

As for the *Ismailians*, they are an esoteric sect with their own interpretation of the Koran. They believe that the principles of the soul and universal reason are accessible only to prophets and imams. This transmigration is supposed to climax with the coming of the Mahdi, or Messiah, an incarnation to be hoped for by the faithful and feared by their oppressor. The Ismailians limit to seven the number of legitimate imams, inheritors of the Prophet's authority. The seventh, Ismail, however, died at the end of the eighth century without being able to transmit his divine quality. His followers therefore refused to believe in his death and insisted that he had merely disappeared, and formed this sect (whose leader, the Aga Khan, is known to the world for an entirely different reason) which claims that Ismail will return as the Mahdi.

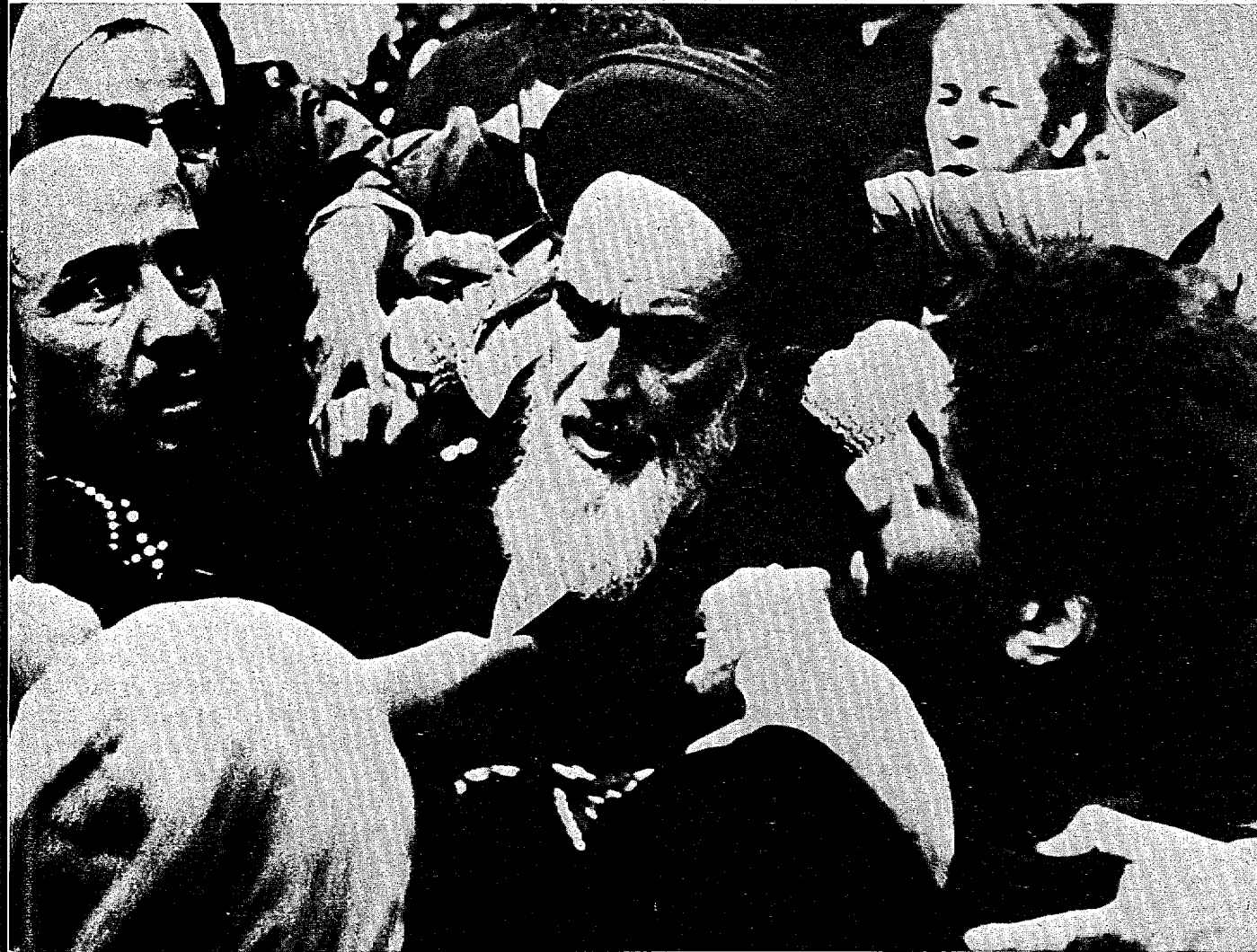
The *Druzes*, who are concentrated in Lebanon, Syria and Israel, form a branch of Ismailism.

Another dissident sect, smaller but with a zealous following, is that of the *Kharijites*, who are often compared to the Quakers. They are especially concentrated in Oman, Muscat, Djerba, Zanzibar and Tripolitania.

There are also other sects, such as the Najarite, the Mutazilite, the Jabrite, and so forth.

This division of Islam into sects goes hand in hand with the influence of the monastic orders, of whose structure we know little, but whose power is undeniable. Today we hear most often about the "Akhuun al-Muslimin", or Moslem Brothers of Egypt, yet these "Khuans" (literally "brothers") are spread throughout the Islamic territory, and their order, the *Sufi*, has undertaken to call all believers to the truth.

In North Africa it is *Maraboutism* (the Marabout is a descendant of the shریف and is considered to belong to the family of the Prophet) which has pros-



AP Photo

Once back in Iran the silence is over for Khomeini. He is pictured here engulfed by supporters on arrival at Tehran's Mehrabad airport from Paris.

