*kâfer*). It can also be read as saying that since Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, many people have lost faith in their religion and have become corrupt. Khorsandi is probably referring to Ayatollah Khomeini's inclusion of politics in religion, to form a theocratic political system. Indirectly Khorsandi is responding to Ayatollah Khomeini placing himself at the top of the political hierarchy, by incorporating the mystical (and unorthodox) doctrine of the perfect man (*ensân-e kâmel*) into his theory of 'the governance of the jurist,' so allowing an ordinary human being who has, in the eyes of the mystics, become a 'perfect' person to represent the twelfth Imam during his absence. In another *robâʿi* Khorsandi responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's use of love mysticism, saying:

With a kiss that Beloved has sewed up my lips, sewed up my lips.	آن یار ببوسه ای لبم دوخت که دوخت
With the flame of love he has burnt my soul, burnt my soul.	با شعلهٔ عشق ِ جان من سوخت که سوخت
Then he unlawfully hit me on the head with a stone, with a stone.	آنگه بسرم سنگ جفاکوفت که کوفت
Like a glass he has taught me to break, to break.	چون شیشه بمن شکستن آموخت که موخت.[733]

In this *robâʿi* the poet says that Ayatollah Khomeini's 'kisses' have 'sewed up' his mouth and the flame of love has destructively burnt his soul. Khorsandi turns the symbolic pain of the mystical lover, of which Ayatollah Khomeini speaks in his third couplet ("Anguish for the heart-ravisher had set my heart on fire") into a real physical pain in his parody.

[733] H. Khorsandi, *Āyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, p. 111.

Khorsandi blames Ayatollah Khomeini for distracting the people with his 'words of love,' while in the end nothing was left of their pleasure (*lezzat*) and cheerfulness (*khoshbâsh'*) and 'kicks' were all the people received. According to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini has been able to lure the people to support his goal, by using concepts from love mysticism such as 'love' and 'union.' Khorsandi's eyes were opened when he realized that Ayatollah Khomeini later used less peaceful means to keep the Iranians loyal to him. The poet connects Ayatollah Khomeini to the 'unlawful' and 'unequal' judicial and legal system in Iran twice. He refers to the fact that Iranians were often punished by the government, while their guilt had not (yet) been proven in a trial. As W. Floor indicates, judicial courts in Iran are not objective, often ignoring human and legal rights.[734]

In the following quatrain Khorsandi also refers to the corruption of Iranian society under Ayatollah Khomeini, where the time of equality has ended:[735]

It's a pity the time of equality has come to an end.	افسوس که شد دورهٔ یکرنگی ختم
That the beautiful days of jokes and happiness have come to an end.	ایام قشنگ شوخی و شنگی ختم
That love and union and pleasure and happiness,	آن عشق و وصال و لذ ت و خوشباشی
started with a kiss and ended with a kick.	با بوسه شد آغاز و به آردنگی ختم.[736]

The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini has used words deriving from love mysticism, such as union and love, to get popular support, but what "started with a kiss … ended with a kick." While many Iranians were at first very much attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini's words, they were later appalled when they found that the regime he promoted was less peaceful than it seemed. This sentiment can also be noticed in this parody by Khorsandi.

[734] See W. Floor, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Judicial and Legal Systems v. udicial System in the 20th Century. See also *Final Report of the Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, E/CN. 4/1993/41 E/CN. 4/2002/42.

[735] For the violation of the legal system by governmental officers see W. Floor's article in *Encylopaedia Iranica*, under Judicial and Legal Systems v. Judicial System in the 20th Century.

[736] H. Khorsandi, *Āyehā-ye Irāni*, Los Angeles: Zax, 1993, pp. 111.

As the following quatrain indicates, Khorsandi is angry not only at Ayatollah Khomeini but also at those Iranians who supported him once he was in power, to secure their own positions:

I've seen those who cursed the sheikh and	آنانکه به شیخ ٍ فحش بد میدادند
constantly flung foul language at his head,	دشنام رکیک ٍ بی عدد میدادند
to get their possessions back, give him baskets of flowers as a sign of respect.	دیدم پی پس گرفتن مال و منالگل خدمت او سبد سبد میدادند.[737]

6.2.3 An anonymous Satire on Ayatollah Khomeini's Poetry

Some poets in the Diaspora who responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry wished to stay anonymous. One example is the following parody on Ayatollah Khomeini's *Cheshm-e Bimâr*, composed in 1989:

1	[If even] the city's preacher [the Āyatullāh] has headed to the wine-seller	واعظ شهر سوی خانه خمار شدست
	How difficult this makes the job of the guardians of morality and the police!	کار بر محتسب و شحنه عجب زار شدست
2	What a lasso is my beloved's hair that even The prayer bead carrying ascetic is ensnared!	چه کمندیست سر زلف نگارم که درآن زاهد سبحه بکف نیز گرفتار شدست
	Tell him to throw down his prayer beads if truthfully!	گو که تسبیح به خاک افکند ار از سر صدق
3	This murderer of the young Magi wants to put on the sacred girdle.	قاتل مغبچهگان طالب زنر شدست
	The (wine) cup breaking shaykh has not broken his old repentance	شیخ پیمانه شکن توبه دیرین نشکست
4	He talks in delirium since he fell sick.	هزیان گوید از ان روز که بیمار شدست
	Don't listen to his delirium, don't accept a wolf's recantation,	هزیانش مشنو توبه گرگان میزیر
	For in his trap two hundred flocks [thousands] have fallen	که بدین دام وسد گله گرفتار شدست
5	He sees his own face in every liquid; and with a new trick	نقش خود دیده بهرآب و به نیرنگی نو
	That seeker wants to use the mirror cup [for his own ends]	طالب آن قده آینه کردار شدست
6	After shedding the blood of a thousand Mansurs	از پس ریختن خون هزاران منصور
	He deceptively pretends to claim his own place on the gallows	خود به تزویر خریدار سر دار شدست

[737] Ibid., p. 112.

