

# The place of Muhammad Iqbal in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iranian thought.

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## Abstract

Out of the fifteen thousand known lines of poetry that Allamah Muhammad Iqbal wrote, around nine thousand were written in Persian. Yet still there remains no systematic study in the English language of the range of influence of Iqbal in the intellectual history of Iran. This article seeks to take a step in that direction, suggesting that Iqbal provides a point of reference to think through Iranian revolutionary and post-revolutionary thought. To do so, I consider the centrality of Iqbal in the thought of Ali Shariati, arguably the leading figure in the ideas behind the revolution, and in the thought of Abdolkarim Soroush, perhaps the most prominent philosopher that is critical of the Iranian revolution.

This article seeks to suggest that Iqbal provides a useful touchstone from which to understand many central themes in Iranian philosophy and political thought of the twentieth century - from the expansion of Islamic revolutionary politics in the mid-twentieth century to the post-revolutionary political thought that emerged after 1979. I will first sketch a history of the spread of Iqbal's ideas in Iran by highlighting the socio-political and intellectual context of the mid-century and locating the translation and proliferation of Iqbal's works during this period. I will turn to the central revolutionary thinker in the 1960s and 1970s, Ali Shariati (1933-1977) to indicate the importance of Iqbal to his interpretation of Islam. I will then focus upon Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945) and his critique of Shariati's ideologization of Islam, to demonstrate how Iqbal still was an important inspiration behind the post-revolutionary turn in Iranian thought. This will reveal how Iqbal was a frame of reference across the ruptures of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iranian thought.

Out of the fifteen thousand known lines of poetry that Iqbal wrote, around nine thousand were written in Persian; yet still the range of influence of Iqbal in the intellectual history of Iran has not yet been systematically studied in the English-speaking academy.<sup>1</sup> Although a number of Iranian and Pakistani scholars has considered the importance of Iqbal for Iranian revolutionary and post-revolutionary thought, this work has not reached the Europe or America.<sup>2</sup> Ali Mirespassi has touched upon the relationship of Iqbal and Iran, but does not reveal in-depth the philosophical continuities between Iqbal and revolutionary Iranian thinkers.<sup>3</sup> The lacuna on Iqbal in Iran is particularly surprising given the long-established prominence of Iqbal in Islamic studies, theology, and, more recently, "global" intellectual history in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United

<sup>1</sup> Ali Khamenei, "Iqbal: The Poet Philosopher of Islamic Resurgence," *Al-Tawhid* 3 (1986), 27. This figure of nine thousand is also mentioned by Mohammad Baqaei Makan, "Iqbal-shenasi dar Iran", *Hamsabari*, No. 3068, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Manan Cheema, Dr Shakeel Akher Thakar, and Dr Naseer Ahmad Assad. Dr. Abdul Hameed Irfani's Iqbal Recognition at a Glance: *Zauq-e-Tabaqeeq* 4, no. 2 (2 September 2022): 44-51. Also, Mohammad Baqaei Makan, "Iqbal-shenasi dar Iran".

<sup>3</sup> Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially 20-36, 45-48, and 248-250.

States.<sup>4</sup> Recent intellectual historians in the English-speaking academy, such as Arang Keshavarzian, have begun to study the global roots of the 1979 revolution but the historical role of Iqbal remains unmentioned.<sup>5</sup> By drawing on Persian scholars and translating key works on Iqbal by Shariati and Soroush, alongside drawing on their well-known translated works, I seek to redress this oversight.<sup>6</sup> Iqbal's shadow hides in plain sight: today, the name of Iqbal "Lehoori", as he is affectionately known in Iran, identifies streets in Tehran. In 1986, then president of Iran, now Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei (b. 1939), highlighted in a conference on Iqbal that revolutionary Iran was 'the embodiment of Iqbal's dream'.<sup>7</sup> The Iranian interpretation of Iqbal's dreams must be unpicked - after all, the translation of "Iqbal studies" into Farsi is *Iqbal-shenasi*, which can also mean "fortune telling".<sup>8</sup>

## The roots of Iqbal in Iran

Khamenei argues that Iqbal was scarcely studied before the Iranian revolution of 1979 in Iran; it was only the Islamic government of Iran that realised many of Iqbal's principles and would then aim to spread Iqbal's message across Iran through books, 'paintings', and musicians rendering his poems into 'popular tunes' to reveal the debt the Iranians owed to Iqbal.<sup>9</sup> This reading of Iqbal's place in Iranian intellectual history evidently serves an ideological purpose; the veracity of its claim must be investigated by sketching the rise of Iranian interest in Iqbal against the backdrop of Iran's political history.

The Persian poetry of Iqbal began to receive interest during the interwar period against the backdrop of growing Persian nationalism. Although Iqbal had composed and published his first major Persian poems, *Asrar-i Khudi* (The Secrets of the Self) and *Rumuz-e-Bekhud* (The Secrets of Selflessness) during the War, they seem to have received little immediate mention in Iran.<sup>10</sup> This changed with the rise of Persian nationalism under Reza Pahlavi (1878-1944). Having initiated a successful coup d'état in 1921 and becoming sole ruler in 1925, and inspired by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk (1881-1938), he sought to render Persia a modern nation-state. As part of a secularising celebration of pre-Islamic Persia, the Shah sponsored efforts to cleanse Persian of its Arabic and foreign vocabulary.<sup>11</sup> This led to the development of *Farhangestan* -such as the *Farhangestan-e Iran* that was founded in 1935 - academic groups aimed at ameliorating the state of the Persian language

<sup>4</sup> Iqbal quite rapidly became a source of interest in the English academy - the Cambridge Orientalist, R. A. Nicholson (1868-1945) - had already initiated a translation of Iqbal's poems, *Asrar-i Khudi*, in 1920. Meanwhile, in Germany, the great Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003) dedicated much of her work, such as *Gabriel's Wing*, to Iqbal's thought - which she then brought to the USA with her professorship at Harvard from 1967 to 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Arang Keshavarzian and Ali Mirsepassi, eds., *Global 1979: Geographies and Histories of the Iranian Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Having studied Persian since January 2022, I have been able to make basic translations of relevant sections of secondary journals as well as the work of Shariati and Soroush. For systematic translation of the key texts and pinpointing particularly relevant sections, I am deeply grateful to Iqan Shahidi and his patience with me during supervisions over the last seven weeks.

