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# *Third Wave Shi‘ism: Sayyid ‘Arif Husain al-Husaini and the Islamic Revolution in Pakistan*<sup>1</sup>

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SIMON WOLFGANG FUCHS

## **Abstract**

*This paper seeks to illuminate the intellectual impact of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 among Pakistani Shi‘as by focusing on Sayyid ‘Arif Husain al-Husaini, the dominating Shi‘i leader of the 1980s. In particular, I am interested in exploring how al-Husaini adapted hallmark themes of the Iranian revolutionary message, such as Muslim unity or political leadership of the religious scholars (‘ulama), to the specific circumstances of Pakistan. Crucial for such processes of translation was not only pressure from the Pakistani state but rather internal challenges and divisions among the Shi‘i community. While al-Husaini could draw on a strong, indigenous tradition of political mobilisation, his revolutionary ‘third wave’ of Shi‘i thought sat uncomfortably between Lucknow-educated traditionalists and Najaf-trained reformers who shied away from getting entangled in these novel forms of politics. By drawing on biographical accounts and al-Husaini’s speeches in Urdu, I trace how his revolutionary rhetoric had to accommodate thorny local issues such as sectarianism, South Asian mourning traditions or the lack of an established Shi‘i clerical hierarchy in Pakistan.*

Pakistan’s Shi‘as<sup>2</sup> barely had time to celebrate the energising success of the Iranian Revolution. The events of 1979 endowed them overnight with a sudden but ultimately only illusory claim to the leadership of Islamism.<sup>3</sup> Already the early 1980s witnessed rising tides of anti-Shi‘i sentiments instead. Even though sectarian violence was hardly foreign to South Asia, the following decades bore witness to a far deadlier climate.<sup>4</sup> The Islamisation initiatives of General Zia ul-Haq (r. 1979–1988), with their exclusive focus on the implementation of

<sup>1</sup>The author would like to thank Ali Usman Qasmi, Justin Jones, Mirjam Künkler, Christophe Jaffrelot, Andreas Rieck, Mariam Abou Zahab, Laurence Louër, Muhammad Qasim Zaman and the anonymous reviewers of the JRAS for their extremely valuable feedback on earlier versions of this article.

<sup>2</sup>This article is only concerned with Twelver Shi‘as (*ithna ‘ashariyya*). For the Isma‘ili minority, see W. Holzwarth, *Die Ismailiten in Nordpakistan: Zur Entwicklung einer religiösen Minderheit im Kontext neuer Außenbeziehungen* (Berlin, 1994), and M. Marsden, *Living Islam: Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 193–238.

<sup>3</sup>V. Nasr, “The Iranian Revolution and changes in Islamism in Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan”, in *Iran and the Surrounding World. Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, (eds.) N. R. Keddie and R. P. Mathee (Seattle, 2002), p. 334.

<sup>4</sup>For a detailed listing of deaths related to sectarian violence in this time period, see T. Kamran, “Contextualizing sectarian militancy in Pakistan: A case study of Jhang”, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, XX, 1 (2009), pp. 81–82. For a recent, excellent discussion on late colonial manifestations of sectarianism that also points to the importance of internal debates within the Shi‘i community, see J. Jones, *Shi‘a Islam in Colonial India. Religion, Community and Sectarianism* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 186–238.

Hanafi *fiqh*, prepared the ground for an unprecedented rise of inter-sectarian tensions in Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> Radical and politicised lay activists were drawn to ever more uncompromising groups.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the *jihad* against Soviet forces in neighbouring Afghanistan as a training ground for militants figured importantly in the equation on the Sunni side.<sup>7</sup> The latter was coupled with Saudi-Arabian ‘humanitarian aid’ that extended to the financing of virulently anti-Shi‘a tracts such as Ihsan Ilahi Zahir’s *Al-Shi‘a wa-l-Sunna* that claimed Shi‘ism to be “the religion of falsehood (*din al-kidhb*), and the religion of deceit and cunning (*din al-khida wa-l-makr*), and telling lies for ever and ever; and there is no escape from it”.<sup>8</sup> Scholars have also noted triggering socio-economic factors, for example rivalries between a rising Sunni middle class and locally dominant Shi‘i landholders, aggravated through labour migration to the Gulf.<sup>9</sup>

Given these turbulent times, it is thus not surprising that the existing literature on the Shi‘i community of Pakistan has so far taken much more interest in inter-sectarian conflict than in the changes which affected Shi‘i thought post-1979. The precise influences of the ‘Iranian moment’ are far more often assumed than actually established, as demonstrated by the following, rather typical statement:

As a consequence of the Iranian Revolution and the resultant Shi‘i religiopolitical activism, Shi‘ism in Pakistan became more centralised, more clericalist, more Iranianised, and more integrated with the international Shi‘i community. The revolution especially reinforced the emotional and religious bonds of Pakistani Shi‘ah with Iran and its religiocultural centres.<sup>10</sup>

How are we to understand these manifestations of the ‘esprit de Qom’, which in Sabrina Mervin’s view is not only “a revolutionary spirit, but also a certain concept of Islamic modernity which all can adapt and apply after returning to their own societies”?<sup>11</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab hints at the complexity of this process. According to her, nearly 4,000 students received scholarships from the Iranian government immediately after the revolution to spend

<sup>5</sup>It is not my intention in this paper to evaluate the sincerity of these measures. For a critique of them as an “Islamically legitimised politics of state penetration”, see J. Malik, *Colonialization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 340–341.

<sup>6</sup>E. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan* (New York, 2009), pp. 105–108.

<sup>7</sup>V. Nasr, “The rise of Sunni militancy in Pakistan: The changing role of Islamism and the Ulama in society and politics”, *Modern Asian Studies*, XXXIV, 1 (2000), pp. 144–145.

<sup>8</sup>I. I. Zahir, *Al-Shi‘a wa-l-Sunna* (Lahore, 2008), p. 184. Zahir himself was assassinated in 1987. See M. Abou Zahab, “The SSP: Herald of militant Sunni Islam in Pakistan”, in *Armed Militias of South Asia. Fundamentalists, Maoists and Separatists*, (eds.) L. Gayer and C. Jaffrelot (New York, 2009), pp. 167–168.

<sup>9</sup>M. Q. Zaman, “Sectarianism in Pakistan: The radicalization of Shi‘i and Sunni identities”, *Modern Asian Studies*, XXXII, 3 (1998), pp. 709–713. Kamran argues that sectarianism was used by influential rural families as an extension of intra-*biradari* [kinship group] politics (Kamran, “Contextualizing sectarian militancy”, pp. 62–65). See also M. Abou Zahab, “The Sunni–Shia conflict in Jhang (Pakistan)”, in *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*, (eds.) I. Ahmad and H. Reifeld (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 135–148. See for a discussion that questions the decisiveness of Saudi influence on sectarian thought in Pakistan but instead emphasizes how local Deobandi scholars creatively drew on South Asian intellectual traditions in order to counter the political threat which in their view Shi‘i Islam constituted after the Iranian revolution, my paper, “*Abū Mu‘awiya’s Longings for the State. The dialectics of the local and the transnational in Shī‘ī-Sunni sectarianism*”, presented at the workshop ‘Center and Periphery in the Muslim World: De-Centering Traditional Religious Authority’, The Center for the Study of Contemporary Muslims Societies, Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, Doha, Qatar, 31 March – 01 April 2014.

<sup>10</sup>M. Ahmed, “Shi‘i political activism in Pakistan”, *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, 5, 1–2 (2003), p. 64. For a similar statement, see O. Roy, “The impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Middle East”, in *The Shi‘a Worlds and Iran*, (ed.) S. Mervin (London, 2010), pp. 35–36, and also A. H. Syed, “The Sunni–Shia conflict in Pakistan”, in *Pakistan. Founder’s Aspirations and Today’s Realities*, (ed.) H. Malik (Karachi, 2001), p. 255.

