

g al Consequences

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focus for power struggles between groups. For example, at Georgetown University, a Catholic institution where I am a professor, there has been a struggle between those who support having crucifixes displayed in classrooms and those who are opposed to this practice. Both groups obviously recognize the important carrier role of the crucifix; otherwise, they would not fight over two pieces of wood joined together in the shape of a cross. Similarly, the flag of the Old Confederacy in the Southern part of the United States is "just a piece of cloth," but African Americans have fought to have this flag set aside, because they recognize it as a carrier of values associated with slavery. Thus, of central importance is the cultural meaning of a carrier as subjectively understood by people, rather than any objective or strictly practical characteristics it might have.

In this discussion, I shall focus particularly on the role of two carriers central to the Islamic movement (1) leadership^{style} and (2) the veil prescribed for use by women. Although almost all human societies have leaders, there is considerable variation in style of leadership across cultures, and my focus will be on the continuity of style of leadership in Iran. With respect to the Islamic veil, which from one perspective is just a piece of cloth, again the emphasis will be on the role of this carrier in sustaining particular aspects of a meaning system.

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THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION, CARRIERS, AND CULTURAL SURPLUS

A variety of competing interpretations and ideologies are available for assessing the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 (for examples, see Algar, 1983; Arjomand, 1988a; Khomeini, 2002; Motahhari, 1986; Parsa, 1989), a survey of such interpretations and ideologies being beyond the scope of this chapter. My main objective is to highlight certain continuities achieved through carriers, continuities that span across pre- and postrevolution Iran and that underline fundamental ways in which life remained the same after the revolution. In this analysis, I pay close attention to informal normative systems, the way things actually get done and meaning systems as they are, rather than to formal systems, or the way things are officially supposed to be done. This cultural approach is in line with developments in a number of specialties, giving greater importance to social-cultural rather than formal-material aspects of life, such as the focus on social capital in political science (Putnam, 2000) and discussions of human capital in economics (Jones, 1987).

Context and Background

Modern Iran covers a territory of 628,000 square miles, an area larger than France, Italy, and Spain combined. At the time of the revolution in

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1978-79, the population in Iran numbered around thirty-six million, and in 2002 it is close to seventy million. The discovery and excavation of oil in Iran in the early 1900s eventually formed the economic basis for the modern Iranian state, with the Qajar dynasty (1796-1921) being succeeded by the Pahlavi dynasty (1926-78). The revolution of 1978 toppled Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-79), and brought into place an Islamic Republic, thus ending a supposedly unbroken line of monarchy going back 2,500 years (for a more detailed background discussion, see Mackay, 1998).

LEADERSHIP, CARRIERS, AND CULTURAL SURPLUS

Leadership is a primitive social relation that emerged early in the evolution of human social life. The role of leader in such early groups was probably particularly essential in organizing defense, flight from enemies, and hunting. Elementary leadership characteristics are reflected in the rank order that emerges among animals as well as humans, including children (Savin-Williams, 1979). The coming together of a group of individuals for the first time typically involves an initial period of competition, after which a pecking order is established. In a cross-cultural study involving comparisons across European children, Japanese children, and children of Bushmen in central Kalahari, Hold (1977) identified a number of common characteristics among high-ranking and low-ranking children in all three groups. Of particular importance for our discussion are the high-ranking children, potential leaders, who were more likely to initiate activities, mediate in conflicts, protect weaker members, and act as the decision maker in the distribution of resources (e.g., candy). Interestingly, the notion of pecking order was first empirically demonstrated in a pioneering study on rank order among chickens (for a broader discussion, see Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1989, pp. 297-314), and a number of the elementary characteristics of leadership are found among human and nonhuman primates.