<sup>7</sup> Ali Khamenei, "Iqbal", 4. He is now the Supreme Leader of Iran but first acted as President of Iran from 1981 to 1989 (at which point, he was appointed Supreme Leader).

<sup>8</sup> اقبال شناسی - the word "اقبال", Iqbal, can mean luck, while the word "شناس", shenasi, is an ending added to words to render them into "scientific" disciplines (somewhat equivalent to the ending "-ology"). For instance: روانشناسی, ravan-shenasi, which means psychology. The "scientific discipline" of luck, therefore, is the word for fortune-telling.

<sup>9</sup> Khamenei, "Iqbal", 31.

<sup>10</sup> There seems to be no mention of Iqbal's poetry in contemporary literary journals in Iran like *Armagan* ('Gift'), published from 1919 onwards, or *Bahar*, published from 1910 to 1922. Edward Granville Browne, *A History of Persian Literature: In Modern times (A.D. 1500-1924). Literary History of Persia; Vol. 4* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924,) 460-490, where he makes no mention of Iqbal in the final section on contemporary poetry in Persia. This is significant given Browne was aware of Iqbal's work, as detailed by Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 479.

<sup>11</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Iran*, 474-76.

to tackle the rise of modern vocabulary from Europe.<sup>12</sup> It was against this backdrop that the interwar Persian poetry of Iqbal began to receive increasing attention. By the 1930s, the Iranian literary scholar, Sayyed Mohammad 'ali Da'i-Al-Eslam, (1877-1952), began focusing upon Iqbal as part of his project to reform and standardise the Persian language so that it could accommodate the plethora of new scientific vocabulary from Europe—encompassed in his major work *Farhang-e neẓam*, the first methodical dictionary of the Persian language.<sup>13</sup> In a speech he delivered in Hyderabad in 1928 on modern Persian poetry, he praised Iqbal.<sup>14</sup> This likely informed his Persian article - the first Persian work on Iqbal – 'Iqbal and Persian Poetry'.<sup>15</sup> Although he worked largely in Hyderabad, he travelled frequently back to his home country, and thus likely encouraged an interest in Iqbal among Persian literary scholars there.<sup>16</sup>

By World War Two, interest in Iqbal's poetry had increased in Iranian literary circles. A 1944 report assembled by scholars of an Iranian *Farhangestan*, who had visited Pakistan, mentions the poetry of Iqbal as a shining recent example of the great love for the Persian language in Pakistan.<sup>17</sup> This cemented Iqbal's reputation in Iran as an intimate foreigner; despite being Iqbal "Lahoori", from Lahore, he wrote intimately in the Persian language and thus gradually became part of the modern Persian poetical canon. Yet, despite Iqbal having delivered his seminal lectures on Islam, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, in 1930 partly in Hyderabad, Iqbal's avowedly philosophical and political work, published in English, seems to have received no noteworthy mention from Daei al-Islam or contemporary Iranian journals - there were no concerted efforts made to translate it.<sup>18</sup> Rather, it was his mastery of the Persian *ghazal* form in his Persian poetical works and how it could help refine the Persian language as part of the wider push for Persian nationalism that attracted attention.

In the 1960s, The nature of the Iranian interest in Iqbal changed dramatically from a focus on Iqbal's poetry as a potential source for refining the Persian language to a novel interest in him as a key figure in Islamic political thought.<sup>19</sup> The hopes of an Iranian national democracy became tied to the fate of the nationalist politician, Mohammad Mossadegh (1882-1967) - when he was toppled in a British-orchestrated coup d'état in 1953, these hopes were dashed. It is over-simplifying to demarcate Iranian political history as nationalist before 1953 and Islamist after: there were active groups such as *Fedaiyan-e Islam* that pursued Islamic politics from 1946.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, the failure of the National Front offered an opportunity for anti-liberal politics. Marxist parties, like Tudeh, quickly spread their ideas rapidly among the younger population, causing grave concern in Qom, where Allamah Tabatabai lectured on the fallacies of dialectical materialism.<sup>21</sup> With the death of the leading Ayatollah, Hossein Borujerdi, and his brand of political quietism in 1961, outspoken clerics, Khomeini and Morteza Motahhari (1919-1979), were able to offer an alternative anti-liberal vision: Islamic politics. In 1963, the Shah, supported by President John. F. Kennedy, initiated a

<sup>12</sup> M. A. Jazayeri, "Farhangestan", *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, New York, [<https://iranicaonline.org>], accessed: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023] and Abbas Amanat, *Iran*, 474-76.

<sup>13</sup> M. Saleem Akhtar, "Da'i-Al-Eslam, Sayyed Mohammad 'ali", *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, New York, [<https://iranicaonline.org>], accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023].

<sup>14</sup> A. M. Mahdi, "sh'er va sha'era 'esr jadid iran", *bakharu*, no. 15, (1391/2013), 28-30.

<sup>15</sup> Mahdi, "sh'er va sha'era 'esr jadid iran" and Makan, "Iqbal-shenasi dar Iran".

<sup>16</sup> Akhtar, "Da'i-Al-Eslam".

<sup>17</sup> Zabid Ahmad Mabshi "vaqay'e farhangestan, nama-e farhangestan", no. 2 (1 March 1323/ 1944), 53.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), xiv. Again, the journal *Armagan*, a literary journal, which continued to be published by the founder's son from 1943, seems to make no mention of *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*. L. P. Elwell-Sutton, "Armagan", *Encyclopædia Iranica, online edition*, New York, [<https://iranicaonline.org>], accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023].

<sup>19</sup> By using the phrase Islamic political thought, I merely mean political thinking that used Islamic motifs and ideas. I do not mean to use the word in its meaning in the discipline as a specific mode of studying past political ideas.