<sup>11</sup>S. Mervin, “Introduction”, in *The Shi‘a Worlds and Iran*, (ed.) S. Mervin, p. 17.

between six months and a year in religious institutions, mostly in Qom. Upon their return to Pakistan, they toured the Punjabi countryside and the Northern Areas, showing films on the oppression of the Shah's regime and the success of the revolution:

They criticised the traditional *ulama* and their links to Iraq and accused them of being apolitical, quietist and opposed to the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Although the traditional clergy welcomed the revolution because it had replaced a secular anti-*ulama* monarchy with a government of the *ulama*, it was opposed to Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric and saw the students' activism as a threat to its own authority.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, the 'traditional' *ulama* were not able simply to dismiss these crash-course propagandists. Even within their own ranks politicised clergy gained prominence, denoting a 'third wave' of Shi'i thought in Pakistan that was much more activist and less concerned with debates over theology, the status of the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bait*) or reform of customs – topics that were intimately connected to two earlier intellectual centres for South Asian Shi'as: Lucknow in northern India and later Najaf in Iraq.<sup>13</sup> This development manifested itself in the rise of Sayyid 'Arif Husain al-Husaini (d. 1988) to the helm of Pakistan's major Shi'i organisation at that time, the *Tahrik-i Nifaz-i Fiqh-i Ja'fariyya* [Movement for the Implementation of Ja'fari Law, hereafter TNFJ]<sup>14</sup> in 1984. He has been described as being "probably the most ardent admirer of Khomeini among Pakistan's Shia '*ulamâ*' of his generation and status".<sup>15</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab credits him with intensifying the 'qomization' of the *ulama* class with regard to the 'rationalization'<sup>16</sup> and 'politicization' of rituals, which now focused on the oppression committed by enemies of the Shi'a at home and abroad.<sup>17</sup> Iranian publications likewise extol him for spreading the idea of the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini, thereby breaking the monopoly of influence that wealthy landholders and non-political, conservative circles had enjoyed over the Shi'i community.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup>M. Abou Zahab, "The politicization of the Shia community in Pakistan in the 1970s and 1980s", in *The other Shiites. From the Mediterranean to Central Asia*, (eds.) A. Monsutti, S. Naef and F. Sabahi (Bern, 2007), pp. 100–101.

<sup>13</sup>See below for a discussion of the different camps to which Shi'i scholars belonged.

<sup>14</sup>The term *ja'fari* relates to the sixth Shi'i Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765) who outlined the broad strokes of Shi'i theories on the Imamate. *Ja'fari* became increasingly used during the twentieth century in the context of energetic efforts to recast Shi'ism as a fifth school of law (*madhhab*) along with the four established Sunni schools, culminating in an interview (and later *fatwa*) given by the *Shaikh al-Azhar* Mahmud Shaltut in 1959. Shaltut went as far as declaring that Muslims are free to attach themselves to any of the five schools. See R. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Brill, 1996), p. 289–293.

<sup>15</sup>See A. Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan. An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority* (forthcoming), p. 249. I am grateful to Dr Andreas Rieck for sharing several chapters of his yet unpublished book with me. Please note that the page numbers of the final printed version will most likely differ from this manuscript. Ahmed goes even further than Rieck when claiming that "probably single-handedly, 'Arif al-Hussaini internationalised Pakistan's Shi'i clergy" (Ahmed, "Political activism", p. 66).

<sup>16</sup>This is of course a rather problematic term and reflects first of all Iranian views on the "extreme (*ifriati*)" forms of traditional Shi'i ritual in Pakistan. See D. Nu'aimiyan, *Bāztab-i inqilāb dar Pākistān*. Markaz-i Isnād-i Inqilāb-i Islāmī: <http://www.irdc.ir/fa/content/5412/default.aspx> (accessed 1 June 2012).

<sup>17</sup>Unfortunately, Abou Zahab only provides some examples of how Iranian slogans in the vein of *Kull yaum 'Ashura, kull ard Karbala* [Every day is 'Ashura, every piece of land is Karbala] were gaining prominence at Shi'i gatherings. See Abou Zahab, "The politicization", pp. 108–109.

<sup>18</sup>M. Nuşūhiyān, *Shi'iyān-i Pākistān va Inqilāb-i Islāmī-yi Īrān*. See Markaz-i Isnād-i Inqilāb-i Islāmī, [www.irdc.ir/fa/content/5593/default.aspx](http://www.irdc.ir/fa/content/5593/default.aspx) (accessed 1 June 2012).

It may be that Sayyid ‘Arif Husain al-Husaini’s status as an outsider fostered his unlikely career. Born into a humble, non-scholarly family in late 1946,<sup>19</sup> he grew up close to Parachinar, the capital of the Kurram agency in north-west Pakistan’s tribal areas. His first religious training took place locally before undertaking in 1967 the journey to Najaf where he spent six years studying. He was introduced to Khomeini by Ayatollah Asadullah Madani (d. 1981), one of the former’s strongest supporters in Najaf.<sup>20</sup> Al-Husaini’s biographers credit him with a very activist stance towards the Iraqi authorities. After travelling to Kufa to pay a solidarity visit to Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (d. 1980),<sup>21</sup> who had just been put under house arrest, al-Husaini reportedly attacked some policemen, who were busy abusing Shi‘i students. Additionally, he kept sending protest telegrams to the Shah.<sup>22</sup> This outspoken attitude most likely curtailed his stay in Iraq: in 1973, he was either deported from Iraq or left the country voluntarily in order to get married.<sup>23</sup> His official biography reports that his main goal was to spread revolutionary ideas. A letter of appointment as Khomeini’s representative (*wakil*) in Pakistan was forcibly taken away from him at the Iranian border.<sup>24</sup> Al-Husaini returned to Pakistan for several months before continuing his studies in Qom. Once again, he was at the forefront of the fight against the Shah, encouraging fellow Pakistani students to join protests.<sup>25</sup> Abou Zahab maintains that he intended to remain in Qom for a longer period of time, yet was “sent back to Pakistan in 1977 with a mission to mobilise the community on the pattern of what Imam Musa Sadr had done in Lebanon”.<sup>26</sup> Other accounts argue that he was expelled from Iran after refusing to sign a document not to mingle with revolutionary clerics.<sup>27</sup> Back in Pakistan, al-Husaini earned his first credentials as a community leader in Parachinar in 1980 when he led popular protests after attacks on Shi‘i Muharram processions and was consequently imprisoned for 22 days.<sup>28</sup> Despite these activities, he was still largely unknown when the TNFJ convention in February 1984 unexpectedly elected him as leader, due to his “energy, courage, political acumen and religious learning”.<sup>29</sup>

The broad acknowledgement of al-Husaini’s crucial leadership role within the *imami* community during the 1980s has not been supplemented with a more detailed study of his thought. Existing scholarship has been more concerned with debates among Pakistani Shi‘i scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, not allowing for the fundamental changes within religious

<sup>19</sup>None of his biographers discuss whether his *sayyid* pedigree facilitated his career. His family traces their lineage back to a grandchild of al-Husain (d. 680), Husain al-Asghar, son of Zain al-‘Abidin (d. 713).

<sup>20</sup>T. R. Khān, *Zindāgināmah-i ‘allāmah shahīd ‘Arīf Ḥusain al-Ḥusainī az vilādat tā shahādāt* (Qom, 1990), p. 155. Al-Husaini refers to him as his main teacher. See al-Ḥusainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, pp. 107–108. For full biographical references of all literature on al-Husaini, see footnote 32.

<sup>21</sup>On his life and influence in the Iraqi context and beyond, see C. Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law: Muhammad Baqer as-Sadr, Najaf and the Shi‘i International* (Cambridge, 1995).

<sup>22</sup>Khan singles him out as the only Pakistani student to do so. See Khān, *Safīr-i nūr*, p. 41. See also S. G. H. Šādiqī, “‘Allāmah Sayyid ‘Arif Ḥusain Ḥusainī”, in *Satārgān-i Ḥaram*, (eds.) *Gurūhī āz nivīsandīgān-i farhang-i kaušar* (Qom, 2004), p. 84.

<sup>23</sup>For the former view, see Zaman, “Sectarianism”, p. 695; for the latter, Abou Zahab, “The politicization”, p. 105.

<sup>24</sup>Khān, *Safīr-i Nūr*, p. 43.

<sup>25</sup>Naqvi, *Tāzīkīra*, p. 156.

<sup>26</sup>Abou Zahab, “The politicization”, p. 106.

