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Master's Thesis of Asian Languages and Civilizations

Iranian Masculinities

– Analysis of Changing Islamic Masculinity
Found in the Martyrdom Discourse of
Ali Shariati and Morteza Avini –

복수의 이란 남성성:
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Iranian Masculinities

-Analysis of Changing Islamic Masculinity
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Abstract

This research finds changing notions of masculinity in Iranian religious nationalism as a ‘site of modernity,’ where the concept of the modern gendered subject is contested and negotiated. It analyzes embedded masculinity in late-twentieth-century Iranian political discourses centering on martyrdom or *shahadat* by focusing on works of two prominent Iranian cultural theorists, Ali Shariati (1933-1977) and Morteza Avini (1947-1993). Both men focused on the potentiality of religious traditions for making political changes; the former, as a scholar-activist before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, re-interpreted Islam into revolutionary ideology through the medium of books, articles, and speeches, and the latter, as a documentary filmmaker during the Iran-Iraq war, played a crucial role in re-capturing revolutionary ideology and turning it into one that can be utilized in favor of the state, utilizing visual media. Scholars of Iranian gender studies have previously pointed to the masculine nature of Iranian history and patriarchal religious interpretations. The discourse of martyrdom has been portrayed as being representative of this trend. This research problematizes the previous scholarship, arguing that in these studies ‘Islamic masculinity’ has been considered monolithic and static, devoid of change contrary to heterogenic Islamic femininities. By tracking differentiated masculinity in the discourse of Shariati and Avini, this research proposes that normative Islamic masculinity has changed from elevating voluntary, family-oriented men to individuals in a self-sufficient, hierarchical, fraternal community. In specific, this research understands Shariati’s gendered perspective through his imagination of an exemplary Muslim family consisting of Ali ibn Abi Talib as the father, Fatimah bint Muhammad (Muhammad’s daughter) as the mother, Hasan and Husayn as the sons, and Zaynab as the daughter. In this imagination, heroic masculinity embodied by Husayn as a martyr is particularly proposed as normative Islamic masculinity. This version of masculinity highlights self-leadership and self-consciousness in contradistinction to traditional strongman masculinity

embodied by Hamza ibn Abdul-Muttalib, a relative and disciple of the Prophet Muhammad. In Shariati's imagination, female members of the family support male members of the family by serving the roles of messenger, nurturer, educator, based on their intellectual ability and voluntarism. On the other hand, Avini's gender perception centers around a fraternal community composed of warriors. A militaristic hierarchy centering on a leader dominates the community and persists self-sufficiently without the help of women, who lost the role of caregivers and persist only as the bearer of future martyrs. This research situates these findings in line with previous nationalist discourses. Shariati, following the tradition of anti-state nationalist discourse, countered the discourse of public patriarchy by accentuating citizenship and the voluntarist role of citizens, both male, and female, for the nation. Avini, on the other hand, inherited a gender perspective of statist nationalism centered on a hierarchical fraternal community. Both discourses, however, showed continued male dominance in the modern project of heteronormalization in Iranian society. On the other hand, both discourses mark a definite departure from previous nationalist discourses by eliminating male responsibility as a protector and educator of women. Therefore, this research rejects the conventional notion, which understands the gender perspective of Islamism as reactionary, and argues for the necessity to understand its heterogenic and hybrid nature. Consequently, this research proposes Iranian masculinity as a prism, through which one can observe the contestation and intermixing of secular liberalism, conservatism, and Islamism in Iranian society.

Keyword: Modern Iranian history, History of gender, Masculinity, Martyrdom, Iranian Revolution, Iran-Iraq War, Ali Shariati, Morteza Avini

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I. Introduction

This thesis aims to analyze embedded masculinity in late-twentieth-century Iranian political discourses centering on martyrdom or *shahada* by focusing on works of two prominent Iranian cultural theorists, Ali Shariati (1933–1977) and Morteza Avini (1947–1993). Shariati articulated his revolutionary discourse during the 1960s and 1970s, while Avini came to prominence in the years that followed Iran’s 1979 revolution. Nevertheless, both men focused on the potentiality of religious traditions for making political changes; the former, as a scholar-activist, re-interpreted Islam into revolutionary ideology through the medium of books, articles, and speeches, and the latter, as a documentary filmmaker, played a crucial role in re-capturing revolutionary ideology and putting it at the service of the state, utilizing visual media. In these ways, Shariati and Avini contributed respectively to the mobilization of the people during the anti-monarchy uprising of the late 1970s and the post-revolutionary Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988). In its reading of the works of these prolific cultural theorists, this research focuses on the theme of martyrdom, and it considers some of the ways in which Shariati’s and Avini’s discourses of martyrdom shaped Iranian nationalism in revolutionary and post-revolutionary contexts. Among the multifarious political and societal implications of the culture of martyrdom, this research highlights its role in configuring and reflecting the changing masculinity of Iranian society, being careful not to compensate its role in fortifying patriarchy in a unilateral and monolithic way. This study attempts to take one step further from previous studies, which have shown that particular interpretations of Islam are used to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity in modern

Iran, by showcasing the heterogeneity of Islamic masculinities. By tracking differentiated masculinity in the discourse of Shariati and Avini, this research proposes that normative Islamic masculinity has changed from elevating self-conscious, family-oriented men to individuals in a self-sufficient, hierarchical, fraternal community. This research situates this finding in line with previous nationalist discourses. Shariati, following the tradition of anti-state nationalist discourse, countered the discourse of public patriarchy by accentuating citizenship and the voluntarist role of citizens, both male, and female, for the nation. Avini, on the other hand, inherited a gender perspective of statist nationalism centered on a hierarchical fraternal community. Both discourses, however, showed continued male dominance in the modern project of heteronormalization in Iranian society. On the other hand, both discourses mark a definite departure from previous nationalist discourses by eliminating male responsibility as a protector and educator of women. Therefore, this research rejects the conventional notion, which understands the gender perspective of Islamism as reactionary, and argues for the necessity to understand its heterogenic and hybrid nature. Consequently, this research proposes Iranian masculinity as a prism, through which one can observe the contestation and intermixing of secular liberalism, conservatism, and Islamism in Iranian society.

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter reviews how Iranian gender studies have dealt with the topic of martyrdom, and points out that they have considered religious masculinity as monolithic, despite their criticisms of the monolithic model of Islamic femininity. The next two chapters analyze the understanding of masculinity embedded in the discourse of Shariati and Avini.

Specifically, Shariati's lectures and speeches dealing with role models for men and women are analyzed in relation to martyrdom discourse in the second chapter, and a famous documentary series dealing with the Iran-Iraq War, *The Chronicles of Victory* or *Ravayat-e Fath*, filmed, edited, and its script written and narrated by Avini himself, is analyzed in the third chapter. The last chapter discusses previous study on Iranian masculinity with the findings from the previous chapter. This thesis concludes with remarks on the further need to establish masculinity as an effective perspective where one can observe the construction of local modernity in a non-Western context.

1. Literature Review: Martyrdom and Masculinity in the Iranian Context

The word *Shahadat* does not appear in the Quran to signify death for a noble cause.¹ In modern Shi'i Islam, however, *Shahadat* has become a central theme. The killing of the Prophet's grandson Husayn Ibn Ali in the Battle of Karbala (680AD) against the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiya marks the definitive moment of Sunni-Shi'i split; the "legitimate" successor in Shi'ism was killed by the Sunni "tyrant." While the event marks the first bloodshed between Sunni and Shi'i, considering the fact that the practical division between Sunnism and Shi'ism was not clear and Shi'i theology was not concrete before the advent of the Safavid dynasty, the importance of martyrdom in Shi'ism gradually gained political significance over the centuries. From the seventeenth century onward, the martyrdom of Husayn, who is regarded as the third Shi'i Imam, was commemorated in the form of passion play, or *ta'zīeh*, and in lyrical song, or *rauzeh*, in folk culture in Iran.² It is significant in the sense that it is an instance of religious sentiment that has been practiced and reproduced by the public, and it has not been restricted to the theological arena. More importantly, it has provided an occasion for people to express their political distress in the form of mourning.³

Martyrdom has played a significant role not only as rituals but also as a political narrative, in mobilizing people and forming a worldview, especially since

¹ Faegheh Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer: Memorializing Martyred (Shahid) Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Visual Anthropology* 25, no. 1–2 (2012): 100.

² Ali Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity in Iran: The Idea of Homeland Derived from Ancient Persian and Islamic Imaginations of Place* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 74.

³ Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 170.

the 1950s. Known as the “Karbala paradigm,” the narrative of martyrdom has been understood as contributing to the worldview that strictly divides between good and evil, and us and them, where the understanding that “Imam Husayn symbolizes goodness, truth, justice, piety, courage, self-sacrifice, honor, and devotion to God and Yazid symbolizes evil, moral corruption, injustice, cruelty, pride, obsession with the material world” has been deeply entrenched in Iranian politics.⁴ In this way, Imam Husayn has also been one of the major points of reference for Iranian nationalism along with Ferdowsi’s monumental tenth-century epic, *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), and the myth of Aryanism.⁵ Especially during the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war, the actualization of “martyrdom” in real life has triggered a convolution of the Iranian identity with narratives of martyrdom, and the discourse of martyrdom has contributed to mobilizing people for the revolution and the consolidation of the post-revolutionary state.⁶ As a source of mobilization, the discourse has also been utilized by dissidents of the Islamic Republic, as can be seen in the case of the 2009 Iranian Green Movement, where victims of governmental oppression were revered as “Green martyrs,” and their commemoration as such was a point of unification.⁷ Significant as a source of political mobilization, social ritual, and reference point for identity construction, the discourse of martyrdom as a form of political ideology plays a role similar to that of nationalism.

⁴ Kamran Scot Aghaie, *Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004), x–xi.

