

## A Note on Transliteration

Transliteration is always a difficult problem in the field of Islamic or Middle Eastern Studies. However, this book posed particular difficulties, because the chapters include about half a dozen languages. This is further complicated by the fact that many terms in the book move from one language to another with minor changes. We tried using several systems, including a strict Arabic system; however, each approach posed serious difficulties and led to confusion. In the end we adopted a flexible system.

Whenever possible the original transliteration system of the author is used. However, there is one very important exception to this general rule: Terms that appear repeatedly throughout the different chapters, such as *Hosayn*, *Ali Ebn-e Abi Taleb*, *Ta'ziyeh*, *Majles*, *Fateme*, or *Moharram*, are transliterated according to modern Persian. While this is admittedly problematic, especially in the chapters on Arab or South Asian communities, it proved to be the least problematic of all the systems that we considered for use. More than half the chapters deal with Iran or use significant Persian terms. Also, many of the terms used in South Asia, even those originating from Arabic, entered the language through Iran and Persian. This is particularly true in the case of terms related to Shi'ism. Even in the cases of chapters dealing with Arab communities, which were at times the most problematic, the Persian transliteration often (although certainly not always) is not far from the colloquial Arabic pronunciation.

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