<sup>27</sup>Khān, *Zindāgināmah*, p. 27.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, pp. 250–251.

reasoning in the wake of the Iranian revolution.<sup>30</sup> The goal of this article, therefore, is partially to fill this gap and to supplement our knowledge on the prevalent discourses in the early 1980s among the “new Shiites”, as Abou Zahab terms them – religious scholars who were educated in Iran rather than in Iraq. I am interested in exploring how al-Husaini adapted the universal Iranian message to the particular minority situation in Pakistan. Outside pressures from the Pakistani state were not the only factor that forced him to do so. Rather, internal challenges and divisions among the Shi'i community played a far more crucial role in these modifications. Additionally, al-Husaini could rely on a strong indigenous, Pakistani tradition of Shi'i mobilisation and opposition to the state that did not owe its vigour to Iranian encouragement. To be sure, al-Husaini, as a busy community leader with a very active political life, never seems to have found the time to express his thoughts in writing.<sup>31</sup> This lacuna can be compensated, however, by the available, extensive collections, in both Urdu and Persian, of speeches and interviews delivered by al-Husaini throughout his career that were transcribed from recordings after his death.<sup>32</sup> Many of these also include question and answer sessions that provide us with a feel for the way the audience was reacting to his declarations.<sup>33</sup> This material has been supplemented with various detailed biographical dictionaries of Pakistani Shi'i scholars, al-Husaini's 'official' biography published by the al-'Arif Academy in Lahore<sup>34</sup> and issues of the Pakistani Shi'i weekly *Rizakar*.

The remainder of this article first sheds light on how al-Husaini as a representative of “third-wave Shi'ism” in Pakistan differed from other scholarly camps in the country and how the strength of these groups and the previous experience of confronting the government, in turn, amended his revolutionary message. To achieve this goal, I will briefly review both the emergence of Shi'i political activism in Pakistan as well as the character of internal intellectual debates and divisions among *imami* scholars. These two aspects will provide the background for an evaluation of the new Shi'i rhetoric after the Iranian revolution. This will be included in the final section, where I shall be attempting a detailed analysis of al-Husaini's thought.

<sup>30</sup>S. H. A. Naqvi, “The controversy about the Shaykhiyya tendency among Shia 'Ulamā' in Pakistan”, in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times. Religious Culture & Political History*, (eds.) R. Brunner and W. Ende (Leiden, 2001), pp. 135–149. Andreas Rieck in his excellent study mainly discusses the rise of al-Husaini to the leadership and his confrontational relationship with the government. See Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, pp. 247–259.

<sup>31</sup>Al-Husaini himself referred to a treatise he planned to write in order to counter allegations that Shi'as believe in the corruption of the Qur'anic text (*tahrif*) but had to delegate these plans because of his busy schedule. See Sayyid 'Arif Husain al-Husaini, *Misāq-i khūn. Avā'il-i qiyādat aur hawzah-i 'ilmiyya ke muta'aliq shahīd qā'id ke khitābāt* (Lahore, 1997), p. 165. There are no written works by al-Husaini referenced in Sayyid Husain 'Arif Naqvi's biographical dictionary *Tāzkirah-i 'ulamā'-i imāmiyah-i Pākistān* (Mashhad, 1991). The bibliographical collection of Shi'i Urdu texts by the same author, *Barr-i ṣaghīr ke imāmiyah muṣannifīn kī maṭbū'ah taṣānīf aur tarājīm* (Islamabad, 1997), likewise only lists a couple of short pamphlets written on the life of Sayyid 'Arif Husain al-Husaini (see vol. 1, p. 484, and vol. 2, pp. 453, 512).

<sup>32</sup>Besides *Misāq-i khūn*, I am drawing on *Guftār-i ṣidq. Ma'ārif-i Qur'ān ā' ahl-i bait shahīd-i maẓlūm ke khitābāt* (Lahore, 1996), *Sukhan-i 'ishq. Majālis-i 'azā sayyid al-shuhadā'* (Lahore, 1996), *Uslūb-i siyāsāt. Islām-i Muḥammad ke ijā' aur 'ālamī umūr par qā'id shahīd ke khitābāt* (Lahore, 2007), as well as Sayyid Niṣār 'Alī al-Husainī al-Tirmizī, *Naqīb-i vaḥdat. 'Allāmah 'Arif Husain al-Husainī* (Islamabad, 2011).

<sup>33</sup>See, for example, *Misāq-i khūn*, pp. 65–72, 110–118 and 142–148.

<sup>34</sup>T. R. Khān, *Safīr-i nūr* (Lahore, 1998) and *Zindagī-nāmah-i 'allāmah shahīd 'Arif Husain al-Husainī az vilādāt tā shahādāt* (Qom, 1990). This academy does not seem to be active beyond compiling al-Husaini's speeches.

### The character of Shi'i activism before 1979

During Pakistan's first three decades as a new state, the chances of political organising along religious, Shi'i lines seemed a rather remote possibility. Compared to their co-religionists in Lebanon or Iraq,<sup>35</sup> for example, Pakistan's Shi'a minority hardly qualified as being among the oppressed of the Earth. Many of the Muslim League's early leaders were Shi'as. The community was prominently represented among the dominant landholders, the military, the local and federal bureaucracy as well as in the industrial and entrepreneurial elite. Each successive Pakistani government involved Shi'i ministers.<sup>36</sup> This relative influence has led some observers to conclude that despite occasional riots during the month of Muharram, most Shi'as did not feel discriminated against.<sup>37</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab holds that Shi'i organisations were in general "apolitical and concerned with rituals and the organisation of Muharram processions only".<sup>38</sup> Andreas Rieck complicates this picture in his close study of intra-Shi'a rivalries, pointing to the mid-1960s as a period of organisational change. The influential 'alim Sayyid Muhammad Dihlavi (1899–1971)<sup>39</sup> managed to bring together 250 Shi'i 'ulama at a convention in Karachi and later established *Shi'a Mutalabat* [Demands] Committees all over the country. Dihlavi and his movement called for the full freedom and protection of self-flagellation (*'azadari*), separate religious instruction in public schools and the administration of Shi'i *awqaf* [religious endowments] by Shi'as only. Faced with repeated delaying tactics and bans on public speaking, they set an ultimatum for the Pakistani government in July 1967 to accept their "apolitical, religious and constitutional demands" within three months.<sup>40</sup> When finally some 15,000 Shi'as gathered in Rawalpindi three months later to discuss the strategy for the suggested civil disobedience campaign, the Ayub Khan government relented to these demands – only days before its final downfall.<sup>41</sup> Given this 'ulama-led campaign, it is tempting to agree with Andreas Rieck's evaluation that "the new wave of Shia mobilisation in Pakistan following the Iranian revolution and Zia ul-Haq's Islamisation policy drew on long experiences from the 1950s and 1960s".<sup>42</sup> Especially if we consider Dihlavi's role, who had received his entire Shi'i education in India, Abou Zahab's argument, widely shared by Iranian authors,<sup>43</sup> about the apolitical and solely rituals-focused outlook of Shi'i scholars before the Iranian revolution needs to be qualified.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup>See, for example, in the context of Lebanon A. R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a* (Austin, 1987), pp. 13–36.

<sup>36</sup>M. A. 'Ārifī, "Shi'iyān-i Pākistān", *Faṣlnāmah-i takhaṣṣuṣī-yi Shī'ahshināsī*, I, 3–4 (2003), p. 209.

<sup>37</sup>Abou Zahab, "The politicization", p. 97. For a similar view, see also M. D. Ahmed, "The Shi'is of Pakistan", in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, (ed.) M. Kramer (Boulder, 1987), pp. 280–281.

<sup>38</sup>M. Abou Zahab, "The regional dimension of sectarian conflicts in Pakistan", in *Pakistan, Nationalism without a Nation*, (ed.) C. Jaffrelot (London, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>39</sup>On his biography, see Naqvi, *Tāzīkirah*, pp. 254–256. Being a prolific writer and gifted orator, Dihlavi was referred to as the "greatest preacher" (*khatib-i a'zam*) in the Shi'i community.

<sup>40</sup>A. Rieck, "The struggle for equal rights as a minority: Shia communal organizations in Pakistan, 1948–1968", in *The Twelver Shia*, (eds.) R. Brunner and W. Ende, pp. 278–280.

<sup>41</sup>These rights were conceded gradually by the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, only to be revoked again under Zia ul-Haq in 1978. See *ibid.*, pp. 282–283.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>43</sup>See, for example, M. A. 'Ārifī, *Junbish-i islāmī-yi Pākistān: Barrasī-yi avāmil-i nākāmī dar ijād-i niẓām-i islāmī* (Qom, 2003), p. 120.

