

THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL IN EUROPEAN SHI'ISM



European Shiism is a neglected area of European Islam Studies, which indicates the question to what extent Shiism in Europe represents a particular realm of organization and a particular religiosity. It could be assumed in light of Shiism's eye-catching transnational features, and general findings on European Islam, that border crossing and cross-ethnic organization would be prolific among Shiites in Europe. Exploring British and Dutch cases, however, leaves little room for this notion. When focusing on the ethnic national background of board members of Shiite organizations and on their formal organizational interlocks, ethnically articulate identities come to the fore, particular mixes of which take shape within sub-European frameworks of states. My paper also explores European Shiism from two other perspectives that do, to the contrary, indicate local, European particularity, but in opposed ways. The first angle provides glimpses of Shiite religiosity that point to Western grassroots input for the development of minority jurisprudence and the translation of such universal notions as 'sacrifice' into 'blood donation' within the particular context of British society. The second also illustrates Shiite organisation and religiosity particular to their Western environment, but here, as top-down extensions of non-Western religious authority. Together, these cases indicate three distinct modes of what it means to be Shiite in Europe, and their differences are defined by interlocks with global Shiism.

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