7	The oppressor who sewed up the lips of bowl and wine drinker Now is claiming to love the mole on the upper lip of the beloved	آن ستمگر که لب ساغر و ساقی می دوخت هلیا مدعیه خال لب یار شدست
8	The gay gathering of the drunkards of "Aren't I"won't let him in No matter how much he has come to despise mosque and seminary	بزم مستان آلستش ندهد راه ورود گرچه از مسجد و از مدرسه بیزار شدست
9	He is not worthy of the drunkards who hold suffering of the world on their shoulders He who is so despised in the eyes of all the fellows of wisdom.[738]	لایق صحبت رندان بلاکش نبود آنکه در چشمه همه اهل خرد خار شدست

The anonymous poet has written his counter poem in the exact same metre as the original one by Ayatollah Khomeini, namely -0--/00--/00- (*ramal-e mothamman-e makhbun-e mahdhuf*), adding two additional couplets. To ensure his poem would be read as a response (*javâb*) to Ayatollah Khomeini's poem, the poet wrote in the third person, while Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* is in the first person. Like Khorsandi, the poet uses the antinomian symbols and images that Ayatollah Khomeini used in his poem, but places them in another context to criticize Ayatollah Khomeini.

Couplet one responds in a satiric fashion to the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with unorthodox figures such as wine drinkers, but established a regime that enforced Islamic laws of dress and behavior, such as the ban on drinking wine. As A.A. Seyed-Gohrab has indicated, the wine motif has retained a prominent position in both classical and modern Persian poetry, although Islam forbids the consumption of alcohol. It has been used by Persian poets in medical, religious and mystical contexts.[739] To ridicule Ayatollah Khomeini, the anonymous poet takes the wine motif literally, pointing out that those who did drink were punished by "the guardians of morality and the police." The poet is appalled that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with the wine drinkers while, as he states in couplet seven, in reality Ayatollah Khomeini was an "oppressor who sewed up the lips of bowl and wine drinker."

In couplet two, the poet responds to the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini in the first couplet of his poem claims to have been spiritually intoxicated after having witnessed the Beloved. The poet believes that the mystical state of *bimâri*, which Ayatollah Khomeini

[738]The translation comes from M.M.J. Fischer and M. Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural dialogues in postmodernity and tradition*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 453-454.

[739] See A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, "The Rose and the Wine: Dispute as a Literary Device in Classical Persian Literature," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 47, Issue I, 2014, pp. 69-85.

pretends to have reached, is merely a trick to fool the people ("Tell him to throw down his prayer beads if truthfully").

In couplet three the anonymous poet responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's praise of the Magi ("Oh my friend, I have become possessed by the beauty spot above your lip."), who in mystical poetry is often presented as an idealized beauty, reflecting his perfection on all levels. In his response, the anonymous poet depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as the "murderer of the young Magi who wants to put on the sacred girdle," condemning him for his 'peaceful' and 'tolerant' words, while Zoroastrians had hard times under his rule. In addition, the poet believes that Ayatollah Khomeini is not worthy of wearing the sacred girdle, which mystics who have reached perfection are allowed to wear. The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini has only used concepts from love mysticism to place himself above others, claiming that he had reached a state of perfection.

In couplet four the poet, like Khorsandi, turns the mystical concept of *bimâri*, to which Ayatollah Khomeini refers, into a physical sickness. The poet believes that Ayatollah Khomeini's illness is not caused by his longing for God but is rather a real physical disease. The poet is convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini merely uses beautiful mystical language to distract people, like a wolf who distracts people by showing a fake 'repentance.'[740] According to the anonymous poet thousands of people have fallen in his trap. So does the poet refer to *bimâri*, which in a mystical context entails the 'love-madness' of the infatuated mystical lover that has witnessed God, but which the poet in the case of Ayatollah Khomeini defines as a 'delirium', (*divânegi*), a real physical disease that has nothing to do with the mystic that has reached spiritual perfection.

In couplet five the poet refers to an 1978 incident, where Iranians claimed that they had seen the face of Ayatollah Khomeini in the moon.[741] The news, which spread rapidly through the country with the help of the media, was soon confirmed by millions of Iranians who claimed that they had also seen his face. The incident added to Ayatollah Khomeini's image of being a saint, by far trespassing the qualities of an ordinary religious scholar. Up to today many Iranians have responded to this incident, some positively and other negatively, claiming that these rumors have been falsely spread to popularize Ayatollah Khomeini. One

[740] Comes from the Persian expression "*towbe-ye gorg marg ast*"("the repentance of a wolf is its death"). See M.M.J. Fischer, and M. Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*, p. 453.