⁵ Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Psycho-Nationalism: Global Thought, Iranian Imaginations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁶ Roxanne Varzi, *Warring Souls: Youth, Media, and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁷ Elisabeth Jane Yarbakhsh, “Green Martyrdom and the Iranian State,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2014): 77–78.

Considering such political importance, one should revisit whether the construction of the discourse of martyrdom has contributed to reinforcing male centrism in Iranian politics. Several historians in the field of Iranian studies have dealt with masculinities held by traditional, secular-liberal, and religious sectors of the country contesting for hegemony, marginalizing women and prescribing femininity in their own fashion. The masculinity of chivalry practiced by local strongmen was traditionally praised until they were castigated as being “unmanly” for their failure to fulfill their duty of protecting women from Western encroachment by emerging Western-educated intellectuals who started to present themselves as the new models of hegemonic masculinity beginning in the late nineteenth century.⁸ In the course of this development, the imagination that saw homeland, or *vatan*, as a patriarchal family, where family members are protected by a generous father-*shah*, turned into a matriotic one, where sons are required to prove their manliness by their nationalist fervor to protect their mother-homeland.⁹ Although this imagination allowed women to gain symbolic power as national mothers and also made it possible for national sisters to participate in the public arena to play a role similar to that of their brothers, the discourse prioritized men as the agency of resistance, utilizing female activists primarily as rhetorical tools to embarrass and educate non-patriotic men.¹⁰ Indeed, the masculinity of being “zealous” was praised and the lion and the sun were gradually institutionalized as masculine statist symbols, exalting heroic chivalrous masculinity protecting mother

⁸ Sivan Balslev, *Iranian Masculinities: Gender and Sexuality in Late Qajar and Early Pahlavi Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

⁹ Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “From Patriotism to Matriotism: A Tropological Study of Iranian Nationalism, 1870-1909,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34 (2002): 217–38.

¹⁰ Tavakoli-Targhi, 228–32.

homeland.¹¹ Along with the demise of westernized elites in the next few decades, the *mullah* and the martyr came to dominate Iranian society and politics by maintaining themselves as the norm bearers of Islamic hyper-masculinity throughout the revolution and Iran-Iraq war.¹² Under the theme of wartime masculinity, Muslim brothers would show their willingness to fight for an ideal of Islamic nationalism, and sisters would remain veiled.¹³ After the war, the gendered theme, in which men were seen as “heroic protectors, providers and procreators” and women as “nurturers and caregivers,” was reproduced in the form of religious rituals.¹⁴ Patriarchal religious interpretations constituting socio-political activities and apparatuses have also facilitated hegemonic male dominance over women.¹⁵ Notably, Aghaie has analyzed gender narratives of literature dealing with martyrdom from the 1950s to the 1970s and pointed out that there are gender-neutral themes of “loyalty to Husayn, courage, self-sacrifice for Islam, and moral conducts,” masculine themes of “leadership, fighting, and martyrdom” not very different from the Western model of masculinity, and feminine themes of “willing to sacrifice husbands, being sacrificed as victims, mourners, the conscience of the community, and spokesperson, preservers, and transmitters of Husayn’s message.”¹⁶ As revolutionary religious discourse has gradually lost its mobilizing

¹¹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 64–89.

¹² Shahin Gerami, “Mullahs, Martyrs, and Men: Conceptualizing Masculinity in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Men and Masculinities* 5, no. 3 (January 1, 2003): 257–74.

¹³ Mino Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Azam Torab, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007), 139–168.

¹⁵ Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

¹⁶ Aghaie, *Martyrs of Karbala*, 119–25.

power, revolutionary martyrs' hegemonic masculinity has also witnessed gradual deconstruction in its conflict with traditional patriarchy and women's increased roles.¹⁷ However, as young males remain the primary target of its mobilization, the Islamic Republic still maintains masculine themes as central to its adjusted nationalistic propaganda.¹⁸ Especially in the recent rejuvenation of the banal rhetoric of martyrdom after the killing of Qasem Soleimani (1957–2020), a commander of the Qods Force at the time he was assassinated by the military operation of the United States, the need to revisit the association between the construction of the discourse of martyrdom and the gender politics of Iran is great.

In revisiting this association, this thesis takes neither an essentialist view on Islam as an innately misogynic religion nor the institutionalist view that accentuates the amalgamation of religion and state in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with previous studies on Iranian gender politics. Rather, in the awareness that male centrism has been a global phenomenon prevalent in other parts of the world as well, including the West, this research is critical of embedded masculinity in political ideologies. Previous studies on Iranian masculinity have shown well the lopsided nature of Iranian gender politics and how Islam has been unilaterally interpreted by the state in favor of its hegemonic masculinity. They have also illuminated the global tendency of anti-colonial nationalism in the Iranian context, where women are empowered by being given an opportunity to participate in political movements and encouraged to rise to the level of companionship with

¹⁷ Minoo Moallem, "Staging Masculinity in Iran-Iraq War Movies," in *Handbook on Asian Cinema*, ed. Aaron Magnan-Park, Gina Marchetti, and Tan See-Kam (Palgrave, 2018); Shirazi, "Death, the Great Equalizer," 104–6.

¹⁸ Narges Bajoghli, *Iran Reframed: Anxieties of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 98–99.

men, but presented as a weak and vulnerable national symbol, a possession of men that should be protected, the bearers of the next generation or educators of their children in national values, bereft of activist roles in the nationalist movement in contrast to men, who are pictured as protagonists and warriors.¹⁹ At the same time, these studies did not replicate the dominant view in the field of masculinity studies according to which non-Western masculinity is primarily pictured as reactionary or violent due to its inferiority to hegemonic Western masculinity. Rather, they have proposed multiple models of masculinity competing for hegemony in non-Western contexts. However, they are problematic in the sense that they considered “Islamic masculinity” as a monolithic and static model devoid of change. While these scholars have stressed that there is no one single Islamic gender model and that the religious interpretations provided by the Islamic state are open to challenge,²⁰ Islamic masculinity has seldom been contested in this literature, in contrast to its counterpart. Therefore, this research aims to track how the content of Islamic masculinity has changed in relation to a changing historical background, along with the changes to femininity. This nuanced perspective on Iranian religious masculinity will allow a more sociological account of why the Islamic Republic opted for patriarchal interpretations of Islam, building on conventional reasoning accentuating its pursuit of authenticity in relation to the West and overcoming a simplistic reduction to men’s innate willingness to control women’s sexuality and reproduce patriarchy.

¹⁹ Cynthia Enloe, “Nationalism and Masculinity,” in *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁰ Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender*; Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*.

2. Research Methodology

This research singles out Ali Shariati and Morteza Avini as two of the most influential interpreters and propagators of the trend of the politicization of the discourse of martyrdom. Ali Shariati, whom Ervand Abrahamian calls the “Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,”²¹ sought a definitive turn of “cultural” trends in Shi’i Islam through redefining Shi’i martyrdom by placing it in the service of the rising anti-monarchy revolutionary movement. In his criticism of *ta'zīyeh* as a custom imported from Christian culture,²² he might have aimed to bring all the political energy wasted on memorializing the past into the revolutionary movement. He encouraged people themselves to become martyrs. He contributed to a definitive turn from a previously soteriological understanding of martyrdom to a politicized martyrdom practiced by contemporary people.²³

Morteza Avini, a documentary film director, played a central role in articulating and propagating the post-revolutionary discourse of martyrdom during the Iran-Iraq war, when the post-revolutionary state drew on the politicized potential of the Shi’i concept of martyrdom to mobilize the population, calling on them to sacrifice themselves for the defense of the country and of the revolution during the Iran-Iraq War.²⁴ Through his documentary series, *Ravayat-e-Fath*, he aimed to bring a “true perception” of the war to the Iranian people, in awareness of

²¹ Ervand Abrahamian, “Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,” *Middle East Report* 102 (January/February 1982).

²² Abrahamian, 202.

²³ Olmo Gözl, “Martyrdom and Masculinity in Warring Iran: The Karbala Paradigm, the Heroic, and the Personal Dimensions of War,” *Behemoth: A Journal on Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2019): 37–43.

²⁴ Varzi, *Warring Souls*.

the ever-increasing role of the media in forming perceptions of reality.²⁵ While previous literature has considered the belief that the documentary was the primary lens through which the Iranian people perceived the war during its eight years,²⁶ however, considering the fact that it was produced and aired between 1986 and 1994, both during and after the war, Avini's documentary helped the state to advance its particular narrative of the war as a “sacred defense” and as a necessary struggle to defend the legacy of the revolution. While Avini was deeply influenced by Shariati, the two men differ in their interpretation of martyrdom. The political needs of their times and positions were different; Shariati was in the position of a dissident in the revolutionary era, and Avini was on the side of the government during the post-revolutionary wartime.

To discuss Shariati’s work, this paper uses an online database²⁷ to access translated and untranslated speeches, articles, and books related to martyrdom. The chapter on Avini analyzes his famous documentary series dealing with the Iran-Iraq War, *The Chronicles of Victory* or *Ravayat-e Fath*, filmed, edited, written, and narrated by Avini himself, which has characteristics similar to a political manifesto.²⁸ While the selected works of two cultural theorists are not solely or directly intended to tackle gender issues, the embedded masculinity in those discourses either reflects contemporary social conceptions of gender or makes their audience uncritically accept them as the pre-given nature of the world. To analyze

²⁵ Varzi.

²⁶ Narges Bajoghli, “Debating the Iran-Iraq War on Film,” *Middle East Report*, no. 271 (2014): 40–42.

²⁷ www.shariati.com; www.al-Islam.org.

