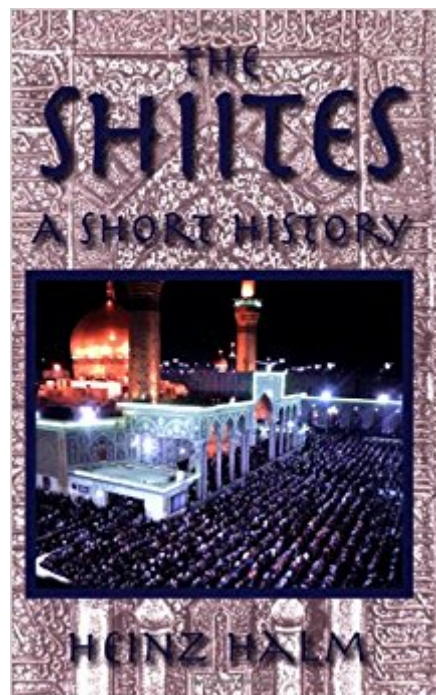




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The Shiites: A Short History (Princeton Series On The Middle East)



Synopsis

"Combining history, comparative religion, and political interpretations, the author elucidates Shi'ism and political developments in the Middle East for the Western reader. The author highlights three main aspects of Shi'a Islam: its historical development, especially the history of the Imams, the rituals, including flagellation and passion plays, and the rules of the mullahs, known as the "government of experts." Halm explains the exalted position of the religious scholars, the mullahs and ayatollahs, who established themselves as clergy in the Safavid Empire and defined themselves as the "administrators" of the Hidden Imam. The relationship between the rulers of Iran and the mullahs has always been tense. The Khomeini revolution was the powerful culmination of a lengthy historical conflict that has expanded into Iraq and Lebanon after the American invasion in Iraq."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Heinz Halm, an internationally renowned expert on Shi'ism, provides a concise and highly readable introduction to the historical and intellectual development of Twelver (Imamite) Shi'a Islam. He also presents Shi'i rituals as seen by European travelers. Halm considers these rituals as more important than Shi'a legal codes in terms of influencing culture. For example, he maintains that the 1979 Iranian revolution selectively utilized those historical and cultural symbols of Shi'ism that appealed to the sentiments of the masses; these symbols thus became tools in the hands of religious leaders." -- Journal of Palestine Studies "This very readable and useful account of the travails of the

Shi'ah begins with the martyrdom of al-Husayn in 680 and advances to the 11th Imam, with the 12th's fate being uncertain. The work is divided into five parts. The first recounts the life and fate of the 12 Imams, including the one in occultation. Part 2 details the lamentations, flagellations, processions, and passion plays associated with the death of Husayn, including the accounts of the earliest Western travelers and their observations. Part 3 focuses on what is termed "The Islam of the Mullahs," who purportedly serve as representatives and spokesmen of the hidden Imam; it includes their formulation of Shi'i law and how they related to the established government. The fourth part deals with the revolutionary ideology of the ayatollahs toward the outside world, focusing on Khomeini's role and on Qom as the center of their authority as mujtahids. The last part treats the Shi'ah outside Iran, including Iraq, the Indian subcontinent, and Lebanon. This all-encompassing short history is illustrated with some print reproductions of Shi'ite rituals. Short bibliography. A concise, timely work that should appeal to those who have no prior knowledge of Shi'ism. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries. -- C. E. Farah, University of Minnesota -- Choice Magazine

College library shelves now groan under the weight of Darfur commentary. Policy-oriented in origin, most of these contributions emphasize ethno-racial conflict, governing elite authoritarianism, past discrimination, and internal warfare. If there is one book to put the Darfur crisis in its necessary context, this is it. Collins, a respected historian (Univ. of California at Santa Barbara), has been writing about Sudan since the 1960s; Burr is a former State Department analyst. They locate the crisis in a wider circle of conflict instigated about 40 years ago by Libya's mercurial petty imperialist Muammar Qaddafi to establish a puritanical, Arab Islamic authority in central Africa with the help of ambitious leaders in Chad and Sudan. This volume expands their earlier collaboration, *Africa's Thirty Years War: Libya, Chad and the Sudan, 1962-1999* (CH, Jan'00, 37-2912). This volume makes clear genocide in Darfur emerges from an enduring African regional and international crisis involving radical Islamic ideologies, cross-border enmities, and Arab-African tensions. It will require much more than humanitarian assistance and UN-African Union military cooperation to bring peace. The Libya-Chad-Sudan triangle remains an incubator of wider unrest and wars, a major challenge in the present global conflict. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper division undergraduates through practitioners. -- H. Glickman, emeritus, Haverford College -- November 2007 Vol. 45 No. 03 CHOICE Magazine.

