

The Islamic World

The West pays attention to the Islamic world when there is a crisis—when hostages are taken, or a bloody jihad is waged, or an ayatollah pronounces a death sentence upon a “blasphemous” novelist. Few Westerners recognize that beneath such headline events lie ancient, tangled conflicts that go to the heart of Islamic faith and civilization, often threatening to divide it.

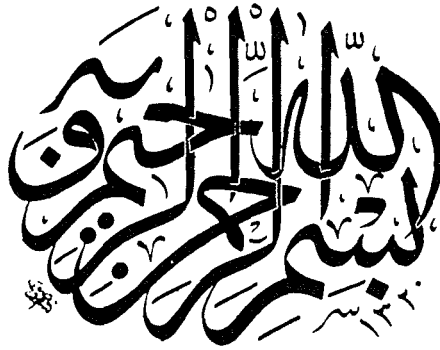
One such conflict—between worldly and spiritual authority—finds apt expression in the 16th-century Persian painting featured on this page. It depicts an early Muslim caliph, Hisham, who, on his pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, tried unsuccessfully to touch the shrine of the Ka’ba. The caliph looks on as the crowd parts to allow a holy man, the Imam ‘Ali Zaynul-Abidin, to approach and kiss the shrine. The painting implies that the imam is morally and spiritually superior to the caliph—and that this makes him, in principle if not in fact, the rightful leader of the Muslim people.



While the image is a partisan one, reflecting the Shiite view about ultimate authority in this world [see box, p. 60], the painting circles a number of related questions faced by all Muslims throughout their 1400-year-old history: Who is the rightful ruler of an Islamic state? What constitutes a proper state and society under Islam? And, indeed, is there one and only one correct conception of state, society, and leadership under Islam? The questions are far from academic. To many of the one billion Muslims living today, they are often matters of life or death.

Our contributors here offer three approaches to the ongoing Islamic debate. Bernard Lewis considers the evolution of civic and social arrangements in Muslim polities from the time of Muhammad to the present. Some Islamic leaders who today claim to be recreating the community as it was under Muhammad and the early caliphs are, Lewis argues, inventing something quite new. Shaul Bakhash looks at the first 10 years of the Islamic Republic of Iran to show how a fundamentalist theocracy has fared in coping with the problems of everyday governance. Finally, Mahnaz Ispahani, who recently returned from a tour of several Muslim nations, surveys the variety of contemporary Muslim cultures and states. This diversity, she finds, allows many liberal and moderate Muslims to challenge the fundamentalists’ notion of a single, orthodox Muslim state without abandoning the vision of unified community of believers.

Each of the articles is opened by a calligraphic rendering of the first line of the Qur’an, “In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”



STATE AND SOCIETY UNDER ISLAM

by Bernard Lewis

Christendom and Islam are in many ways sister civilizations, both drawing on the shared heritage of Jewish revelation and prophesy and Greek philosophy and science, and both nourished by the immemorial traditions of Middle Eastern antiquity. For most of their joint history, they have been locked in combat, in an endless series of attacks and counter-attacks, jihads and crusades, conquests and reconquests. But even in struggle and polemic they reveal their essential kinship and the common features which link them to each other and set them apart from the remoter civilizations of Asia.

As well as resemblances, there are, of course, profound disparities between the two, and these go beyond the obvious differences in dogma and worship. Nowhere are these differences more profound—and more obvious—than in the attitudes of these two religions, and of their authorized exponents, to the relations among government, religion, and society. The founder of

Christianity bade his followers “render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things which are God’s”—and for centuries Christianity grew and developed as a religion of the downtrodden, until Caesar himself became a Christian and inaugurated a series of changes by which the new faith captured the Roman Empire and—some would add—was captured by it.

The founder of Islam was his own Constantine and founded his own empire. He did not therefore create—or need to create—a church. The dichotomy of *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, so crucial in the history of Western Christendom, had no equivalent in Islam. During Muhammad’s lifetime, the Muslims became at once a political and a religious community, with the Prophet as head of state. As such, he governed a place and a people, dispensed justice, collected taxes, commanded armies, waged war, and made peace. For the first generation of Muslims, whose adventures are the sacred

and salvation history of Islam, there was no protracted testing by persecution, no tradition of resistance to a hostile state power. On the contrary, the state that ruled them was that of Islam, and God's approval of their cause was made clear to them in the form of victory and empire in this world.