²⁸ Mehrzad Karimabadi, “Manifesto of Martyrdom: Similarities and Differences between Avini’s Ravaayat-e Fath [Chronicles of Victory] and More Traditional Manifestoes,” *Iranian Studies* 44, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 381–86; http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/revayat-fath.aspx.

embedded masculinity in Shariati's and Avini's meta-narratives, this paper raises three sets of questions:

In Shariati's and Avini's interpretations,

- 1) What kind of gender roles should men play? Which masculine features are associated with being a martyr? How do they relate to each other?
- 2) Which roles are reserved for women? How is femininity illustrated in relation to masculinity?
- 3) In what ways is a masculine politics of nationalism reproduced? In what ways do their discourses challenge or transcend norms of masculinity in Iranian nationalism?

After tracking the changes in the Islamic understanding of masculinity surrounding the discourse of martyrdom by answering these questions, this research will end by discussing what these changes would mean in terms of the construction of local modernity.

II. Analysis of Embedded Masculinity

1. Ali Shariati's Discourse of Martyrdom and Its Embedded Masculinity

As early Islamic revolutionary discourses, the works of Ali Shariati have been closely examined in terms of Islam's relationship with modernity. Scholars have focused on his differentiated Islamic discourse with Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) and some are attempting to develop his legacy into a “project of indigenous modernity whose critical reexamination can serve the negotiation of a third way between hegemonic universalism and essentialist particularism.”²⁹ Indeed, Shariati's views on gender have been the subject of many discussions. In particular, his reinterpretation of Fatimah bint Muhammad (Muhammad's daughter) as a new role model for Muslim women who wanted to be politically active and navigate their own way of life has been considered empowering for women.³⁰ However, it has been pointed out that Shariati's discussion of women is limited in that it is not issue-specific, but embedded in the “broader processes of the negotiation of individual subjectivity and social and political agency in Iranian society.”³¹ Moallem also criticizes the “modernist and masculinist bias” Shariati shows when he deplores the laziness of middle-class women, who do not perform any domestic or public roles.³² This chapter revisits Shariati's discourses on women by linking

²⁹ Siavash Saffari, “Reclaiming Islam and Modernity: A Neo-Shariati Revisiting of Ali Shariati's Intellectual Discourse in Post-revolutionary Iran” (PhD Diss., University of Alberta, 2013).

³⁰ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 91-92.

³¹ Saffari, “Reclaiming Islam and Modernity,” 167-68.

³² Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 93.

them to his embedded view of masculinity, primarily inferred from his martyrdom discourse.

Shariati's martyrdom discourse emerged when the guerilla movement in Iran intensified and fighters close to him had been executed in early 1970s. In his lectures at Hosseinieh Ershad, he turned his previous educational tone into an insurrectionary one, urging his students to become martyrs.³³ Following his lectures, students would undergo "the transitional process from political discontent to radical political consciousness, and finally to armed revolutionary struggles."³⁴ In this research, such a transition is understood neither as an abrupt turn due to his personal loss nor as a necessary step of his project to produce freedom fighters but as a differentiated representation reflecting a changing social and political atmosphere and circumstances. Therefore, it ought to be possible to trace a consistent thread of embedded gender perspectives encompassing his education and insurrectionary works.

Ali Shariati's interpretation of martyrdom is broad, in the sense that it signifies every act that reveals and recovers the forgotten holy spirit. It does not even have to entail death, although the martyrdom that results in the death of the martyr is the most sublime one.³⁵

Shariati's discourse is marked by its consideration of the family as an elementary unit of society in contrast to the "individual" in modern Western political thought. He constructs for the audience a paradigm of an exemplary

³³ Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (New York: I.B.Tauris, 2000), 314.

³⁴ Rahnama, 317.

³⁵ Ali Shariati, "Jihad & Shahadat," <http://www.shariati.org/english/jihadand.html>.

Muslim family consisting of Ali ibn Abi Talib (the first Shi'i Imam) as the father, Fatimah as the mother, Hasan and Husayn as the sons, and Zaynab as the daughter.³⁶ While he is critical of the destruction of family relations in the West and the bourgeois culture of individual liberty, which invites women to leave the house,³⁷ but at the same time, he is highly critical of traditional patriarchy, in which ancient tribal and local traditions and customs try to “hold women inside by creating bonds, obligations, and restrictions.”³⁸ Shariati does not portray Ali as a patriarch, who sways absolute control over family members as the head of the family. Nor does Shariati picture the ideal Muslim community as a traditional patriarchal society, where men form a homosocial unity among themselves based on a strict generational hierarchy. Rather, Shariati shows the fragmented nature of male society by making the generational divide between men the main cause of the crisis of succession in Islam, portraying Ali as one who has been isolated by older members of the community who were jealous of his extraordinary qualities.³⁹ Instead of forming a unity, men undergo inner struggles surrounding hegemonic masculinity.

Shariati articulates these struggles by proposing three types of masculinity with his discourse centering on Husayn. Husayn is pictured as an idealistic, patient, and generous “defender of the innocent, silent and oppressed victims,” who is just the opposite of the despotic, exploitive, and stupefying masculinity exemplified by

³⁶ Ali Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 1,” <http://www.shariati.com/english/woman/woman1.html>.

³⁷ Ali Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 2,” <http://www.shariati.com/english/woman/woman2.html>; Ali Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, trans. Laleh Bakhtiar (Shariati Foundation, 1980), 53–4, <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/9540>.

³⁸ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 2.”

³⁹ Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, 110–12.

Yazid.⁴⁰ In the contemporary context, the West is presented as belonging to this type, since it tries to induce women to have sex, a modern form of scientific and mental stupefaction.⁴¹ The type of masculinity proposed by Husayn is further articulated in contradistinction to that of the other type of martyr, Hamza ibn Abdul-Muttalib, a relative and disciple of the Prophet Muhammad. The latter, who was killed in the Battle of Uhud (625 AD), is illustrated by Shariati as “*mujahid*,” a “heroic and epic personality” and “great hunter and warrior,” a symbol of the typical strongman.⁴² Hamza’s version of martyrdom is the one carried out by a loyal, straightforward, and honest type of masculine figure, which is the opposite of the “filthy and womanly conspiracy” by which he was killed.⁴³ While Shariati does not depreciate the type of martyrdom symbolized by Hamza, he praises the martyrdom of Husayn more highly than that of Hamza.⁴⁴ Husayn is depicted as a rather less powerful figure,⁴⁵ but a more proactive martyr, since he consciously chose his death, while Hamza was incidentally killed during the battle. The importance of active and independent choice is accentuated in Shariati’s discourse by the example of Hurr ibn Yazid al-Tamimi, who was a commander of the army of Yazid but deserted his army to be martyred for Husayn when he was ordered to crush the army of Husayn. Shariati stresses Hurr to his male audiences as the paradigm of a person who made his own choice between good and evil, truthful and deceiving religion, and just and unjust politics.⁴⁶ While Shariati emphasizes

⁴⁰ Shariati, “Jihad & Shahadat.”

⁴¹ Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, 50.

⁴² Shariati, “Jihad & Shahadat.”

⁴³ Shariati.

⁴⁴ Shariati.

⁴⁵ Shariati.

⁴⁶ Ali Shariati, “Horr,” <http://www.shariati.com/english/horr.html>.

the responsibility of “committed Muslim intellectuals,”⁴⁷ he does not rally men to find and follow the lead of intellectuals. Rather, he encourages them to perform self-leadership, following Husayn as an ideal model of masculinity.

In their practical struggles, however, men do not stand by themselves but are always in need of women’s support. In this way, Shariati does not expect women to play the same role, although he does not exclude women from performing the role of the martyr; women have their distinct way of achieving “martyrdom,” not just by simply emulating masculine behavior. Specifically, he provides two “spiritual symbols,” or “martyrs” in his broad sense⁴⁸: Zaynab as a role model for daughters or unmarried women and Fatimah as a role model for mothers or married women. Shariati praises Zaynab’s self-determination in joining jihad along with her male family members and her role in bravely spreading the revolutionary thoughts of Husayn. In Shariati’s account, Zaynab left her husband and children to join the uprising of Husayn.⁴⁹ She survived the massacre of the Battle of Karbala, and she continued Husayn’s movement by spreading the cruelty of Yazid and revolutionary thoughts of Husayn.⁵⁰ Thereby, she is held up as a goal for Muslim women who “have shown the greatest talents in science, literature, and social issues.”⁵¹ Following Zaynab, they are encouraged to announce “the message of those who bore witness but are silent.”⁵² Therefore, Zaynab symbolizes

⁴⁷ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 1.”

⁴⁸ Ali Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 3,” <http://www.shariati.com/english/woman/woman3.html>.

⁴⁹ Shariati.

⁵⁰ Ali Shariati, *Martyrdom: Arise and Bear Witness*, trans. Ali Asghar Ghassemy (Al-Islam, 1975), 46–47, <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/9817>.

⁵¹ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 3.”

⁵² Shariati, *Martyrdom*, 53.

“message,” intellectual activism, as a counterpart to “blood,” physical revolution, symbolized by Husayn.⁵³

In Shariati’s account, Fatimah, on the other hand, serves in the role of the mother throughout her life, mainly performing two functions. First, she supports male figures in sustaining the struggles surrounding “power, leadership, and self-protection” in the masculine public space devoid of “emotions, friendship, sincerity” so that they can thereby maintain their pursuit of “honor, glory, and pride.”⁵⁴ When she was young, as a “mother of her father,” she would always accompany his father and “support him through his troubles and sufferings” by comforting and sympathizing with him.⁵⁵ After she married Ali, she protected him when he was abandoned amid the successor dispute and gathered people to her house to speak for Ali.⁵⁶ In this way, Shariati tries to break the strict dichotomy between public and private and create occasions where women could indirectly take part in public affairs. Second, she performs the role of securer of the patriline and nourisher and trainer of her children. While Shariati is highly critical of traditional patriarchy, he does not question the legitimacy of patrilinealism, one of the main pillars of patriarchy. Shariati tries to equate Ali with being Muhammad’s son and praises Fatimah for compensating for all the sufferings of her father by giving birth to his grandsons, Hasan and Husayn.⁵⁷ After giving birth to her children, she performs the role of the “woman of house” who grows future martyrs, as opposed to the “man of battle,” Ali. Here, Shariati assigns a modern undertone

⁵³ Shariati, 54.