Heinz Halm, an internationally renowned expert on Shi'ism, provides a concise and highly readable introduction to the historical and intellectual development of Twelver (Imamite) Shi'a Islam. He also presents Shi'i rituals as seen by European travelers. Halm considers these rituals as more important than Shi'a legal codes in terms of influencing culture. For example, he maintains that the 1979 Iranian revolution selectively utilized

those historical and cultural symbols of Shi'ism that appealed to the sentiments of the masses; these symbols thus became tools in the hands of religious leaders." -- Journal of Palestine Studies

J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, *Darfur: The Long Road to Disaster*. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006. xix + 340 pp. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index.. When the conflict in Darfur claimed international attention in 2003, journalists and political analysts unreflectively placed it within the framework of Sudan's peripheral wars--southern Sudan revisited on the western frontier. Few knew that Darfur's war had begun as spillover from another conflict, in 1987, when a Chadian militia retreated into the region, pursued by the Chadian government and French troops. The militia leader, Acheikh Ibn Oumar, was both head of his own faction and commander in Gaddafi's Islamic Legion, a band of Sahelian Bedouin mercenaries recruited to bolster Libyan designs on Chad and its neighbors. One of the very few books in English to track this history is Millard Burr and Robert Collins's *Africa's Thirty Years' War: Chad, Libya, and the Sudan, 1963-1993* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999), which documents the twists and turns of regional and factional politics in Libya, Chad, and Sudan from the 1960s until Idriss Deby seized power in December 1990. The politics of Chad--its own internal fragmentation alongside the minor version of the Cold War's "Great Game" in which France and the U.S. fought a proxy war with Libya--was a protracted tragedy in itself as well as a prelude to disaster in Darfur. The analyst of Darfur's factional politics, digging into the history of the Janjaweed and the Darfur armed movements, finds layer upon layer of sediments from Chad's wars deposited across that country's eastern border, nourishing today's conflicts. In *Darfur: The Long Road to Disaster*, Burr and Collins have updated their original 1999 volume with additional chapters. The new title is not a publisher's gimmick: this is indeed the prehistory of Darfur's tragedy, and it is essential, if difficult, reading for any serious student of the crisis. The book's shortcoming is its weakness of method. Its sources are almost exclusively English- and French-language publications, including news wires and reports from diplomatic and human rights sources. It does not utilize Arabic language ephemera. The authors have not done their own field research, nor have they had privileged access to any archives. This leaves some significant gaps. For example, the Darfurian origin of the Janjaweed lies with the Mahamid Arabs of northern Darfur, who were the intermediaries for smuggling Libyan arms to Chadian Arab militia before forming a formidable militia themselves. The Mahamid remained obscure until their leader, Musa Hilal, achieved infamy in 2004. Because there is almost no English-language published reference to the Mahamid and their role, this important element is missing from Burr and Collins's account. Similarly, the factional politics of the Zaghawa, including the hot-and-cold relations between Idriss Deby and the leaders of Darfur's Justice and Equality Movement, can be understood only with reference to

Deby's betrayal of the Zaghawa Kobe leader Abbas Koty, whom he welcomed back to Chad in 1994 and then had murdered. Underreferenced in English language sources, this episode also fails to appear in this book. These omissions notwithstanding, the updating of the 1999 book and the publication of *Darfur: The Long Road to Disaster* is very welcome. Not only does it provide an account of a history indispensable for understanding Darfur, but it is a salutary reminder of how intractable conflicts in the Chad basin can be. Alex de Waal Social Science Research Council New York, New York