<sup>20</sup> Sohrab Behdad, "Islamic Utopia in Pre-Revolutionary Iran: Navvab Safavi and the Fada'ian-e Eslam", *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 1 (1997), 40–65.

<sup>21</sup> Hamid Algar, "'Allama Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i: Philosopher, Exegete, And Gnostic," *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 17, No. 3 (2006), 326–51.

series of secularising reforms known as the White Revolution, which attacked the clerics and landowning classes in Iran.<sup>22</sup> In a series of pivotal speeches during the subsequent protests in Qom and Tehran in June 1963, Khomeini guided political resistance against US hegemony in a politics rooted in Islam.<sup>23</sup> To legitimise this fusion, Khomeini, Motahhari, and their followers sought to construct a lineage of Islamic political thought that could be linked to Iran.

Iqbal's thought on Islam became a source of interest for those seeking to prove the tradition of Islamic politics in Iran. Unlike Enlightenment thought, marked by, as Hannah Arendt argues, a concern for novelty, purveyors of Islamic politics in Iran were concerned to show that the fusion of Islam and politics was a long-established tradition in Islam.<sup>24</sup> As Franz Rosenthal indicates, the mode of knowledge transmission in *fiqh*, law, and *tasawwuf*, mysticism, in Sunni but also Shia Islam, has long operated according to the notion of *isnad*, the chain of authorities that establishes the truth of hadith, according to which scholars construct genealogies of their intellectual lineage to demonstrate their abilities.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in seeking to demonstrate the validity of their Islamic politics, revolutionary clerics like Khomeini and Motahhari, constructed canons of thinkers who had combined Islam and politics.

As Soyyed Hossein Nasr argues, there have always been the twin cultural traditions of Arabia and Persia in Islam.<sup>26</sup> To accommodate the latter, and thereby prevent a reversion to the Persian nationalist protest against an over-bearing Arabia, Islamic thinkers in Iran sought to highlight the centrality of Persia in a canon of Islamic political thought. Al-Afghani provided a useful founding figure: he was ethnically Persian, Shia, and had played a popular and crucial role in the founding moment of mass oppositional politics in modern Iranian history: the Tobacco Riots of 1891.<sup>27</sup> The next natural figure in a constructed canon of Islamic political thought for 1960s Iran was less obvious - the Iranian discursive milieu now drawn to the fusion of Islam and politics after the eruption of protests in 1963, instead returned to a figure who had, by the 1960s, become a distinguished member of the Persian poetical canon: Iqbal "Lehoori".

The turn to Iqbal as a thinker of Islam, rather than simply a Persian poet, led to a growth in interest in his political-philosophical works. In 1968, Iqbal's work *magnum opus*, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, was finally translated into Persian, by the eclectic translator Ahmad Aram (1906-1998), as *ehya-e fekr-e dini dar islam*.<sup>28</sup> Rather than denoting reconstruction, which is better captured by the sociological term *baḡsazi*, *ehya-e* (احياء) denotes a "revival"—indicating Aram's awareness that his contemporaries in Iran were interested in Iqbal to resuscitate what they perceived as a lost tradition of Islamic political thought. Indeed, the editors' foreword to the book shows a clear recognition that its publication will change the contemporary focus on Iqbal as primarily a poet.<sup>29</sup> Although correct, then, to argue that Iqbal's reception in Iran was not immediate, Khomeini clearly overstates the role of the Islamic government in popularising Iqbal.

The increase in interest in Iqbal's prose alongside the Islamic elements of his poetry, neatly enabled a shift from Iqbal's identity in Iran as the "Lehoori" who perfected the Persian *ghazal* to the Sunni Muslim who could revive Shia politics. The elements of Iqbal's identity that could strike discord with Iranian Shia were often actively overlooked—Iqbal's critiques of the Mahdi and other central tenets of Shia faith in the fifth lecture of *Reconstruction* led Aram to redact certain passages

<sup>22</sup> Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 22-3.

<sup>23</sup> Ruhollah Khomeini, "The Granting of Capitulatory Rights to the U.S.", in Ruhollah Khomeini, and Hamid Algar, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (NJ: Mizan Press, 1981), 187.

<sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*; Introduction by Margaret Canovan. Second edn. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 249.

<sup>25</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longman, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani": A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Iqbal, *ehya-e fekr-e dini dar islam*, trans. Ahmad Aram and introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1968).

<sup>29</sup> Iqbal, *ehya-e fekr-e dini dar islam*, 5.



from that lecture.<sup>30</sup> Although Iqbal's sectarian background is not a central theme of this article, in both my discussion of Shariati and Soroush, I briefly point to how Iqbal's Sunni identity was reflected in different ways in their works. By the rise to stardom of Shariati in the later 1960s, Iqbal was beginning to be understood as central figure in Shia political thought in Iran; less as a source of reconsidering the Persian language, as he had been during the high tide of nationalism.

## Shariati

Shariati developed his sociology of Islam during the period of the 1960s in Iran, in which there was a growing interest in Iqbal as political thinker of Islam alongside the popularity of psychoanalysis in contemporary Marxism. Born in 1933 in Sabzevar and schooled in Mashhad, Shariati gained a scholarship to pursue a doctorate in sociology in Paris from 1960 to 1964. Here Shariati was influenced by the psychoanalytic drive of Marxian anticolonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), who argued that newly independent countries in Africa risked neo-colonial subservience due to the lingering psychological impacts of colonialism.<sup>31</sup> By Shariati's return in 1964, popular thinking on politics in Iran had shifted in a decidedly Islamic direction, which had initiated an interest in Iqbal as a thinker of Islam. At the same time, there had emerged in the Iranian discursive milieu a profound interest in revisionist Marxism, which highlighted the importance of culture and psychology as a framework for understanding the political malaise of imperial domination in Iran. The Iranian leftist, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, had published his work *Gharbzadegi* ('Westoxification') in 1955, in which he argued that the Iranian mind had become dominated by the culture of the West.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, in which he focuses upon "cultural hegemony" as maintaining capitalism, had been translated into Persian by the 1960s.<sup>33</sup> Shariati began lecturing at the Hosseiniyeh-Ershad in October 1968, an institution of Islamic revolutionary thought established in Tehran in 1963, attracting growing numbers of radical students over the following six years.<sup>34</sup> Shariati began the crucial moment in his intellectual career during the growth of interest in Iqbal as an Islamic thinker and in a context suffused with psychology and Marxism, motivating his keen interest in , and revision of, Iqbal while lecturing at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad, like to construct his own radical vision of Islam.<sup>35</sup>

