

I began writing novels about the Middle East after returning from a long trip to the area in 1971. My first success was *Kicked to Death by a Camel*, published by Harper and Row in 1973. Since I did not then have a tenured position, I opted for a pen-name: Clarence J.-L. Jackson, a combination of Clarence Joseph and Leander Jackson, the first and middle names of my grandfather and father respectively. The novel was nominated for an Edgar Award in the category Best First Mystery. Two subsequent novels built around the same characters did not find publication, so I decided that history writing was my forte after all.

As the Iranian Revolution loomed I wrote *The Tomb of the Twelfth Imam*, finishing it just before the Zhaleh Square massacre of September 6, 1978. My publisher waited more than a year before bringing it out, by which time American readers were so preoccupied by the hostage crisis that they had little interest in a novel about a religious revolution.

*The Gulf Scenario*, which visualizes the ease with which a determined country might take over one or several Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, came out in 1984 to no great acclaim, though it enjoyed a brief flurry of interest when Daniel Pipes gave it a favorable review in the *Wall Street Journal*. In 1991 I published a fourth novel, *The Sufi Fiddle*, to a grand total of one newspaper review.

*Chakra*, the novel that you can read or download by clicking on the appropriate icons, is a combination science fiction/political thriller laid in Central Asia shortly after the end of the Soviet Union. It seeks to recreate the atmosphere of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1993 when I visited there with a group of graduate students and faculty from Columbia University.