

Many books and articles have been published in European languages on the political career of Ayatollah Khomeini (1902-1989), and on his Islamic movement, which transformed Iran from a monarchy to an Islamic Republic on April 1st, 1979. There has been much less research, especially in the West, on another essential aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini: the role of mysticism in his life. Even fewer studies have been conducted on his poems, yet these represent unique self-documentation, giving a window into his personal thoughts and mystical aspirations.

To my knowledge, the first Western scholar to draw attention to Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism was Hamid Algar, in his *Islam and Revolution*, in 1981. While focusing on his political career through translations of his most important public speeches, Hamid Algar highlights the mystical aspect of Ayatollah Khomeini's character in this book by translating various mystical lectures by Ayatollah Khomeini, such as his TV appearances in 1979 and 1980, in which he interpreted a Koranic verse from a mystical point of view. In 1988, the same author wrote an article entitled "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1962: The Pre-Revolutionary Years" to Ayatollah Khomeini's early mysticism.

In 1992, Alexander Knysh published "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," an article in which he tried to demonstrate that Ayatollah Khomeini's worldview was intertwined with Islamic mystico-philosophical thinking (*'erfân*). A couple of years later, Yahya Bonaud published a scholarly work focused primarily on Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism, under the title *L'Imam Khomeiny, un Gnostique Méconnu du XXe siècle*. In 1999, Johan ter Haar tried to make a connection between Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism and his interpretation of political leadership in his article "Heiligheid en Politiek Gezag; Het Begrip Wilāyat in de Optiek van Khumayni" (Sanctity and Political Authority: the Concept of Wilāyat in Khomeini's View). In 2000, Vanessa Martin published *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*. The book offers ample information on Ayatollah Khomeini's political activities and ideology. Also, it provides the reader with abundant information on how his political views were influenced by mystical thoughts. In the context of the relationship between mysticism and a cleric's life, Roy Mottahedeh's *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (2009) is worth reading as the book demonstrates the place of mystical philosophy in the orthodox Shiite milieu of Iran. Although some of these works, such as Mottahedeh's book, present interesting thoughts on Ayatollah Khomeini's mysticism and its influence on his political career, they do not deal with Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, although poetry had an important role in his private life and gives insights into his approach to mysticism and to orthodox Shiite doctrines.

While it is about 35 years since the world was first introduced to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, surprisingly few Western studies have been conducted on these highly personal documents, which provide access to a side of his character that was heavily influenced by mystical thoughts. To my knowledge, the first Western scholarly response to Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry came from Finn Thiesen in 1991, with a translation of eight of his lyrical poems in his article, "A Draught of Love: A translation of Rūḥollāh Xomeini's Sabū ye 'Ešq." William Hanaway translated and interpreted five of Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical *ghazals*. In 1999, Baqer Moin responded to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry, adopting some of his lyrics and trying to demonstrate the importance of his poetry "because it shows how deeply his mysticism is enshrined in his own world of personal experience." Baqer Moin admits the importance of exploring all aspects of Ayatollah Khomeini's character, the political, the mystical and the jurisprudential, to form a complete image of him. Though Moin refers to these three elements in Ayatollah Khomeini's character, his book contains only a few references to Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry. The first extensive Western study of Ayatollah Khomeini's *Divân* ('collected poetry') was conducted by Benedikt Reinert, with his article "Ḥumainī im Spiegel seiner Gedichte" (2007). In this long article, Reinert comments on a considerable number of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems in three genres: panegyrics, quatrains and lyrical poems. Reinert gives an analysis of various mystical topics in these poems and comments on traces of his socio-political thinking in his poetry. Since Reinert has translated a large number of poems by Ayatollah Khomeini, he is able to detect in them a development of Ayatollah Khomeini's political thoughts. Although Reinert comes to interesting conclusions in his article, many topics in Ayatollah Khomeini's poetry collection need further analysis or have gone unnoticed. In 2011, Asghar Seyed-Gohrab gave an analysis of one of Ayatollah Khomeini's poems, in his "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," focusing on the genre of antinomian mysticism and recently in his book *Martyrdom, Mysticism and Dissent: The Poetry of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)* he analysed Khomeini's poetry in the context of Iran's political relationship with Saudi-Arabia. Lloyd Ridgeon published a short article entitled "Hidden Khomeini: Mysticism and Poetry," in which he responds to both Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical aspirations and his poetic endeavours. It appears that despite these few Western studies on Ayatollah Khomeini's poetic activities, a thorough analysis of his poetry and the mystical and personal thoughts it reflects is still lacking.

This book will explore Ayatollah Khomeini as a mystical poet, a poet who always wished to be part of a millennium-old Islamic mystical tradition. While Ayatollah Khomeini kept his love for mysticism mostly private, it had an enormous impact on his family, religious

and political life. Therefore both his mystical aspiration and his poetic virtuosity must be considered, together with his political ambitions, to form a complete image of Ayatollah Khomeini. The main question of this research is how to interpret Ayatollah Khomeini's mystical poetry. Are these poems the expressions of a convinced mystic, or did he copy this poetic framework for other purposes? Does his early poetry differ from his later work? Is his poetry innovative, or does he confine himself to the classical poetic rules and subject-matters? How does he treat poetic themes and mystical motifs in his poems? How does he adapt them to modern conditions? Do his poems contain personal notes or are they merely poetic constructions without any personal touch? Does his poetry reflect his ideological convictions? How can we connect his poems on wine and love with his public appearance in which he accepted no infringements of Islamic norms? Should they be interpreted literally? And how can we read those poems in which he rejects Islamic institutions, such as the Ka'ba in Mecca? Are such poems related to personal problems he had with Saudi Arabia or are they merely classical metaphors without any personal loading? And finally, how did his followers and opponents respond to his poetry, and why did they respond as they did?