⁵⁴ Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, 118–19.

⁵⁵ Shariati, 77.

⁵⁶ Shariati, 114.

⁵⁷ Shariati, 95–102.

to “caring” and enhances its significance. For Shariati, child-rearing requires intelligence, literacy, education, discipline, and knowledge about culture, civilization, and social manners as a prerequisite.⁵⁸ Shariati succeeds in preserving the outward appearances of the traditional family, while at the same time distancing it from traditional patriarchal precedents by replacing its undertones with “modern” language. This is in line with modern masculine discourses that have attempted to construct modern female subjects based on schooling in modern sciences, chastity, companionship to their husbands, and interest in national interests.⁵⁹

In both feminine models, women’s roles are confined to supportive ones. He gives similar accounts in which women take part in encouraging and inspiring the troops and nursing the war-wounded.⁶⁰ Women are mainly portrayed as “companions,” “partners,” and “consolers” of their fathers, husbands, or brothers, who play major roles. Women come to play major roles only after male figures are either dead or faced with a hardship that they cannot overcome by themselves. Most of all, in Shariati’s account, Fatimah and Zaynab do not achieve the “most sublime martyrdom,” which accompanies death; “blood” only belongs to men.

Shariati’s narrative conceals the embedded hierarchy between men and women by utilizing several discursive apparatuses. First, he accentuates the necessity of the intellectual ability of women to perform the roles discussed above. This is related to Shariati’s effort to detach the “modern” values of freedom, liberty,

⁵⁸ Shariati, 60.

⁵⁹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Veiled Discourse—Unveiled Bodies,” *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 3 (1993): 493.

⁶⁰ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 2”; “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 3.”

and science from Western modernity, instead of its wholesale adoption. He picks scientists, philosophers, and scholar-activists from Western women as models for Iranian women.⁶¹ However, he tries to differentiate Iranian women from their Western counterparts by differentiating their basis of agency. He presumes that the emancipation of Western women is based on the economic independence provided by the capitalist economy, which automatically leads them to become slaves of consumerism.⁶² He calls their freedom “artificial,” and seeks independence that is based on spiritual and social values.⁶³ In this sense, the self-determination of women toward the values that he prescribes for them is considered important. Shariati accentuates the point that Zaynab did not join Husayn’s war for the sake of her brother, but “by her sense of responsibility and commitment to her society and religion.”⁶⁴ Likewise, the identity of Fatimah is emphasized, so as not to reduce her to her identity as a daughter of Muhammad or a wife of Ali.⁶⁵ He tries to mobilize the agency of women into revolting against the old traditions and Western enslavement.⁶⁶ Thereby, Shariati prevents disruption of the familial order and maintains the companionship between wife and husband based on feelings of faith, love, shared belief, and friendship through a voluntary movement on the side of women, rather than adaptation or reaction from the side of men.⁶⁷ Consequently, between the two roles, he prioritizes Fatimah as a role model for women, as seen by his appraisal of Fatimah as an “example of women.”⁶⁸ Indeed, against the background of increased awareness of transnational feminist movements, emphasis

⁶¹ Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, 46.

⁶² Shariati, 51–57.

⁶³ Shariati, 52; 128.

⁶⁴ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 3.”

⁶⁵ Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, 128.

⁶⁶ Shariati, *Martyrdom*, 46.

⁶⁷ Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, 86.

⁶⁸ Shariati, “Expectations from the Muslim Woman: Part 3.”

on the “nativist” ideal and resistance against foreign invasion, and increased presence in the public arena, Shariati’s version of Zaynab emerged as a symbol of progressive leadership of women, and it was soon domesticated and marginalized after the revolution.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Bizaa Zeynab Ali, “Contemporary Karbala Narratives and the Changing Gender Dynamics in Shi’i Communities,” Columbia University, Academic Commons, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D87S7WZ3>; Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 93–94.

2. Morteza Avini's Discourse of Martyrdom and Its

Embedded Masculinity

A decade-long political uprising against the Pahlavi Dynasty's political oppression culminated in the overthrow of the monarchy in 1979. During the 1979 Iranian Revolution, multiple political factions of Islamists, socialists, secular nationalists, and communists, as well as social and political classes that did not necessarily share political agendas, joined together to overthrow the monarchy. In due course, Khomeini emerged as the leader of the revolution thanks to his broad appeal across the classes; he spoke the religious language of the traditional middle class, adopted democratic language from the modern middle class, and appealed to the despondent urban working class with social justice and a sense of community.⁷⁰ After the revolution, Iran was renamed the Islamic Republic of Iran via the referendum, and Islamists rose as victors amid post-revolutionary competition.⁷¹

Khomeini's aggressive rhetoric, "the export of the Islamic Revolution," feared authoritarian leaders of the Middle East region and Western countries that had backed the rulers for a stable oil supply. Against this background, on September 22, 1980, Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein (1937–2006), invaded Iran with the goal of gaining control of the long-disputed Shatt al-Arab, as well as the domestic Shii' population and the Arab League. Iraq enjoyed tremendous regional and international support, including that of the United States

⁷⁰ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton University Press, 1982), 533-35.

⁷¹ One should note that Islamists neither 'stole' the revolution nor were the predetermined victors of the revolution. See Naghmeh Sobrabi. "The "Problem Space" of the Historiography of the 1979 Iranian Revolution," *History Compass* 16, no. 11 (2018); 16:e12500. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12500>.

and the USSR, which had united for the first time since the start of the Cold War. At the time of the invasion, Iran did not properly inherit the military strength of the previous dynasty due to the continued purge of military personnel.⁷² It was predicted that the war would end as a swift victory of Iraq. However, Iran withstood the initial invasion and even attacked the Iraqi border in 1982. The war finally ended on August 20, 1988, after 2920 days, resulting in more than 300,000 fatalities and 500,000 casualties for Iran. Iranian men of every age and class fought in the war, and in desperate resistance and prolonged war of attrition engaging inferior military institutions and resources, were left with physical and mental trauma, even if they managed to survive the war.⁷³ Many international political scientists, however, consider the Iran-Iraq War a gift from God to the Islamic Republic, since this “holy war” was an occasion for Islamists to mobilize and unite their citizens and purge domestic dissidents.⁷⁴ Concomitantly, the commemoration of the fallen in the Iran-Iraq War as “martyrs” became the central trope of religious nationalism in Iran. In particular, Morteza Avini played a central role in this process by rearticulating the Iran-Iraq War in the language of political Islam instead of using it as a source of typical war propaganda.

Born in 1947, Morteza Avini was the kind of person who could casually be classified as a secular intellectual interested in Persian literature and poetry. He earned his MA in Architecture from the University of Tehran.⁷⁵ Since 1978, at the

⁷² Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*, (Washington: George Town University Press, 2009).

⁷³ Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, “Memory, Mourning, Memorializing: On the Victims of Iran-Iraq War, 1980—Present,” *Radical History Review*, no. 105 (2009): 109–12.

⁷⁴ Ward, 2009.

⁷⁵ Pedram Khosronejad, “The Iran-Iraq War and the Creation of Sacred Defence Cinema,” in *Iranian Sacred Defence Cinema: Religion, Martyrdom, and National Identity*, ed.

dawn of the revolution, however, he became radically ideologized and started to participate in Islamist organizations.⁷⁶ In the nascent Islamic Republic, he started his film career by producing documentary films—one about a flood in Khuzestan Province and another about intertribal conflicts in the Fars Province—at the film office run by *Jahad-e-Sazandehgi* (The Construction Jihad).⁷⁷ When the Iran-Iraq War commenced, he produced a series of war documentaries and led a group of young filmmakers at Hozey-e-Honari (The Center for [Islamic Art]) and created the school of Sacred Defense cinema.⁷⁸ His works culminated in the *Ravayat-e-Fath* series. In the documentary, he focused on *basiji* soldiers, who had volunteered to fight on the front, as opposed to regular soldiers in the army (*artesh*) or commanders who had been professionals.⁷⁹ Rather than portraying them as typical war heroes, he emphasized the subjecthood of these Iranian soldiers.⁸⁰ Crafting a state-mediated visualization of Islamic ideology instead of low-grade propaganda, his intention was to expand the concept to *Jang-e-tahmili* (The Imposed War) into the *Jang-e-e'teqadi* (The Ideological War).

In *Ravayat-e-Fath*, “martyr” solely indicates a soldier present on the war front in contrast to Shariati’s broader concept of a martyr as a realizer of the holy spirit. The active actualization of death is important in Avini’s conception of martyrdom. The protagonists of the documentary are called soldiers, fighters, warriors, *Basijis*,⁸¹ or the party of God (*Hezbollah*). Indeed, soldiers in the

Pedram Khosronejad (UK: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2012), 8-9.

⁷⁶ Khosronejad, 10.

⁷⁷ Khosronejad, 10.

⁷⁸ Khosronejad, 7.

⁷⁹ Khosronejad, 12-13.

⁸⁰ Khosronejad, 13.

⁸¹ The Basij Force is a volunteer army created after the 1979 revolution that mobilized

documentary are always men, without a single exception. They form a homosocial fraternal community at the battlefield. These male figures share immense responsibility, and this is also the basis of their authority. Their responsibility is not just to defend Iran from the Iraqi invasion but to establish a grander Islamic community.⁸² While Iran is highlighted as “a center of the holy light that shed the darkness of the era and [will] realize the historical justice of the future,”⁸³ they are not preoccupied with the imminent defense of the country. They have the clear goal of the liberation of Palestine as the next stage.⁸⁴ By detaching these soldiers from explicit Iranian nationalism, by stating, “Their homeland is Islam” or, “They do not fight for water and earth,”⁸⁵ Avini succeeds in granting holy characteristics to these soldiers.