<sup>44</sup>Such a claim might be especially problematic when intended to cover the whole of Pakistan. Andreas Rieck has shown elsewhere that "the lack of a meaningful political representation of the Northern Areas people, both under British and Dogra rule and ever since their accession to Pakistan, (...) has helped the Shi'a *ulamā'* a lot

Even after 1979 the TNFJ under the leadership of Mufti Ja'far Husain (d. 1983)<sup>45</sup> seems to have operated according to the time-honoured strategy of confronting the state to secure Shi'i rights without any obvious Iranian ideological input. Mufti Ja'far's approach manifested itself in the famous, strong Shi'a backlash in June 1980 after the government had promulgated its determination to deduct *zakat* [obligatory Islamic charity payment] from all bank accounts held by Pakistani Muslims. The Shi'a – due to far-reaching legal differences in this regard – vehemently opposed all these plans.<sup>46</sup> Protests culminated in a two-day siege of Islamabad's government district by Shi'i demonstrators from across Pakistan on 5 July 1980, which openly defied the ban on public gatherings under martial law. Faced with strong Shi'i protest and significant pressure brought to bear on Pakistan by revolutionary Iran, the Zia regime finally capitulated.<sup>47</sup> The events of that day led to the so-called Islamabad agreement, according to which the Shi'a were free to administer internal affairs in keeping with their law. This success became a point of reference for the movement in later times when the unfulfilled promises of the agreement were held up against Zia.<sup>48</sup> As we shall see below, Sayyid 'Arif al-Husaini saw himself very much as heir to this confrontational legacy, which at times even overshadowed his commitment to the specific, transnational slogans of the Iranian revolution. These local influences in al-Husaini's thought are even more palpable when we turn next to the heated intra-Shi'i debates on reform.

### **Shaikhism, Shi'i-Wahhabis and rhetorics of reform**

We still lack a thorough understanding of intellectual debates among Shi'i scholars of the late colonial period and thus have to rely mostly on Sayyid Hussain 'Arif Naqvi's account of the controversy over Shaikhism, which he portrays primarily as a 'foreign', Indian import. Since no serious institution of higher Shi'i learning existed in Pakistan at the time of Partition, nearly all influential scholars who emigrated to the new-born country had received their training in Lucknow where *shaikhi* leanings supposedly were widespread.<sup>49</sup> These *muhajirs* did not encounter any real doctrinal opposition due to the relative 'unsophistication' of the locals: scholars residing within the boundaries of today's Pakistan were rather late to establish bonds with eminent *mujtahids* in Iraq.<sup>50</sup> Naqvi stresses the elitist twist of the

to win positions of influence within the local society, apparently unmatched in any other part of Pakistan". See A. Rieck, "A stronghold of Shi'a orthodoxy in Northern Pakistan", in *Islamstudien ohne Ende. Festschrift für Werner Ende zum 65. Geburtstag*, (eds.) R. Brunner et al (Würzburg, 2002), p. 402.

<sup>45</sup>Ja'far Husain was born in Gujranwala in 1916 and studied in both Lucknow and Najaf before embarking on a teaching career in Pakistan. In 1949, he was chosen as a member of the Board of Islamic Education and served two terms under Ayub Khan on the Council of Islamic Ideology (see Naqvi, *Tazkirah*, pp. 70–72).

<sup>46</sup>Zaman, "Sectarianism", p. 396.

<sup>47</sup>Nasr, "Iranian Revolution", p. 88. Not all authors regard Iran's involvement as decisive. See A. Haydar, "The politicization of the Shias and the development of the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria in Pakistan", in *Pakistan, 1992*, (ed.) C. H. Kennedy (Westview, 1992), p. 81, and S. A. Tirmazi, *Profiles of Intelligence* (Lahore, 1995), p. 272.

<sup>48</sup>Shi'i leaders repeatedly referred to this success: see *Rizakār* (1985).

<sup>49</sup>Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 140. For a recent endorsement of Naqvi's portrayal of Lucknow, see Muḥammad Akram 'Arifi, *Shi'iyān-i Pākistān* (Qom, 2007). It is important to note that *shaikhi* can easily be (mis)used as a derogatory phrase to slander opponents who are more inclined to the inherent esoteric potentials of Shi'ism and should thus be viewed with caution. The Indian *mujtahid* Sayyid 'Ali Naqi Naqvi (d. 1988), writing about the Shaikhi school in 1934, remarks that they had only a very marginal influence in northern India. See 'Alī Naqī Naqvi, *Bāb ō mazhab-i Bahā'ī* (Lucknow, 1934), pp. 128–129.

<sup>50</sup>Rieck, "A Stronghold", p. 390.

immigrants' religious views: in advocating God's delegation (*tafwid*) of some of his powers, like control over creation, to the Shi'ite Imams, they claimed that "laymen could not comprehend such things".<sup>51</sup> In the early 1960s, when these and other hallmark *shaikhi* themes were put into book form, some scholars lately returned from the Middle East, ready to confront the theological challenge to Shi'i orthodoxy. Pakistani 'ulama had been eager to catch up and take advantage of the intrinsically international Shi'i experience of learning, bracing themselves for Najaf.<sup>52</sup> The 1960s were arguably the heyday of Shi'i religious students rushing to the Iraqi shrine cities, followed by a steep decline in the 1970s caused by the Iraqi government's stricter visa policies.<sup>53</sup> The reformist voices of the 1960s attacked 'superstitious' rituals and accused their colleagues, who had been exclusively trained in the subcontinent, of deifying the *ahl al-bait*, the members of Muhammad's household. One of the most influential proponents of reform was Muhammad Husain Dhakku (b. 1933). He had studied in Najaf from 1954 until 1960<sup>54</sup> and upon his return to Pakistan served as the principal of the *Dar al-'Ulum Muhammadiyya* in Sargodha (founded in 1949), then the most influential Shi'i religious seminary in Pakistan.<sup>55</sup> Dhakku was enraged that in his view "the majority of Shiite preachers (. . .) were making their listeners happy by simply stressing the virtues of the *ahl al-bait* without exhorting them to perform good deeds".<sup>56</sup> He thought it necessary to guide both the preachers and the common people "on the right path". A milestone in this respect was the translation of Ibn Babawayh al-Saduq's (d. 991) influential creed work *Risalat al-'Itiqadat*<sup>57</sup> into Urdu, along with lengthy commentaries by Dhakku. With this book, the ground was laid for a controversy that was still raging more than three decades later. Dhakku "presented his own views on 'correct beliefs' about the Shi'i Imams and other subjects in a categorical manner while at the same time mincing no words in his refutation of what he considered *ghulūw*<sup>58</sup> and *tafwīz* propagated by most preachers in Pakistan at that time".<sup>59</sup> He directly attacked some well-established scholars such as Muhammad Bashir 'Ansari (d. 1983)<sup>60</sup> or Muhammad Isma'il (d. 1974)<sup>61</sup>, accusing them of deliberately twisting the truth. According to Dhakku, these scholars had always opposed the founding of Shi'i seminaries in the country because they wanted to safeguard their monopoly of religious learning, considering the Shi'as of Pakistan "a gold-mine, from

<sup>51</sup> Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 135.

<sup>52</sup> On this feature of Shi'ism see also S. Mervin, "Transnational intellectual debates", in *The Shi'a Worlds*, (ed.) Mervin, pp. 321–346.

<sup>53</sup> Rieck, "A stronghold", pp. 292–294. It was only after the Iranian revolution that Qom and Mashhad fully replaced the Iraqi centres of learning.

<sup>54</sup> For a list of his teachers, see Naqvī, *Tazkirah*, p. 295.

<sup>55</sup> See Sayyid Muḥammad Saqlain Kāzmi, *Imāmiyah dīnī madāris-i Pākistān* (Lahore, 2007), pp. 185–187.

<sup>56</sup> Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 141.

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of this work, see A. A. A. Fyze "The creed of Ibn Bābawayhi", *Journal of Bombay University*, XII (1943), pp. 70–86.

<sup>58</sup> Denoting "exaggerated", extremist Shi'i beliefs.

<sup>59</sup> Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 148.