In pagan Rome, Caesar was God. For Christians, there is a choice between God and Caesar, and endless generations of Christians have been ensnared in that choice. In Islam, there was no such choice. In the universal Islamic polity as conceived by Muslims, there is no Caesar, but only God, who is the sole sovereign and the sole source of law. Muhammad was his Prophet, who during his lifetime both taught and ruled on God's behalf. When Muhammad died in A.D. 632, his spiritual and prophetic mission, to bring God's book to man, was completed. What remained was the religious mission of spreading God's revelation until finally all the world accepted it. This was to be achieved by extending the authority and thus also the membership of the community which embraced the true faith and upheld God's law. To provide the necessary cohesion and leadership for this task, a deputy or successor of the Prophet was required. The Arabic word *khalifa*, the title by which that successor came to be known, combines the two meanings. This was the title adopted by the Prophet's father-in-law and first successor, 'Abū Bakr, whose accession to the leadership of the Islamic community marked the foundation of the great historic institution of the caliphate.

Under the caliphs, the community of

Medina, where the Prophet had held sway, grew in a century into a vast empire, and Islam became a world religion. In the experience of the first Muslims, as preserved and recorded for later generations, religious belief and political power were indissolubly associated: The first sanctified the second; the second sustained the first. The late Ayatollah Khomeini once remarked that "Islam is politics or it is nothing." Not all Muslims would go that far, but most would agree that God is concerned with politics, and this belief is confirmed and sustained by the Shari'a, the Holy Law, which deals extensively with the acquisition and exercise of power, the nature of authority, the duties of ruler and subject—in a word, with what we in the West would call constitutional law and political philosophy.

In the Islamic state, as ideally conceived and as it indeed existed from medieval through to Ottoman times almost into the 19th century, there could be no conflict between Pope and Emperor; in classical Middle Eastern Islam, the two mighty powers which these two represented were one and the same, and the caliph was the embodiment of both. As a building, a place of public worship, the Muslim equivalent of the church is the mosque; as an institution, a corporate body with its own hierarchy and laws, there is no church in Islam. For the same reason, there is no priesthood in the true sense of the term, and therefore no prelates or hierarchy, no councils or synods, to define orthodoxy and thus condemn heterodoxy. The ulema, the professional men of religion in the Islamic world, may perhaps be called a clergy in the sociological but certainly not in the theological

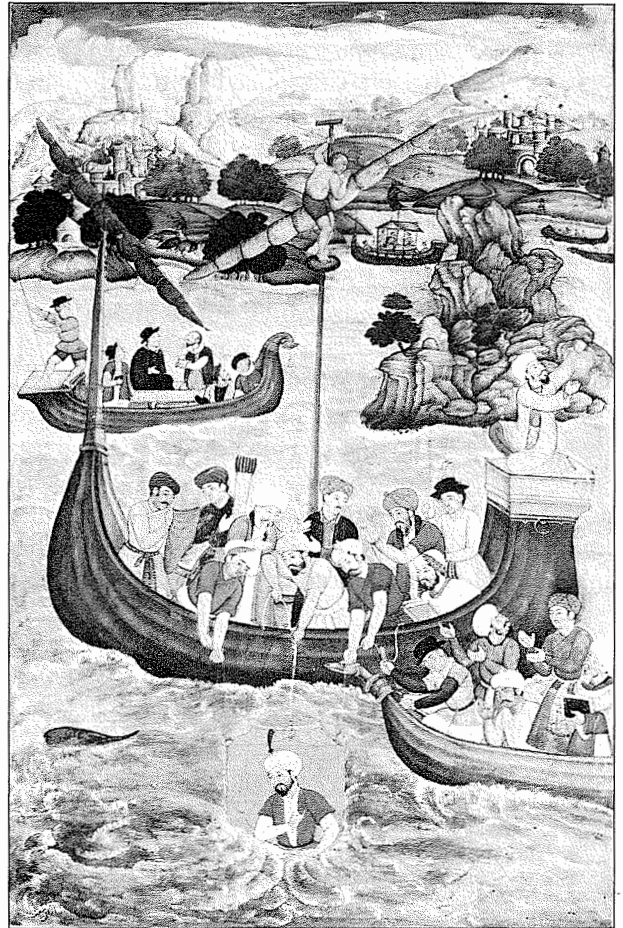
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sense. They receive no ordination, have no parishes, perform no sacraments. There is no priestly mediation between the worshiper and his God, and in early Islam there was no constituted ecclesiastical authority of any kind.

