



Shi'i Reformation in Iran: The Life and Theology of Shari'at Sangelaji (Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies)

By Ali Rahnema



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Shi'ism caught the attention of the world as Iran experienced her revolution in 1979 and was subsequently cast in the mold of a monolithic discourse of radical political Islam. The spokespersons of Shi'i Islam, in or out of power, have not been the sole representatives of the faith. Nonconformist and uncompromising, the Shi'i jurist and reformist Shari'at Sangelaji (1891-1944) challenged certain popular Shi'i beliefs and the mainstream clerical establishment, guarding and propagating it. In *Shi'i Reformation in Iran*, Ali Rahnema offers a fresh understanding of Sangelaji's reformist discourse from a theological standpoint, and takes readers into the heart of the key religious debates in Iran in the 1940s. Exploring Sangelaji's life, theological position and disputations, Rahnema demonstrates that far from being change resistant, debates around why and how to reform the faith have long been at the heart of Shi'i Islam. Drawing on the writings and sermons of Sangelaji, as well as interviews with his son, the book provides a detailed and comprehensive introduction to the reformist's ideas. As such it offers scholars of religion and Middle Eastern politics alike a penetrating insight into the impact that these ideas have had on Shi'ism - an impact which is still felt today.



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Editorial Review

Review

'...an important and well-researched study about one of the eminent Shi'i reformers in twentieth-century Iran. It appears at the right time when the monolithic appearing leadership of 12er Emami Shi'ism in Iran has come under increasing pressure to defend their dogmatic and intellectual position in their teaching against the different challenges in a modern, more globalised world. The book deals extensively with issues of dogma and methodology in Shi'ism which Shari'at Sangelaji, himself a jurist, tried to reform and steer towards monotheistic rationalism, cleared from much of the ballast collected on its long journey through history. This study will undoubtedly encourage and contribute to the debate about the ways and methods how the Shi'i community should be guided in future.' Paul Luft, Durham University, UK

About the Author

Ali Rahnema teaches Economics and Middle East and Islamic Studies and is Director of the Master of Arts program in Middle East and Islamic Studies at the American University of Paris. His many publications include: Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks (2015); Superstition as Ideology in Iranian Politics, From Majlesi to Ahmadinejad (2011); An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati (1998, 2000, 2013); Pioneers of Islamic Revival (1994, 2006); and Islamic Economic Systems (with Farhad Nomani, 1994).

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