Men in the documentary are illustrated as plain beings in origin. Rather than being urban, smart, fancy, strong, valorous, and sophisticated, they are ordinary people who were originally farmers or seminary students whom “one can see at every Friday sermon.”⁸⁶ They are “friends of simpleness and pureness,” and “humble and friendly men.”⁸⁷ The accentuation of physical and mental humbleness even goes so far as to label physical disability as a symbol (*neshaneh*) of

many civilian volunteers (known as *Basijis*) to participate in the Iran-Iraq war.

⁸² *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 10, “Ziyāfat: Ramz-e-Piruzi,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

⁸³ Avini.

⁸⁴ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 2, episode 1, “Delbākhteh,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf2.aspx.

⁸⁵ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

⁸⁶ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 2, “Pātok-e-Ruz-e-Chāharom,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

⁸⁷ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 1, “Shab-e-‘Āshurāi,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

mardanegi, which can be interpreted both as bravery and masculinity.⁸⁸ As imperfect and normal beings, the soldiers are capable of loving others and being loved by others, in contrast to the enemies, who are arrogant “slaves of machines,” equipped with heartless modern technology.⁸⁹ Iranian soldiers are consistently called “lovers” in Avini’s narration. They learn a lesson of love, rather than a lesson of knowledge or jurisprudence, from the war.⁹⁰ The hallmark of humbleness and the ability to love is presented in the tears of the men. The documentary does not shy away from capturing men weeping. Crying men seem weak, but their tears show their humaneness well. In the crying scenes, soldiers are turned from inhumane instruments of war into lovable neighbors. Avini quotes the legend that even the brave and unbreakable Imam Ali had cried every night near a well.⁹¹

These imperfect beings require the necessary power and ability to execute their responsibility to fulfill a heavy duty. In contrast to Shariati’s discourse, where men need women’s support, the fraternal community is self-sufficient. Through faith, they obtain extraordinary willpower and patience such that they are not afraid of death.⁹² And through endurance and their voluntary presence at the war front, soldiers are elevated to a higher level of consciousness. They have succeeded in their quest to “repel satanic dominance through a renewal of their bad habit, weakness, and fear.”⁹³ Equipped with the ability to “appreciate the blessing of

⁸⁸ Avini, “Pātok.”

⁸⁹ Avini.

⁹⁰ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 3, “Tārikhsāzān Cheh Kasāni Hastand?” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

⁹¹ Avini, “Shab.”

⁹² Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

⁹³ Avini, “Shab.”

God”⁹⁴ and the awareness that “everything belongs to God,”⁹⁵ soldiers realize “their ascension by their service to the realization of the will of God.”⁹⁶ Here, their service to God designates closeness to Husayn,⁹⁷ which is their intention in martyrdom. Thereby, a “young *Basiji* could reach a height that a seventy-year-old dedicated *Sufi* never reached,”⁹⁸ and they become an *‘Āref* (mystic and devotee of God).⁹⁹ Soldiers hold a special place as “being God’s favorites.”¹⁰⁰ They usurp the conventional spiritual order among the masses.

A militaristic hierarchy centering on a leader and strict obedience to him within the fraternal community eases the transformation of lovable but imperfect beings into a historical force. Through their huge numbers and the guidance of a great leader, as a group, men can become more than they were. Their ties to the community and sense of obligation to stay together are maintained by their “promise not to leave Imam [Husayn] alone” at Karbala.¹⁰¹ “They feel a historical connection deep in their existence.”¹⁰² They go to the front to help Imam Husayn,

⁹⁴ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

⁹⁵ Avini.

⁹⁶ Avini.

⁹⁷ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 9, “Hozur-ol-Hāzer,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

⁹⁸ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 8, “Sarbāzān-e-Emām-Zamān,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

⁹⁹ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 2, episode 4, “Che Kasi az Jang Khaste Shode Ast?,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf2.aspx.

¹⁰⁰ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 4, “Do Sāl Qabl” va “Bā Shirmardān-e-Havāniruz,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

¹⁰¹ Avini, “Pātok.”

¹⁰² *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 6, “Tajdid-e-Payman,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

and they also ask him for help in the victory.¹⁰³ It is noteworthy that they are not emulating Imam Husayn directly. Rather, they are identified as followers of Imam Husayn. Soldiers feel that they are in the seventh-century Karbala. When Avini declares that “Every day is Ashura,” he means the time has not passed since Ashura,¹⁰⁴ because the mission of overthrowing tyranny had not been fulfilled. So now, when this unfulfilled goal could be realized, is a critical moment of history. The time of providence is now about to flow again, and the soldiers have the great duty of realizing history. They are to emulate Abbas ibn Ali, a brother of Imam Husayn well known for his loyalty to his brother, who lost his arms before his martyrdom,¹⁰⁵ or Qasim ibn Hasan, a nephew of Husayn,¹⁰⁶ both of whom were killed during the battle of Karbala. This group is then operated by a military culture of unquestioning obedience to the order of the leader, Ruhollah Khomeini. In an interview with Avini, a soldier is asked what his wishes are. “Before thinking, he replies, ‘freedom of Palestine’ and adds ‘everything that the imam says. Khomeini is a surrogate for the Hidden Imam and we are obedient to him.’”¹⁰⁷ So, the authority of Khomeini is based on the line of command connecting God, the Messenger, and the Imams. With the halo of his predecessors, Khomeini wields absolute control of men. Avini adds the “*Basiji* doesn’t allow himself to have another wish other than the one that the leader wants.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Avini, “Hozur.”

¹⁰⁴ Avini, “Sarbāzān.”

¹⁰⁵ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 2, episode 10, “Hanābandān,” directed, written, and narrated by Moretza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf2.aspx.

¹⁰⁶ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 3, episode 1, “Qāsem,” directed, written, and narrated by Moretza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf3.aspx.

¹⁰⁷ Avini, “Delbākhteh.”

¹⁰⁸ Avini.

As a cost of the fraternal community, family is destroyed. Male members of a family are subsumed into the fraternal community. Avini illustrates thus: “Three generations are beside each other. A father, a son, and a kid hold the weight of responsibility of a grand movement making our future bright.”¹⁰⁹ There, young men play the major role, while old men play the subsidiary role. In an imaginary letter written by a soldier to his parents, the soldier shares his willingness to enter the road of martyrdom with his father, wishing that his father could come to the battlefield as well, and asking if his father “doesn’t have the wish of being in the desert of Karbala.”¹¹⁰ But due to his senility, the father cannot join the battle. The father is depicted as a hard-handed worker who has taught the lessons of thrift and diligence, but he does not seem to be respected by his son due to his absence from the war. Rather, the son tries to teach his father a lesson. The absence of the role of the patriarch is more conspicuous in the episode in which the life of a small village called Darreh Bid in Isfahan province is depicted.¹¹¹ There, an old man who seems to be in his sixties works hard to collect syrup from trees and flowers to make honey. His life is destitute, but he saves money to donate to the soldiers. The patriarch does not play the role of breadwinner. While men are able to love and be loved, their love is only for God, not for their children or wives. Instead, men

¹⁰⁹ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

¹¹⁰ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 1, episode 11, “Rāh-e-Qods az Karbalā,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf1.aspx.

¹¹¹ *Ravayat-e-Fath*, Season 2, episode 2, “Āqa-e-Said: Rezq-e-Halāl, Dareh-Bid,” directed, written, and narrated by Morteza Avini, aired 1365/1986–1987, on IRIB1, http://www.aviny.com/clip/Defae_moghadas/Aviny/revayat-fath/rf2.aspx.

abandon their families, because “To go to Karbala, you should free yourself from every heavy and remaining connection.”¹¹²

The role of the mother also faces minimization. While the role of mothers is praised in figurative ways as the “beating heart that allows patient, resistant, and loyal blood of grand people to flow,”¹¹³ it only persists as the bearer of future martyrs, losing the role of caregiver. The role of the caregiver is reserved for the Islamic regime. The narration, “The future is in the hands of these children who are shouting the slogan ‘Fight, fight till victory’ along with the travelers of Karbala”¹¹⁴ is read over a scene in which children are standing behind the fence of a kindergarten, implying that the state is playing a caretaker. This is more explicit in the narration, “Our kids of today are grown in the demonstration, *hayat*, and *rowzehkhan*. They suck the milk of mother mixed with the tears of Husayn, and love of Husayn is mixed into the soul.”¹¹⁵ Bereft of the role of a breeder, women are given two tasks: first, cheering on the men, and second, maintaining their chastity. Men march through the streets valorously and women cheer them on, chanting “The army of the *mahdi* is coming.”¹¹⁶ A middle-aged woman in an interview abstains from exclusively keeping her son in her family.¹¹⁷ She keeps herself away from emotional attachment to her child and communizes her son for the greater cause. To the question of whether it is not sad to let them go, she answers that she would kiss their feet since it is their responsibility to go.¹¹⁸ The

¹¹² Avini, “Tajdid.”

¹¹³ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

¹¹⁴ Avini, “Hozur.”

¹¹⁵ Avini.

¹¹⁶ Avini, “‘Oruj.”

¹¹⁷ Avini.

¹¹⁸ Avini.

second task of women is to protect their chastity. Chastity is praised as highly as a counterpart of martyrdom. When asked about her thoughts about the duty of “sisters” after “brothers” are gone to the front, a young woman answers, “Sisters can better preserve the shelter behind the front with their hijabs.”¹¹⁹ This can be understood to mean that women are joining a “sacred defense” in cultural terms, in contrast to men, who are performing war in material terms. In this way, hijab is promoted as “the most important shelter that sisters should keep,” and it is “more powerful(*koobandeh*) than the blood of brothers.”¹²⁰ Chastity is praised as “holy privacy, through which the children of the Abrahamic community of present and future can go to heaven.”¹²¹ In less florid language, chastity is to “preserve the respect for the blood of the people of Karbala.”¹²² It is intended to keep women from betraying their present or future husbands while they are gone to war.

