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Acknowledgments and Observations

The present book is the second English edition of an article which was published in an academic journal in 1994 under the name "El isl®m shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?" [Sh®'ite Isl®m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. The article was well–received in academic circles and was soon widely circulated on various Islamic sites on the Internet thanks to a digital edition published by the *Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt* in Sevilla, Spain. Thereafter, in the year 2000, the article was published in three parts in *Az–Zaqalain*, a Spanish language academic journal published in Qum, Iran.

In response to the interest received by the article, Dr. John Andrew Morrow decided to translate, edit, and turn it into a book. As often occurs in such cases, the challenge of turning an article into a book relates to its amplification. Dr. Morrow resolved this problem by including an exhaustive amount of notes and bibliographical information from Arabic and Persian sources. In both quantity and quality, his notes make a notable contribution to the original work of the author.

For all intents and purpose, this book constitutes a slightly modified version of that article originally published in *Epimelia: Revista de Estudios Sobre La Tradición*. The journal in question is the official academic organ of the Center for Research into the Philosophy and History of Religion (CIFHIRE) [*Centro de Investigaciones en Filosofía e Historia de Las Religiones*] at the Department of Philosophy of the School of Graduate Studies at John F. Kennedy Argentine University.

The book, in its present form, contains nothing new with the exception of the valuable critical and biographical notes, the opening remarks, the translator's preface, the genesis of the work, and the detailed index, provided by Dr. Morrow. It also contains an exordium, a foreword by Sayyid Musammad Rizvs, and a commendatory preface by Professor Barbara Castleton, as well as an author's preface in which we expand our criticism of Orientalism from the point of view of the philosophy of the history of religion to the broader field of social studies.

Besides these addenda, we have not modified the original text in any substantial fashion for obvious reasons. For starters, it would be impossible to alter the sentences without changing their original intent. Furthermore, any such changes might arouse suspicion, leading some readers to believe that they were

done for editorial reasons.

Finally, one of the main reasons for not making any changes, save those slight details brought to our attention by those who reviewed the original Spanish version or its English translation, is that the work was written with great haste in the space of two months. It was produced with the specific purpose of responding to endless allegations of Orientalists who, unsatisfied with characterizing Sherism as a fundamentalist form of Islem, stubbornly insisted on labeling it as a heterodox sect. By doing so, these scholars were merely echoing old Orientalist prejudices and supporting Muslim reformists.

This reformist sector was quickly embraced by Western Orientalists as proponents of "moderate Isl®m" while the traditional sector was labeled as representatives of "extremist Isl®m," dangerous "fundamentalists" who make militant and violent interpretations of faith based on the Qur'®n.

The purpose of the original study, which has now been converted into a book, was to address this conceptual error which is incessantly repeated, *ad nauseam*, in academic circles and which passes from textbook to textbook. However, when the time came to review the book for publication, we felt much less optimistic with regards to our goal of conveying to Western readers that Sh® ite Isl®m is not an extreme, heterodox, fundamentalist or fanatical sect. Evidently, we never pretended to provide a definitive "solution" to such a complex problem. Any such effort would require broader and more detailed studies. We acknowledge that many of the issues related to the topic remained outside the scope of our study. Although we are most conscious of the gaps in our study, we would never even dream of trying to fill them in the space of this exposition. Such exclusion is the understandable result of the need to assume a determined perspective, forcing us to be selective in our choice of the material covered.

In order to avoid confusing or misleading our readers, we must point out that we never proposed to write an introduction to Sherite Islem. This book does not study certain aspects which are crucial in the understanding of the political and metaphysical thought of Twelver Sherism. It may touch upon them, it may gloss over them, but it certainly does not study them in depth.

Although we have drawn from primary sources in Arabic and Persian, presenting various legal and theological views with respect to issues like consensus [ijm], as well as traditional exegesis, both ancient and contemporary, it was not the objective of this book to expound exhaustively upon the views of every school of thought.

Our immediate and most pressing goal was to demonstrate that Shefite Islem is a genuine, legal and spiritual expression of traditional Islem, both in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In the same way that Sunner Islem is based in doctrine and practice on the basic principles of the Qur'en and prophetic tradition, so is Shefite Islem, which, in its traditional form, has the added advantage of having been preserved and reaffirmed by a continuous and direct line of successors, the Holy Imems, the natural heirs of the wileyah, the Cycle of Prophecy.