Leadership Style As Cultural Surplus

Although the primitive social relation of leadership was common to most and perhaps all surviving human groups, particular forms of leadership style evolved and were sustained by carriers as part of a cultural surplus in each group. Such leadership style can only be understood by considering the relationship between leaders and followers, rather than by focusing on leaders in isolation. More specifically, attention must be given to the details of everyday social practices among followers in their relationships with the leader. These everyday practices are informal and can continue across generations, able to survive attempts to change the

official system of governance and formal relationship between leaders and followers. For example, the informal system of creating obligations in others, especially leaders, is practiced in a number of societies, particularly Eastern ones. Yang (1994) has studied this practice in China, where it is termed *Guanxixue*, and specifically involves "the exchange of gifts, favors, and banquets; the cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence; and the manufacturing of obligations and indebtedness" (p. 6). By going out of their way to create obligations in leaders, as when a factory worker does huge personal favors for the family of the factory manager, followers can influence leader behavior.

A second strategy for assessing leadership style is to attend to the implicit and informal system, rather than the explicit and formal system. For example, according to the formal rhetoric in China, the practice of *Guanxixue* is a relic of the past that has been stamped out, or at least is almost ended. But a detailed look at everyday social practices as they actually are suggests this practice to be continuing, despite serious efforts to end it by the communist regime. Thus, attention to leader-follower relationships and to everyday social practices as they actually exist leads to the identification of a surprising level of continuity.

In the context of Iran, also, by paying close attention to leader-follower relationships, as well as to everyday social practices, we identify a surprisingly high level of continuity across pre- and postrevolution eras. The 1978-79 revolution formally changed the political system of Iran from monarchy to Islamic Republic. The Safavid rulers (1501-1722) made Shiism the state religion of Iran, Shia being the minority religion in the world context, comprising about 15 percent of all Muslims, with most of the rest being Sunni Muslims. On the surface, the 1978-79 revolution fundamentally changed the political landscape in Iran, because it set aside the monarchy and established religious authority as the absolute power. However, in terms of deeper leader-follower relations, the situation in Iran is characterized by continuity rather than change. To recognize the nature of this process, it is necessary to consider some details of the practice of Shiism in Iran.

A fundamentally important feature of Shiism as traditionally practiced in Iran is that it comprises an informal normative system, rather than a formally organized system (this is for the most part still true of post-1978 Iran). For example, there is no formal Shii church, with an identifiable organizational chart and formal hierarchy as in the case of the Christian church. Similarly, the system of training for *talabeh*, "theology students," in the *madrassa*, "Islamic schools," tends still to be informal and unstructured compared with the Christian educational system. Similarly, the process through which Islamic mullas come to acquire titles such as Hujjat al-Islam or Ayatollah or Grand Ayatollah is, again, informal and unstructured compared with the Christian system, with its explicit and well-

ship between leaders and existing obligations in other societies, particularly in China, where it is the exchange of gifts, favors, relationships and networks of obligations and indebted obligations in leaders, or for the family of the behavior.

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attention to leader-follower practices, we identify a surge postrevolution eras. The formal system of Iran from (1501–1722) made Shi'ite religion in the world, with most of the rest of the revolution fundamentalise it set aside the monarchical power. However, the situation in Iran is characterized the nature of this of the practice of Shiism

traditionally practiced a system, rather than a that still true of post-1978 Iran, with an identifiable case of the Christian, "theology students," informal and unstructured. Similarly, the proper titles such as Hujjat informal and unstructured its explicit and well-

known bureaucracies for appointing bishops, the pope, and so on. The informality of Shiism in Iran, as compared with the formal and explicit system of the secular government in Iran with the monarch at its head, has meant that leadership has been analyzed in connection with the secular rather than the religious system. A major point I want to illustrate and highlight is that leadership in Iran must be considered in the context of religion, and not just the monarchy and the formal secular state. It is through attention to leader-follower relations in Shiism as practiced in Iran that we can best explain continuity in leadership style in Iran.

The key to leader-follower relations in Islam, as practiced by Sunni and Shia alike, is found in Verse 4:59 in the Quran, the Muslim holy book, which commands believers to obey God, to obey the Messenger, and to obey "those in authority among you" (see Arjomand, 1988c, p. 1). Muslim ulama (religious scholars) have debated the exact interpretation of "those in authority among you." A tension has existed historically, between the authority of religion and temporal authority, in Western terms, the church versus the state. Whereas in the United States and most other Western democracies, as well as some non-Western ones, church and state are explicitly separated, at least on paper, in Iran, the relationship between religion and temporal authority has been much more intimate and interwoven. Those who interpret this relationship to have been competitive must acknowledge that religious authority has become dominant and monopolistic in postrevolution Iran.