The primary function of the ulema—from a word meaning knowledge—is to uphold and interpret the Holy Law. From late medieval times, something like a parish clergy emerged, ministering to the needs of ordinary people in cities and villages, but these were usually separate from and mistrusted by the ulema, and owed much more to mystical than to dogmatic Islam. In the later Islamic monarchies, in Turkey and Iran, a kind of ecclesiastical hierarchy appeared, but this had no roots in the classical Muslim tradition, and members of these hierarchies never claimed and still less exercised the powers of Christian prelates.

If one may speak of a clergy only in a limited sociological sense in the Islamic world, there is no sense at all in which one can speak of a laity. The very notion of something that is separate or even separable from religious authority, expressed in Christian languages by such terms as lay, temporal, or secular, is totally alien to Islamic thought and practice. It was not until relatively modern times that equivalents for these terms were used in Arabic. They were borrowed from the usage of Arabic-speaking Christians.

Yet, from the days of the Prophet, the Islamic society had a dual character. On the one hand it was a polity—a chieftaincy which successively became a state and an empire. At the same



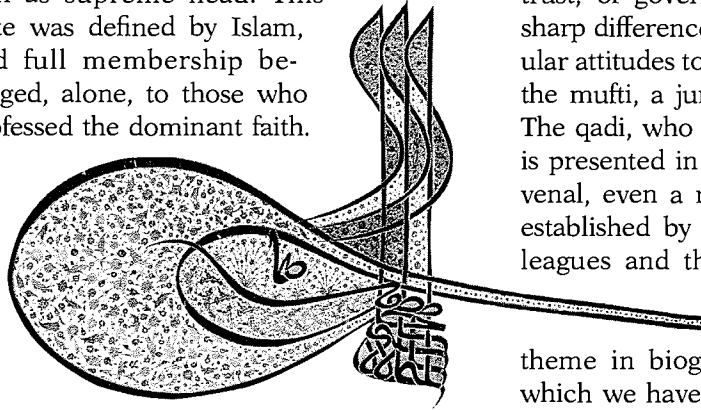
Islamic civilization, as it spread, accommodated and absorbed other cultures. In this 16th-century Mughal painting, Alexander the Great, wearing an Islamic turban, is shown being lowered into the sea in a glass jar.

time, it was a religious community, founded by a Prophet and ruled by his deputies who were also his successors.

Christ was crucified, Moses died without entering the Promised Land, and the beliefs and attitudes of their religious followers are still profoundly influenced by the memory of these facts. Muhammad triumphed during his lifetime and died a conqueror and a sovereign. The resulting Muslim attitudes can only have been confirmed by the subsequent history of their religion.

In the West, barbarian but teachable in-

vaders came to an existing state and religion, the Roman empire and the Christian church. The invaders recognized both and tried to serve their own aims and needs within the existing structures of Roman polity and Christian religion, both using the Latin language. The Muslim Arab invaders who conquered the Middle East and North Africa brought their own faith, with their own scriptures in their own language; they created their own polity, with a new set of laws, a new imperial language, and a new imperial structure, with the caliph as supreme head. This state was defined by Islam, and full membership belonged, alone, to those who professed the dominant faith.



Calligraphic emblem of Süleyman I.

