



Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah

Baqer Moin

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The Ayatollah Khomeini was the most radical Muslim leader of this age. In transforming himself from a traditional Muslim theologian into the charismatic Iranian ruler who took on the world, Khomeini launched an Islamic revival movement that, with the collapse of communism, quickly evolved for some as the centre-piece in the pantheon of western demonology, and for others as the inspiration for spiritual and political rebirth. Whether viewed as a hero by his supporters or as a villain by his enemies, Khomeini was undoubtedly one of the seminal figures of the twentieth century, whose influence will extend some way into the new millennium.

Baqer Moin here explores how and why this frail octogenarian, dressed in the traditional robes of a Muslim cleric, overthrew the secular Shah of Iran and became the spiritual leader of a new and militant Islamic regime. Still an enigma in the West, Khomeini transformed the Middle East and the world. But where did the man come from? What was his childhood and family background? What lay behind his implacable opposition to the Shah? What role did the turbulent events in Iran during his youth play in shaping Khomeini's political perceptions? What changed him from an obscure traditional theologian with mystical and poetic inclinations into a combative and highly vengeful radical? How will his vision of an international community of Muslims, a kind of Islamic Internationale, affect the Middle East?

Drawing on many exclusive personal interviews with Khomeini's associates, on unpublished new materials and on the author's firsthand experience in Islamic seminaries, this biography provides a fascinating, well-documented and highly accessible analysis of the life and thought of one of the most controversial leaders of the late twentieth century.

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