



### Ayatullah Sayyed Hussain Bahr al-Uloom

With the demise of Ayatullah Sayyed Hussain Bahr al-Uloom, on 22 June 2001, Iraq has lost the last in a long line of distinguished senior 'Ulama of the Bahr al-

Uloom family spanning more than two centuries. He was born in 1927 in the holy city of Najaf, in Southern Iraq.

From early childhood Sayyed Hussain followed the well trodden route of the Shi'a 'Ulama, studying theology, Qur'anic and Arabic studies in the established schools of Najaf - the heartbeat of Shi'a Islamic theological training in Iraq - under his father, Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Taqi Bahr al-Uloom.

Later he was taught by, among others, Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Jawahari, whose fate remains unknown since his imprisonment in Iraq in 1980. He then studied with some of the illustrious 'Ulama, such as Ayatullahs Sayyed Muhsin al-Hakim, Sayyed Abualqasim al-Khoei and Sayyed Muhammad Ruhani. After the death of Khoei, he was recognised as a Marja' (spiritual leader) and issued his *Risala al-Amaliyya* ('directives to the faithful').

Sayyed Hussain's distinguished ancestry goes back to the 18th century to Mehdi Bahr al-Uloom, an authority on Islamic jurisprudence. In 1920, Muhammad Ali Bahr al-Uloom, played a major role in the revolt against the British occupation of Iraq, and was expelled from Najaf by the British. Muhammad Saleh Bahr al-Uloom, another family member, was an important intellectual and poet.

After the civil uprisings in Iraq in March 1991 which followed the Gulf War, 18 'Ulama of the Bahr al-Uloom family were arrested, beside 10 other relatives. In that month, more than a hundred 'Ulama from Najaf were arrested whose fate remains unknown.

With the murder of Ayatullah Sayyed Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and his two sons in 1999, official pressure grew on Ayatullah Bahr al-Uloom to become the officially sponsored Marja'. In a defiant, principled stand, he refused, demanding instead the release of the imprisoned colleagues and relatives, the lifting of restrictions on Shi'a Islamic functions and services, and the end of censorship on Shi'a Islamic books and literature. He continued to function as a relatively

low key Marja', preferring his dealings to be direct with people independent of government.

In contrast to his family's tradition, Ayatullah Bahr al-Uloom was known as a vigorous proponent of the modernisation of religious education and training. He introduced the concept of admission through formal examination and was supportive of introduction of more modern modes of study in the Najaf seminaries.

Besides jurisprudence and Qur'anic studies he took a deep interest in poetry and literature. His published works include significant religious, patriotic and romantic poems; his main works of poetry are to be found in *Zawraq al-Khayal* ('Voyage of Imagination', 1977).

The Ayatullah was known for his relaxed company and good humour reflected in his commitment to humanitarian aid for the poor mainly in Iraq, among his followers. Despite his Marja' status, he was essentially a local leader, with his strong support and affection reflected in the close and enduring relations that he maintained with the tribes of Southern Iraq.

The conduct of his funeral was characteristic of that of many of his Shi'a 'Ulama predecessors. His body was hurriedly rushed for burial, the official public announcement only coming two days after his death. Such blatant disregard for appropriate rites only feeds the suspicion of the government's involvement in his death. The suspicion is reinforced by the news that 10 days before his death Ayatullah Bahr al-Uloom had refused to appear on a youth TV channel - owned by Saddam's son, Uday - to congratulate Saddam's second son, Qusay, on his election triumphs.

Ayatullah Bahr al-Uloom is survived by his wife, Fatima Fartoosi, and a daughter, Zaynab, adopted as an orphan.

#### Yousif al-Khoei

Yousif al-Khoei is grandson of the late Grand Ayatullah Abul-Qasim al-Khoei (d.1992). He heads the London-based Al-Khoei Foundation.

### Dr Omar Ali Juma

The Tanzanian vice president, **Dr Omar Ali Juma**, died suddenly of a heart attack at his Dar es Salaam home on the evening of 11 July 2001. Although he had a heart condition, Dr Omar appeared to have been in good health. Earlier in the day he assisted President **Benjamin Mkapa** in his meetings with Presidents **Yoweri Museveni** of Uganda and **Joseph Kabila** of the Democratic

Republic of Congo and walked around several stands at the Dar International Trade Fair at Nyerere grounds.

Benjamin Mkapa described him as his 'right hand man, a dedicated, hard working and a humble leader who loved people and was always in the defence of the people of Tanzania and Union', and that his death had 'left a big gap in the hierarchy of our nation'.

Born on 26 June 1941 in Chake Chake Pemba Island, Omar Ali Juma went to primary school at Chake Chake Boys School (1949-57); to EUAN Smith Madrasa (1957-60) for Ordinary School Level Certificate; to the Moscow State University for an Advanced Level Certificate in 1962 and a diploma in Veterinary Medicine and Surgery in 1967; and to the Cairo University (1967-70) for a post graduate certificate in Animal Production and Health. In 1976 he attended a one-year Post Graduate Diploma course in Tropical Veterinary Medicine at Edinburgh University; and in 1982, he studied livestock economics at the Reading University in England.

Starting as an assistant veterinary officer in 1967 in Zanzibar, by 1984 he had risen as principal secretary in the ministry of agriculture and livestock development. His first political appointment came in 1988 as chief minister of Zanzibar from where he was picked up by Mkapa as his vice president in 1995 and again in 2000. Juma was mainly responsible for the government's poverty eradication and environmental programmes and seen as the likely successor to Mkapa after the end of his term in 2005.

Omar Ali Juma was buried on 6 July 2001 to a 19-gun salute in his home village of Wawi in the Pemba Island. He is survived by his wife and nine children.

### Sayed Khalifa

Renowned Sudanese singer, Sayed Khalifa (Ali Muhammad Khalifa), 71, died on 2 July 2001 in hospital in Amman, Jordan, where he had been receiving treatment since last April. He was buried in Sudan.

He was born in the village of Al-Dibiba near Khartoum in 1930. Known for his unique patriotic and emotional songs, Sayed Khalifa had been a leading figure since the early 1940s in the world of modern Arab singing. He also sang lyrics written in Amharic (Ethiopian) and Somali languages. Though he had gone to Cairo to study at Al Azhar he ended up studying music. He was also member of the advisory council of the ruling National Congress