

with political correctness and willingness to engage with thorny issues is clear in his documenting of “Muslim pressure in the Church’s historic [hearlands]” (p. 459). He highlights the fact that the Church of the East is increasingly a church living in diaspora and therefore in need of adjusting to the fact that its geographical and historical core in Mesopotamia may well have very few if any Christians in the near future, given the on-going disastrous fall-out for Iraqi Christians from the ill-conceived 2003 invasion of their country. The author presents an optimistic vision of where the Church could be in 2050 (pp. 463–464) which is certainly believable in parts, although recent events have put the lie to his statement that “the future looks brightest for the Assyrian community in Syria” (p. 460). Furthermore, many with knowledge of the Church will question whether indeed “Nestorians of California might one day press for the ordination of women” (p. 461) and die-hard Assyrian nationalists will undoubtedly reject Wilmshurst’s well-argued exhortation that the Church “distance itself from the Assyrian identity” (pp. 462–463). However, it is hard to disagree with his closing paragraph:

The Church of the East has many faults, and I have not attempted to gloss over them in this book. At the same time, it has witnessed to the truth of the Christian faith in and beyond the lands of Islam for more than a millennium, often under the most difficult conditions and sometimes under the threat of persecution . . . Those who wish the Church of the East well, as I do, can only hope and pray that the twenty-first century will be kinder than the twentieth . . . it is a blessing that they now richly deserve (p. 465). dickens@ualberta.ca

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MILITANCY AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SHIISM – TRENDS AND PATTERNS. Edited by ASSAF MOGHADAM. pp. xvi, 247, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.
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If the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 has provided a boost for Iranian Studies as well as an impetus within the Study of Islam which increasingly acknowledges the relevance of research in contemporary issues; the recent war in Iraq and related religio-political developments in the Muslim world appears to have caused a flood of publications on contemporary aspects of Shiism. Many in this fast turnover of new titles however, seem to have been motivated more by the prospect of massive sales rather than by sustained academic value, which in turn, causes some prejudiced suspicion of any new publication in this field. The responsibility of authors and/or editors would therefore be to ensure a depth of analysis and presentation that can make their own publications stand out of the broad mass of rather mediocre.

The work under review had the potential to do exactly this, namely by providing a thorough historical discussion of the issue of militancy in various Shīʿī denominations, and its relationship to the historically developed dominant non-violent and more theologically charged understanding of Shīʿa Islam. Such an edition could then well place contemporary political and militant manifestations of Shiism in a kind of *longue durée* of appropriation of, and dissociation from violence as a defining element of Shīʿa Islam. The structure of the volume, edited by Assaf Moghadam, currently of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Israeli Herzliya, suggests that indeed a decent effort in this direction has been made: while the second part contains seven regional case studies, the 46 pages of the first part aimed at providing the reader with the “Historical, doctrinal, and religious context”. However, a closer look reveals very soon that unfortunately, the emphasis in this section is solely on Iran and, moreover, goes hardly back beyond

the middle of the twentieth century. In the first chapter, Babak Rahimi discusses “the rise of Shii ideology in pre-revolutionary Iran” (pp. 25–48) by taking the reader on a journey back to the reign of Riżā Shāh Pahlavī and his inglorious son Muḥammad Riżā between 1941 and 1979, with the occasional excursion into the Constitutional period in the first half of the twentieth century. While he certainly succeeds in tracing the roots of contemporary Shīī Islamist thought and organisation in Iran to the militant *Fadā’iyān-i islām* (established in 1943), it would have significantly increased the relevance of this contribution if the author had embedded these observations not only in a discussion of political and socio-economic developments in Iran, but in a wider context of religiously grounded arguments pro and counter violence in Shī’a Islam throughout Muslim history. The same could be said about the second chapter in that section by David Menashri (pp. 49–69), which revolves around the doctrine of the “trusteeship of the jurist” (*vilāyat-i faqīh*) that had gained extraordinary importance in the political thought of the Āyatullāh Rūḥullāh Khumaynī. By focusing almost exclusively on the career of the doctrine in the evolution of Khumaynī’s thought and testing its viability on the degree of implementation in post-revolutionary Iran, the author fuels the somewhat misleading conception that religiously substantiated political thought in Shī’a Islam — at least in its Twelver variety — is tied almost exclusively to Khumaynī. While precursors of the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries are mentioned in passing (p. 50), their important contribution to the development of a clergy-centred political model are not discussed any further.