Through Iqbal, Shariati developed a Nietzschean interpretation of the present *stasis* of Islam. Iqbal sought to rebut the German Orientalist Oswald Spengler (1880-1936). For the latter, Islam's cultural decline was caused by its Magian spirit, in which priests, Magi, were to be unquestionably obeyed, preventing any notion of selfhood.<sup>36</sup> Iqbal countered this argument by drawing on the Nietzschean historical mode in *Genealogy of Morality* to demonstrate that the *stasis* of Islam was not innate to the religion itself; it was caused by the influence of the foreign ideas of Greek philosophy, specifically Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism, into Islamic philosophy.<sup>37</sup> Just as Christianity in Nietzsche initiated a self-effacing asceticism, the influence of Greek thought over philosophers

<sup>30</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 115, the last paragraph of the lecture mentions and supports Ibn Khaldun's critique of all twenty-four traditions that prove the legitimacy of belief in the Mahdi. In the equivalent page of Aram's translation, page 166, this last paragraph does not include a mention of this critique by Ibn Khaldun.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (I. B. Tauris, 2014), 50-80. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

<sup>32</sup> Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York University Press, 1993), 82-4.

<sup>33</sup> Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Rebel's Journey: Mostafa Sho'a'ayan and Revolutionary Theory in Iran* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2019), 20 - discusses the translation of Gramsci's *magnum opus*.

<sup>34</sup> Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian*, 226-8.

<sup>35</sup> Ali Shariati, "Iqbal muslah qarn kbair", in Ali Shariati, *Ma va Iqbal: majmooeh asar 5 (Iqbal and Us: Collected Works 5)*, (Aachen, Germany: Hosseiniyeh Ershad, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 3-4.

like Ibn Rushd led to a deeply idealist 'philosophy of life' that denied the importance of the natural world.<sup>38</sup>

The work of Fanon and Al-e Ahmad had inspired Shariati to perceive contemporary Iran as powerless under influence of Western "cultural hegemony" but neither could offer an Islamic account of decline in Iran.<sup>39</sup> Convinced that *stasis* was due to a Western hegemony over the Iranian mind, and encountering an Islamic story of decline in the increasingly popular figure of Iqbal, Shariati was attracted to Iqbal's Nietzschean philosophical history of Islam's decline as the result of Greek influence. In his work on Iqbal and his importance to Iranian thought, *ma va Iqbal* ('Us and Iqbal') of 1978, Shariati states that although Greek philosophy increased the analytic capabilities of Islamic philosophy, it 'changed the noble message and pure worldview of the Qur'an'.<sup>40</sup> Influenced by the focus on consciousness in Fanon, Shariati applies a psychoanalytic hermeneutic to Iqbal: what for Iqbal was a Nietzschean philosophical history of a philosophical wrong-turn, Shariati transforms into an idea of hegemony of the West. The enervating nature of Greek thought and its influence over Islam was yet another example of *gharbzadegi*.

Persuaded by Iqbal's explanation of Islamic decline, Shariati nonetheless departs from Iqbal's interpretation of history that grounded the philosophical-historical reconstruction. Albeit influenced by neo-Hegelianism while at Cambridge, Iqbal perceived its philosophy of history as deterministic; instead basing his mode of reconstruction on a complex temporality that could reveal 'buried treasure', to use a term from Quentin Skinner, from the past. Shariati's understanding of history leads to a departure from the mode of Iqbal's reconstruction. Although a critic of Marxism, Shariati was still convinced by a reductive form of Hegelian dialectics as the basis for a sacralised version of historical materialism. He proclaims in his key work *Islamshinasi* that history in Islam should be understood as a 'certain kind of historical determinism' that is 'dominated by a dialectical contradiction'.<sup>41</sup>

Having defined ideology as a 'belief system' that speaks to every element of a man's life and his society, Shariati, like the maverick French Marxist Maxime Rodinson, understands original Islam as an ideology.<sup>42</sup> As Shariati sees philosophy of history as a central 'pillar' in the formation of ideology, Iqbal's method of reconstruction takes on a distinctly ideological function.<sup>43</sup> 'Responsible individuals' will reconstruct Islamic ideology and thus encourage a radical change in the consciousness of the masses to overcome *gharbzadegi* in Iran.<sup>44</sup> Shariati therefore hails Iqbal as 'the anti-colonial fighter' who 'chooses as his main ground the psychological-intellectual transformation of the conscience of his people'.<sup>45</sup>

With Iqbal's method of reconstruction rendered ideological, Shariati history from an originally Sunni perspective to the history of the Shia. Shariati's seamless transfer of Iqbal's ideas across sectarian lines was likely enabled by the active elision of Iqbal's non-Shia identity, such as in the altered translation of *Reconstruction*.

According to Soroush, Shariati stated in a lecture that 'Iqbal was the most Iranian non-Iranian, and the most Shia non-Shia'.<sup>46</sup> Similar to Iqbal's argument that Islam had originally been empirical,

<sup>38</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 3-4

<sup>39</sup> Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 60-80. Al-e Ahmad wrote shorter tracts on his own personal relationship with his Islamic faith but his popular writings like *Gharbzadegi* were largely concerned with the status of Iranian culture vis-à-vis the West.

<sup>40</sup> Ali Shariati, *ma va Iqbal*; "Vali binsh-e asil va jahanbini vize-ye qarani ra taghiir dad", 213.