[741] See A. Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution*, New York: Alder and Alder Publishers, 1986, p. 238; Y. Richard, *Shi'ite Islam*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 197.

of the responses came from the famous poet Nader Naderpur (d. 2000) who composed and published the satirical poem *Khomeini dar Mâh, Khâtami dar Mâhvâre* (Khomeini on the Moon, Khatami on a Satellite) in the Iranian Newspaper *Keyhân*. In the couplet the poet also criticizes Ayatollah Khomeini's appropriation of Mansur Hallâj (d. 922). In the tradition of antinomian poets, Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with this mystic, who was executed for claiming to have attained spiritual perfection. The poet cannot believe that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies with this 'unorthodox' person, when in reality he oppressed those who deviated from Islamic Law: he has shed "the blood of a thousand Mansurs."

In couplet six the poet responds to Ayatollah Khomeini's adoption of the figure of Hallâj in his poem and condemns Ayatollah Khomeini's identification with this unorthodox figure in his poetry, while in reality he severely punished all those that trespassed the Islamic rules and prescriptions.

In couplet seven the anonymous poet defines Ayatollah Khomeini as an 'oppressor' (*zâlem*), an epithet that Ayatollah Khomeini applied often, to the West, the Arabs, the Sunnites or the Iranian royal family. The anonymous poet tellingly turns it on Ayatollah Khomeini himself. While Ayatollah Khomeini presents himself as a tolerant wine-drinking mystic, the poet depicts him as the total opposite, a cruel oppressor who harshly punished those who broke Islamic law.

In couplet eight the poet again comments on Ayatollah Khomeini's identification with 'wine-drinking' mystics who have turned their back at religious institutions. The poet implies that Ayatollah Khomeini will never be accepted by these sort of mystics.

Although the poet chooses to be anonymous, in the last couplet of the poem, where Persian poets traditionally leave their pen-name (*takhallos*), the poet suggests his own background when he speaks of Ayatollah Khomeini being "despised in the eyes of all the fellows of wisdom." [742] The term implies that the anonymous poet must be a person with a philosophical approach to Islam. It is clear that the poet is one of these "fellows of wisdom," that does not accept Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical pretentions at all.

[742] See J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2), under Takhallus ii In the Sense of Pen-Name. 3See also J. Rypka, *History of Iranian literature*, Dordrecht: Springer, 1968, p. 99.

Conclusion

The content of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry has led to many doubts about the authenticity of his poetry collection. Many Iranians could not rhyme the unorthodox topics in his poems with the Ayatollah Khomeini they knew in the political scene, where he often presented himself as an uncompromising Islamic leader. Only a small group of intimates was familiar with the mystical inclinations of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Also the responses in Diaspora were not positive. We have seen how both Khorsandi and the anonymous poet have removed all mystical and metaphoric values from Ayatollah Khomeini's original poem. While Ayatollah Khomeini wrote his *ghazal* in the classical style and terminology, making use of a wide range of mystical metaphors, both Khorsandi and the anonymous poet in their parodies purposely use these metaphors in a literal sense, trying to correspond them to the hard realities of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime. The form parody enables the poets to remove Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* from its classical context, moving it to the modern period. Both poets depict Ayatollah Khomeini as a sick person, who used concepts from love mysticism to distract people. Both criticize Ayatollah Khomeini for presenting himself as a tolerant mystic, wary of orthodox institutions, while in reality he paved the way for the implementation of an Islamic governance where people were forced to live according to strict Islamic laws.

Khorsandi's satire on *Cheshm-e Bimâr* indicates that, according to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini has turned concepts deriving from love mysticism into means of destruction. In these *robâ'i*s of the late 1980s, Khorsandi presents Ayatollah Khomeini as a cruel oppressor who loves to spill blood. Also in his satirical essays Khorsandi often depicts Ayatollah Khomeini as a blood-thirsty person. In the second part of his satirical story collection *Âyehâ-ye Irâni*, which is called *Part Two; in which Everyone waits for the Imam to die*, Khorsandi refers to the rumors which spread through Iran in 1982, stating that the war with Iraq would soon come to an end. In the name of the "Supreme War Council," Khorsandi satirically says: "There are reports upon hearing the news that the war has come to an end, Imam Khomeini has had a heart attack and has been hospitalized at the Heart Hospital's Queen Mother Suite. The Imam's doctors have prescribed that fighting should be resumed along the country's western borders within 24 hours".[743] In a satiric fashion Khorsandi implies that Ayatollah Khomeini enjoined war-making, depicting him as cruel dictator who only can be prevented from dying when the blood of his people flows. In another satirical

[743] H. Khorsandi, Ā*yehā-ye Irāni,* p. 78.

story, Khorsandi has the main character in the story, the Supreme War Council, say that "the valiant, shroud-wearing Islamic Revolutionary Guards shall never let the Iraqi forces pull out of the areas they have occupied in Iran, and even should they leave Iran, the Islamic Republic will continue the war until Saddam Hussein is overthrown, the Palestine War has begun, Israel is bombed, Saudi Arabia is destroyed, King Hossein of Jordan has fallen, King Hassan of Morocco is punished, Soviet forces have left Afghanistan, Poland's internal problems are settled, the crisis in Bulgaria is over, and the British Labour Party's leadership problem is resolved".[744] In other words, Khorsandi satirically says that the war will never be over, since every time the Iranian regime finds a new reason for prolonging the war. In another satirical story Khorsandi states that 'they must shed blood these youth as an offering, for the sake of bloodshed they must shed blood. For the sake of all they must shed. It has blessings for us, blood does, for everybody".[745]

Satirical story collections such *Âyehâ-ye Irâni* help us to understand the general message in Hadi Khorsandi's exile poetry and in the poem analysed above. According to him, Ayatollah Khomeini used the mystical concepts of love and union to mobilize people for his political agenda. According to Khorsandi, Ayatollah Khomeini was only out for power and for world-leadership and made use of mystical poetry, which has played an important role in Iranian culture since the ninth century, to attract people. While the poet was a fervent supporter of Ayatollah Khomeini at first, and was also sensitive to his love messages, this poem demonstrates that Khorsandi is convinced that Ayatollah Khomeini soon set aside his peaceful means, once he came to power, and that he from then on used more violent means to attain mass obedience.