<sup>60</sup> Ansari was born in 1901 in the North Indian city of Shikarpur and combined a religious education with a secular college degree in Comparative Science of Religion. He became a Shi'i missionary (*muballigh*) in Pakistan and is credited with large-scale conversions during public debates (*munazarat*) with Sunni opponents. Naqvi regards him as one of the most important propagandists of the *shaikhiyya* in Pakistan (Naqvī, *Tazkirah*, pp. 276–279).

<sup>61</sup> He became known as *muballigh-i a'zam* [the greatest Shi'i missionary] and allegedly revealed his *shaikhi* leanings only rather late in life (Naqvī, *Tazkirah*, pp. 260–264).

which they served themselves with both hands".<sup>62</sup> Dhakku's opponents did not remain silent. They charged him with downgrading the *ahl al-bait* and saw in him a narrow-minded, fanatic *shi'i-wahhabi* and a reductionist *qashri 'alim* – a scholar who is only concerned with the exoteric aspects [literally: the husk] of religious teaching.<sup>63</sup> Even more radical in the rejection of Dhakku's views was Ansari himself, calling for his total social boycott while denouncing him as a *nasibi*, an enemy of the Prophet's household.<sup>64</sup>

The Shi'i *'ulama* of Pakistan thus became pinned against each other. The reformist camp around Dhakku was primarily represented in institutions of higher religious learning and hence could influence new generations of students and teachers. The so-called *shaikhis*, on the other hand, dominated the pulpit at Shi'i religious gatherings (*majalis*).<sup>65</sup> Outside involvement kindled the flames of discord as well: from late 1974 the conflict intensified due to increased activities of the leaders of two branches of the *shaikhiyya* school of thought, Ayatollah 'Abd al-Rida Ibrahim Kermani (d. 1979), based in Kerman in Eastern Iran, and Ayatollah Mirza Hasan al-Ha'iri al-Ihqaqi (d. 2000), who resided in Kuwait. Both tried to expand their influence in Pakistan with financial help to religious institutions and the distribution of literature.<sup>66</sup> Anti-*shaikhiyya* publications, on the other hand, made use of quotations by leading Iranian scholars to argue against the school.<sup>67</sup> A genuine reconciliation between the rival camps never took place, with this internal splintering haunting the new Shi'i organisations founded after the Iranian Revolution.<sup>68</sup>

I argue that al-Husaini at times sat quite uncomfortably between these two camps. While his "third wave" positions definitely harkened back to some of the concerns of the reformist camp, he repeatedly criticised the latter for embracing a too narrow and too overly apolitical Shi'i outlook. At the same time, al-Husaini faced serious opposition from more traditionalist-minded *'ulama* who had broken away from the TNFJ, concluding on 21 May 1985 a separate agreement with the government on the legalisation of *'azadari* processions.<sup>69</sup> Naqvi points out the *shaikhi* leanings of this group, to which al-Husaini also repeatedly referred when emphasising his disagreement with their leader Sayyid Hamid 'Ali Shah Mousavi over attributing extensive powers to the Imams.<sup>70</sup> The Shi'i community was obviously highly confused by this open display of conflict, reflected by the frequency with which al-Husaini was questioned to prove that he was not a self-made fraud.<sup>71</sup> Given this challenge and in order to make his case as the proper representative of the community, al-Husaini criss-crossed Pakistan, delivering sermons in Urdu as well as in his native Pashtu in a hitherto unknown "revolutionary way" (*bah surat-i inqilabi*).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>62</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 150.

<sup>63</sup>Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 142.

<sup>64</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 152.

<sup>65</sup>Naqvi, "The controversy" p. 143.

<sup>66</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 198.

<sup>67</sup>Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 146.

<sup>68</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 204.

<sup>69</sup>See *Rizākār* IL, 25 (1 July 1985) for an extensive discussion of this agreement.

<sup>70</sup>Naqvi, "The controversy", p. 147. Al-Husaini, *Misāq-i khūn*, pp. 206–207.

<sup>71</sup>See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>72</sup>For a sample of his extensive travelling schedule in 1986, see Naqvi, *Tazkirah*, pp. 159–160.

A bloody police crackdown seems to have finally been the decisive impetus for turning al-Husaini into a 'real' leader. When 13 demonstrators died and hundreds were imprisoned on 5 July 1985 in Quetta while demanding the implementation of the Islamabad agreement of 1980, al-Husaini had finally found a cause to rally the Shi'i masses behind him.<sup>73</sup> In 1987, al-Husaini announced that the TNFJ would transform itself into a political party, demanding that each recognised *madhhab* should be governed by its own interpretation of what the Qur'an and *sunna* mean. Additionally, Pakistan's various Islamic schools of thought should be given representation in the Council of Islamic Ideology and a "Popular Islamic Army" should be created to help reduce the distance between the military and the people. Muhammad Qasim Zaman suggests that these demands probably disquieted the Sunnis since they could entail that "Islam should mean different things to different people, their call to a popular army stoked fear of Shi'i sectarianism and freedom of religion would mean freedom to curse".<sup>74</sup> Al-Husaini had no time left, however, to prove himself in the arena of party politics. His assassination in Peshawar on 5 August 1988, in close conjunction with Zia ul-Haq's death and the end of the Iran-Iraq war just some days later, arguably "marked the end of the short heyday of political radicalism among Shias in Pakistan".<sup>75</sup>

### Localising the Revolution

How did this new 'revolutionary way' manifest itself in al-Husaini's rhetoric? In order to evaluate his indebtedness to the Iranian experience, the following discussion is structured according to hallmark themes of Iran's attempted export of the revolution (*sudur-i inqilab*), discussing (a) calls for Muslim unity, (b) the centrality of Imam Khomeini and Iran, (c) authority of the *'ulama* and religious awakening and (d) political activism. This categorisation is intended to help determine which efforts al-Husaini exerted in trying to adjust the broader Iranian framework to his specific Pakistani context. I would argue that such an adaptation definitely took place, even though al-Husaini's language was at first glance couched in a very faithful rendering of Iran's revolutionary rhetoric. If we read his speeches and interviews closely, however, it becomes clear that he felt compelled to modify the universalist message due to heated internal Shi'i debates and a specific Pakistani legacy of political activism and confrontation with the government.

#### (a) Calling for Muslim unity

One of the major topics of revolutionary Iranian discourse revolved around the call for *taqrib*, an endeavoured *rapprochement* with the Sunnis. Such a closing of ranks seemed essential for Khomeini's goal to establish an ideal, global Islamic system. This new order should encompass the entire Muslim *umma* and be modelled on the example of Iran, which represents the 'pure Muhammadan Islam' (*islam-i nab-i muhammadi*). The world's Muslims, to be sure, were weak, at odds with each other and affected by moral corruption. Yet, revolutionary Iran emphasised

<sup>73</sup>The prisoners were finally released in late April 1986. See *Rizākār*, L, 17 (1 May 1986).

<sup>74</sup>Zaman, "Sectarianism", p. 696.

<sup>75</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 259. Whereas Rieck holds that the murder was carried out by circles tied to Zia ul-Haq, others have blamed Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Khān, *Zindagināmah*, pp. 91–93).

that it did not hold Sunni Islam *per se* responsible for preventing Muslim unity, but rather the conspiring superpowers. In order to show its willingness to come to term with Sunnis on practical terms, hostile sectarian publications were banned in Iran after the revolution, along with the public cursing of the first three caliphs (*sabb va la'n*) or the celebration of the murder of the second caliph 'Umar (d. 644) ('*Umar kushan*). Additionally, Khomeini ruled that Shi'as should end their habit of praying separately from Sunnis during the *hajj*.<sup>76</sup>

As far as Sayyid 'Arif is concerned, the dominating theme of *taqrib* ran through nearly all of his speeches and was clearly situated in the context of sectarian violence and conflict. Underlining that *rapprochement* with the Sunnis was no mere theoretical consideration for him, al-Husaini repeatedly referred to his personal working relationships even with Deobandi and Ahl-i Hadis scholars.<sup>77</sup> He was at pains to convince the Sunnis that the two *madhhabs* were not each others' enemy. Rather, they were both facing a common opponent: polytheism (*shirk*) and unbelief (*kufir*) along with global imperialism, which threatened the whole Islamic world irrespective of its sectarian affiliation. Especially then, after these powers had failed to turn back the clock in Iran and Lebanon, they were aiming at Pakistan.<sup>78</sup> If his organisation was calling for the establishment of an Islamic system in Pakistan, they were not advocating sectarianism (*firqah variyyat*) but striving for a system in which all individual creeds were respected.<sup>79</sup> Al-Husaini turned the famous (if contested) *hadith* "ikhtilaf ummati rahma" [disagreement among my community is a blessing]<sup>80</sup> on its head when he argued that disagreements among Muslims had to be regarded as the soldiers of Satan (*shaitan ke junud*). Every single statement which harmed the *umma* and benefited the superpowers had to be rejected.<sup>81</sup> Al-Husaini also tried to connect with 'classical' *taqrib* efforts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by mentioning the "early heroes" Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Mahmud Shaltut.<sup>82</sup> He called on all Muslims to form one line in prayer and prostration before God, not before the East or the West.<sup>83</sup> Shi'as should simply attend the mosque closest to their home, be it Sunni or Shi'i, for Friday prayers.<sup>84</sup>