The belief in the pre-eminence of Iran in the development of militant Shīī Islamism is further perpetuated in the seven regional studies that make up the second part of the volume, entitled “Trends and patterns in the Shii heartland and beyond”: after all, even though the notion of “Shii heartland” is not substantiated any further, the sequence of the regional entries suggests that at least the editor considers it to be constituted by Iran (Sanam Vakil, pp. 73–94) and Iraq (Reidar Visser, pp. 95–111). While such a notion appears distorted already for the Twelver Shī’a, it clearly ignores the importance of other Shīī denominations, first and foremost the Ismā’īliyya and the Zaydiyya. Both distinct branches of Shī’a Islam, very much prevalent in South Asia and Yemen, respectively, have contributed substantially to the development of political, and even militant political thought in Shī’a Islam in general and would have merited at least some acknowledgement. This, however, has not even been the case in the chapter on Pakistan by Hassan Abbas (pp. 155–180) who, by stressing that “Pakistan is home of the second-largest Shii community in the world” (p. 150), helps at least to rectify the notion of a “Shii heartland” in the Middle East. However, besides a rather laconic footnote that “the term “Shiis” in this article refers primarily to the *Ithna Ashariya*, or Twelver Shiis” (p. 175 n.1), even Abbas ignores the 2% Ismā’īlis among Pakistani Muslims who, with the Āghā Khān, possess a living Imām as infallible religio-political leader.

The remaining regional case studies by Benedetta Berti on Lebanon (pp. 112–134), Toby Jones on Saudi Arabia (pp. 135–154), Brian Glys Williams on Afghanistan (pp. 182–200) and Uzi Rabi on Kuwait and Bahrain (pp. 201–216) perpetuate the Iran- and Twelver Shī’a-centred view. All four contributors affirm the overwhelming importance of Khumaynī’s thought and post-revolutionary Iran for the politically activist expressions of the Shīī communities in Lebanon, the Gulf States including Saudi Arabia, and even of the Hazara community in Afghanistan; moreover, in most cases the development of such expressions is discussed against the background of evolving Sunnī militancy, or at least open anti-Shīī sentiments in these countries, often on the instigation of the respective governments.

While in the concluding chapter on “trends, types, and drivers of militancy among the Shiis” (pp. 217–236) the editor highlights various inevitable shortcomings that any edited volume of this kind will have, none of the critical points raised here are found among them. Instead, Moghadam would wish for little else than a more exhaustive list of Shīī organisations across the globe positively inclined to politically motivated violence, and for further regional case studies (see pp. 217f), and then go on

to systematise the findings from the nine chapters of this volume. However, such consent with the many obvious gaps in the analysis of the matters at hand and the particular style of presentation can be explained quite easily, first and foremost with the professional background of most of the contributors in Security Studies and policy counselling. Four contributors, including the editor himself, are involved in policy analysis and security assessment in Israel, which, after all, is a declared arch-enemy of the religio-political establishment in Iran and prime target of a possible military attack, meanwhile even of a nuclear strike. Moreover, in his introduction (pp. 1–21) as well as in his conclusion Moghadam makes the unequivocally clear that the “ambitious aim” of the volume, somewhat disguised by its much broader title, was to “assess trends in militancy and political violence in the Shii community after 1979” (p. 217) and, ultimately, to provide a research-based input to especially U.S. policy making (see pp. 232–235). Such an aim is in itself not reprehensible, but should be clearly expressed in the title of this volume, in order to not raise any false hopes in what readers can expect. With the general title that was chosen, and which most probably is owed rather to the publisher’s marketing strategy than to the intention of editor and authors, however, many academic readers will be thoroughly disappointed and perhaps regret having spent the impressive amount of £80.00 on this book. As such, I am afraid I will not be able to see Moghadam’s edition stand out from the mass of similar policy- and market-oriented rush jobs on the matter. jh74@soas.ac.uk.

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MAKING FACES: SELF AND IMAGE CREATION IN A HIMALAYAN VALLEY. By ALKA HINGORANI. pp. 160. Honolulu, University of Hawai’i Press, 2013.
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Mohras are metal face-images of Hindu deities and seers. In the Kullu valley, in the mountains of northern India, an area which has been inhabited for a long time, ritually enlivened *mohras* are treasured members of prosperous village communities. With the collaborative and hierarchal production of these objects and the dynamics of their performance and consumption as her twin-foci; Alka Hingorani has authored the first book-length study on art and life in the Western Himalayas that is equally attentive to ethnography and to art historical writing and methodology.

Making Faces is divided into five profusely illustrated chapters and a brief epilogue. In Chapter 1, the author compares two types of journeys that *mohras* are taken on. One type is exemplified by an annual pageant at which processions of porters and pilgrims from all over the region carry rows of flower-bedecked face-images enthroned on sedan chairs and caparisoned palanquins to the town of Kullu. Like the ceremonial excursions of chieftains who formerly governed the region, the *mohras* come to Kullu to see and to be seen. They congregate in the town centre and, with their devotees’ assistance, pay homage to the great gods, renew pledges to their subjects, negotiate their place in an increasingly crowded pantheon, and try to extend their authority. At other times of the year, the *mohras* are carried to those settlements in which their devotees wish to establish or renew marriage and kinship ties. In the author’s perception, these journeys exemplify the second type of journey.

In Chapter 2, Hingorani discusses an unevenly published corpus of *mohras* and their appurtenances dating from the ninth-century to the present day. Tracing continuities and shifts in their iconographies and cultic affiliations, she emphasizes that *mohras* are generally not inscribed and are periodically remade by melting down and remoulding. Therefore, in lieu of a conventional construction of stylistic chronologies, and a straightforward account of the development of artisans *oeuvres*, readers are offered