The goal of this book, then, is to demonstrate that, far from being a heretical schismatic sect or

She'ism is the living expression of original Mueammadan Islem, perfectly preserved by his successors, the Holy Imems from the Prophetic Household [ahl al-bayt]. It was for this reason, that we proposed, without any polemical or apologetic intent, to present the She'ite point of view, with the highest possible degree of objectivity, without any concession to the prejudiced views of its detractors, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. We have presented She'ite Islem from a She'ite point of view. We made sure to put aside outside influences received during our academic formation for, as G. Bachelard has pointed out, these can turn into real epistemological obstacles which impede objectivity.

Readers should not be offended if, at given moments, they get the impression that they are reading a panegyric. This impression is to be expected as this work does not contain the redundant repetition of pejorative postulations presented in Orientalist works which claim to present Isl®m and the Arab world "objectively." Despite the overt contempt its secular ideologists manifest towards Isl®m, the West remains cynically passive. This attitude, however, can only be understood within its historical context.

Western animosity towards Isl®m forms part of a long history of cultural encounters through which the West attempted to impose its hegemony on the East. It should come as no surprise that the unrepressed hatred towards Isl®m and Arabs forms the very basis of much Western Orientalism.

In many cases, Orientalism has been more or less officially at the service of the intellectual self–satisfaction of secular illustrated despotism and the conservatism of Western imperialist authoritarianism. Be it politically, militarily or intellectually, Western imperialism rarely hides its overwhelming aversion towards those who resist being physically or economically annexed into colonies, and those who refuse to be assimilated culturally, linguistically, mentally and spiritually.

It should be known from the onset that we are not unaware of the various aspects which have fallen outside of the reach of our study. Despite shortcomings related to time and space, we have attempted to develop our arguments in the most satisfactory fashion, using all our abilities to help readers overcome their resistance to the topic, the result of heightened sensitivities caused by events of worldwide repercussions which, directly or indirectly, involve Shifite Islim.

Since this book was written so rapidly as a response to current events, it cannot be considered an introduction to Sherite Islem. Any such claim would do a grave injustice to Muslim scholars who have devoted their entire lives to the study of one of the many fields which this book has merely surveyed with a bird's eye view. We have merely shown some of the scenery of Sherism, not its depth and detail. However, in our own defense, the general overview we have provided may be justified by the fact that it is not the fruit of improvisation.

This book is the result of years of study on the origins of She ite Islem. Even though the book was written during the first semester of the 1994 academic year, it should be mentioned that its final form was

based on various preliminary versions and partial drafts from courses and lectures that we delivered in the *Seminarios de historia, pensamiento y cultura del mundo islámico* [Lectures on the History, Thought, and Culture of the Islamic World] between 1991 and 1992. This serie of lectures was organized by the Argentinean Institute for Islamic Culture and the Cultural Bureau of the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires and took place in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires. Any good which comes from this limited contribution to the topic of Sh® ite Isl®m is due, in great part, to the valuable critical interest displayed by colleagues, friends, and students, whose questions and observations contributed considerably to the preparation of the final version of the book.

The very idea of writing an article on the basis of those classes and lectures owes much to the guidance of Dr. Francisco García Bazán, Dean of the Department of Philosophy, and Director of the Center for Research into the History and Philosophy of Religion at John F. Kennedy Argentine University, as well as the Editor of the journal *Epimeleia*. Dr. García Bazán must be thanked first and foremost for encouraging me to write this article. He deemed the article a necessary contribution to scholarship. He understood, much better than most Orientalists, that **Sh** is m, although representing a minority tradition, represents a spiritual current of Gnostic illumination, law and theology, which is entirely Islamic in orthodoxy and orthopraxy, to the same extent as mainstream and majority Sunn Islam. To be sincere, we must recognize that it was our director, Dr. García Bazán, who revived our interest in writing that article which was always in an indefinite state and which we could never come around to completing.

Dr. García Bazán's constant encouragement gave us an almost journalistic rhythm of redaction and, in little time, he granted us the time and the confidence to transform those initial rough drafts into a completed work. We are greatly indebted to the generous spirit of Dr. García Bazán, who, besides always knowing how and when to help us, from start to finish, has been of great benefit due to his scholarly knowledge and experience, counseling and guiding us with mastery in many ways. We will always consider it a privilege and an honor to have worked besides this great master of philosophy and comparative religion. We also thank him for permitting us to republish our work.