The antagonistic context of Pakistan entered the frame in a rather one-sided way. Even though al-Husaini also called on the Shi'a not to insult the Sunnis for their particular prayers during the month of Ramadan (*tarawih*), the latter were supposed to accept '*azadari* as a custom prescribed by God (*sha'a'ir-i Allah*).<sup>85</sup> Additionally, al-Husaini insisted that *sunna* was of course not restricted to the deeds and sayings of the Prophet but included the

<sup>76</sup>W. Buchta, *Die iranische Schia und die islamische Einheit: 1979–1996* (Hamburg, 1997), pp. 64–77.

<sup>77</sup>Al-Husaini at one point approached his fellow Pashtu speaker Maulana Fazl ur-Rahman of the Jami'at-i 'Ulama-i Islam with the suggestion of forming a united party to advocate the Islamic revolution. At a discussion forum, organised by the newspaper *Jang*, the TNFJ representative yielded his time to no one less than Ihsan Ilahi Zahir to continue his critique of the government's proposed Shari'at Bill (Al-Tirmizī, *Naqib-i vahdat*, pp. 39–41).

<sup>78</sup>Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, p. 102.

<sup>79</sup>See, for example, al-Husainī, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, p. 27.

<sup>80</sup>See Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, p. 237. This saying is missing in all major Sunni *hadith* collections but is widely cited in authoritative Shi'i sources.

<sup>81</sup>Al-Husainī, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, p. 25 and *Guftār-i šidq*, pp. 30–31, 81. See also M. Lodhi, "Pakistan's Shia movement: An interview with Arif Hussaini", *Third World Quarterly*, X, 2 (1988), p. 813.

<sup>82</sup>Al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 52 and *idem.*, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup>Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, p. 110.

<sup>84</sup>Al-Tirmizī, *Naqib-i vahdat*, p. 80.

<sup>85</sup>Al-Husainī, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, p. 80.

Shi'i Imams as well.<sup>86</sup> The last question in particular has usually, along with other decisive differences in the fields of law and theology, been avoided in Iranian discourse and seriously calls into doubt the feasibility of sectarian harmony.<sup>87</sup> Al-Husaini was obviously forced to lay emphasis on these Shi'i particularities because his internal opponents accused him of denigrating the *ahl al-bait*. In the run-up to the TNFJ-led Qur'an and Sunna Conference on 6 July 1987 in Lahore, they organised a rival Qur'an and Ahl al-Bait Conference, demanded that the government revoke the permission for al-Husaini's event and even carried out a bomb attack on the city's railway station to scare away prospective participants.<sup>88</sup>

(b) *Centrality of Imam Khomeini and the Iranian example*

Even though stretching out their hands to the Sunnis, Iran always emphasised the centrality of its supreme leader (*rahbar*). Khomeini and his successor Khamenei were hailed as being nearly infallible (*qarib-i ma'sum*) and addressed as the ruler of the Muslim world (*vali-yi amr-i muslimin-i jahan*).<sup>89</sup> Al-Husaini's ecumenism faced the same limitations when he singled out Khomeini as the only personality able to break the dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union, which planned to splinter the Muslim world.<sup>90</sup> The fundamentally different, altruistic Iranian approach, according to al-Husaini, was on display in Afghanistan, where the Islamic Republic was the only outside player to provide uninterested help for the sake of Islam.<sup>91</sup> In the same way as the Muslim *umma* only had one *ka'ba*, it needed to rally around one single leader (*yaki rahbar vahidī*).<sup>92</sup> Putting it even more starkly, al-Husaini insisted that no Islamic movement (*harakat-i islami*) which did not acknowledge Iran's centrality (*markaziyyat*) could be accepted as Islamic.<sup>93</sup> This overarching importance of Iran and its leader might also have to do with the special access to help from the unseen world (*ghaibi madad*) with which Khomeini was blessed in al-Husaini's view.<sup>94</sup> After extolling the Shi'i Imams with the customary eulogies, Khomeini was addressed by him with distinct but similar sounding phrases, thus conveying a connection to the audience which went beyond Khomeini being only the rightful representative of the Hidden Imam (*na'ib-i bar ḥaqq-i Imam-i zaman*).<sup>95</sup> Given the Iranian leader's superior insights, an Islamic Revolution modelled after the example of Iran was the only thinkable solution for Pakistan's woes, even though 'Arif al-Husaini constantly denied that his organisation had a violent upheaval in

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>87</sup> Buchta, *Die iranische Schia*, p. 101.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Tirmizī, *Naqīb-i vaḥdat*, p. 19.

<sup>89</sup> K. Amirpur, "A doctrine in the making? Velayat-e Faqih in post-revolutionary Iran", in *Speaking for Islam. Religious authorities in Muslim societies*, (eds.) G. Krämer and S. Schmidtke (Leiden, 2006), pp. 229–230, and W. Buchta, "Tehran's ecumenical society (Majma' al-Taqrīb): A veritable ecumenical revival or a Trojan horse of Iran?", in *The Twelver Shia*, eds. Brunner and Ende, pp. 334–335. See also N. Calder, "Accommodation and revolution in Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence: Khumayni and the classical tradition", in *Shi'ism, State and Government*, (eds.) P. Luft and C. Turner (London, 2008), pp. 53–54.

<sup>90</sup> Al-Husainī, *Gufṭār-i šidq*, pp. 73, 120–122.

<sup>91</sup> Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, p. 169.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 171.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>94</sup> Al-Husainī, *Sukhm-i 'ishq*, p. 71.

<sup>95</sup> Khomeini was *inter alia* addressed as the Destroyer of Unbelief (*kufr shikan*), the Pounder of East and West (*kubandah-i sharq o gharb*) and the Heir of 'Alī (*varis-i 'Alī*). See al-Husainī, *Miṣāq-i khūn*, p. 39

mind.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, al-Husaini hardly ever indicated how he aimed to achieve this lofty goal, nor did he elaborate his position on the meaning of *vilayat-i faqih* in the context of Pakistan, preferring instead simply to oppose the government. In an interview with the Pakistani newspaper *Muslim* he tried hard to evade the question as to whether he preferred elections over revolution in Pakistan. Similarly, he was at pains to restrict the applicability of the Iranian model solely to Pakistan's economic sphere.<sup>97</sup> He and the *Tahrir* would support any real Islamic system worldwide; it was a mere coincidence that Iran was a Shi'i country.<sup>98</sup>

(c) *Awakening and the leadership role of the 'ulama*

The leadership of the jurist also meant in general a new, central role for the 'ulama in Iranian society,<sup>99</sup> a topic which was of utmost importance to al-Husaini. In the early 1980s, religious scholars faced stiff competition from popular preachers (*zakirs*) who exerted firm control over Shi'i mourning sessions (*majalis*).<sup>100</sup> This particular Pakistani challenge found its way into al-Husaini's arguments when he repeatedly called on his audience to accept 'ulama leadership, lamenting at the same time that many parts of the country were still devoid of their presence.<sup>101</sup> While the rank of *marja' al-taqlid* [source of emulation] was reserved exclusively for Khomeini, lower-ranking scholars in Pakistan could still provide true guidance. They played a crucial role, for example, in identifying the substantial amount of weak *hadith* material in the Shi'i compendia, which among other things promotes *tanasukh*, the transmigration of souls, or displays influences of errant Christian and Jewish interpretations.<sup>102</sup>

It is the 'ulama whom al-Husaini expected to prepare the way for the fundamental reform of fellow Shi'as and Pakistan at large and to facilitate an Iranian-style awakening (*bidari*).<sup>103</sup> In his view "before each revolution, a mental revolution is necessary. If our thinking is not overturned, we remain in ignorant sleep while being faced with conspiracies".<sup>104</sup> On another occasion al-Husaini compared an awakened society with a house full of lights and its residents alert, giving intruders no chance to break in and steal.<sup>105</sup> Awakening also meant preparing Pakistani Muslims to accept the idea of a Muslim world government (*hukumat-i jahani-yi islam*), the idea of which was to be spread by cultural work, books and conferences.<sup>106</sup>

Emphasising the need for *bidari*, al-Husaini explicitly criticised non-political reformists and traditionalists alike. He clearly distanced himself from Dhakku as an authority when he argued that the reform project for which this 'alim stood was useless: the extreme exoteric approach (*qashri gari*) of his group neglected to pay attention to the authentic Islamic teachings

<sup>96</sup> Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, pp. 123, 129.

