

**General Topics :: Shiite Muslims/The Root of Terror****Shiite Muslims/The Root of Terror - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:53**

This is a restart or maybe an attempt to understand why we as Americans and Europeans fear Shiite Muslims and their methods used to inflict suffering on us.

This is taken from a book that Brother Rahman suggested in another thread.

All the Shah's Men, An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror
By Stephen Kinzer

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Many countries in the Middle East are artificial creations. European colonialists drew their national borders in the nineteenth or twentieth century, often with little regard for local history and tradition, and their leaders have had to concoct outlandish myths in order to give citizens a sense of nationhood. Just the opposite is true of Iran. This is one of the world's oldest nations, heir to a tradition that reaches back thousands of years, to periods when great conquerors extended their rule across continents, poets and artists created works of exquisite beauty, and one of the world's most extraordinarily religious traditions took root and flowered. Even in modern times, which have been marked by long periods of anarchy, repression, and suffering, Iranians are passionately inspired by their heritage.

Great themes run through Iranian history and shape it to this day. One is the continuing and often frustrating effort to find a synthesis between Islam, which was imposed on the country by Arab conquerors, and the rich heritage of pre-Islamic times. Another, fueled by the Shiite Muslim tradition to which most Iranians now belong, is the thirst for just leadership, of which they have enjoyed precious little. A third, also sharpened by Shiite beliefs, is a tragic view of life rooted in a sense of martyrdom and communal pain. Finally, Iran has since time immemorial been a target of foreign invaders, victim of a geography that places it astride some of the world's most important trading routes and atop an ocean of oil, and it has struggled to find a way to live with powerful outsiders. All these strains combined in the middle of the twentieth century to produce and then destroy the towering figure of Mohammad Mossadegh.

Migrants from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent began arriving in what is now Iran nearly four thousand years ago, pushed out by a combination of resource depletion and marauding tribes from the north and east. Among them were the Aryans, from whose name the word Iran is taken. The emperor who united these gifted visionaries and the figure who first conceived the idea of an empire based in the region known as Pars (later Fars).

to be continued...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: Shiite Muslims/The Root of Terror - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:55

continued thought...

After rising to power in 559 BC., Cyrus, launched a brilliant campaign that brought other leaders on the vast Iranian plateau under his sway. Some he conquered, but many he won to his side by persuasion and compromise. Today he is remembered for his conquests but also for the relative gentleness with which he treated his subjects. He understood that this was an even surer way to build a durable empire than the more common means of oppression, terror, and slaughter.

In 547 Cyrus marched into Asia Minor and captured the majestic Lydian capital of Sardis. Seven years later he subdued the other great regional power, Babylon. Over the decades that followed, he and his successors went on to more great victories, including one by Xerxes in which Macedon, Thermopylae, and Athens were taken by an army of 180,000 men, by far the largest seen in Europe up to that time. This dynasty, known as the Achaemenians, built the greatest empire of its era. By 500 B.C., it embraced the eastern Mediterranean from Greece through modern-day Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Libya and stretched eastward across the Caucasus to the banks of the Indus. Cyrus called it Persia because it sprang from his own base in Pars.

The tolerant and all-embracing approach to life and politics for which Achaemenian emperors were known sprang in part from their connection to the Zoroastrian faith, which holds that the sacred responsibility of every human being is to work toward establishing social justice on earth. Zoroastrians believe that humanity is locked in an eternal struggle between good and evil. Theirs is said to have been the first revealed religion to preach that people must face judgment after death, and that each soul will spend eternity in either paradise or perdition. According to its precepts, God makes his judgment according to how virtuous one has been in life, measured by one's thoughts, words, and deeds. The prophet Zoroaster, later known to Europeans as Zarathustra, lived sometime between the tenth and seventh centuries B.C. in what is now northeastern Iran, and preached this creed after a series of divine visions. Zoroastrianism has had a profound effect on Persian history not simply because Cyrus used it in his audaciously successful campaign of empire-building, but because it has captured the hearts of so many believers over the course of so many centuries.

to be continued...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:55

The Zoroastrian religion taught Iranians that citizens have an inalienable right to enlightened leadership and that the duty of subjects is not simply to obey wise kings but also to rise up against those who are wicked. Leaders are seen as representatives of God on earth, but they deserve allegiance only as long as they have farr, a kind divine blessing that they must earn by moral behavior. To pray for it, generations of Persian leaders visited Zoroastrian temples where holy flames burned perpetually, symbolizing the importance of constant vigilance against iniquity.