The career of the Prophet Muhammad, in this as in all else the model which all good Muslims seek to emulate, falls into two parts. In the first, during his years in his birthplace Mecca (?570–622), he was an opponent of the reigning pagan oligarchy. In the second, after his migration from Mecca to Medina (622–632), he was the head of a state. These two phases in the Prophet's career, the one of resistance, the other of rule, are both reflected in the Qur'an, where, in different chapters, the believers are enjoined to obey God's representative and to disobey Pharaoh, the paradigm of the unjust and tyrannical ruler. These two aspects of the Prophet's life and work inspired two traditions in Islam, the one authoritarian

and quietist, the other radical and activist. Both are amply reflected, on the one hand in the development of the tradition, on the other, in the unfolding of events. It was not always easy to determine who was God's representative and who was Pharaoh; many books were written, and many battles fought, in the attempt. Both traditions can be seen very clearly in the polemics and struggles of our own times.

Between the extremes of quietism and radicalism, there is a pervasive, widely expressed attitude of reserve, even of mistrust, of government. An example is the sharp difference, in medieval times, of popular attitudes towards the qadi, a judge, and the mufti, a jurisconsult in the Holy Law. The qadi, who was appointed by the ruler, is presented in literature and folklore as a venal, even a ridiculous figure; the mufti, established by the recognition of his colleagues and the general population, enjoyed esteem and respect. A recurring theme in biographies of pious men—of which we have hundreds of thousands—is that the hero was offered a government appointment, and refused. The offer establishes his learning and reputation, the refusal his integrity.

Under the Ottoman sultans there was an important change. The qadi gained greatly in power and authority, and even the mufti was integrated into the public chain of authority. But the old attitude of mistrust of government persisted, and is frequently expressed in proverbs, folk tales, and even high literature.

For more than a thousand years, Islam provided the only universally acceptable set of rules and principles for the regulation of public and social life. Even during the period of maximum European influence, in the countries ruled or dominated by European imperial powers as well as in those that remained independent, Islamic politi-

cal notions and attitudes remained a profound and pervasive influence.

In recent years there have been many signs that these notions and attitudes may be returning, albeit in much modified forms, to their previous dominance. There are therefore good reasons to devote a serious study to these ideas, and in particular to how they deal with the relations among government, religion, and society.

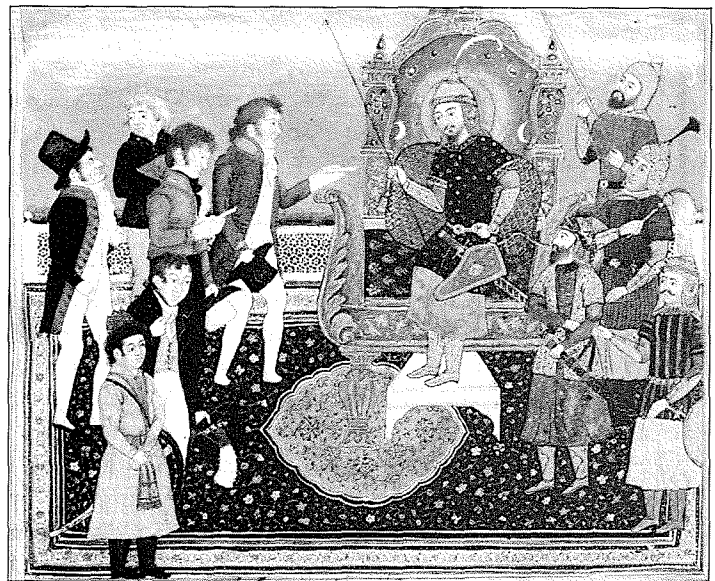
The term "civil society" has become very popular in recent years, and is used in a number of different—sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting—senses. It may therefore be useful to examine Islamic perceptions of civility, according to various definitions of that term.

Perhaps the primary meaning of civil, in the Middle East today, is as the converse of military; it is in this sense that civility must begin, before any other is conceivable. This has a special relevance in a place and at a time when the professional officer corps is often both the source and the instrument of power. Understood this way, Islamic society, at the time of its inception and in its early formative years, was unequivocally civil. The Prophet and the early caliphs that followed employed no professional soldiers but relied for military duties on a kind of armed, mostly voluntary militia.