The message which Khorsandi conveys in his poem is also shared by the anonymous poet. Like Khorsandi, he has made use of parody, taking Ayatollah Khomeini's original *ghazal* from its context, enabling him to depict Ayatollah Khomeini as a cruel oppressor, who distracts the people with his mystical claims. So does the anonymous poet make fun of the rumour which spread in 1978 that Ayatollah Khomeini's face could be seen in the moon, presenting it as part of his distracting games. It seems as if both poets have a problem with the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini identifies himself with the mystical lover, placing himself in the tradition of poets such as Hâfez and Khayyâm, who are the pride of the Iranians. It would be interesting to find out how Iranians in Diaspora would respond to the same poem, not

[744] Ibid., p. 27.

[745] Ibid., p. 60.

knowing that it had been composed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Hopefully this question can be answered in the near future by further research.

The responses of Ayatollah Khomeini's followers on the other hand, show a purely mystical reading. Ayatollah Khomeini's followers have put every effort in proving that his poems should be placed in a mystical context, by adopting 'mystical' lectures from Ayatollah Khomeini addressed to his daughter-in-law or by composing a mystical glossary. The charges that the poems could not have been written by Ayatollah Khomeini are set aside by multiple references to his mystical works from the early 1940s. Like in the case of Khayyâm's poetry, which at the instigation of the Islamic government of Iran has been re-interpreted and presented as mystical poetry while it for ages had been criticized for its blasphemous nature, Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry in these two books is presented in a similar way. The question is why his followers want to place Ayatollah Khomeini in a mystical context? Why would Ahmad Ayatollah Khomeini, his own son, publish a mystical poem of his father in the daily newspaper Keyhân? And why would Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, the daughter-in-law of Ayatollah Khomeini, comment publicly on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry?

The fact that Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i allows Iranians to peak into her personal life, by depicting the mystical experiences she shared with Ayatollah Khomeini, enlargens the saintly status which has been projected on Ayatollah Khomeini by his followers since his appearance in the political arena. By merely focusing on the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian government, whether purposely or accidentally, overlooks Ayatollah Khomeini's political decisions, which in some cases had far-reaching consequences for Iran and for its people. The few references to Ayatollah Khomeini's political actions that can be found in these books, are all placed in a mystical context. Legenhausen interprets the Islamic revolution that was headed by Ayatollah Khomeini as "the exoteric dimension of the impetus to reveal Islamic mysticism to the public".[746] As Legenhausen states:

> Imām Khomeini, in line with sentiments his reports having been expressed by his teacher Shāâhbādi, sought to initiate a process through which *'irfān* could become public. This process was not to be a sudden revolution. His own works on *'irfān* were not very widely distributed during his lifetime, but a persistent emphasis on the mystical elements of Shiite thought were interspersed among the more popular political declaration, and may be found in *The Greatest Jihād*,[3f] as well. (3f Imām Khomeini, *The Greatest Jihād: Combat with the Self,*

[746] *The Wine of Love*, p. xvii.

2nd ed., tr. Mohammad Legenhausen (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 2003), [EDs.][747]

As a matter of fact, Legenhausen places all of Ayatollah Khomeini's decisions in a mystical context, tracing them back to Ayatollah Khomeini's selflessness and unconditional love for God, saying: "If he tolerated derisions by the ignorant; if he took poison and traded his pride,[3] it was for Islam and Allah and if he waged *jihād*, that too, was to please the Lord."[748] By placing his poetry and his character in a mystical context, Ayatollah Khomeini's followers, whether purposely or unintended, offer an explanation for all of Ayatollah Khomeini's actions, also the political ones, which according to them all derived from his unconditional love for God.

In my view, Legenhausen, Adabiyyat and Ayatollah Khomeini's family have purposely placed Ayatollah Khomeini in a mystical light after his death, enabling them to project on him a holy status, that by far trespassed that of the ordinary man. It seems as if his followers have used his poems as tokens of his personal experiences on the mystical path, to support the thought that Ayatollah Khomeini had reached perfection and therefore was invulnerable and free from blame. It might have been a deliberate act to overemphasize the mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini's character in books such as the ones examined, in order for the reader to re-interpret all of Ayatollah Khomeini's actions, whether they were poetical or political, and approach all of them from a mystical point of view, taking off the sharp edges of his character, which was often under fire for his political decisions. Another reason for Ayatollah Khomeini's followers to place him in a mystical context, could have been that they were well aware of the popularity of Islamic mysticism in Iranian culture. The whole Iranian society, not only a religious level, but also in the literary field, has been intertwined with mystical thoughts since the ninth century. Each Iranian, young and old, knows at least some mystical poems of Hâfez by heart. Islamic mysticism thus typifies the Iranian identity. It could be that Ayatollah Khomeini's followers purposely highlighted this mystical side of Ayatollah Khomeini, to disseminate him as a true Iranian as opposed to the Arab Islamic culture which many other Ayatollahs propagated. The replacement of the Pahlavi government by an Islamic institution, without doubt was an enormous change for Iranians living in Iran. By using mystical ideas in his ceremonies, books and as appears also in his poetry, Ayatollah

[747] Ibid.