Cyrus and the other kings of his line bound their vast empire together with roads, bridges, uniform coinage, and efficient system of taxation, and the world's first long-range postal service. But eventually and inevitably, the tide of history turned against them. Their empire began to shake after Darius, Persia's last great leader, lost the decisive Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. The death blow came from no less a conqueror than Alexander, who marched into Persia in 334 B.C. and, in a rampage of destruction, sacked and burned Persepolis.

For the next ten centuries, through periods of rule by three dynasties, Persians nurtured and deepened their strong feelings of pride and nobility. They flourished by assimilating influences from the lands around them, especially Greece, Egypt, and India, reshaping them to fit within the framework of their Zoroastrian faith. In the third century A.D. they began returning to the peak of world power on a scale that recalled the glory of the early emperors, capturing Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria and pushing to the walls of Constantinople. Persian armies suffered a reverse at the hands of the Byzantines in 626, but the great defeat was yet to come. A few years later, an army arose on the barren Arabian peninsula and turned toward Persia. These Arabs came armed not only with the traditional weapons of war, but with a new religion, Islam.

to be continued...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:56

The invasion by the Arabs, who to the cultivated Persians seemed no more than barbarians, was a decisive turning point in the nation's history. Persia's fate paralleled that of many empires. Its army had been worn down by long campaigns, its leaders had slipped from what Zoroastrian priests would call the realm of light into that of darkness, and the priests themselves had become divorced from the masses. People fell into poverty as the greedy court imposed ever-increasing taxes. Tyranny tore apart the social contract between ruler and ruled that Zoroastrian doctrine holds to be the basis of organized life. By both political and religious standards, the last of the pre-Islamic dynasties in Persia, the Sassanians, lost the right to rule. The merciless logic of history dictated that it be overrun by an ascendant people fired by passionate belief in its leaders, its cause, and its faith.

Sassanian power was centered in Ctesiphon, the luxurious capital of Mesopotamia. This was not a city of stately columns like Persepolis but one bathed in excess. Its royal palace housed fabulous collections of jewels and was guarded by

statuary of solid gold and silver. The centerpiece was the king's cavernous audience hall, which featured a ninety-foot-square silk carpet depicting a flowering garden and, metaphorically, the empire's wealth and power. Rubies, pearls, and diamonds were sewn into it with golden threads. When Arab conquerors reached Ctesiphon in 638, they looted the palace and sent the magnificent carpet to Mecca, where Muslim leaders ordered it cut to pieces to show their contempt for worldly wealth. They destroyed countless treasures, including the entire royal library. In an account of this conquest written by the tenth-century Persian poet Ferdowsi, a general laments; "Curse this world, curse this time, curse this fate / That uncivilized Arabs have come to force me to be Muslim."

to be continued...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:58

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By the time of the Arab conquest, Persians already had long experience in assimilating foreign cultures, and whenever they did so, they shaped those cultures to their liking or took certain parts while resisting others. So it was when they were forced to adopt Islam. They had no choice but to accept Mohammad as God's prophet and the Koran as God's word, but over

A period of centuries they fashioned an interpretation of Islam quite different from that of their Arab conquerors. This interpretation, called Shiism, is based on a particular reading of Islamic history, and it has the ingenious effect of using Islam to reinforce long-standing Iranian beliefs.

About 90% of the one billion Muslims in the world today identify with the Sunni tradition. Of the remainder, most are Shiites, the largest number of whom are in Iran. The split between these two groups springs from differing interpretations of who deserved to succeed the prophet Mohammad as caliph, or leader of the Islamic world, after his death in 632. Shiites believe that his legitimate successor was Ali, a cousin whom he raised from childhood and who married one of his daughters. Ali was one of those to whom Mohammad dictated his revelations, which became known as the Koran, and he once slept in Mohammad's bed as a decoy to foil a murder plot. But another man was chosen as caliph, and soon Ali found himself in the position of a dissident. He criticized the religious establishment for seeking worldly power and diluting the purity of its spiritual inheritance. Economic discontent brought many to his side, and ultimately the conflict turned violent.

