

Tod Ausdruck in der Errichtung eines großen Mausoleums in der Nähe von Teheran. Die bronzene Kuppel ist weithin sichtbar. Khomeinis Schrein wurde ein Wallfahrtsort, besonders für Frauen, der an den Schrein al-Husains in Kerbela erinnert.

Literatur

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Shiite Theologians: Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989)

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Ayatollah Khomeini is one of the most influential Shiite theologians of the present time. Whereas most theologians attain popularity through their work, teaching at universities, or through issuing legal decrees, (*fatwas*) Ayatollah Khomeini took over the political as well as religious leadership of Iran, as leader of the Iranian revolution in 1979. From 1980, neighbouring Islamic Iraq fought an eight year long war against Iran, in which hundreds of thousands of young men – many poorly equipped and trained – were called upon to sacrifice themselves as martyrs in battle. Paradise was promised to them. During these years Iran attempted to export the Iranian revolution to the rest of the Islamic world.

The main branch of Shiism is called „Twelver Shiism“ as its adherents believe in twelve Imams as religious leaders of the Shii community. In actual fact, the teachings of the Twelver Shia which Khomeini subscribed to was a more subdued form of Shiism, not normally striving for political mastery. Classical Shiism looks forward to attaining rulership when the last Imam as a messiah ap-

pears on the world stage in the last days, to establish a reign of peace. Khomeini, however, reinterpreted the classic Shiite teachings quite a long time before the revolution, to open the way for Shiite clerics to exercise active political power. His “ruling of the experts” (Persian: *velayat-e-faqih*) meaning religious rule as the highest authority, found its way into the first Iranian constitution.¹ The visible rulership of a returning Imam at the end of time is made redundant by the “*ruling of the learned*”.² These “experts” introduce a government pleasing to God, provide for the application of Koranic law and punishment, and for the preservation of public law and order. Allah, therefore, is the one sovereign power over the state, as stated in the “*Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran*”. All laws and regulations must measure up to the demands of the Koran and Islamic tradition. This process is watched over by the “*council of the*

¹ Ayatollah Khomeini: The Islamic State. Islamkundliches Material. vol. 9, Berlin 1983.

² Heinz Halm. Der Schiitische Islam. Von Religion zu Revolution. München, 1994, p. 159.

guards”, consisting of six religious legal experts, and six secular jurors.

Ruhu’llah ibn Mustafa Musawi Khumayni (Khomeini) was born on either 2nd or 24th of September, 1902, in the small town of Khumayn, south-west of Qumm (Qum/Gom). It is said that he could recite the Koran by heart at the age of 7.³ He began his theological training in 1919, and continued it in Qumm – perhaps the most important centre for Shiite studies in Iran – in 1929. From 1927 Khomeini taught ethics, mysticism and philosophy. Already in 1944 he published a paper attacking the rulership of Reza Shah, and the institution of the monarchy. From 1960/61 Khomeini intensified his focus on political activities, through his support for a movement amongst clerics against the Shah, and openly criticised the government during his lectures. In 1963 Khomeini’s attacks against the Shah reached a climax, when, during a public speech, he described the Shah as a “modern-day Yazid” – that is, a polluter of the Shiite community, and murderer of the grandson of the prophet, al-Husain, in the year 680. He was then arrested, and an uprising resulted, during which about 1000 people are said to be shot dead by the security forces.⁴

In just one year, 1963, Khomeini was arrested three times. He had protested against the “*White Revolution*” which the Shah had introduced, which comprised an effort to teach women literary skills, to forbid the Muharram processions, and to forbid women from wearing veils. In the following year, 1964, Khomeini was exiled to Bursa, in Tur-

key, where he maintained contact with Iran and continued writing. In 1965, the Shah allowed him to live in Najaf, a Shiite pilgrim town in Iraq in the hope that his influence would diminish, which did not happen, but rather the opposite. From Najaf, Khomeini taught and preached over the following 13 years, and continued his bitter opposition to the Shah regime. He held lectures, in which he openly encouraged Shiite clerics to become involved in the political struggle. He was enabled to do so by his new interpretation of Shiite tradition, namely, that the time of mourning and suffering over the death of al-Husain, the grandson of the prophet, was now over, and was now replaced by the necessity of a sacrificial death through martyrdom, should the political situation demand it (and so it did).⁵ This lecture was smuggled into Iraq by Khomeini’s followers.

From this point on, the end-time hope, and waiting for the returning Imam, was replaced by action, in the form of revolution. Khomeini taught that the “twelfth Imam” was living, hidden away in secret, and that the leadership of the Muslim community had been handed over by him to just, God-fearing men, well versed in the law. With the expression “God fearing men” Khomeini was referring to himself, and thus preparing the Shiite community for his political and religious leadership.

After the revolution, in 1979, Khomeini took over the highest authority of teacher, and that of “one sent” by the still living Imam. He never described himself as an Imam, but took over the associated functions. His utterances were considered infallible, as with an Imam. He argued that a lifestyle observing Is-

³ Hamid Algar: A brief biography of Imam Khomeini. www.wandea.org.pl. 15.9.2005.

⁴ Wilfried Buchta. Schiiten. Kreuzlingen/München 2004, page 81.

⁵ Ibid. page 81.

Islamic law (Arabic: *sharia*) was impossible under the Shah, and that Muslims were obliged to participate in the revolution, so as to restore true Islamic order. This came about, in a theocracy, in which Islamic law and traditions, interpreted and applied by the highest religious authorities, got back their full validity. The strong end-time expectations of the Shiite community played an important role, as these expectations appeared to have been fulfilled in the person of Khomeini, who seemed able to fulfil the promise of a nation under Islam, and Islamic law.

At the same time, the gulf between the Shah's increasing Western and American influenced politics, unpopular and forcibly enacted reforms, and the considerable curtailing of the rights of Muslim clerics, grew wider and wider. Khomeini proclaimed that the Shah's authority was no longer based on the general will of Muslim believers, as he had morally and ethically violated the Muslim faith.

The religious already had a very tense relationship with the government, and had become financially independent, through income from various religious trusts, and donations from individual Muslim believers. This enabled a strong bond to be formed between the people and the religious leadership, who now began to demand opposition to the government. The traditional Shiite avoidance of political activity was increasingly forgotten.

In 1978, the demonstrations of the people and Muslim clerics, against the government, intensified. Khomeini was sent into exile in France, where he then began to openly demand the overthrow of the monarchy. The Shah left Iran on the

16th of January 1979, and on the 1st of February 1979, Khomeini returned from his exile, and landed at Tehran.

His return signalled the beginning of a new chapter in Iranian history, marked by a drastic narrowing of individual freedom, (especially strict clothing regulations for women) political persecution of critics and intellectuals, as well as arbitrary imprisonment and torture, numerous executions, mass poverty, and martyrdom of hundreds of thousands. He exercised an enormous influence through his *fatwas* (legal opinions). This was also felt by the British author Salman Rushdie after the publication of this book „*The Satanic Verses*“ 1988, as Khomeini declared him to be an apostate and promised 3 Mio. US \$ to anybody who would kill him.

Ayatollah Khomeini died on the 3rd of June 1989. The carefully maintained personality cult surrounding him during his lifetime found expression after his death through the construction of a large mausoleum near Teheran. The bronze dome is visible from a considerable distance. Especially for women, Khomeini's shrine has become a place of pilgrimage, reminding one of the shrine of al-Husain in Kerbela.

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