[748] Ibid., pp. iii, iv.

Khomeini was able to popularize Islam and to address the mystical feelings with which all Iranians have grown up. Millions of people, both inside and outside of Iran were appealed by Ayatollah Khomeini's words. His followers were well aware of this. As appears from the poem *Khâb-e Shâh*, Khorsandi, one of Ayatollah Khomeini's greatest opponents, was at first also attracted by Ayatollah Khomeini's 'messages of love', being a point of recognition for him. However, in Khorsandi's view Ayatollah Khomeini only used mystical ideas to for political purposes. This is also the opinion of the anonymous poet. Although both poets are very familiar with the mystical tradition in which Ayatollah Khomeini wrote his *ghazal*, they purposely erase all mystical values from Ayatollah Khomeini's poem in their parodies, since they believe that Ayatollah Khomeini had nothing to do with mysticism.

General Conclusion

The research question in this dissertation has been how we are to interpret and contextualize Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. We can conclude that his poetry opens a door to the inner world of one of the most influential revolutionary leaders of the twentieth century. He promoted an Islamic form of governance, political Islam, a theocratic political system that was meant to be exported beyond the borders of Iran, but he was at the same time a convinced mystic, eschewing all forms of material possessions and worldly attachments, enjoying writing mystical poems in his spare time. While most academic works on Ayatollah Khomeini have focused on his political career, the mystical and especially the poetical side to his character are to a large extent unexplored. His mystical poetry enables us to form a more complete picture of his character, helping us to understand the paradox in his personality. In his poetry, one detects a strong mystical aspiration where spiritual growth is preferred over religious and even political duties. At the same time, one can also find traces of his political convictions, such as his condemnation of imperialism, his ideas on pan-Islamism and his rejection of any forms of governance that is not based on Islamic tenets. This study demonstrates how Ayatollah Khomeini places himself in a long literary tradition, but at the same time recycles popular mystical motifs and themes to comment on political events.

Ayatollah Khomeini's *qasides*, the oldest poems that he wrote during the 1920s, clearly illustrate how he used mystical motifs as political instruments. These poems are interesting as they are all written in Ayatollah Khomeini's early career, reflecting his preoccupation with a new Islamic political system, a legitimate form of temporal government that could cope with modernity and withstand European imperialist aspirations. In these panegyrics, one sees the influences of Ibn ʿArabi and Mollâ Sadrâ, where Ayatollah Khomeini projects mystical concepts of perfection onto Hâ'eri, presenting his teacher as a Perfect Man, a precursor of *velâyat-e faqih*. These poems demonstrate how Ayatollah Khomeini tries to model his ideal Islamic form of Governance on the ideas of several nineteenth-century *mojtahed*s such as Sheikh Fazl Allâh Nuri. The poems are illustrative of the ingenious way in which Ayatollah Khomeini has recycled well-known literary and mystical themes to create a new form of governance that could meet with the challenges of modernity. To my knowledge, Ayatollah Khomeini is the only one who elevates Hâ'eri to the status of a perfect man, to be emulated in both religious, social and political matters. Though he never expressed himself on this matter in public, at least not to my knowledge, the poems illustrate how Ayatollah Khomeini recycled mystical themes to serve political needs.

That Ayatollah Khomeini has used poetry to respond to various aspects of his life, both personal, religious and socio-political, and that he has made use of the mystical poetic framework to communicate political issues, can best be seen in his *robâʿi*s, the quatrains that he wrote during the 1980s. It was, above all, the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran that impelled Ayatollah Khomeini to compose his first *robâʿi*. The war between Iran and Iraq plays an important role in the *robâʿi*s. The classical poetical love theme that he uses in these poems to equate the spiritual love death of the mystic to the actual martyr death of the Iranian soldier, is only one example of how Ayatollah Khomeini has used classical mystical metaphors, that have typified Persian poetry for over a thousand years, as political symbols during the 1980s. He often adopted the same love death theme in his public speeches, when he equated the road of the Iranian soldiers to the spiritual journey of the mystic; both aimed at reaching union with God. The theme was also immensely popular amongst Iranian war poets of that period. Also Ayatollah Khomeini's re-interpretation of the event at Karbalâ illustrates his politicization of mystical motifs. In his *robâʿi*s, he presents the battle at Karbalâ as a conscious act of active revolt against the troops of Yazid. The same re-interpretation could be noticed amongst Iranian war poets and representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâʿi*s on the mystical figure of Mansur Hallâj, who died for the sake of love, are other examples of the way in which he connected religious and mystical poetic figures to political events, in this case to serve military needs to encourage Iranians to participate in the fight against Iraq. Ayatollah Khomeini was not unique in his use of antinomian figures. They were used on a regular basis by war poets during the 1980s. And as M. Nematollahi rightly states: "Employing mystical and religious motifs was not unique to the war poetry. These motifs were [also] used during both the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911), and the Islamic Revolution of 1979."[749] The rejection of the Kaʿba is another classical metaphor from antinomian poetry that can be found in Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâʿi*s. It could be that Ayatollah Khomeini adopted this topos as a political statement, to reflect the restrained socio-political relation that Iran had with Saudi Arabia at that time. Although we will never know the exact intentions behind the Kaʿba motif in his poems and whether they served socio-political purposes, it is clear that, as with the Karbalâ event and the figure of Mansur Hallâj, Ayatollah Khomeini was very familiar with the antinomian poetic tradition. Ayatollah Khomeini's *robâʿi*s are also interesting because of the personal note that can be found in these poems. The poems addressed to his daughter-in-law reflect his approach

[749] See M. Nematollahi, "*Do Not Say They Are Dead*", p. 241.

to religion, where he prefers intuitive knowledge over rational knowledge, convinced that only the first can give entrance to the divine secrets.