Ali was passed over twice more when caliphs died, and he devoted himself to preaching a doctrine of piety and social justice that won him many followers, especially among the lower classes. He finally won the supreme post in 656, but the conflict only intensified, and less than five years later he was assassinated while praying inside the mosque at Kufa, a Mesopotamian garrison town that was a cauldron of religious conflict. According to tradition, he knew he was to be murdered that day but refused to flee because "one cannot stop death." After being stabbed, he cried out, "O God, most fortunate I am!"

The mantle of resistance passed to Ali's son, Hussein, who was himself killed while leading seventy-two followers against an army of thousands in a suicidal revolt at Karbala in 680. Determined to suppress Hussein's legacy, the authorities ordered most of his family slain afterward. His body was trampled in the mud and his severed head taken to Damascus, where Shiites believe that it continued to chant the Koran even as the caliph beat it with a stick. Retelling these stories and others about Hussein, "the lord among martyrs," is what provokes the paroxysm that spread through Qom and other sacred Iranian cities every year on the anniversary of his death.

Hussein's embrace of death in a sacred cause has shaped the collective psyche of Iranians. To visit Qom during the mourning that commemorates his martyrdom is to be caught up in a wave of emotion so intense that it is hard for an outsider to comprehend. Processions of men and boys dressed in black move slowly, as if in a trance, toward the gate of the main shrine. All the while, they chant funeral verses lamenting Hussein's fate and flog themselves with metal-studded whips until their shoulders and backs are streaked with blood. In storefront mosques, holy men recount the sad tale with such passion that soon after they begin, worshipers fall prostrate with grief, weeping uncontrollably as if the most intimate personal tragedy had just crushed them. The breathtaking authenticity of this scene testifies to the success Iran's Shiites have had in formulating a set of religious beliefs that is within the Islamic tradition but still distinctly native.

to be continued...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 14:59

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Sunnis do not attribute great importance to the violent deaths of Ali or Hussein, but for Shiites, whose name comes from the phrase Shi'at-Ali, or "followers of Ali," they were cataclysmic events. To them, Ali and Hussein represent both the mystic spirituality of pure Islam and the self-sacrificing life that true Muslims must live. In this view, shaped by Zoroastrian tradition, the two heroes rebelled against an establishment that had become corrupt and thereby lost its way. They are believed to have sacrificed themselves, as the truly pious must, on the altar of evil. By doing so they embraced a pattern that still shapes Iran's consciousness. They bequeathed to Shiites a legacy of religious zeal and a willingness, even an eagerness, to embrace martyrdom at the hands of God's enemies. Ali remains the most perfect soul and the most enlightened leader who ever lived, excepting only the Prophet himself; Shiites still pore over his speeches and memorize his thousands of proverbs and aphorisms. Hussein epitomizes the self-sacrifice that is the inevitable fate of all who truly love Islam and humanity. His martyrdom is considered even more universally significant than that of Ali because it was inflicted by government soldiers rather than by a lone fanatic. Grasping the depth of this passion is essential to any understanding of modern Iran.

Iranian Shiites consider Ali to have been the first of twelve legitimate imams, or successors to Mohammad. The twelfth was still a youth when he passed into an occult state, apart from the world but aware of its suffering. For Iranian believers he is still vividly alive. They revere him as the Twelfth Imam, often called the Hidden Imam or the Imam of the Age, and many pray each day for his return to earth. When he does return, he will be the Mahdi, or messiah, who will right all wrongs and usher in an age of perfect justice. Until that time, it is the duty of temporal rulers to emulate his wisdom and righteousness. When they fail to do so, they trample not only on human rights but on the very will of God.

"The Imam watches over men inwardly and is in communion with the soul and spirit of men even if he be hidden from their physical eyes," the twentieth-century Shiite scholar Allamah Tabatabai has written. "His existence is always necessary, even if the time has not yet arrived for his outward appearance and the universal reconstruction that he is to bring about."

The profound hold that this tradition has on the souls of Iranian Shiites raises their beliefs above the level of traditional doctrine to what the anthropologist Michael M. J. Fisher has called "a drama of faith." They revere Mohammad but focus far more viscerally on Ali and Hussein, embracing what Fisher calls "a story expandable to be all-inclusive of history, cosmology and life's problems" and reinforcing it with "ritual or physical drama to embody the story and maintain high levels of emotional investment." Ali and Hussein gave them a paradigm that tells them not only how the moral believer should live, but also how he should die.