<sup>41</sup> Shariati, "The Philosophy of History: Cain and Abel", in Shariati, Ali, *On the Sociology of Islam*: trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan, 1979). 97. Algar states that this is translated from *Islamshinasi*, volume 1, 68-85.

<sup>42</sup> Ali Shariati, "Islamology", [www.shariati.com, accessed: 24 February 2021]. Maxime Rodinson, *Muhammad*. Trans. Anne Carter (New York Book Review Classics, 2021).

<sup>43</sup> Shariati, "Islamology".

<sup>44</sup> Ali Shariati, "A Manifestation of Self-reconstruction and Reformation", [www.shariati.com, accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023].

<sup>45</sup> Shariati, "Ideology", 91. [ "Excerpts from Shari'ati's lecture on Sir Muhammad Iqbal", <https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/nietzsche1313>, accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

<sup>46</sup> *Iqbal sh'er*, 1 – "irani tarin ghayr irani va shi'i tarin ghayr shi'i".

Shariati argues that Shiism began in concern for political justice amongst the corruption of the Umayyads.<sup>47</sup> This was symbolised in the martyrdom of Husayn at the Battle of Karbala, who declared 'no'; not to the world, like the Sufis' 'ignoring of cruelty and tyranny', but *against* the world.<sup>48</sup> However, after the Safavid Empire adopted Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion - when Shiism 'departed from the great mosque of the masses to become a next door neighbour to the Palace' - 'Red Shiism' became 'Black Shiism'.<sup>49</sup> This is an active re-working of Iqbal's philosophical history of Islam: Shiism had its own Nietzschean "revolt" into a 'religion of mourning', which said "no" to the world and the political action that accompanied it, in the same manner that Islamic philosophy was corrupted by Greek thought. Shariati sees Iqbal as his chief inspiration for this mode of Shia historiography, with which Shias will recover the original meaning of their ideology: Iqbal's 'reconstruction is the beginning point from which we Muslim intellectuals must ourselves begin'.<sup>50</sup>

Having ideologically reconstructed Shia history, Shariati drew upon Iqbal's notion of *khudi*, self, as the means by which the Shia subject would recover their ideology. Iqbal's concept of *khudi* was a combination of the psychology of religious experience drawn from William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) with the Sufi idea of selfhood.<sup>51</sup> Iqbal sought to highlight that the traditional Sufi idea of the self had been overly influenced by the Magian spirit of pre-Islamic Persia and Neo-Platonism, leading to the Sufi aim of *fana*, self-annihilation, in the presence of God.<sup>52</sup> This was a mistake: Iqbal applied an Islamic hermeneutic to Nietzsche, arguing that Muslims must embody a Nietzschean rendering of Sufi selfhood, in which man's individuality was strengthened in the presence of God.<sup>53</sup> Shariati appropriated Iqbal's *khudi* for the solution to an escape from the contemporary *gharbzadegi* in Iran. In his 1970 lecture on Iqbal, he commends the latter for rejecting the "slave morality" of Sufism and instead postulating a 'Qur'anic mysticism' in which 'If the world does not agree with you, Arise against it!'.<sup>54</sup>

Returning to his ideological history of Shiism, Shariati highlights in another lecture, 'Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness', that it Husayn's martyrdom at Karbala which provides the ultimate site of theoretical reconstruction for true selfhood in Shia ideology. Shariati critiques the traditional interpretation of Karbala as Black Shiism, in which Husayn passively submitted to God's will in his martyrdom and thus became an event commemorated by mourning.<sup>55</sup> Instead, according to Red Shiism, Husayn commits martyrdom at Karbala as 'only one man - a lonely man - who says "Yes"', despite all others choosing 'no', which was 'seclusion, Sufism and piety by accepting the present reality' of Umayyad corruption.<sup>56</sup> Iqbal's Islamic hermeneutic of Nietzsche's concept of selfhood becomes, in Shariati's psychoanalytically-charged reading, the core of a ideological revolution against the clutches of Western hegemony. The light of Iqbal in Shariati's articulation of his message on Husayn even suffused the spatial context where he lectured on the topic, the *Hosseiniyeh-Ershad*: Iqbal's own verses on Husayn's martyrdom were inscribed behind the speaker's stage in the Hosseiniyeh.<sup>57</sup>

Shariati's ideological rendering of Iqbal became highly influential in the contemporary Iranian milieu, completing Iqbal's transformation in the Iranian mind from Persian poet to Islamic thinker.

<sup>47</sup> Shariati, "And Once Again Abu-Dhar", Part 1, [www.shariati.com, accessed: 20 April 2021].

<sup>48</sup> Shariati, *Red Shi'ism: The Religion of Martyrdom; Black Shi'ism: The Religion of Mourning*, Part 1, [www.shariati.com, accessed: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021].

<sup>49</sup> Shariati, *Red Shi'ism*.

<sup>50</sup> Ali Shariati, "Mohammad Iqbal: A Manifestation of Self-reconstruction and Reformation".

<sup>51</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 14-18.

<sup>52</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 99.

<sup>53</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 9. Iqbal highlights Qur'an 33:72, in which only man accepted the 'trust of personality'.

<sup>54</sup> Shariati, "Mohammad Iqbal".

<sup>55</sup> Ali Shariati, *Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness*, trans. Ali Asghar Ghassemy (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project, 1975). [http://www.al-islam.org, accessed 11 December 2021], 30-35.

<sup>56</sup> Shariati, *Martyrdom*, 35-37.

<sup>57</sup> Soroush, *Iqbal sh'er*, 11 describes the presence of Iqbal's verses in the Hosseiniyeh Ershad.