Zaynab and Fatimah, who have activist implications in Shariati’s discourse, lose their symbolic power in Avini’s discourse due to his sole focus on the fraternal community. In an imaginary letter to his mother, a soldier reminds his mother of the “salty tears that [she] has shed for the loneliness of Zaynab,” which would connect the soldier with the affection of Husayn when combined with her milk.¹²³ Here, the mother is considered empathetic to Zaynab, not in terms of Zaynab’s active role of propagating the legacy of Imam Husayn, but as one who was left alone after the martyrdom of Husayn and his people. Avini’s interpretation of Zaynab is a woman, who is lonely and mournful after the death of her family.

¹¹⁹ Avini, “Hozur.”

¹²⁰ Avini.

¹²¹ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

¹²² Avini, “Hozur.”

¹²³ Avini, “Rāh.”

While “shouting ‘Oh, Fatimah, Oh, Zahra’ is considered to be the secret words of victory,”¹²⁴ and the simple meal at the frontline consisting of dry bread, cheese, and dates is called the *sofreh* of Zahra,¹²⁵ their meanings are not explicated, and neither men nor women are identified with female Islamic figures. Women would never get to the battlefield, a place of test where “[soldiers] should swear to God that their eagerness to confront the enemy is greater than the enemy’s eagerness to run away.”¹²⁶ Women in the discourse of Avini are passive awaiters of men.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

¹²⁵ Avini, “Rāh.”

¹²⁶ Avini, “Ziyāfat.”

¹²⁷ Torab reports simillar account of Fatimah’s representation as “the paragon of sexual purity” and deminishes her significance as “sole link between the Prophet and his male successors” in postwar martyrdom rituals. See Torab, *Performing Islam*, 156.

III. Discussing Iranian Masculinity

The scholarship on masculinity has merit in its availability to observe reciprocal relationships between men and women by relativizing masculinity as a social and historical construct. Masculinity studies emerged as a criticism of previous gender studies, which have focused on the prolonged patriarchal domination inflicted over women, leaving men undifferentiated and static. One can easily observe the same tendency in Iranian scholarship on gender. For example, Torab considered martyrdom rituals as another social apparatus to maintain patrilinealism and the legitimacy of the male-centered rule of law inherited from the Pahlavi Dynasty.¹²⁸ However, in the previous chapter, we saw the changing nature of masculinity in martyrdom discourses. Similarly, Janet Afary criticizes Shariati's views of gender for falling short of the full emancipation of women because it does not "interfere with [women's] responsibility as a wife or mother" and attributes this shortcoming to a conservative audience in Iran, rather than delving into Shariati's self-perception as a man and considering this as a starting point of his view toward women.¹²⁹ She considers both secular-leftist men and Islamist men to have identical transgenerational social and familial expectations.¹³⁰ In the previous

¹²⁸ Torab, 167.

¹²⁹ Afary, *Sexual Politics of Modern Iran*. 241-44. There are recent trials to reread the Iranian thinkers by juxtaposing their works with their personal lives. Most recently, Hamid Dabashi, in his recent biography of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, he proposes new readings of Ahmad's controversial book, *Sangi bar Guri (A Tombstone)*, which has been criticized as exemplifying misogynic view of Ahmad. Dabashi proposes that the book was in fact Ahmad's autobiographical account of self-reproachment and self-confession due to his failure to fulfill his wife's willingness to become a mother due to his impotency. Dabashi proposes that Ahmad's relationship with his wife was a companionate one transcending traditional gender roles. See Hamid Dabashi, *The Last Muslim Intellectual: The Life and Legacy of Jalal Al-e Ahmad* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 68-88.

¹³⁰ Afary, *Sexual Politics of Modern Iran*, 282.

chapter, we observed that Shariati's perception of women cannot be fully understood without his embedded perception of masculinity.

This research neither tries to justify nor reject the existence of the patriarchal domination of women. Representing victims of Iranian patriarchal domination, Iranian feminist scholars were naturally inclined to focus on the delayed emancipation of women caused by multiple factions of men. However, critique of patriarchy devoid of an in-depth explanation of its social and political orientation has made feminism appear as an ideological weapon attacking men, solely serving women's interests instead of emancipatory theory for both men and women seeking to usurp patriarchal domination. Therefore, the study of masculinity has its value in terms of scrutinizing the different socio-political backgrounds of multiple masculinities that share the same symptomatic behavior of inclination toward subordination of women and prescribing tailored measures toward gender justice without unnecessary antipathy, in addition to its academic contribution to the broader gender studies.

In 1987, Rawyen Connell prominently introduced the concept of multiple masculinities to the field of gender studies and distinguished hegemonic masculinity from its subordinated and marginalized counterparts.¹³¹ The pluralizing of masculinity has not only allowed analysis of relations within and differences between men, but it has also affected the scholarship of history, giving birth to the history of masculinity in late 1980s.¹³² However, there has been too

¹³¹ R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Sydney Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

¹³² John Tosh, "The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?" in *What is Masculinity: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to Contemporary World*, eds, John H.

much focus on molecular representations of masculinity in cultural works (i.e. novels or movies) of specific time and place and those studies failed to link their findings to the broader picture of gender dynamics.¹³³ Masculinity studies in the Iranian context have had similar tendencies and the works on the history of masculinity, which encompass its relation to femininity and avoid redundancy with patriarchal historiography assuming genderless “man” as its subject, have been rare. However, Afsaneh Najmabadi and Minoou Moallem, this chapter argues, are two scholars who have fulfilled this goal and contributed to the study of modern Iranian masculinity, although they do not define their works as pertaining to the history of masculinity. This chapter discusses Shariati and Avini through the theoretical lens of Najmabadi and Moallem’s work while simultaneously critiquing their limitations and presenting new findings.

Najmabadi famously portrayed the process of heteronormalization by the modernist project of national subject construction that took place between the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.¹³⁴ With heteronormalizing modernization, men had to transform their homoerotic bonds into “asexual sentiment among citizen-brothers” and patriotic national camaraderie surrounding feminized *vatan*.¹³⁵ Concurrently, wives shifted from the tools for begetting offspring in homoerotic society to companionate partner that could support male patriots, raise modern citizens, and maintain affectionate relationship with male counterparts.¹³⁶ Women had to voluntarily accept these new roles and desire

Arnold and Sean Brady (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17.

¹³³ Tosh, 22-32.

¹³⁴ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*.

¹³⁵ Najmabadi, 147.

¹³⁶ Najmabadi, 159.

marriage with male citizens to prove their patriotism and become female citizens.¹³⁷ Proper masculinity accordingly meant being “the loyal and caring husband.”¹³⁸ This replaced the statist discourse of masculine authority, which dates back to the early twentieth century.¹³⁹ In previous statist and militarist discourses, the Shah—as the head of coercive patriarchy—controlled and prescribed what was good for men and women in public spaces.¹⁴⁰

Focusing on revolutionary and post-revolutionary contexts in the mid-twentieth century, Moallem prominently evaluated how men whose masculinity had previously been marginalized due to secular and Western modernization utilized the martyrdom discourse as a religio-cultural resource to remasculinize themselves by becoming a legitimate male citizens of the modern nation-state just like the West-educated intellectuals.¹⁴¹ She contested that the images of the warrior brother and the veiled sister were juxtaposed to evoke “persistent militancy, political awareness, and ethno-religious pride” throughout the post-revolutionary era and the Iran-Iraq War in particular.¹⁴² According to her, this image contributed to the institutionalization of heteronormativity in Iran and the degradation of women as domesticated objects short of public subjects, who are generally considered as family members of males rather than individuals.¹⁴³ Following her general argument that “Islamic fundamentalism” is the modern revival of tradition, she argued that traditional masculine gender norms were reactivated along with the

¹³⁷ Najmabadi, 166-67.

¹³⁸ Balslev, *Iranian Masculinities*, 204.

¹³⁹ Najmabadi, 128.

¹⁴⁰ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 65-67.

¹⁴¹ Moallem, 103; 111.

¹⁴² Moallem, 107.

¹⁴³ Moallem, 109; 113.

modern male biases.¹⁴⁴ To sum up, Najmabadi dealt with the rise of women and the formation of female *vatan* in place of the statist concept of paternalistic homeland alongside the modern project of heteronormalization. In contrast, Moallem dealt with the Islamist instrumentation of women during the contestation of masculinities.

Reaffirming Moallem's argument, the grand narrative of martyrdom—in which warrior-men, as protagonists, face an evil enemy—contributes to reproducing male-centrism. Building on her observation centered on power dynamics between multiple models of masculinity and its implications for women, this research has illuminated that what specifically constitutes “warrior men” and their counterparts has actually changed, contingent on its interpreters upon closer looks.