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In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/26 15:12

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After Ali and Hussein met their worldly ends in the seventh century, the Arabian empire reached its peak and then began to weaken. Arabs who dominated Iran slowly melted into the country's already mixed population. As Arab power receded, Shiites gained strength, partly because their warnings about the corruption of worldly dynasties were borne out by the excesses of the conquering Seljuk Turks and the savagery of Genghis Khan's Mongol hordes, who ravaged Iran in the years after their invasion in 1220. When the Mongols began to lose control, power passed to the revolutionary Safavid dynasty, which was inspired by Shiite belief. The Safavid leader, Ismail, was a militant Shiite who sent his warriors into

o battle crying, "We are Hussein's men, and this is our epoch! In devotion we are slaves of the Imam! Our name is Zealot and our title is Martyr!"

After a series of victories won with the help of Shiites who flocked to his side from other lands, Ismail proclaimed himself shah, or king, in 1501. His first act after assuming the throne was to declare Shiism the official religion. A famous miniature painting depicts the scene, with this caption, "On Friday, the exalted king went to the congregational mosque of Tabriz and ordered its preacher, who was one of the Shiite dignitaries, to mount the pulpit. The king himself proceeded to the front of the pulpit, unsheathed the sword of the Lord of Time, may peace be upon him, and stood there like the shining sun."

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just a side thought, do you see that this king Ismail was supported by Shiites that flocked from other lands?

This occurred in the 1200s. This same situation is occurring today...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: Shiite Muslims/The Root of Terror, on: 2006/4/27 7:09

Ya and I fear that the U.S. will be seeing a lot more terror from these Zealots. Standing before The Israeli Embassy taunting threats (Islamists) is a BAD SIGN. America has traditionally been a PROTECTOR of Jews and it has been a good thing (God has blessed). When we let the Jews' enemies taunt them in New York, it's wrong. The mandate of the Islamists is the complete eradication of the Jews from Israel. This single act, along with the fight over Jerusalem, will usher in Armageddon.

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/27 10:30

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Far more than simply a religious act, this was the single most important step toward creating the Iranian nation. Ismail used Shiism to help him build an empire that within ten years of his coronation not only included most of modern-day Iran but extended from Central Asia to Baghdad and from the frosty Caucasus to the sands of the Persian Gulf. During Ismail's rule, today's Iran emerged not just politically but also spiritually. Iranians were already bound together by a shifting geography, a language, and a collective memory of ancient glory, but none of these ties evoked anything close to the unifying fervor of Shiism. By embracing the faith, Iranians accepted Islam but not in the way their Sunni Arab conquerors had wished. They rebelled while appearing to submit.

Perhaps most important, Iranians found an institution that would ultimately free them, at least spiritually, from the authority of the state. Ismail and the Safavid leaders who followed him thought they could control Shiism, and for most of the next two hundred years they did. But integral to Shiism, as to Zoroastrianism, is the belief that rulers may hold power only as they are just. Ultimately, this belief gave the Shiite masses, and by extension their religious leaders, the political and emotional power to bring temporal regimes crashing down.

to be continued...

will we be a temporal regime in that region of the world?

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/4/28 10:51

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By the time Ismail rose to power, Iranians had already reached great cultural pinnacles. As early as the ninth century, their intellectuals had traveled through the Islamic world in search of the wisest philosophers and the most learned scientists and had translated and studied the works of Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Euclid, Ptolemy, and other Greek thinkers. Artisans made breathtaking leaps forward in architecture and ceramic arts. Persian miniaturists established styles that were copied but never matched by masters from Constantinople to the steppes of Central Asia. Captivating poets composed works full of ecstasy and passion that are still read around the world. Many of them, like the thirteenth-century mystic Jelaluddin Rumi, reject orthodoxy of any kind:

“I hold to no religion or creed.
Am neither Eastern nor Western,
Muslim or infidel,
Zoroastrian, Christian, Jew or Gentile.
I come from neither land nor sea,
Am not related to those above or below,
Was not born nearby or far away,
Do not live either in Paradise or on this Earth,
Claim descent not from Adam and Eve or the Angels above.
I transcend body and soul.
My home is beyond place and name.
It is with the beloved, in a space beyond space.
I embrace all and am part of all.”