Shariati lectured on Iqbal at the Hosseiniyeh-Ershad during the height of his popularity in 1970, such as 'Iqbal muslah-e qarn-e akhir' ('Iqbal: reformer of the last century') of April 1970, when his lectures attracted scores of Iranian students but had not yet received full repression from SAVAK, the Shah's secret police.<sup>58</sup> For this new generation of Iranians, Iqbal the "anti-colonial fighter" was the primary interpretation of Iqbal they received. Although it is unclear when Shariati composed his work *ma va Iqbal*, it was published with a collection of his lectures on Iqbal after his death in 1978—projecting Shariati's "Iqbal the ideologue" into the sea of revolutionary fervour.<sup>59</sup> This cemented Shariati's interpretation as the definitive version of "Iqbal Lehoori" during the first decade of revolution. Consider the role of Shariati in Khamenei's relationship with Iqbal. As Daniel Brumberg and Ghamari-Tabrizi have demonstrated, Shariati's ideas were relayed to and then deployed by clerical revolutionaries during the 1970s.<sup>60</sup> Khamenei had initially been interested in Iqbal's poetry alongside other modern Persian poetry before the revolution but, with the advent of revolution, seems to take a noted increase in interest in Iqbal as a thinker of Islam, travelling to Pakistan in the early 1980s to meet various scholars of Iqbal and establishing a foundation to study Iqbal.<sup>61</sup> Shariati's Iqbal, the "anti-colonial fighter", triumphed in the first decade of the revolution; to religious intellectuals who would turn against the revolution, Iqbal would be unavoidable.

## Soroush

Soroush's interaction with Iqbal developed from the perspective of the history and philosophy of science. This requires his educational context to be unearthed. Having read Pharmacy at Tehran University throughout the latter half of the 1960s, Soroush moved to London in 1972 to study analytical chemistry and then pursued a degree in history and philosophy of science at Chelsea College, London from 1973 to 1978.<sup>62</sup> Here he encountered the thought of Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper via his lecturer H. R. Post.<sup>63</sup> Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) focuses upon the historical development of science, in which different periods of history generate their own paradigms of knowledge.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, Popper in *Poverty of Historicism* (1957), criticised historicism, or the belief that history contained predictable laws of evolution; unlike natural science, history could not make circumscribed predictions based on a specific amount of data but rather made grand prophecies on the basis of all previous events, all of which are discrete and contingent.<sup>65</sup> Popper critiqued historicism for its tendency to close the possibility of an open society, in which each individual exercised independent, critical reason.<sup>66</sup> This imbibed in Soroush a focus upon the importance of history to epistemology and a belief in the contingency of the historical event, which pervaded his critiques of the alleged scientific laws of historical materialism while in London.<sup>67</sup> After his return to Iran in 1978, his anti-Marxist critique would earn him the appointment to the Cultural Revolution Council in 1980 as part of a government attempt to

<sup>58</sup> Rahnema, *Islamic Utopian*, 320-340.

<sup>59</sup> Shariati, *ma va Iqbal*.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Brumberg, *Reinventing Khomeini: The Struggle for Reform in Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 70-76; Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz, "The Divine, the People, and the Faqih", in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Adib-Moghaddam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 227-278.

<sup>61</sup> Soroush, *Iqbal sh'er*, 11. He describes how Khamenei visited Pakistan in the years after the revolution, set up a foundation on Iqbal, where he also spoke. This is likely the already cited speech by Khamenei on Iqbal—as this was delivered in 1986.

<sup>62</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 5-9.

<sup>63</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 9-10.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967); Alexander Bird, "Thomas Kuhn", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), [https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/thomas-kuhn, accessed: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2023].

<sup>65</sup> Karl Popper, *Poverty of Historicism* (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1957), 100-105; also see Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (Routledge, 2014, 450-458).

<sup>66</sup> Karl Popper, *Poverty of Historicism*, 67.

<sup>67</sup> Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent*, 75-85.



extinguish dissident Marxism among the student population.<sup>68</sup> Although Soroush originally agreed with the repression of Marxism as a necessary defence against its totalitarianism, he began to see the Islamic government itself as responsible for creating an ideologically-rigid society.<sup>69</sup> For Soroush, Shariati's ideologization of Islam, which the former had first encountered in his final year at Tehran University, had played a role in the foreclosure of Popper's open society, allowing the Islamic government's totalitarian turn.<sup>70</sup> With Khamenei celebrating Iran as Iqbal's vision, Soroush turned to reinterpret Iqbal's idea of history to counter Shariati and the ramifications of his ideas in Iran. Soroush located in Iqbal an Islamic form of the history of science perspective that he had developed while in London. Although Popper had provided inspiration for Soroush's understanding of history to critique Marxists, Soroush had to find an alternative source in Islam that could provide an understanding of history that would counter Islamists. In the late 1980s, with Iqbal's *Reconstruction* now widely available to read, and his name being sung by revolutionary intellectuals like Khamenei and Motahhari, Soroush engaged with Iqbal's *Reconstruction* as the source of his critique. Here, he encountered the historiographical basis of Iqbal's reconstruction of Islam and how Iqbal, invoking Ibn Khaldun, repeatedly focused upon history as a source of knowledge in Islam. He found similarities in his own schooling in Popper's critique of historicism with Iqbal's definition of history, and, in turn, epistemology as protean and unpredictable.

As Iqbal states in his preface to *Reconstruction*, 'there is no such thing as finality in philosophical thinking'.<sup>71</sup> The central role of history and its relationship to Islam in Iqbal struck Soroush: he states in his article 'Doctrine and Justification', 'to paraphrase the late Iqbal Lahori, religion has now found two new rivals: human science and history'—a reference to Iqbal's discussion of the relationship of science, religion, and history, in particular in the fifth lecture of *Reconstruction*.<sup>72</sup> Soroush therefore sought, and found, in Iqbal an Islamic understanding of history that would demonstrate the flawed epistemological foundations of political Islam. For Soroush, the centrepiece of Iqbal's philosophical history of Islam was his notion of the finality of prophethood, which, as I will demonstrate below, would ground Soroush's critique of contemporary Islamic politics. Iqbal had argued in his fifth lecture of *Reconstruction* that 'a great idea' of Islam was the idea of Muhammad as the Seal of the prophets.<sup>73</sup> This doctrine of finality foreclosed all subsequent possibilities of prophethood, thrusting humanity to inductive rationality as the only mode of attaining further knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Muhammad highlights the importance of inductive reasoning as a form of knowledge, pushing humanity towards an era that would no longer require prophethood.