In his *ghazal*s, Ayatollah Khomeini uses poetry to express his own spiritual development, rather than to comment on socio-political affairs. His adoption of antinomian topics in these lyrical poems again shows that he had a considerable knowledge of the mystical poetic tradition, in which unorthodox topics have traditionally been used to discuss religious hypocrisy and piety. The fact that Ayatollah Khomeini imitates one of Hafez' *ghazal*s illustrates that he purposely places himself in the same poetic tradition; his unorthodox poems should be interpreted in the same way, as tokens of piety. The fact that, in these poems, he prefers spiritual development over observance of the Islamic rules indicates that Ayatollah Khomeini's piety transcended that of the average Muslim (or at least, that he believed it did). His rejection of the Kaʿba in Mecca should be read in the same light. It indicates that he, as a mystic, interpreted piety as a spiritual rather than a physical observance of the Islamic laws.

The attraction of literary, Shiite and mystical motifs, such as those used by Ayatollah Khomeini, for the Iranian population and the intense response to them from Iranians from all strata, can be explained by the essential and interlocking role of poetry, religion and mysticism in the lives of Iranians. From an early age, they are extensively exposed to mystical and other poetry and to Shiite stories commemorating the lives of the Shiite Imams, in particular that of Imam Hoseyn. For centuries, the faith of the Shiite community has been commemorated during special recital meetings (*rowze-khâni*s), gatherings that are extremely popular amongst the Iranian population. The recurring images and motifs used during these popular meetings have resulted in strong feelings of a common past and nostalgia. Charismatic as he was, Ayatollah Khomeini was able to address these common emotions and the collective memory of the Iranian population during the revolutionary period, when most Iranians, whether secular, intellectual, reformist, or *bazaaris*, had become estranged from Mohammad Reza Shah. Many Iranians, who were marginalized on a political, social and cultural level by the Pahlavi government, found a safe haven in religious institutions and mosques. In this de-spiritualized era, Ayatollah Khomeini's religiously inspired words found fertile soil, addressing the common spiritual and religious feelings of the Iranians. As M. Mahdavi rightly puts it: "Khomeini emerged armed with Shi'i cultural symbols and clerical institutions in order to lead this mass movement."[750] As the 1979 poem by Hadi Khorsandi

[750] M. Mahdavi, "The Rise of Khomeinism," p. 67.

demonstrates, secular Iranians were also attracted by the way Ayatollah Khomeini presented himself, as a mystic and as an inverse image of the Westernized and secularized Mohammad Reza Shah. As I showed earlier, also in the following period, during the war, Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Republic of Iran as a whole used these familiar Shiite metaphors and classical mystical motifs to foster feelings of a common past and to create a sense of shared responsibility.

What can be concluded from the reception of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry is that the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini made every effort to place his poetry in the vivid and popular Iranian poetical tradition, making him one of 'them.' It is notable that it is the same typically Iranian mystical nature of Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry that is criticized in responses from the Diaspora. Both Hadi Khorsandi and the anonymous poet make every effort in de-mystifying Ayatollah Khomeini and his mystical poetry. It seems that they cannot accept that this leader, who in their eyes is a 'cruel oppressor,' has used 'their' mystical poetic language and tries to place himself in a millennium-old Iranian tradition, with which both poets feel so connected. The contradiction between Hadi Khorsandi's poem from 1979 in support of Ayatollah Khomeini and the *robâ'i*s of 1989 in response to Ayatollah Khomeini's *ghazal* indicates this even better. While his 1979 poem 'mystifies' Ayatollah Khomeini, turning him into an almost impeccable *ensân-e kâmel* figure, the same poet ten years later, strips the man of his mystical pretentions and the poem of its 'Iranian' elements, as if he, as an Iranian poet, does not want Ayatollah Khomeini to touch this cultural heritage. It would be interesting to examine whether Iranian poets would respond in the same negative way to Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry, if they did not know who was the author of the poems.

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SUMMARY IN DUTCH

Dit onderzoek is opgezet naar aanleiding van de gedichten die Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), de oprichter van de Islamitische Republiek Iran, schreef gedurende zijn leven. Terwijl er vele wetenschappelijke publicaties zijn verschenen over Ayatollah Khomeini's politieke optreden en over zijn islamitisch-politieke gedachtengoed, is de cruciale rol die mystiek en met name de dichtkunst in zijn leven speelden nog steeds onderbelicht in wetenschappelijke studies. Zijn mystieke gedichten geven toegang tot zijn persoonlijke wereld en reflecteren zijn meest intieme gedachten en zijn om die reden van onschatbare waarde om een vollediger beeld van hem te kunnen vormen.