These cultural achievements meant that when Iranians finally achieved political unity, they were poised to enter the modern age confident of their creative, as well as of their military and spiritual power. The Safavid king who inspired them to some of their greatest achievements as a people, Abbas Shah, is still revered as a hero. He sat on the throne for more than forty years, from 1588 to 1629. His success in unifying his people and giving them a sense of shared destiny was at least as profound as the success of his contemporaries, Elizabeth I in Britain and Phillip II of Spain. He built roads that brought European traders into Iranian cities and established workshops to produce silk, ceramics, and other products those traders wanted to buy. His bureaucracy collected taxes, enforced justice, and organized life as it had not been organized since the era of Cyrus and Darius two thousand years before.

Abbas fit the archetype of Iranian rulers not only because he was dedicated to bringing the best of the world into his kingdom. He was also typical because he imposed cruel tyranny and brooked no challenge to his absolutism. Torture and execution were commonplace during his reign. For years he locked his own sons inside the royal palace, allowing them the pleasure of concubines but denying them access to the education and training that would prepare them for future leadership—or, Abbas feared, for rebellion against his rule. He had his eldest son murdered and two other sons, two brothers, and his father blinded.

to be continued...

These people who live in what is today Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait have a history, have a culture, and have their heroes. All nations of people seek to glorify their heritage.

In this history of this region we find that the leaders today resemble those of the past. Their ways of rule, have been known and nothing is new...

In Christ
Jeff

Re: - posted by rookie (), on: 2006/5/3 15:40

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...Given the savagery with which Abbas Shah treated potential heirs to his throne, it is not surprising that Iran fell into disarray after his death. Neighbors began to prey on it, and in 1722 Afghan tribesmen swept down and overran it, even sack Isfahan itself. The Afghans were finally expelled by the last of Iran's great historical leaders, Nadir Shah, a Sunni Turk who then marched on to seize Delhi. One of the treasures he looted from Delhi was the jewel encrusted Peacock Throne, which became a symbol of Iranian royalty. Nadir was assassinated in 1747, and after a series of power struggles that lasted nearly fifty years, a new dynasty, the Qajars, came to power.

The Qajars, a Turkic tribe based near the Caspian Sea, ruled Iran from the late eighteenth century until 1925. Their corrupt, small-minded kings bear heavy responsibility for the country's poverty and backwardness. As much of the world rushed toward modernity, Iran under the Qajars stagnated.

"In a country so backward in constitutional progress, so destitute of forms and statutes and charters, and so firmly stereotyped in the immemorial traditions of the East, the personal element, as might be expected, is largely in the ascendant," the British statesman Lord Curzon wrote toward the end of the Qajar period. "The government of Persia is little else than the arbitrary exercise of authority by a series of units in a descending scale from the sovereign to the headman of a petty village."

Had Iran been governed during the nineteenth century by a strong and sophisticated regime, it might have managed to fend off the ambitions of foreign powers. The pressures, however, would have been intense in any case. Geography placed Iran in the way of that era's two great imperial powers, Britain and Russia. When the British looked at Iran, they saw a nation that straddled the land route to India, their richest and most precious colony. The Russians, for their part, saw a chance to control a large swath of land across their exposed southern border. The fact that Iran was ruled by weak and self-involved monarchs made it too tantalizing for either empire to resist. Both rushed to fill the power vacuum left by the ignorant Qajars.

Qajar kings did not seem disturbed to see Iran slipping into subservience, or if they were, they determined to take what advantage they could of its seemingly unavoidable fate. In what turned out to be a great miscalculation, they presumed that the Iranian people would accept whatever their rulers dictated. But by their corruption and especially their willingness to allow Iran to slip under the domination of foreign powers, the Qajars fell out of step with their people and ultimately lost their right to rule, their farr. Armed with the Shiite principle that endows the ordinary citizen with inherent power to overthrow despotism, and with the ideals of the emerging new world, Iranians rebelled in a way their forefathers never had. Their demands were as astonishing as their rebellion itself; an end to the country's domination by outside powers and a parliament to express the popular will. This was the most radical program Iranians had ever embraced. It would spell the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty and define all of Iran's subsequent history.

to be continued...

What comes next resembles what happened when our forefathers rebelled against the King of England in the act of the Boston Tea Party incident....

It is amazing how history repeats itself in various generations and nations of peoples. Just like Solomon wrote...there is nothing new under the sun...

In Christ
jeff