<sup>97</sup> Lodhi, "Pakistan's Shi'a movement", pp. 810–811.

<sup>98</sup> Al-Husainī, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, pp. 127–128.

<sup>99</sup> See Roy, "The Impact", p. 35.

<sup>100</sup> About Zahab, "Regional Dimensions", p. 116.

<sup>101</sup> Al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, pp. 34, 43, 49, 191, 237, 247.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40, 110.

<sup>103</sup> 'Awakening' in this context is contrasted with the 'traditional' view which regarded political activism as running counter to the prescribed reliance on God's provision (*taqwa*). See Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>104</sup> Naqvi, *Tazkirah*, pp. 158–159.

<sup>105</sup> Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, p. 103.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

and did not provide any solution to burning questions like Kashmir or Palestine.<sup>107</sup> Their apolitical stance clearly betrayed their self-identification as reformers: instead, they should be called reactionaries (*irtija'iyun*). Contrary to what these people argued, the Qur'an was not only a book of law and education but contained guidance in the fields of politics, society and economy as well.<sup>108</sup> Since politics is a part of religion, it is not possible for a believer to close his eyes to events unfolding both in his own country and internationally.<sup>109</sup> The idea that scholars have no role to play in the political realm, should only sit in the mosques, lead prayers and discuss questions revolving around the legal implication of menstruation, was a deliberate lie spread by imperialism (*samraj*).<sup>110</sup> The contrast between al-Husaini and other reformist voices appears even starker since, according to the former, the demands of the Shi'a movement had clearly evolved by 1987: the TNFJ was not longer calling only for a narrow implementation of Shi'i law but for an Islamic system (*islami nizām*) and an Islamic government.<sup>111</sup>

The traditionalists were, of course, on an equally wrong path. Such people only spoke according to the wishes of the people, focused on narrow sectarian issues and did not elucidate what the Qur'an and the *ahl al-bait* demanded from them.<sup>112</sup> While promoting 'azadari, they forgot that the real purpose of 'ashura was not the performance of certain rituals. In its essence, commemorating al-Husain meant striving to reform the *umma* and uniting all downtrodden people (*mustazaḥfin*).<sup>113</sup> "If I myself am bound by the chains of flagellation (*zanjirin*), how can I set others free?" Sayyid 'Arif al-Husaini asked.<sup>114</sup> Making such controversial statements, the leader of the TNFJ drew on the authority of the third Shi'i Imam himself, quoting al-Husain's proclamation during the battle of Karbala: "I did not go into battle out of impertinence or vanity, nor because I am an evil-doer or morally corrupt, but rather to demand the reform of my grandfather's *umma*".<sup>115</sup> If the popular preachers, despite their importance for the Shi'i community in Pakistan, refrained from educating the people, they betrayed the "pulpit of the martyr for the whole of humanity" (*shahid-i insaniyyat ke minbar*).<sup>116</sup> The last reference is a curious one since al-Husaini thus attempted to broaden the appeal of his message and to link revolutionary Iranian discourse to the leading Indian Shi'i authority of the twentieth century, Sayyid 'Ali Naqi Naqvi, widely known as Naqqan Sahib (d. 1988). Far from politicising Karbala, 'Ali Naqi Naqvi in his famous book *Shahid-i Insaniyyat*, originally published around 1940, emphasised the universal attributes and the unique display of morals surrounding al-Husain's martyrdom to which people of all faiths could relate.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107, and al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 138.

<sup>109</sup> Al-Husainī, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*; al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 137.

<sup>111</sup> *Idem*, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, pp. 63–64. See also Lodhi, "Pakistan's Shi'a movement", p. 808.

<sup>112</sup> Al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, pp. 81–82, and al-Tirmizī, *Naqīb-i vaḥdat*, pp. 86–87.

<sup>113</sup> Al-Husainī, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 61, and Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, 1990, p. 147.

<sup>114</sup> Al-Husainī, *Misāq-i khūn*, p. 191.

<sup>115</sup> *Idem*, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, p. 69.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Tirmizī, *Naqīb-i vaḥdat*, p. 89.

<sup>117</sup> Syed Rizwan Zamir, *'Alī Naqvi and his Thought* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Institute of Religious Studies, University of Virginia, 2011), p. 181. For the controversies surrounding this book, see also Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala. Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (New York, 2006), p. 102. See for a new reading of how 'Ali

Reflecting another concern of the Iranian revolution, al-Husaini repeatedly conceded a much wider role for women than many Sunni Islamists: he applauded the contribution of women in Iran after the revolution who, without neglecting their modesty, were very active in reconstructing and advancing their country, including as members of parliament. According to al-Husaini, they could even give religious guidance, provided that they had attained the qualification of independent legal reasoning (*ijtihad*).<sup>118</sup> Pakistan should follow this model and finally recognise the neglected half of its population as full, respected members of society.<sup>119</sup> Al-Husaini's awakening project also reflected elements of the Shi'i heritage, which stretched beyond the Iranian revolution insofar as he emphasised the role of reason and philosophy for believers: if a human being does not develop his rational faculties, perfection is not attainable.<sup>120</sup>

(d) *Political activism*

Finally, for revolutionary Iran, trying to close ranks among Muslims implied lashing out against the 'Global Arrogance' (*istikbar-i jahani*). Khomeini called the United States the main enemy of all the deprived and oppressed people in the world and, as such, it had to be brought to its knees.<sup>121</sup> Islam offered a third path that was neither allied with the East nor the West.<sup>122</sup> Rhetoric against Saudi Arabia was part and parcel of this view, since Saudi princes were seen as morally degenerate, hypocritical rulers who did not obey God but their American masters.<sup>123</sup> Important in this regard was a speech which al-Husaini delivered in the aftermath of Muharram 1984, following large-scale attacks on Shi'is in Karachi, including arson of a mosque and dozens of houses in Liaquatabad.<sup>124</sup> Al-Husaini declared that the Shi'a were aware that "those Wahhabis, who wrap themselves in the mantle of Islam", were behind all these conspiracies. There could be no doubt that Pakistan's Shi'as were being betrayed by their own government which made common cause with the Saudis.<sup>125</sup> The latter were free to construct schools in Peshawar and to run a so-called Islamic University in Islamabad which was not worthy of this title since it accepted neither Shi'i students nor teachers and was only set up to spread hatred among Muslims.<sup>126</sup> These issues served al-Husaini as examples for the unchecked spread of deviant ideas (*afkar-i munharif*) and a corrupted version of Islam that was subservient to the United States.<sup>127</sup> Even more deplorable, however, was Saudi Arabia's anti-Shi'a propaganda in Mecca and Medina and the severe restrictions the country placed

Naqi Naqvi's reconceptualization of al-Husain pre-empted its later politicisation, Justin Jones, "Shi'ism, Humanity and Revolution in Twentieth-Century India: Selfhood and Politics in the Husainology of 'Ali Naqi Naqvi", in this volume.

<sup>118</sup> Al-Husaini, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 127.

<sup>119</sup> Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, p. 132.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>121</sup> D. Menashri, *Post-revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society, and Power* (London, 2001), pp. 187–188.

<sup>122</sup> R. Ramazani, "Iran's export of the revolution: Politics, ends, and means", in *The Iranian Revolution. Its Global Impact*, (ed.) J. L. Esposito (Miami, 1990), pp. 73–75.

<sup>123</sup> With the exception of a *Burgfrieden* policy between 1983 and 1987. See Buchta, *Die iranische Schia*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>124</sup> See Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 253.

