



# **Shi'i Sectarianism in the Middle East: Modernisation and the Quest for Islamic Universalism (Library of Modern Religion)**

*Elisheva Machlis*

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The eruption of violent sectarianism in Iraq following the US invasion in 2003 brought the question of Sunni-Shi'i relations in the country to the forefront of the international public agenda. Empowerment of the Shi'i majority for the first time in the history of modern Iraq and the emergence of a factious political system strengthened the popular belief that contemporary Shi'ism is inherently sectarian. Challenging this widely accepted consensus and providing a more ecumenical depiction of Islam, Elisheva Machlis here assesses the relationship between sectarianism and universalism in Shi'i thought by examining the scholarly interaction between Iran, Iraq and Lebanon in the twentieth century. The author presents a multifaceted and complex analysis of the shifting sectarian identity of Shi'ism in the transition to the modern era, exploring questions of leadership, religious identity, group membership and transnationalism. Examining the relationship between intellectual thought and socio-political development in the region, this book provides a new perspective concerning the future of an increasingly globalised Muslim world.

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