The authority of religion, and the influence of religious leaders, has been considerably strengthened in Iran through the particular characteristics of Shia practice. Each practicing Shia Muslim is obligated to select a *marja-i-taqlid*, "a source of imitation." This *marja-i-taqlid* is selected from among the ulama and is used as a reference point, a guidepost, on each and every single issue and decision. Each practicing Shia Muslim is obligated to pay Islamic taxes (these are additional to, and separate from, government taxes) directly to the clergy, and typically such taxes are paid to the person selected as one's *marja-i-taqlid*. Thus, the authority of Islamic authorities in Shia Iran has been based on a strong and independent or freestanding foundation. On the one hand, the laymen are obligated to adopt a *marja-i-taqlid* as a source of imitation; integral to this relationship is a legal and moral obligation for the follower to obey the leader. On the other hand, the follower is obligated to pay taxes directly to the leadership, thus helping to maintain the ulama financially independent from the secular powers.

A third key feature of the leader-follower relationship in Shia Islam as practiced in Iran can best be understood through the concept of *ijtihad*, involving the interpretation of legal norms through jurisprudence and more generally the interpretation of holy scripture. The Quran is still read in classical Arabic, a language only a small minority understand in Iran,

which is predominantly Persian speaking (no doubt this reminds Christians of the pre-Reformation era, when the Bible was still not translated from Latin into local languages, and those clergy who were educated were among the very small minority who could read and understand the Bible in Latin). Through many years of study and devotion, religious scholars may reach a stage when they join the *mujtahidin*, those who have the authority to interpret holy scripture. Thus, the Shia masses have a particularly dependent relationship with the *mujtahidin*, because the ordinary Shia believer is unable to read and understand the holy book of Islam in Arabic, and even if some believers could read the Arabic text they would still have to rely on the *mujtahidin* to interpret the text for them and to resolve contemporary issues through the application of such interpretations.

These broad and central characteristics of Shia Islam as practiced in Iran support a certain style of leader-follower relationship, and this style is further strengthened by more fine-grained, detailed features of everyday social practices. An example is the practice of daily prayers, every Muslim being obligated to say prayers five times each day, at specified times: when the sky is filled with light but before actual sunrise, immediately after midday, sometime between three and five o'clock in the afternoon, after sunset but before darkness, and any hour of darkness. The daily prayer in Islam is a highly structured, repetitive, collective activity. It is collective first in the sense that all Muslims follow the same procedures for ritually cleaning themselves before each prayer, all face in the direction of Mecca, and all recite the same prayers in Arabic. Thus, each individual goes through the same prayer rituals at the same time as all other Muslims, and this shared activity underlines the collective rather than individualistic nature of the experience. A second way in which the daily prayer is collective is that Muslims are encouraged to say their prayers in the company of other Muslims, and the attendance of community prayer is an obligation for the noon prayer on Fridays. This coming together is an opportunity for the community, and particularly the Imam leading the prayer, to exert influence on individuals and to strengthen conformity and obedience. A third way in which the daily prayer is collective is that five times a day the muezzin call the faithful to prayer, traditionally by calling out from the high minarets of mosques, and in recent years by calling through loudspeaker systems. In this way, everyone present in the Islamic world experiences the call to prayer five times every day and is reminded of the overarching power and reach of the mosque, even if they themselves do not attend prayers.

