Westerners commonly perceive the Iranian Revolution as an atavistic and xenophobic movement that rejects all things modern and non-Muslim, a view reinforced by the present leaders of Iran. They claim that the revolution spearheads the resurgence of Islam, and that the revolutionary movement is an authentic phenomenon uncorrupted by any alien ideas and inspired solely by the teachings of the Prophet and the Shi’i imams. This conventional wisdom, however, ignores the contributions of ‘Ali Shari’ati, the main ideologue of the Iranian Revolution.

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Ervand Abrahamian "Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," Middle East Report 102 (January/February 1982). The Iranian revolution expresses itself in the language of Islam, that is to say, as a religious movement with a religious leadership, a religiously formulated critique of the old order, and religiously expressed plans for the new. Muslim revolutionaries look to the birth of Islam as their model, and see themselves as engaged in a struggle against paganism, oppression, and empire. But even more importantly he developed the ideology of who would run the Islamic Republic, what form of government it would take. Khomeini believed strongly that Islam required the principle of velayat-e faqih, be applied to government, i.e. that Muslims, in Ali Shariati is widely recognized as the main ideologue of the Iranian revolution. To a reader of his varied works, Shariati presents a very complex and eclectic mix of ideas: traditional Muslim-Shi`a thought, radical Islamic fundamentalism, a mystical Sufi strand, Western existentialism, dialectical Marxism, and anti-imperialism. Importance of activist ideology. Shariati believed that Islamic societies were suffering from internal and external oppression, that revolution was the only alternative left for effecting change, and that ideology was the main tool for mobilizing society. Ideolo...
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