De centrale vraag in dit onderzoek is: Hoe moeten de mystieke gedichten van Ayatollah Khomeini geduid worden? Hoe zijn onorthodoxe thema's in zijn gedichten zoals wijn, verering van niet-islamitische personen en mystieke liefde te verenigen met zijn publieke optreden, waarin hij geen overtredingen van de islamitische regels duldde? Zijn zij het product van een overtuigd mysticus of zou Ayatollah Khomeini een andere reden hebben gehad om zijn gedichten in deze 'mystieke mal' te gieten? Hoe is Ayatollah Khomeini's persoonlijke gedachtengoed terug te vinden in zijn gedichten? Bevatten zijn gedichten verwijzingen naar politieke gebeurtenissen? Is Ayatollah Khomeini's poëzie vernieuwend? Hoe reageerden Ayatollah Khomeini's voor- en tegenstanders op zijn gedichten en hoe kunnen hun reacties worden verklaard?

Dat Ayatollah Khomeini gedichten schreef was tijdens zijn leven slechts bekend bij een klein publiek. Zijn oudste gedichten dateren uit de jaren twintig van de vorige eeuw. Het was nota bene zijn eigen zoon, Ahmad Khomeini, die opdracht gaf één van de gedichten van zijn vader te publiceren in de Iraanse krant Keyhân, slechts drie weken na diens dood in 1989. Kort na deze publicatie kwamen er meer gedichten aan het licht die aan Ayatollah Khomeini werden toegeschreven. In 1993 werden al deze gedichten in verschillende poëtische vormen, gebundeld en in zijn geheel gepubliceerd in Iran. De gedichten dateren van vóór 1936, toen Ayatollah Khomeini nog een student was in Qom, en van ná 1979, toen hij na 15 jaar ballingschap was teruggekeerd naar Iran.

Het merendeel van Ayatollah Khomeini's gedichten heeft een sterk mystieke lading, maar ook de oorlog tussen Iran en Irak, de politieke situatie in Iran, en de relatie tussen Ayatollah Khomeini en zijn schoondochter Fâteme Tabâtabâ'i, zijn regelmatig terugkerende onderwerpen in zijn gedichten. Ayatollah Khomeini's gedichten veroorzaakten een storm aan reacties, zowel positief als negatief. Ook de interpretatie van zijn werk was niet éénduidig.

Sommige Iraniërs interpreteerden zijn gedichten letterlijk. Anderen erkenden de symboliek in zijn gedichten, aan welke zij vervolgens een diepere betekenis toekenden.

Om de centrale vraag van dit onderzoek, hoe de mystieke gedichten van Ayatollah Khomeini te duiden, te kunnen beantwoorden, is dit onderzoek opgedeeld in zes hoofdstukken. Om zijn gedichten in een bepaalde context te kunnen plaatsten opent het onderzoek in hoofdstuk één met een uiteenzetting over de religieus-politieke situatie in Iran vanaf het einde van de negentiende eeuw, waarbij er een speciale focus ligt op de relatie tussen de staat en de geestelijken in Iran, vóór en ná de invoering van de eerste grondwet in Iran in 1908. Ik ga in op de politieke discussies die werden gevoerd onder geestelijken in de negentiende en de twintigste eeuw, onder andere m.b.t. de ideale vorm van staatsinrichting. Hoe reageerden zij op de Constitutionele Revolutie die plaatsvond tussen 1905 en 1911? Ondersteunden zij de invoering van een grondwet of was deze volgens hen in strijd met de islamitische regels? Vergrootte de rol van de geestelijken in de politieke arena na de invoering van de grondwet? Ook besteed ik aandacht aan de rol die buitenlandse mogendheden, te weten Groot-Brittannië, Rusland en de Verenigde Staten speelden in de Iraanse politiek en onderzoek ik hoe de geestelijken reageerden op de verschillende economische concessies die Iran Groot-Brittannië en Rusland in de negentiende en de twintigste eeuw deed, zoals het monopolie in de Iraanse olie-industrie dat Groot-Brittannië verkreeg in 1913. Ook zal ik ingaan op de relatie tussen Reza Shah (gest. 1944) en de geestelijken en welke maatregelen de eerstgenoemde nam om de macht van de geestelijken te beperken. Hoe reageerde de geestelijken op zijn repressieve beleid? En hoe was de verstandhouding tussen de geestelijken en Reza Shah's zoon, Mohammad Reza Shah (gest. 1980), die zijn vader na diens afzetting in 1941 opvolgt? Er zal ruime aandacht worden geschonken aan de rol van Ayatollah Borujerdi (gest. 1961) in de Iraanse politiek en hoe zijn dood in 1961 het religieus-politieke klimaat in Iran veranderde en samenviel met het begin van Mohammad Reza Shah's intensieve modernisatieprogramma. Er wordt een analyse gegeven van de maatregelen die Mohammad Reza Shah nam om de macht van de geestelijken in Iran te beperken. Vervolgens volgt er een uitgebreide beschrijving van Ayatollah Khomeini's intrede in de politieke arena in 1963, van zijn rol als leider van de religieuze oppositiegroep, die demonstreerde tegen de hervormingen van Mohammad Reza Shah en zijn regering, van zijn verbanning naar Turkije, van zijn leven als banneling in Irak en Frankrijk tot aan zijn terugkeer naar Iran in 1979, waar hij kort daarna leider van de Islamitische Republiek van Iran zou worden.

In hoofdstuk twee volgt een uitgebreide biografie van Ayatollah Khomeini, waarbij in het bijzonder zal worden ingegaan op zijn interesse in mystiek, die al op jonge leeftijd begon.