Integration and Interim Conclusion

Leadership is conceptualized as a primitive social relation, a behavioral characteristic essential for effective functioning and survival for human

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groups, particularly in ecological conditions that require more complex organization. On the basis of this primitive social relation of leadership, there evolves a cultural surplus that varies in fundamental ways across cultures. To understand the nature of this cultural surplus in Iran, I examined follower-leader relations, rather than leadership in isolation, and highlighted aspects of the informal rather than the formal system, giving particular importance to everyday practices in Shia Islam as practiced in Iran. An extensive array of carriers serves to sustain the follower-leader relationship characteristic of Shiism in Iran. These carriers vary with respect to their pull, load, and flexibility. A number of carriers, such as the daily Islamic prayer, are low on flexibility, in the sense that their form and meaning is fairly well established and unbending, but very high on pull and load, meaning that they are highly effective in sustaining continuity and meaning across generations. The daily prayer involves rituals that have to be performed five times a day, with specific meanings to each part of each ritual, and this repetitive social practice serves to sustain continuity, particularly upholding the collective, community-based nature of social life.

Other carriers, such as the *marja-i-taqlid*, are more flexible. Over the last several hundred years, the scope of authority of the *mujtahid* has varied, becoming broader at times but narrower at other times. Through the influence of Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini and others, a very broad interpretation of the powers of the *mujtahid* has been dominant since the 1978 revolution, so broad that the *marja-i-taqlid* is now placed above all other secular and religious powers. This principle of leadership by a *mujtahid* recognized as the supreme *marja-i-taqlid* is referred to as *vilayat al-faqih*, authority of the jurist, and is at the heart of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the Preamble to the Constitution, it is stated:

In keeping with the principles of governance and the perpetual necessity of leadership, the Constitution provides for the establishment of leadership by a faqih possessing the necessary qualifications and recognized as leader by the people. . . . Such leadership will prevent any deviation by the various organs of the State from their essential Islamic duties. (Arjomand, 1988b, pp. 373-374)

Thus, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic is the leading *marja-i-taqlid*, or a council of *mujtahid* if one outstanding leader is not recognized above all others. Because all laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria (Article 4), the *marja-i-taqlid*, supported by a Guardian Council and other faithful Muslims, acts as the final judge as to which laws, regulations, decisions, and so on, will receive final approval and go into effect. This "judgment from above" trumps the popular vote, because although the president of the Republic, the representatives of the national consultative assembly, and other representatives are voted on by the peo-

ple, they have to be approved by religious authorities, the most important being the supreme *marja-i-taqlid*. There have been many examples of the popular vote being overturned by the religious leadership.

It is timely at this juncture to look across from religious to secular leadership in Iran and identify a fundamental similarity and continuity:

The similarity of the leadership role attained by Khomeini and by the shah is remarkable. . . . the opinion they expressed on any subject (and they expressed opinions on just about every aspect of life) was treated as the final authoritative word, not to be questioned under any circumstances. It was as if these leaders had risen above the level of mere mortals. To criticize them was not just wrong; it was to commit sacrilege. This infallibility was in both of their cases associated with lifelong supreme power. (Moghaddam, 2002, p. 25)

In conclusion, then, despite the vehement opposition of Ayatollah Khomeini and the shah to one another, their leadership style and relationship with followers was based on the same cultural surplus. The everyday social practices that upheld the one also upheld the other.

THE ISLAMIC VEIL: CARRIER AND CULTURAL SURPLUS

Any serious attempt to understand the Islamic fundamentalism movement in Iran and the current conflicts involving Islamic fundamentalists in the Middle East and elsewhere must take into consideration the situation and treatment of women. The modern Western attitude toward gender roles, and the spread of these attitudes to Islamic societies, is viewed by Islamic fundamentalists as a direct threat, and one that must from their viewpoint be thwarted effectively. In this section of the discussion, I begin by elaborating on minimal social relations in the domain of gender roles, and then I discuss the role of the Islamic veil as a carrier used to sustain a particular cultural surplus in Iran and other parts of the world.

Gender Roles, Minimal Social Relations, and Cultural Surplus

The survival of any human group depends on successful procreation and nurturance of the young. Each generation must achieve a certain minimal set of behaviors that enable males and females to have offspring, and to socialize the next generation toward having and supporting offspring. Such minimal social relations must provide for the safety and nourishment needs of pregnant mothers and the young. Any situation in which this is not achieved threatens the survival of the group. These shared requirements create certain universals in gender relations. For example,

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even in societies in which women are kept in near slavery conditions, they are valued for their role in procreation and are provided certain safeguards as mothers.