<sup>125</sup> Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, pp. 120, 171.

<sup>126</sup> Al-Husaini, *Guftār-i šidq*, p. 200.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73, and Khān, *Zindagīnamāh*, pp. 169, 191.

on pilgrimage for Shi'as.<sup>128</sup> These great crimes subjected the Saudis to God's curse (*un par khuda ki la'nat he*).<sup>129</sup>

While Saudi Arabia thus constituted al-Husaini's 'far enemy' with significant leverage in Pakistan, his political activism was even more frequently directed against the government of his own country, in the process drawing on and expanding a longstanding Shi'i theme. Al-Husaini was constantly denying that Pakistan under Zia deserved in any way to be termed an Islamic Republic, given not only the alliance of the country with the United States but also due to widespread exploitation, immorality and immodesty and a general disregard for Islam.<sup>130</sup> The political system itself was immoral (*fasid*) and wrong (*ghalat*) since Western laws and culture dominated.<sup>131</sup> The government which came to power in the name of religion was, in al-Husaini's view, nothing more than a disgrace for Islam (*Islam ko bad nam kar rahe hen*).<sup>132</sup>

It is interesting to note that al-Husaini remained extremely steady in his anti-Saudi and anti-government rhetoric, even in the years between 1983 and 1987 when Khomeini deliberately toned down any attacks on the kingdom due to the Iran–Iraq war. The Islamic Republic and Saudi Arabia even reached a sort of compromise as far as limited Iranian demonstrations in Mecca during the *hajj* were concerned.<sup>133</sup> Sayyid 'Arif Husain al-Husaini was obviously unimpressed and continued explicitly to identify Wahhabism as the primary enemy of Shi'as worldwide. Al-Husaini and Iran were likewise at odds with regard to the scholar's native country when the Iranian government actively reached out to Pakistan, eager to establish good relations with their neighbours and refraining from any criticism in public.<sup>134</sup> These diplomatic overtures were actively resisted by al-Husaini whose anti-Zia stance went as far as refraining from welcoming 'Ali Khamenei, then Iran's president, at the airport when he made a state visit to Pakistan in January 1986. Although al-Husaini justified his decision by pointing out that he intended not to lend the slightest legitimacy to Zia ul-Haq, Khamenei reportedly strongly disapproved of his radicalism.<sup>135</sup>

### Conclusion: Beyond the lone revolutionary

Probably these last observations most clearly demonstrate the limits of control that the Iranians could hope to exert over the Pakistani propagators of their revolutionary mission.<sup>136</sup> At first glance, al-Husaini's speeches with their adamant critique of imperialism and the constant call

<sup>128</sup> Al-Husaini, *Gufār-i šidq*, pp. 196–197. For a discussion of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia in this regard, see W. S. Harrop, "Pakistan and revolutionary Iran: Adjusting to necessity", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, XIII, 1–2 (1989), p. 120.

<sup>129</sup> Al-Husaini, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, pp. 327–329.

<sup>130</sup> Khān, *Zindāginamāh*, p. 122.

<sup>131</sup> Al-Husaini, *Gufār-i šidq*, p. 50, and *idem*, *Uslūb-i siyāsāt*, pp. 136, 318.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*; Al-Husaini, *Gufār-i šidq*, p. 149.

<sup>133</sup> Buchta, *Die Iranische Schia*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>134</sup> Harrop, "Pakistan and revolutionary Iran", p. 125.

<sup>135</sup> Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 255. See also the coverage in *Rizākār*, L, 2–3 (16 January 1986).

<sup>136</sup> Scholars have made similar observations in the context of other countries such as Lebanon or the Gulf states. See, for example, R. Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon. Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York, 2008), pp. 195–210 and Laurence Louër, "The rise and fall of revolutionary utopias in the Gulf monarchies", in *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*, (ed.) Mervin, pp. 84–87.

for Muslim unity strike the reader as not particularly geared towards a Pakistani audience. Yet, if we pay close attention to the different camps of scholars and Shi'i organisations in the country, we can discern particular currents in al-Husaini's rhetoric that go beyond the preliminary assumption that he was simply delivering blind carbon-copied directives emanating from Tehran. For example, as a minority in Pakistan, identity politics are of a much more decisive concern for the Shi'a than for their Iranian co-religionists. It follows that *taqrib* can work only to an extent. Hence, al-Husaini was probably forced to bring up divisive arguments like the corpus of *hadiths* transmitted from the Shi'i Imams, or to emphasise the sacred, divinely prescribed character of *'azadari*, in order to cater to his audience, which felt very threatened by the state and society at large. Additionally, the power of his apolitical reformist and *shaikhi* opponents appears to be much stronger than in the context of Iran. The latter might have to do with the absence of equally sophisticated clerical structures in Pakistan and the formidable challenge staged by very active popular preachers. Related to this point is the specific question as to whether the institution of the *marja'iyya*, the adoption of a senior scholar as a source of emulation, had and has indeed taken root in Pakistan.<sup>137</sup> Scholars who argue in the affirmative point out that after the death of Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim in 1970, most Pakistanis accepted Abu 'l-Qasim al-Khu'i (d. 1992) as their *marja'*. This decision, so this argument runs, presumably limited the revolutionary influence of Khomeini and the appeal of the Iranian conception of *vilayat-i faqih* [the rule of the jurisprudent] in the subcontinent.<sup>138</sup> Other students of Pakistani Shi'as have challenged this view, arguing that the concept of *marja'iyya* is not meaningful at all in the context of Pakistan. In the mid-1980s Nikki Keddie's interlocutors were unable to mention "an actual issue or occasion on which they had followed such clerical guidance".<sup>139</sup> David Pinault, conducting research on Pakistani Shi'as, 17 years later in 2002, made similar observations. Many of the members of the community whom he interviewed "seemed altogether unfamiliar even with the concept of the *marja'*".<sup>140</sup>

If we take this empirical evidence seriously, such a dearth of 'religious literacy' was surely not due to a lack of trying, especially in the light of intensive discussions on the authority of the *maraji'* and their local representatives in the 1960s and 1970s. Emphases of their importance not only filled the pages of the most influential Pakistani Shi'i journals but were also voiced by various Shi'i missionary organisations in the decades before the Iranian Revolution. Additionally, besides Khomeini and al-Khu'i, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Kazim Shar'iatmadari, head of the *Dar al-Tabligh-i Islami* [The house of Islamic preaching] in Qom, had an extensive and vocal following in Pakistan that continued to support him

<sup>137</sup>In the context of Afghanistan and its Hazara Shi'a minority, Bindemann noticed a transformation during the 1980s. Authority shifted from the Sufi orders (*tariqat*), headed by a *pir*, to the 'ulama and to a discourse more dominated by references to *shari'a* than personal charisma. See R. Bindemann, *Religion und Politik bei den schiitischen Hazāra in Afghanistan, Iran und Pakistan* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 34–37.

<sup>138</sup>Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, p. 194. Vali Nasr writes that in the late 1980s South Asian Shi'as referred to al-Khu'i with the same lofty titles Iran used to address Khomeini. They regarded Khomeini only as a leader in political matters, whereas in religious questions they were followers of al-Khu'i, who also received most of their *khums*. See Nasr, "The Iranian revolution", p. 339.

<sup>139</sup>N. R. Keddie, "Shi'ism and Change: Secularism and Myth", in *Shi'ite heritage. Essays on classical and modern traditions*, (ed.) L. Clarke (Binghamton, 2001), p. 400.

<sup>140</sup>D. Pinault, *Notes from the Fortune-Telling Parrot: Islam and the Struggle for Religious Pluralism in Pakistan* (London, 2008), p. 79.

even after he was put under house arrest as a consequence of his alleged involvement in a coup against the Islamic Republic in 1982.<sup>141</sup> If all these efforts failed to sway the majority of Pakistan's Shi'a to submit to the authority of high-ranking scholars beyond the country's borders, it becomes clearer why al-Husaini was forced to spend so much time on extolling the political and religious leadership of Khomeini in order to keep his third wave rolling.  
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<sup>141</sup>For an extensive discussion, see my paper, "Tapping sources: the marāji' and their followers in Pakistan", presented at the workshop 'Traditional Authority and Transnational Religious Networks in Contemporary Shi'i Islam', Keble College, Oxford, 7–9 January 2013. On Shari'atmadari, see E. Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley, 1999), pp. 157–159.