Soroush was greatly impressed by this idea—in a short work he gave likely based upon his lectures on Iqbal in 2013, *Iqbal sh'ar*, 'Iqbal the poet', he states that Iqbal showed how, once the world is deprived of the instant light of prophethood, humanity, disappointed by the lack of a 'heavenly lamp' must learn to 'turn on an earthly light'.<sup>75</sup> Soroush was so wedded to the idea from Iqbal that he was even willing to follow Iqbal's critique of the central Shia notion of the Mahdi, the Twelfth Imam in occultation—as Tabrizi demonstrates, Soroush agreed with Iqbal that the notion of the Mahdi undermined the freedom for human rationality gained in the finality of prophethood.<sup>76</sup> This reveals the radical outcomes of Iqbal's ultimately Sunni identity with his reception by Shia religious intellectuals. Although yet to make such radical statements about a core Shia belief, Soroush had already placed the argument of finality of prophethood at the centre of

<sup>68</sup> Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent*, 96.

<sup>69</sup> Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent*, 130-150; 189-192.

<sup>70</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 29-30.

<sup>71</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 'Preface', xlv.

<sup>72</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 71.

<sup>73</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 100.

<sup>74</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 101.

<sup>75</sup> Soroush, *Iqbal sh'ar*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent*, 238.

his controversial work of 1999 that mounted the most systematic critique of the contemporary form of Islamic politics: *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience*.

In his 1999 work, Soroush fortified the historical thrust of Iqbal's *magnum opus* to extend the notion of finality of prophethood. Drawing on his readings of Popper, Soroush pushes the importance of historical context beyond the role Iqbal granted it in his own idea of the finality of prophethood. While Iqbal had highlighted that the Prophet can be understood as the bridge between the ancient era of instinct to the 'modern' era of rationality, Soroush subtly draws out a different interpretation of Iqbal: the Prophet himself recognised the historical context in which he received revelation from God, where knowledge was moving towards "modern" inductive reasoning. As Soroush states in a commentary upon Iqbal's fifth lecture in *Reconstruction* that forms the centrepiece of his *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, 'the Prophet himself realised that the time for prophethood was at an end'.<sup>77</sup> Although this idea is certainly present in Iqbal—Soroush quotes Iqbal's phrase 'In Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition'—Soroush expands the role of history in Iqbal's concept of the finality of prophethood in order to highlight that even the moment of prophetic revelation was actively informed by context.

In this way, he compares Iqbal's idea of the finality of prophethood to Fukuyama's 'end of history', on the grounds that both leaves humans free to exercise their individual rationality.<sup>78</sup> Soroush deployed his contextualisation of revelation to demonstrate that religion must be differentiated from religious knowledge - his key argument against ideologizing Islam. In his work *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam* (2000), Soroush, outlining an argument he made in 1988 to 1990, during his initial critiques of the Islamic government, states that Iqbal had characterised the modern age as the conflict between 'eternity and temporality'.<sup>79</sup> Drawing on Iqbal's explanation of the modern predicament for religious thought, Soroush seeks to formulate a theory that could accommodate both drives in Islam. He argues that Islamic revivalists had conflated religion, the eternal truth from God, with religious knowledge, the interpretation of that truth by human subjects.<sup>80</sup> Soroush's context-laden reading of Iqbal's finality of prophethood shows that from very moment of revelation, the eternal truth from God, religion, was transformed into religious knowledge. This creates a clear demarcation between eternal truth and its interpretation from a given context, subject to change, at the very beginning of Islam. For Soroush, Muhammad experienced a moment of revelation from God in a mystical moment of intuition, here still in the realm of religion, but then transmits this into words, the Qur'an, thereby rooting the revelation in a specific context of the Arabic language, relativising its eternity.<sup>81</sup>

In turn, Iqbal's formulation of 'eternity and temporality' informed Soroush's critique of Shariati. Via this dichotomy, Soroush demonstrates that any attempt to homogenise and hegemonize a certain idea of truth in Islam, which is fact protean and evolving, shrouds the eternal truth of religion with a temporally-limited, and thus contingent, one. The successful implementation of Shariati's vision to ideologize Islam using contemporary radical theory in Iran was therefore an act of blasphemy. Iqbal thus operates as an important foundation in Soroush's bifurcation of religion and religious knowledge against Shariati and the ideologization of Islam by Khomeini's successors. It is for this reason that he states that while Ghazali was the 'messiah of Islamic revival', it was Iqbal who was the 'architect of reconstruction' of religion.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Abdulkarim Soroush, *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience: Essays on Historicity, Contingency and Plurality in Religion*, tran. by Nilou Mobasser, ed. by Forough Jahanbakhsh (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 30.

<sup>78</sup> Soroush, *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Islam and Dissent*, 192. Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 29.

<sup>80</sup> Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy*, 28-30.

<sup>81</sup> Soroush. *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, 110.

<sup>82</sup> Soroush, *Iqbal sh'er*, 1.

Via Iqbal, Soroush attempts to perform his own reconstruction of an alternative form of religion, grounded in mysticism. Having demonstrated the errors of attempting to fix religious knowledge, which had veiled the eternal truth, Soroush attempts to excavate and reconstruct the possibility for the human to experience *religion* again. In *Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, he states that 'today we must seek the pearl, which lies outside the oyster of time and place.'<sup>83</sup> Like Shariati, he lauds Iqbal's rejection of an inward-facing mysticism for an active mysticism that says 'yes' to the world. For instance, he argues in his work 'Iqbal the poet' that Iqbal was deeply inspired by Nietzsche in rejecting a mysticism of 'slave morality', which rendered the Muslim subject passive. Instead, Soroush attempts to build a form of mysticism from Iqbal's argument that the original drive of the Qur'an was empirical. Iqbal had argued in *Reconstruction* that, contra William James' argument that religious experience marked a definite departure from the rational, reason was still productive during the "tasting" of God. Similarly, Soroush argues that the Muslim subject should employ the inductive reasoning in the Qur'an to remove the veils that separate them from a direct experience, or in Sufi terminology *dhawq* ("taste"), of God.