In the 1980s, the central African nation of Chad was an important and long-running Cold War sideshow. It is a country divided between the Muslim north and the south, where the inhabitants are Christians and followers of traditional religions. On independence in 1960, civil war was imminent. France had bequeathed rule to die southerners and, with Sudanese backing, a Muslim rebel group, Frolinat, was formed in the Darfurian town of Nyala in 1965. The following decade, Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, entered the war, laying claim to a strip of territory along the two countries' common border and proclaiming "unity" between Libya and Chad. He backed factions of Frolinat, which he provided with bases, arms and training. In response, the US and French supported other factions. President Reagan, who harboured a personal animus against Gaddafi, upgraded this to the largest CIA operation in Africa and, like the contemporary and larger US support to the Afghan Mujahidin, won a military victory by proxy. The Libyan Army was routed by nimble Jeep-mounted Chadian fighters in the oasis of Ouadi Doum in 1987. Like the Afghan, conflict the Chadian confrontation left a legacy of armaments. In the immediate aftermath, one of the factions Gaddafi backed the Conseil Democratique Revo-lutionnaire headed by warlord Acheikh Ibn Oumer fled to Darfur. They were pursued by a joint French-Chadian expeditionary force and, with his vehicles burned and troops scattered, and his Libyan support cut off, Ibn Oumer threw In the towel. He submitted to President Hissene Habre at the end of 1988, but not before he had distributed weaponry to his Darfurian Arab hosts and unleashed a short but vicious war between Arabs and Fur. This was the origin of the infamous Janjaweed. -- African Studies Review

Poles apart in a desert landscape Millard Burr and Robert Collins's book, which was originally, published in 1999 under the title *Africa's Thirty Years' War*, documents the twists and turns in this long-running saga. The first edition ended its story in 1991 after Habre had been overthrown by one of his former commanders. Idriss Deby, who on both sides of the Sudan-Chad border and invaded from Darfur with the backing of Sudan and Libya. Deby, it seemed, at last brought a measure of stability. Gaddafi had pulled in his horns and Deby had made a simple pact with Sudan's President Omer al Bashir: each would secure his side of the border from incursions by the other's rebels. For a decade, the deal held. But Deby's promises faded into a mire of corruption and patrimonialism,

despite revenue from Chad's newfound oilfields. His bigger problem was that he could not keep his side of the bargain with Sudan. In 2003, when the Darfurian Zaghawa rebelled, they got support from their brethren in Chad. In the meantime, Bashir's Government turned a blind eye to the discontent in Darfur, then cynically and brutally unleashed the Janjaweed to suppress the rebellion. This edition brings the story almost up to date, tracing the outbreak of the Darfur war in 2003 and the Sudan Government's vicious response. Since 2005, war has returned to Chad, not least because Bashir contends that the best way to find a military solution is to remove Deby from power and cut off Chadian support to the rebels. What is now Africa's 40-years' war is yet unfinished. -- Times: London

This book analyzes the emergence of conflict in Darfur through the prism of regional politics, in particular the complex relations between Chad, Libya, and Sudan. The desert borders between the three countries have long been ignored by the often nomadic local populations that have struggled to deal with recurring drought over the last couple of decades. From the early 1960s, the Sudanese government has supported groups opposed to the regime in Chad. More recently, the regime of Idriss DÃfÃ©by in Chad has shared ethnic links to groups in Darfur opposed to the government in Khartoum, complicating relations between the governments. For his part, Muammar al-Qaddafi has shifted his support back and forth between different groups opposed to one of his neighbors, on behalf of grand if somewhat muddled ambitions. All three governments emerge from this account as sorcerer's apprentices, both weak and venal, but also much too ambitious from a tactical point of view given their very limited capabilities and the huge difficulties of operating in a region with few roads, a horrendous climate, and complex tribal, religious, and environmental conditions. Burr and Collins' account constitutes an excellent history of the region's politics, providing many useful insights into the current conflict. -- Foreign Affairs (June 2007)

About Robert O. Collins: Robert O. Collins, professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, is the author of *Shadow in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1919-1956* and *The Waters of the Nile: Hydropolitics and the Jonglei Canal, 1900-1988*, as well as 24 other books.

I needed this book for a paper I was writing for my World Religions class and it helped me a lot. Thank you to whoever wrote this book. You're a great author. Very insightful.

Writing from a Western academic perspective, Heinz Halm provides a valuable and concise history of the Imami or Twelver Shia from the life and times of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali to the time of the book's publication during the first decade of the 21st century. Part one focuses on the

lives of the twelve imams, while part two focuses on the Ashura rituals and their development. Part three focuses on later developments in Imami Shi'ism, including the formation of the tradition as it exists today. Part four focuses on the revolutionary Shia of modern Iran and a final section of the book briefly examines recent developments within the Shi'ite world outside of Iran. Overall, this book provides an excellent resource for anyone interested in the Imami Shi'ites and their history, but does not go as far as providing comprehensive coverage on Shi'ism as a whole. While the title seems to imply that the Zaidi and Ismaili traditions would be covered at some point, the author makes it very clear from the beginning that he would only be focusing on the Imami tradition. For readers interested in learning more about the Zaidi and Ismaili traditions, this book will not offer much insight. Though *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community* is also available by the same publisher.

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