Beyond this minimal level of behavior required for survival, there are enormous cross-cultural variations in the way gender roles and gender relations are organized. Such variations are part of the cultural surplus in any society, and the nature of cultural surpluses differs across cultures. For example, there are numerous ways in which male dominance is maintained in different societies, including the deprivation of property and voting rights, as was the case in most Western societies until early in the twentieth century, and more direct physical interventions such as female circumcision as still practiced in some Islamic societies (see Moghaddam, 1998, chap. 12). Practices such as foot binding and female circumcision have both practical and symbolic importance in intergroup relations: they serve to impose a severe physical limitation on females in conformity with norms established by males, and so have a direct practical impact; but they also serve as a symbolic reminder of male superiority and male-female differences according to the dominant male ideology.

The Islamic veil functions as a fundamentally important carrier in Iran and many other countries. Most important, the veil sustains values and perpetuates central traditions, particularly those related to gender roles and the limited role of women in the public sphere. Second, the normative use of the veil is a visible and public expression of the dominance of Islamic ideology in a society. Third, the veil serves as a clear visible line between the in-group (Islamic societies) and out-groups (non-Islamic societies). In order to clarify the carrier role of the veil, in the next section I briefly review the fight over the veil in recent Iranian history.

The Veil in Iran

Competing groups have interpreted the veil differently in Iran, but explicitly or implicitly, all view it as a carrier of Islamic values. Islamic traditionalists and fundamentalists have argued that the veil protects women and allows them to escape being treated as sexual objects. From this perspective, the veil also prevents men from being distracted and getting into trouble, it being their nature to be sexually attracted to women. As one mulla put it, a woman should cover herself "because a fight might start if a beautiful woman is seen: the eyes that see her will cause the heart to want her" (Loeffler, 1988, p. 20). Women rather than men wear the veil because men are more easily distracted by the opposite sex than are women, but men should also dress modestly. Those who oppose the veil, most of whom argue for a separation of church and state, view the veil as a means by which the second-class status of women is maintained and the activities of women in the public sphere are severely limited.

Both the pro-Islamic and pro-modernist forces are headed by elite groups of men, and the tug-of-war over the veil has for the most part involved elite men making decisions for women. The first serious efforts to change the gender role of women were made by Reza Shah (ruled 1926-41), who attempted to forcibly make women *behejab*, "without the veil," as part of his modernization program. The veil was torn away from the heads of any women who dared to appear *bahejab*, "with veil," in public. At the same time, pressure was placed on men to change from traditional to modern Western clothes. In making these changes, Reza Shah was moving against traditional Islamic forces, including of course the leading Ayatollahs of the day, but he was also moving against the wishes of many traditionalist fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and other male family members, who did not want the women in their families to become *behejab* and active in the public sphere.

When Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in 1941, his son became Shah but at the time lacked the power to continue the modernization program begun by his father. The policy of forced unveiling of women in public was abandoned, and traditionalists gained ground once more. A small group of women, mostly from the upper classes and living in urban centers, continued to appear in public without the veil, but the majority of women went back to the veil, under varying degrees of direct and indirect social pressure. After the pro-democracy movement led by Mossadeq failed in 1951, and another uprising was thwarted in 1963, Mohammed Reza Shah (ruled 1941-79) used Iran's increasing oil revenues to bolster his support and dominate power at the national level. During the 1960s and early 1970s, increasing urbanization and Westernization was associated with the greater activities of women in the public sphere, mostly without the veil. By the early 1970s, middle- and upper-class women, as well as many working class women, appeared in public without the veil, particularly in the larger urban centers. Indeed, women who wanted to participate in the profitable new modern economy had little choice but to appear in public without the veil.

But this government pressure on women to appear in public without the veil continued side by side with a pressure in the opposite direction from Islamic traditionalists and fundamentalists, who often ruled the private sphere of the home and the family. Thus, during this period in Iran, some women would remove the veil in some public contexts because of the need to conform to government-supported norms in the public sphere, but put the veil back on at other times because of the necessity to conform to traditional norms imposed by their own family members.