However, Soroush, unlike Iqbal, does not offer a convincing account of the role of reason in his mystically reoriented religion. Iqbal had highlighted that reason was still important in religious experience by demonstrating that Ghazali's total separation of reason, the domain of philosophy, from mystical experience - 'reason was unable to capture the Infinite' - was based on a 'mistaken notion of movement of thought in knowledge'.<sup>84</sup> Iqbal shows that this mistaken epistemology must be revised through a complex philosophy of time: although thought is rooted at a distinct event in time, a context, it moves in a deeper layer of time that flows in-between and across events, the realm of divine meaning.<sup>85</sup> Soroush briefly discusses the philosophy of time, referencing Iqbal, in relation to the philosophy of Mulla Sadra in his 1982 work on the latter.<sup>86</sup>

However, time remains largely neglected in Soroush's central writings - for instance, in his reference to Iqbal, he shows a simplistic interpretation of Iqbal's understanding of time as an imitation of Henri Bergson's mystical time. Having emphasised Iqbal's dictum that the modern age is defined by 'temporality' and 'eternality', Soroush overlooks how Iqbal used time to reconcile the two, and therefore remains unable to explain how, in his own theory, a Muslim subject can access religion, rooted in a specific context, from religious knowledge, the eternal. This renders Soroush's recovered religion bewildering and demanding for the Muslim subject. Soroush thus must reserve the possibility of religion for an elite few, who are able to exercise their own inductive reasoning to a sufficiently high capacity so that they can, mysteriously, remove the veils to the eternal truth.<sup>87</sup> Unlike Iqbal, then, Soroush theoretically succeeds in the annihilation, to use the catchword of the Indian Dalit philosopher, B. R. Ambedkar, of a rigidised form of religion in Iran, but does not reconstruct religion in a manner that will offer the ability for most Muslim subjects to experience religion.<sup>88</sup> Soroush argues in his 2013 lectures on Iqbal that there are two "Iqbals" in Iran: 'Iqbal the philosopher' and 'Iqbal the poet'.<sup>89</sup> The fact that Soroush constructs two versions of Iqbal that are distinct perhaps betrays his own inadequate attempt to unite reason and revelation - poetry as the language of revelation and philosophy as that of reason; for Iqbal the two were interlinked.

## Conclusion

<sup>83</sup> Soroush, *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience*, 207.

<sup>84</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 4-5.

<sup>85</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, 4-5.

<sup>86</sup> Abdolkarim Soroush, *Nahad-e na-aram-e jahan* [The Restless Nature of the Universe], (1982). 44 (footnote 14).

<sup>87</sup> Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, "Contentious Public Religion: Two Conceptions of Islam in Revolutionary Iran: Ali Shari'ati and Abdolkarim Soroush", *International Sociology* 19, no. 4 (December 2004), 510-518. He touches upon the demanding level of reason expected from Soroush in the latter's interpretation of Popper.

<sup>88</sup> B. R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste* (Bombay, 1936).

<sup>89</sup> Soroush, *Iqbal sh'er*, 1.

By tracing how Shariati and Soroush used Iqbal's philosophical history of Islam and his idea of *kehudi* to project radically different visions of Islam, I have attempted to indicate that Iqbal operated as a central touchstone across the thought of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran. This opens two new avenues of future work in the English-speaking academy - in the intellectual history of Iran and, more broadly modern Islam. As in Mirsepassi, intellectual history of the Iranian revolution has embraced the so-called "global turn" by focusing upon the Iranian reception of European political thought.<sup>90</sup> While the rise of South Asian intellectual history highlights, as in Shruti Kapila, that India has received and re-defined European political thought, studies of the Mughal empire continue to reveal the traffic of ideas from Persia to India.<sup>91</sup> My brief history of Iqbal's influence in Iran combines these three currents in intellectual history to suggest the need for further work to explore how modern Indian thought re-defined European ideas and propelled them back to the lands of their previous Persian rulers in the twentieth century.

For the modern intellectual history of Islam, my study hopes to reveal not only how Islamic thought of the twentieth century operated across borders and sectarian divisions - as Simon Wolfgang Fuchs has demonstrated in Pakistan - but also suggest that intellectual history itself was a crucial modality of Islamic politics.<sup>92</sup> The attention paid to Iqbal by not only Shariati and Soroush, but also Khomeini, Motahhari, and Khamenei demonstrate that Islamic intellectuals were deeply concerned with constructing a canon of past Islamic thinkers that had combined Islam and politics. The methods they deployed to construct such a canon, and the figures they chose to include in it, could unlock further insights into the intellectual history of modern Islam and, as Alexander Nachman has shown, highlight the reception and reinvention of methods of European political thought in the Islamic world.<sup>93</sup>

Iqbal would die in 1938, only aware through infrequent correspondence, of growing interest in his poetry in Iran. His verses and then his prose, however, would make an indelible mark upon Iranian thought. While Iqbal proclaimed in 1910, 'If you ask me what is the most important event in the history of Islam, I shall immediately answer—the conquest of Persia', Shariati or Soroush might respond by stating that a central event in Iran's recent intellectual history was the birth of Muhammad Iqbal.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>91</sup> Shruti Kapila, *Violent Fraternity: Indian Political Thought in the Global Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Richard Maxwell Eaton, *India in the Persianate Age, 1000-1765*. 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Simon Wolfgang Fuchs. *In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism Between Pakistan and the Middle East*. University of North Carolina Press, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> Alexander Nachman, 'Quentin Skinner Beh Farsi' *Mizan, Culture in Muslim Societies and throughout the Islamic World*. [<https://mizanproject.org/journal-post/quentin-skinner-beh-farsi/>], accessed: 14 November 2021].

<sup>94</sup> 'The Muslim Community: A Sociological Study' (1911), Muhammad Iqbal and Latif Ahmad Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, Iqbal Academy Pakistan



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