Ik zal een overzicht geven van de mystieke meesters door wie Ayatollah Khomeini zich liet inspireren, zoals Mollâ Sadrâ (gest. 1640) en Ibn ‘Arabi (gest. 1240), en de belangrijkste mystieke werken die Ayatollah Khomeini naliet, bespreken. Speciale aandacht zal worden geschonken aan de verstandhouding tussen Ayatollah Khomeini en de orthodoxe geestelijken in Iran, in het bijzonder m.b.t. zijn interesse in mystiek. Tevens zal worden ingegaan op de rol die poëzie speelt in de mystieke traditie en op de rol die mystieke poëzie speelde in Ayatollah Khomeini’s leven.

In hoofdstuk drie volgt een analyse van een groot deel van de kwatrijnen (*robâ‘i*) die Ayatollah Khomeini’s schreef gedurende zijn leven. Deze gedichten zijn uiterst interessant door hun biografische elementen, in het bijzonder zijn gedichten gericht aan zijn schoondochter Fâteme Tabâtabâ’i, aan wie hij de beginselen van de mystiek bijbracht. Er zal een analyse worden gemaakt van de verschillende mystieke thema’s die te vinden zijn in Ayatollah Khomeini’s kwatrijnen, zoals zijn verwijzingen naar mystieke liefde, naar de beroemde mysticus Mansur Hallâj (terechtgesteld 922) en naar het opgaan van de mysticus in God. Er zal een discussie worden gevoerd over de link tussen martelaarschap en Sjiisme en tussen martelaarschap en mystiek, thema’s die veelvuldig te vinden zijn in Ayatollah Khomeini’s kwatrijnen. Ook zal er een analyse worden gegeven van de verwijzingen die er te vinden zijn in zijn kwatrijnen naar de Iran-Irak oorlog en naar de Ka‘ba, het huis van God in Mekka.

Hoofdstuk vier behandelt enkele *ghazal*s, lyrische gedichten, van Ayatollah Khomeini’s hand. Er volgt een vergelijking tussen *ghazal*s van de middeleeuwse Perzische dichter Hâfez (gest. 1389) en die van Ayatollah Khomeini. In dit hoofdstuk zal worden aangetoond dat veel van Ayatollah Khomeini’s lyrische gedichten geplaatst kunnen worden in de antinomistische Perzische poëtische traditie van de twaalfde eeuw, welke gekenmerkt wordt door onorthodoxe motieven (wijn, verheerlijking van niet-islamitische personen, afwijzing van huis van God in Mekka). Er zal worden toegelicht hoe deze onorthodoxe gedichten geïnterpreteerd kunnen worden als uitingen van vroomheid.

In hoofdstuk vijf volgt een analyse van de lofdichten (*qasides*) die Ayatollah Khomeini schreef in de jaren twintig van de vorige eeuw, toen hij nog een student was in Qom. De gedichten bevatten niet alleen veel mystieke onderwerpen zoals spirituele volmaaktheid, het Mohammedaanse licht en het mystieke pad, maar zijn ook doorspekt met socio-politieke onderwerpen zoals imperialisme en secularisatie. In dit hoofdstuk wordt, met behulp van zijn gedichten, aangetoond dat Ayatollah Khomeini’s ideeën over een volledig islamitische staatsinrichting gebaseerd op het gezag van de islamitische jurist, welke pas in

1979 realiteit zouden worden, al in zijn vroege jaren aanwezig waren. Deze gedichten weerspiegelen hoe hij mystieke concepten vermengde met Sjiisme en met sociaal-politieke ideeën en gebeurtenissen. Ayatollah Khomeini's leraar Abdol-Karim Hâ'eri (gest. 1936) speelt een belangrijke rol in zijn lofdichten en zij tonen aan dat Ayatollah Khomeini een speciale rol voor ogen had voor zijn leraar.

Ten slotte wordt in hoofdstuk zes ingegaan op de manier waarop de gedichten van Ayatollah Khomeini zijn ontvangen door het publiek. Hierbij zijn verschillende responses onderzocht van zowel voor- als tegenstanders van Ayatollah Khomeini. Voorstanders deden er alles aan om zijn gedichten in een mystieke context te plaatsten, onder meer door complete mystieke glossaria te wijden aan zijn verzamelde poëzie (*Divân*). Tegenstanders reageerden vaak spottend, in de vorm van satirische gedichten. Niet alleen de mystieke gedichten van Ayatollah Khomeini, maar ook de heftige reacties naar aanleiding van deze gedichten, tonen aan dat zowel klassieke poëzie als mystiek onlosmakelijk verbonden is met de Perzische cultuur en nog steeds een essentiële rol speelt in het alledaagse leven van Iran.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Diede Farhosh-van Loon was born in 1977 in Delft, the Netherlands. In 2006 she obtained her bachelor degree in Middle-Eastern Studies from the University of Utrecht, followed in 2008 by a master degree in Persian Studies from Leiden University. In December 2009 she joined the NWO-research project *Of Poetry and Politics: Classical Poetic Concepts in New Politics of Twentieth Century Iran*, as a PhD-student. She is in particular interested in mysticism, in Persian literature and in translating Persian literature. She was a Committee Member of the Multicultural Women's Center in Zaltbommel, were she explored several possible ways to increase the participation of women from various cultural backgrounds in Dutch society.