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The Thread Of Mu'awiya: The Making Of A Marja' Taqlid



Synopsis

The marja'at or grand ayatollahs are the scholars who sit at the pinnacle of the Shi'a religious hierarchy. Normally learned and reclusive men, they nonetheless wield enormous authority through their religious prestige and the funds generated by religious taxes. From their modest homes in the Shi'ite shrines cities of Iraq and Iran, their influence reaches across the Shi'a world carried by networks of sons, sons-in-law, students, and local clerics. This book reveals the process by which a handful of religious scholars become recognized as grand ayatollahs, the way their influence is exercised, and how they relate to other Shi'a clerics and to ordinary believers. Based on scores of interviews with Shi'a clerics, this book gives a detailed and human portrait of the inner world of the Shi'ite clerical hierarchy. The late Linda Walbridge was an anthropologist of religion specializing in minorities in the Islamic world. Her other works include *Without Forgetting the Imam: Shi'ism in an American Community*, *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, and *The Christians of Pakistan: The Passion of Bishop John Joseph*.

Book Information

Paperback: 186 pages

Publisher: Ramsay Press, The (January 31, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0615957560

ISBN-13: 978-0615957562

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.4 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #1,287,404 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Shi'ism

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John Walbridge is a Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. He is the author of nine books on Islam and Arabic culture, including four books on Islamic philosophy, including *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism* (2001) and *Suhrawardi: The Philosophy of Illumination* (with Hossein Ziai, 1999).

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