From around 1977, people in Iran began to participate in large demonstrations against the Shah. These demonstrations included many different groups with various ideologies, from left to right on the political spectrum. However, it was Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic clerics

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are headed by elite classes for the most part. The first serious efforts to remove Reza Shah (ruled 1926–1941), "without the veil," were torn away from the Shah's "with veil," in public. The change from traditional dress, Reza Shah was moving to reverse the leading Ayatollahs' wishes of many families and other male family members to become *behejab*.

His son became Shah and a modernization program was implemented; of women in public dress once more. A small group living in urban centers, but the majority of women of direct and indirect influence led by Mossadeq in 1963, Mohammed Reza's oil revenues to bolster the veil. During the 1960s, modernization was associated with the public sphere, mostly upper-class women, as women who wanted to appear in public without the veil had little choice but to

appear in public without the veil in the opposite direction. The Shah often ruled the public sphere during this period in Iran, in public contexts because of the necessity to conform to the wishes of members.

Participation in large demonstrations included many different groups on the political right and the Islamic clerics

who stole the thunder from the other groups and took over the leadership of the revolution against the Shah. In order to participate in demonstrations, many women who had previously abandoned the veil now again put on the veil, because the norm for the large demonstrations was now that women should wear the veil. A month after the Shah's downfall, Ayatollah Khomeini called for women to be *bahejab*, with veil, again. Despite some opposition, within a year women in Iran found themselves forced by law to be veiled when appearing in public (see Moghissi, 1995).

Integration and Interim Conclusion

Certain minimal social relations must be achieved in gender relations in order for a human group to survive; but beyond this minimum, variations abound in cultural surpluses in the domain of gender relations. In this discussion, I focused on a very important carrier, the veil, that sustains and perpetuates the cultural surplus pertaining to gender relations in Iran and elsewhere. In some respects, the veil served in the Iranian revolution of 1978–79 the kind of function that the red flag served in the Russian revolution of 1917. Most important, the veil served to unify all of the different Islamic factions, from the so-called Islamic Marxists of the left to the ultraconservative Islamic groups of the right. All the multitudes of Islamic groups could identify with the veil and see it as a symbol of "their" revolution, just as many groups could project their revolutionary ideals onto the red flag during the Russian revolution (Figes & Kolonitskii, 1999).

The veil has also achieved extremely high carrier load and carrier pull. On the one hand, the meaning load of the veil has been tremendously high. In a sense, the veil has come to stand in for the revolution. The veil has a highly visible meaning load in two senses. First, the veil is highly visible, literally speaking. Second, the impact of the veil in changing gender relations and limiting the activities of females in the public sphere has also been highly visible. The carrier pull of the veil is evident in its anchoring power; gender roles are tied down by the veil. Women are not able to operate as equal competitors with men in the public domain, but are forced to stand back and play a complementary public role. Thus, the veil anchors males and females in Iran (and elsewhere) to traditional gender roles.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The tragedy of 9/11 has led to a great deal of interest in conflict between radical Islam and pro-Western forces, particularly as influenced by the countries of the Near East and Middle East. However, there is a danger that this conflict will remain an enigma, because of a lack of sufficient

attention to continuity rather than to change, and to the informal and implicit normative system rather than to the formal and explicit.

In this discussion, I have explored follower-leader relations and the Islamic veil as important aspects of the cultural surplus in Iran. In fundamental ways, my discussion of both follower-leader relations and the Islamic veil highlights continuity rather than change, pointing out the way that things do not, rather than do, change. This focus on stability is a key to understanding relations between macro- and micro-level processes, particularly in the Islamic societies. A recent United Nations report written by a group of distinguished Arab intellectuals states, "The wave of democracy that transformed governance in most of Latin America and East Asia in the 1980s, and Eastern Europe and much of Central Asia in the 1980s and early 1990s, has barely reached the Arab States" (United Nations Development Program, 2002). In order to understand these continuities, it is necessary to focus on factors associated with stability, and not just factors associated with change.

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