It is not until the second century of the Islamic era (A.D. eighth century) that one can speak, with certitude, of a professional army. The caliph, who in early though not in later times occasionally commanded his armies, was nevertheless a civilian. So too was the wazir, who, under the caliph's authority,

was in charge of all branches of the government, both civil and military. The wazir's emblem of office was an inkpot, which was carried before him on ceremonial public occasions. During the later Middle Ages, internal upheavals and external invasions brought about changes which resulted in the militarization of most Islamic regimes. This has persisted to modern times. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was an interlude of civilian, more or less constitutional government, mostly on Western models. During the 1950s and after, these civilian regimes, for the most part, came to an end and were replaced by authoritarian governments under ultimate military control.

This is, however, by no means universal. In some countries, including, for example, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, traditional monarchies still maintain a traditional civilian order; in others, such as Turkey and, later, Egypt and Pakistan, the military themselves have prepared the way for a return to



A Castilian embassy, led by Don Clavijo, arrives at the court of Timur (1336–1405). The domain of the Muslim warrior-leader extended from Mongolia to the Mediterranean. He is known in the West as Tamarlane, a name derived from his alleged lameness.

MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET

The Prophet Muhammad (?570–632) lived only 1400 years ago. Of all the founders of major world religions, he is the closest to us in time. Yet historians have struggled to piece together a complete and accurate biography of the man who Muslims believe is the last prophet in the succession of Abraham. Scarce primary sources include the Qur'an and the *Hadith*, traditional accounts of Muhammad's words and deeds. Early biographies (8th–9th centuries)—the *Sirah* (Life) by Ibn Ishaq, the *Maghazi* (Expeditions) by Al-Waqidi, and the writings of Ibn Sa'd—also remain valuable to scholars.

The Prophet was born in Mecca, a prosperous trading town located in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula. Shortly before his birth around 570, the town's preeminent tribe, the Quraysh, appears to have gained control of the lucrative caravan trade running between Yemen and Syria. This new prosperity, according to some historians, may have created a rift between the great merchants and the lesser

Quraysh "clans," undermining an older code that emphasized communal wealth and protection through kinship ties.

Muhammad, the son of a respected Quraysh family, was orphaned at six and raised, successively, by his grandfather and uncle. He himself went on to become a successful caravan merchant, and at 25 he married his employer, Khadijah, a wealthy widow (and the first of several wives). Financially secure, Muhammad turned to other, higher matters, and sometime in his late thirties he began to meditate in a hill cave outside of town. Around 610, the faithful believe, he had a vision of the archangel Gabriel, who pronounced Muhammad the "Messenger of God." To his friends and relatives and later to the entire community, Muhammad began to relate messages that he claimed came directly from God.

The central tenet of Muhammad's teachings posed a threat to the polytheistic creed of most of his fellow Arabs: He declared that there was

civilian legality. On the whole, the prospects for civilianization at the present time seem to be reasonably good.

In the more generally accepted interpretation of the term civil society, civil is opposed not to religious or to military but to government as such. So construed, the civil society is one in which the main-springs of organization, initiative, and action come from within the society rather than from above, from the holders of authority, the wielders of power. Islamic precept, as presented by the jurists and theologians, and Islamic practice, as reflected by the historians, offer a variety of sometimes contradictory precedents.

The tradition of private charity, for example, is old and deeply rooted in Islam, and is given legal expression in the institution of *waqf*. A *waqf* is a pious endowment in mortmain, consisting of some income-producing property, the proceeds of which are dedicated to a pious purpose—the up-

keep of a place of worship, a school, a bathhouse, a soup kitchen, a water fountain, and the like. The donor might be a ruler or government official; he might equally be, and very often was, a private person. Women, who in Islamic law had the right to own and dispose of property, figure prominently among founders of *waqfs*, sometimes reaching almost half the number. This is perhaps the only area in the traditional Muslim society in which they approach equality with men. By means of the institution of *waqf*, many services, which in other systems are the principal or sole responsibility of the state, are provided by private initiative. One of the major changes brought by modernizing autocrats in the 19th century was to bring the *waqfs* under state control. (Several present-day Muslim states, including Egypt, have departments or ministries of *waqfs*.)