We are equally grateful to <code>fujjat al-Isl</code> wa al-Muslim Feisal Morhell of the World Center of Islamic Sciences of the <code>fawfah</code> 'Ilmiyyah from Qum in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who also happens to be the Director of Cultural Affairs for the Fundación Cultural Oriente and editor of the Spanish version of the academic journal Az-Zaqalain, for his interest in republishing the article which gave origin to this book. <code>fujjat al-Isl</code> wa al-Muslim Feisal Morhell is a young specialist in traditional Islamic sciences who is not alien to this work since he proof-read our Arabic and Persian translations and, furthermore, provided us access to all of the primary Islamic sources which appeared in the original article.

The bibliography for the book, however, has been greatly amplified by Dr. John Andrew Morrow. We would also like to thank **Sujjat** al-Is/**Sm** wa al-Muslim**Sn** Murtada Beheshti, General Director of the Islamic Thought Foundation of Tehran, and the Editor-in-Chief of the Spanish version of the journal Az-

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There is no doubt whatsoever that we would have faced many difficulties during the preparation of this work were it not for the constant advice and observations made by these great scholars and brilliant Muslim. Thanks to their help, however, we have overcome many obstacles and we will be certain to include their contributions in a future edition of the Spanish version of the book.

There are many people in Argentina, the United States, Canada, the U.K., Spain, and Iran, who collaborated with us during the preparation of this study, in its dissemination, and in its first English translation. In this sense, we are particularly grateful to Mrs. Sumeia Younes from the *World Center of Islamic Sciences* of the <code>@aw@ah</code> '*Ilmiyyah* in Qum in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Editorial Secretary for the journal *Az-Zaqalain*, for reading the manuscript of the first Spanish article. We are grateful to Professor Barbara Castleton from Ohio University for proofreading the English translation and preparing a commendatory preface. We are equally grateful to Rachida Bejja for painstakingly correcting the Arabic transliteration and to Professor Gustavo César Bize, Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Thought at Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Universidad Nacional de 3 de Febrero, for reviewing the English translation.

We are also grateful to the following young Islamologists, Professor Ángel Horacio Molina and Professor María Eugenia Gantus, who read the final Spanish and English versions of the work. They are both young research scholars at the Center for Oriental Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario, in Santa Fe, Argentina, an institution associated with the Mull® Sadr® Center for Islamic Studies and Research (CEDIMS) [Centro de Estudios y Documentación Islámicos Mull® Sadr®] at the Universidad Católica Argentina de La Plata (Sede Bernal). We are particularly grateful to its General Coordinator, Dr. Horacio López Romano, for the generous institutional space he has provided, and to Dr. Sonia Yebara, Director of the Center for Oriental Studies of the School of Literature of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario, for their unselfish institutional support.

Other friends and colleagues read fragments or complete version of our rough drafts, providing an impressive volume of critical observations and facts. It would be impossible to mention them all. Nevertheless, we would like to express our gratitude to the following persons for their constant kindness and cooperation. We would like to thank Mr. Ángel Almazán de Gracia, the Spanish cultural journalist, writer and historian who specializes in Sorian culture and Numantine archeology for enthusiastically reading this work and citing it in many of his articles and books. We would like to thank Mr. Mikail Álvarez Ruiz, Director of the *Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt* from Sevilla, Spain, to whom we owe the first digital version of the Spanish original, which was well received and distributed over the Internet. He was the first to conceive of the idea of turning our article into a book, and he is one of the most energetic

promoters of our work on the Internet. Dr. John Andrew Morrow based his English edition on the digital edition prepared by him. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable collaboration of Mr. Héctor H. Manzolillo, one of the most prolific and recognized translators of Islamic texts in Spanish. He was kind enough to review the notes to the English translation, and make greatly appreciated corrections.

Finally, we would like to express our endless gratitude to the editor and translator, Dr. John Andrew Morrow, Associate Professor of Languages and Literature at Eastern New Mexico in the United States, to whom we owe the Spanish and English editions of our work, as well as his scrupulous critical annotations. Through of years of collaboration, we have come to know a marvelous human being who is wise, but humble, and who honors us with his irreplaceable friendship. We would also like to thank our wife Mónica Delia Pereiras, for supporting patiently and lovingly our domestic "absences" through all the time it took us to write and correct this book. We would also like to thank our daughters Ruth Noemí, María Inés and María de los Ángeles, whose affectionate interruptions made the labor of this book both pleasant and possible; our parents, Saturnino and Elvira; our brothers, Daniel and Cristina; and all our family and friends for standing by us, unconditionally, in a thousand and one ways. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank Mr. Mulammad Taql Anlariy and Mawlan Mulammad Rizv for encouraging and supporting this academic endeavor.

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