Referring to Najmabadi's research, one can discover that Shariati, following the tradition of anti-state nationalist discourse, countered the discourse of public patriarchy by accentuating citizenship and citizens' voluntarist role for nation. He tried to construct a heterosocial society in which a woman's role was to support men. As the previous chapter showed, Shariati reinterpreted the family metaphor of nationalism through Islamic symbolic resources so that his discourse could boost civic nationalism, mobilizing the people to create a better society. While Shariati does not use the word *vatan* in his discourse, it is highly probable that his political discourse shares the imagination of *vatan*, or homeland, as a national community to which one should contribute as a citizen, especially in the

¹⁴⁴ Moallem, 97.

context of domestic political protests. *Vatan* was imagined as a female body with clear borders within which national brothers and sisters resided.¹⁴⁵ Iran was described as “a female body to love and possess, to protect and defend, to fight and die for (...), and this was a central trope of a discourse that produced gendered notions of nation and modern citizenship,” not ancillary to nationalist discourses.¹⁴⁶ In secular nationalist discourses, an “honest, secular, selfless family man who will sacrifice himself for the protection of the mother country” was considered normative masculinity.¹⁴⁷

In addition to the resemblance of Shariati’s preferred masculinity to such normative masculinity, his emphasis on independent thinking particularly echoes the central place of the value of liberty in the formation of affection among brother-citizens of *vatan*.¹⁴⁸ Shariati’s construction of the exemplary Muslim family, which we have dealt in the beginning of the last chapter, also resembles the narrative of national family where brothers and sisters collaborate to defend their sick mother in the *vatan* discourse, and the idea that the family is the fundamental unit constituting a country.¹⁴⁹ Overall, the protagonists of *vatan* were also primarily men, and women would have served the roles of “mothers and teachers of sons of the country,” which entailed the need to educate women in modern ways.¹⁵⁰ Among the new models of women in the modern era were “the well-educated mother, the companionate wife, the capable professional woman, (...) the sacrificing nationalist heroine, the selfless comrade,” and many of them can also be

¹⁴⁵ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 98.

¹⁴⁶ Najmabadi, 106.

¹⁴⁷ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 72.

¹⁴⁸ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 115.

¹⁴⁹ Najmabadi, 195.

¹⁵⁰ Najmabadi, 119; 126.

found in Shariati's discourses, which were discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁵¹ Following previous nationalist discourses, Shariati continued the modernist project of integrating women into national life. In particular, his reinterpretation of Islam incorporated many women previously barred from modernization due to their religious background. While Shariati's discourse fell short of the full emancipation of women, it shared this shortcoming with contemporary secular nationalist discourses, which asserted exclusive rights to the modernization of women.

Avini's discourse can be interpreted as having inherited a version of nationalism dominated by a paternalistic state that centers on a hierarchical fraternal community. The intensification of paternalism and state control in religious discourses in the Islamic Republic has been dealt with in other places. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam pointed out how Khomeini turned Shariati's discourse centering on civic responsibility into one centering on the sovereignty and legitimacy of the state.¹⁵² Ali Ansari has also pointed out that the Islamic Republic inherited state-dominated messianic nationalism from the late Pahlavi era.¹⁵³ This chapter argues that the political transitions narrated without gender implications were intricately related to the gender perceptions of the time.

Avini's discourse centers on the homosocial fraternal community. It envisions a completed usurpation of traditional patriarchy and its transition into public patriarchy based on the unity and self-sufficiency of men. As the previous chapter showed, the community, detached from family, features expansionism and

¹⁵¹ Najmabadi, 154.

¹⁵² Adib-Moghaddam, *Psycho-Nationalism*.

¹⁵³ Ali M Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

militarism based on a sense of shared communal history and destiny, which are suggestive of ethnic nationalism. The general tendency of women to ascend as a men's partners, even though subsidiary, was now being revoked. One would naturally presume that women were relegated back into the reproductive machine, losing the role of educator and nurturer. Indeed, as the chapter on Avini's martyrdom discourse showed, the mother's milk that would "nourish her children with knowledge, expertise, and love of *vatan*," was now enmixed with Husayn's tear, losing its monopolies on the roles of educator and nurturer.¹⁵⁴

Pointing to the replacement of heterosociality with homosociality, one might suspect that the modern project of heteronormalization had been revoked. This was also the case with Moallem. Referring to visual and textual representations of the Iran-Iraq War, full of the theme of love, she suspected that the war front became a "homosocial and homoerotic world for warrior men."¹⁵⁵ One should not, however, consider "homosexuality as a consequence of gender segregation."¹⁵⁶ The trend of heteronormalization shown in Shariati's discourse continues in Avini's discourse. Post-revolutionary statist gender perceptions hardly constitute a return to pre-modern times but rather a new form of hybrid modernity propagated by the newly created modern nation-state.

The previous chapter explicated how the homosociality of the war front was cleansed of any trace of homoeroticism. In Avini's discourse, there were many *Sufi* themes, but all homoerotic undertones had been purged. This trend started in the nineteenth century, when the *Sufi* community started to be pictured as a

¹⁵⁴ Najmabadi 126.

¹⁵⁵ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 115-17.

¹⁵⁶ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 240.

“homosocial community yearning for union with the divine” detaching themselves from “female” seduction, shedding its previous image as a homoerotic community.¹⁵⁷ Through a modernization project, homoerotic *Sufi* love was already amended to a purely platonic divine love compatible with heterosexuality and thus a feminized homeland.¹⁵⁸ In Avini’s discourse, every form of love is free of homosexual undertones. *Shahid*, which previously referred to a beautiful and young boy who was a witness of divine love, no longer bore any homoerotic undertones.¹⁵⁹ By televising it in this way, Avini ensured that no homosexual acts were conducted on the homosexuality-prone war front, and that it was only filled with the love of God. He also openly called for love from viewers toward the soldiers, which could have been seen as a sign of weakness and unmanliness in a homosexual culture; adult men should be the ones who give love, as a penetrators, rather than the ones who are being loved.¹⁶⁰ Openly asking for love from the viewers showed his confidence that no one would perceive it as a sign of homosexuality in an already heteronormalized society. Just as Iranian intellectuals defended their “sexual normalcy” from the gaze of Western travelers by differentiating homosociality from homosexuality in the previous century, Avini demonstrated the non-homoeroticism of the soldiers by opening up the war front that had previously been hidden from public view.¹⁶¹

The war front was only supposed to be filled with patriotic brotherhood infused with divine love, and it was to be looked upon as such by others. In this

¹⁵⁷ Najmabadi, 45.

¹⁵⁸ Najmabadi, 113.

¹⁵⁹ Najmabadi, 22.

¹⁶⁰ Najmabadi, 15-16.

¹⁶¹ Najmabadi, 38.

way, maintaining homosociality became a strong marker of manliness. To become manly, men should transcend anything private, including women and their families, and even their own lives. With this extreme subjectivity, martyrs could rise as hegemonic models of the masculinity of the time.¹⁶² However, with the rise of such masculinity, romantic love and partnership between men and women were no longer considered patriotic and social labors.¹⁶³ The resultant danger of homoeroticism was shunned by adventurous behavior outward the community; it hindered the focus on inner community caretaking, which could lead to homoeroticism. The aggressive adventurism aimed at the liberation of Palestine resulted in the disruption of Iran as a *vatan* and of citizenship based on the concept of a matriotic homeland.

Some parts of Shariati's and Avini's discourses mark a definitive departure from previous nationalist discourses, especially in terms of male control of female sexuality and women's agency. When we focus too much on the power struggles among masculinities and the continuous subordination of women to hegemonic masculinity, which is a tendency in masculinity studies, we are prone to miss women's role in the struggle and subtle differences between the models of masculinity and the implications of these differences on women.

Interestingly, one can observe the gradual elimination of male responsibility as a protector and educator of women in Shariati's and Avini's discourses. Even though women were required to maintain chastity, it is conspicuous that it was solely women's responsibility to maintain chastity. Women

¹⁶² Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 88-89.

¹⁶³ Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 180.

were expected to actively protect and regulate themselves rather than being protected and regulated by men. The central nationalistic trope of *vatan* as a female body was predicated on the theme of “control and protection of women’s sexuality by brothers’ responsibility to take care of sisters’ honor and well-being.”¹⁶⁴ In a larger context, the central trope of non-Western colonial masculinity has been considered a sense of inferiority and vengefulness against Western men who would disgrace their women.¹⁶⁵ This trope was frequently utilized to mobilize men and imbue them with patriotic feelings out of their responsibility as patriarchs to regulate women’s sexuality and protect the honor of their women, in addition to their own. As we saw in the first chapter, Iranian intellectuals have also frequently utilized such tropes since the early twentieth century, revering male responsibility as guardians of women. For example, “The Story of the Daughters of Quchan,” recounts how in the early twentieth century, “Iranian” girls were supposedly sold to foreigners in a desperation, marking the definitive moment when the masculine duty to protect their women and children came to the forefront of national mobilization.¹⁶⁶

Surprisingly, such male obligations cannot be found in Avini’s wartime account. It marks a departure from the narrative of the statist discourse of nationalism in which the father-state should protect mother-nation.¹⁶⁷ In contrast to the conventional thinking that patriarchal preoccupation with controlling women’s sexuality became more severe and explicit in religious discourses compared to

¹⁶⁴ Najmabadi, 115; 125.

¹⁶⁵ Enloe, “Nationalism and Masculinity.”

¹⁶⁶ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *The Story of the Daughters of Quchan: Gender and National Memory in Iranian History* (Syracuse University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁷ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 64.

secular discourses before, even with the extension of statist paternalism and against the background of foreign invasion, men were not designated as protectors or educators of women. The official appellation of the Iran-Iraq War as a “holy defense” did not refer to the protection of female *vatan*. Women were still recognized as arbitrators and protectors of their own sexuality and fate. This chapter does not try to argue that men did not intend to control women’s sexuality; rather it highlights how they opted for indirect strategies whereby women would thankfully follow what had been prescribed for them by men, and how the masculine role of protector of women faded.

So how can we explain this transition? The most probable reason is that Iranian women had actually done something more than what men expected them to do behind the curtain of masculine political and cultural representation. Iranian women, rather than passively watching men in public spaces, took part in the revolutionary movement and the war in a way that challenged traditional gender roles. There were women who could openly reject their domestic duties, such as getting married and managing a family, by participating in militaristic revolutionary guerrilla organizations.¹⁶⁸ During the Iran-Iraq War, many women played active military roles—executing operations, training soldiers, and providing logistical and medical supports.¹⁶⁹ Representing the mainstream historiography of women, Moallem regrets that the veiled sisters, who had participated in the revolution alongside their warrior brothers, with their hijabs signifying the “Islamic embodiment of divine womanhood,” were re-domesticated, and the veil became a

¹⁶⁸ Moallem, 79.