Islamic law, unlike Roman law and its derivatives, does not recognize corporate

only one good and all-powerful God. He also preached about the coming of a Day of Judgment and the existence of Heaven (the Garden) and Hell (the Fire). Islam literally means submission, and Muhammad's faith called on Muslims (those who submit) to acknowledge God's might and majesty and to accept Muhammad as the final prophet.

Muhammad's preaching was, above all, religious, but it also contained a social message that was troubling to some of Mecca's wealthier merchants. By A.D. 616, many of the Quraysh leaders had grown alarmed by the Prophet's success, and Muhammad began coming under verbal and then physical attack. By this time, too, the Prophet's reputation had begun to spread beyond Mecca. During the summer of 620, six pilgrims from Yathrib, an oasis town 250 miles north of Mecca, came to hear the Prophet preach. Impressed, they begged him to return with them to arbitrate among the rival tribes in their own community. In 622, Muhammad and some 70 of his followers moved to Yathrib; the *Hijra* (migration) marks year one

of the Islamic calendar.

Established in Yathrib (which the Muslims renamed al-Madina, the city), Muhammad and his followers soon came into conflict with the pagan oligarchy in Mecca. War broke out and Muhammad's forces, though greatly outnumbered, outfought their foes. Each victory seemed proof of Allah's will, and the Islamic ranks swelled to some 10,000 fighting men. In 630, Muhammad triumphantly returned to Mecca at the head of his army; the city surrendered and many of its inhabitants converted to Islam. Muhammad now ruled as the most powerful political and religious leader in Arabia.

The Prophet, however, had little time to savor his triumph. He died a natural death in 632. Thereafter, a line of caliphs (successors), beginning with Muhammad's faithful lieutenant and father-in-law, 'Abū Bakr, spread the power and faith of Islam. Within little more than a century, Islam had expanded north as far as the Atlas Mountains, east across Persia and central Asia to the borders of India and China, and west across North Africa and into Spain.

legal persons, and there are therefore no Islamic equivalents to such Western corporate entities as the city, the monastery, or the college. Cities were mostly governed by royal officers, while convents and colleges relied on royal or private *waqfs*. There are, however, other groupings of considerable importance in traditional Muslim society. Such, for example, are the kin group—family, clan, tribe; the faith group, often linked together by common membership of a sufi fraternity; the craft group, joined in a guild; the ward or neighborhood within a city. Very often these groups overlap or even coincide, and much of the life of a Muslim city is determined by their interaction.

In the Islamic context, the independence and initiative of the civil society may best be measured not in relation to the state but in relation to religion, of which, in the Muslim perception, the state itself is a manifestation and an instrument. In this sense, the primary meaning of civil is non-

religious, and the civil society is one in which the organizing principle is something other than religion, that being a private affair of the individual. This idea received its first classical formulation in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* by the English philosopher John Locke, published in 1689. Locke's conclusion is that "neither Pagan, nor Mahometan, nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion."

The first European country which actually accorded civil rights to non-Christians was Holland, followed within a short time by England and the English colonies in North America, where extensive, though not as yet equal rights were granted to nonconformist Christians and to Jews. These examples were followed by others, and the libertarian ideas which they expressed contributed significantly to the ideologies of both the American and

French Revolutions.

In time, these ideas were almost universally accepted in Western Christendom. Though few nations, other than France and the United States, accepted a formal constitutional separation of religion and the state, most of them in fact accepted secular principles. This virtually ended the earlier situation which Danish scholar Vilhelm Gronbech spoke of as "a religion which is the soul of society, the obverse of the practical, a living and real religion, the practical relationship of the people to God, soul and eternity, that manifests itself in worship and works as a life-giving power in politics and economics, in crafts and commerce, in ethics as in law. In this sense," he concludes, "the modern state has no religion."

Despite the personal devoutness of great and growing numbers of people, Gronbech is right—the Western democratic state has no religion, and most, even among the devout, see this as a merit, not a defect. They are encouraged in this belief by the example of some states in Central and Eastern Europe, yesterday and today, where the principle of unity and direction was retained but with a shift of stress—religion replaced by ideology, and the church by the single ruling party, with its own hierarchy, synods, inquisition, dogmas, and heresies. In such countries, it was not the state that withered away but the civil society.