¹⁶⁹ Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh, *Iranian Women and Gender in the Iran-Iraq War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2021).

tool with which to bind them when the revolution ended.¹⁷⁰ In-depth studies of changes in religious masculinity, however, have found that women did not return to their original places emptyhanded. They induced changes in masculinity, in addition to constructing their own public spaces.

¹⁷⁰ Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother*, 108-12.

IV. Conclusion

This research has reaffirmed the observation of previous studies that the grand narrative of martyrdom, where warrior-men, as protagonists, face an evil enemy, contributes to reproducing male-centrism. Upon a closer look, however, this research has illuminated that what specifically constitute “warrior-men” may vary, contingent on its interpreters. Shariati, based on the divisive nature of men, tries to construct a heterosocial society, in which women play roles supportive to men. By re-interpreting the family metaphor of nationalism through Islamic symbolic resources, Shariati’s discourse could boost civic nationalism, mobilizing the people to make a better society. However, his intention to maintain intact the social structure makes the full-fledged emancipation of women improbable, even though he tries to debunk traditional patriarchy by accentuating individual agency and intellectualism. In contrast, Avini’s discourse centers on the homosocial fraternal community. Detached from family, the community features expansionism and militarism, based on a sense of shared communal history and destiny. This research situates these findings in line with previous nationalist discourses. Shariati, following the tradition of anti-state nationalist discourse, countered the discourse of public patriarchy by accentuating citizenship and the voluntarist role of citizens, both male, and female, for the nation. Avini, on the other hand, inherited a gender perspective of statist nationalism centered on a hierarchical fraternal community. Both discourses, however, showed continued male dominance in the modern project of heteronormalization in Iranian society. On the other hand, both discourses mark a definite departure from previous nationalist discourses by eliminating male responsibility as a protector and educator of women.

The track of change that modern Iranian masculinity has undergone is not identical to its Western counterpart. Just as Islamic revolutionary ideology is an amalgamation of Western ideology with local cultural dialects,¹⁷¹ the associated femininity-construction after the revolution was a complicated battleground between and among patriarchy, global feminism, and local women's agency.¹⁷² However, the masculinity associated with Islamic revolutionary discourses has not been sufficiently dealt with in this regard. This research has tried to contribute to the topic by discussing masculinity in the context of key topics such as traditional and public patriarchy, nationalism, homo- and hetero-sociality, fraternal community, and femininity. Illuminating masculinity in a historical context can provide a fuller picture of the association of modernity questions with gender politics. At least from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the constitution of the modern self has been associated with the political and social issues of religion, nationalism, and gender and it is impossible to detach one from another.

This research hopes to provide a guide to understanding the complicated issues of gender and sexuality in Iran. In addition to the century-old issue of women's rights, many observers of post-war Iran have warned of the catastrophic consequences of suppressed sexuality in Iran. The intensification of homosociality resulted in the construction of dual-public spaces, divided between men and

¹⁷¹ Kamran Matin, "Decoding Political Islam: Uneven and Combined Development and Ali Shariati's Political Thought," in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity*, ed. Robbie Shilliam (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 108–24.

¹⁷² Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 118–62; Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 113–58.

women, with their communications obstructed.¹⁷³ Instead of learning how to properly relate to each other in public and private spaces, young men and women have either searched for ways to escape state surveillance or fully accept the statist patriarchal view of gender and become ultra-conservative to an extent that surprises the older generations.¹⁷⁴ By focusing more on the topic of masculinity, this research intends to systemically tackle the intricately related issues of nationalism, religion, and gender, rather than stating that a part of the population embodies “toxic masculinity.” Among the first generation of Iranian feminists, Bibi Khanum Astarabadi, as early as the late nineteenth century, assumed a critical approach to masculinity, pointing to the co-constitutive nature of femininity and masculinity.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Islamic ontology also does separate men from women, although there is a distinction in terms of the natural predisposition of reason (*‘aql*) and desire (*nafs*) in the Iranian context.¹⁷⁶

In recent years, a number of studies on Iranian masculinity have been conducted, many of which have focused on the cultural representation of Iranian men in Iranian cinema and novels.¹⁷⁷ Rather than drawing a map of masculinities at a specific time and place, this research tries to take a longitudinal approach focusing on one specific model of masculinity. By avoiding the prevalent molecular approach that distinguishes masculinities into specific models, this approach can show the fluidity of masculinity in different times and spaces. This

¹⁷³ Nazanin Shahrokni, *Women in Place: The Politics of Gender Segregation in Iran* (Oakland: The University of California Press, 2020).

¹⁷⁴ Varzi, *Warring Souls*; Bajoghli, *Iran Reframed*.

¹⁷⁵ Najmabadi, “Veiled Discourse.”

¹⁷⁶ Gi yeon Koo, “Making Their Own Public: Emotion and Self among the Privileged Iranian Youth” (PhD Diss., Seoul National University, 2013), 47.

¹⁷⁷ Mostafa Abedinifard and Sahar Allamezade-Jones, “Preface: Iranian Masculinities,” *Iran Namag* 3, no. 1 (2018): IV–XXIV.

thesis may be judged to lack theoretical implications for masculinity or the historiography of the history of gender in general. However, further comparative and theoretical studies on masculinity can establish masculinity as an effective lens through which one can observe the construction of local modernity in a non-Western context.

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Abstract in Korean

본 연구는 이란의 종교적 민족주의에 나타나는 남성성의 변화를 분석함으로써 근대적 주체성이 형성되는 역동적인 과정을 파악하고자 한다. 특히 본 연구는 이란의 문화 사상가 알리 샤리아티(1933-1977)와 모르테자 아비니(1947-1993)의 저작을 중심으로 20세기 중반 이후 이란의 ‘순교’ 사상에 담긴 남성성의 변화를 추적한다. 두 사상가는 공통적으로 종교적 전통의 재해석함으로써 정치적인 변화를 모색하였다. 전자는 1979년 이란 혁명 이전 시기에 책, 논문, 연설 등을 통하여 이슬람을 혁명 이데올로기로 재해석하였고, 후자는 이란-이라크 전쟁 중 다큐멘터리 감독으로서 영상 매체를 통해 혁명 이데올로기를 통치이념화 하는데 결정적인 역할을 하였다. 이란사의 남성중심주의와 가부장적 종교 해석을 다룬 선행연구들은 ‘순교자’ 모델이 현대 이란의 남성중심주의와 가부장적 특성을 대표한다고 파악해왔다. 하지만 본 연구는 앞선 연구들이 다원적 이슬람 여성성과 다르게 ‘이슬람적 남성성’을 정적이고 단일한 것으로 여겨왔다는 측면에서 문제가 있다고 주장한다. 본 연구는 알리 샤리아티의 저작으로부터 발견되는 남성성이 모르테자 아비니의 시기에 이르러 어떻게 변화하는지를 추적하였으며, 규범적 이슬람 남성성이 자발적 사고에 기반한 가족 기반의 남성에서 자기충족적, 위계적 남성 공동체 속의 개인으로 변모하였음을 주장한다. 구체적으로 본 연구는 샤리아티의 이상적 무슬림 가족관을 통해 그의 젠더관을 이해한다. 그는 알리 이븐 아비 탈리브, 파티마 자흐라, 하산과 후세인, 자이납으로 이루어진 이상적 무슬림 가족을 상상하는데, 특히 그는 후세인이 순교자로서 보이는 영웅적 남성성을 규범적 이슬람 남성성으로 제시한다. 해당 남성성 모델은 자기주도성과 자발성을 특징으로 하며 함자 이븐 압둘 탈립(무하마드의 친척이자 제자)이 담지한 전통적 장사(葬師) 남성성과 대조된다. 그의 젠더관에서 가족의 여성 구성원들은 자발성과 지성에 기반하여 전달자, 양육자, 교육자의 역할을 수행하고, 이를 통해 남성 구성원들

을 보조한다. 반면 아비니의 젠더관은 군인들로 이루어진 남성 공동체를 중심으로 하며, 이 속에서 남성들은 지도자를 중심으로 군대적 질서를 형성하고 여성들의 도움없이 자족을 유지한다. 이러한 변화 속에서 여성은 양육자와 교육자의 역할을 잃고 순교자를 재생산하는 역할만을 담당한다. 본 연구는 또한 이러한 발견을 이전시기 민족주의 담론의 젠더관과 연관지어 이해하고자 한다. 샤리아티는 반국가 시민 민족주의 담론의 전통을 따라 남성-여성 시민 모두의 시민성과 자발적 역할 수행을 강조하였다. 반면 아비니는 위계적 남성 공동체를 중심으로 하는 국가주의적 민족주의의 젠더관을 계승하였다. 하지만 두 담론은 공통적으로 이성애 규범화(heteronormalization)와 이 속에서 남성의 우월을 유지하는 근대적 흐름을 벗어나지 않는다. 그러나 두 담론은 공통적으로 여성의 보호자 혹은 교육자로서의 남성 책임을 제거함으로써 선행 민족주의 담론들과 차이를 보인다. 따라서 본 연구는 이슬람주의의 젠더관을 반동적이라고 일반화하는 기존의 이해를 거부하며, 이슬람주의의 다양성과 혼합적 특징(hybridity)을 이해할 필요를 역설한다. 결론적으로 본 연구는 이란 남성성을 이란 사회에서 벌어지는 세속적 자유주의, 보수주의, 이슬람주의의 경합과 혼합을 관찰할 수 있는 프리즘으로 사용할 수 있음을 제시한다.