In the Islamic world, the dethronement of religion as the organizing principle of society was not attempted until much later and resulted entirely from European influences. It was never really completed and is perhaps now being reversed. Certainly in Iran, organized religion has returned to something like the status which it enjoyed in the medieval world, both Christian and Islamic. Indeed, in some ways—notably in the power of the priesthood and the emergence of a political prelacy—the

Iranian theocracy is closer to the Christian than to the classical Islamic model.

During the 14 centuries of Islamic history, there have been many changes. In particular, the long association, sometimes in coexistence, but more often in confrontation, with Christendom, led to the acceptance, in the later Islamic monarchies in Iran and Turkey and their successor states, of patterns of religious organization that might suggest a probably unconscious imitation of Christian ecclesiastical usage. Certainly there is nothing in the classical Islamic past that resembles the more recent offices of the chief mufti of the Ottoman empire or the grand ayatollah of Iran.

These Western influences became more powerful and more important after the French Revolution—the first great movement of ideas in Christendom which was not Christian but was even, in a sense, anti-Christian, and could therefore be considered by Muslim observers with relative detachment. Such earlier movements of ideas in Europe as the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the Enlightenment had no impact whatsoever on the Muslim world, and are virtually unnoticed in contemporary Muslim philosophical and even historical writings. The initial response to the French Revolution was much the same, and the first Muslim comments dismiss it as an internal affair of Christendom, of no interest or concern to Muslims and, more important, offering them no threat.

It was on this last point that they were soon obliged to change their minds. The dissemination of French revolutionary ideas in the Islamic world was not left to chance but was actively promoted by successive French regimes, both by force of arms, and, much more effectively, by translation and publication. The penetration of Western ideas into the Islamic world was greatly accelerated when, from the early 19th century, Muslim students in increasing



An illustration from a 13th-century Iraqi manuscript on the pharmaceutical uses of plants. Islamic civilization is known for its contributions to medicine and other sciences.

numbers were sent to institutions of higher education in France, Italy, and Britain, and later also in other countries. Many of these, on their return home, became carriers of infectious new ideas.

The revolutionaries in France had summarized their ideology in a formula of classical terseness—liberty, equality, fraternity. Some time was to pass before they, and ultimately their disciples elsewhere, came to realize that the first two were mutually exclusive and the third meaningless. Of far greater effect, in the impact of Western ideas on Islam, were two related notions—neither of them originating with the French Revolution, but both of them classically formulated and actively disseminated by its leaders: namely, secularism and nationalism. The one sought to displace religion as the ultimate basis of identity, loyalty, and authority in society; the other provided an alternative.

In the new dispensation, God was to be doubly replaced, both as the source of authority and as the object of worship, by the Nation. Secularism as such had no appeal to Muslims, but an ideology of change and

progress, free—as it seemed then—from any taint of a rival religion, offered attractions to 19th-century Muslims who were increasingly aware of the relatively backward and impoverished state of their own society, as contrasted with the wealth and power of Europe. Liberalism and patriotism seemed to be part of the same progressive ideology and were eagerly adopted by young Muslim intellectuals, seeking arguments to criticize and methods to change their own societies. The West European civic patriotism proved to have limited relevance or appeal, but the ethnic nationalism of Central and Eastern Europe had greater relevance to Middle Eastern conditions, and evoked a much more powerful response. According to the old view, the Muslims are one community, subdivided into such nations as the Turks, the Arabs, the Persians, etc. But according to the new, the Arabs are a nation, subdivided into Muslims and Christians, to which some were, for a while, willing to add Jews.

For a time the idea of the secular nation, defined by country, language, culture, and descent, was dominant among the more or

QUR'AN

Accepted as the word of God by Muslims, the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, remains the fundamental source of Islamic doctrine, law, thinking, and teaching. It says to its followers, "You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour, and believing in God" (III, 106).*

During Muhammad's life, observes historian Marshall Hodgson in *The Venture of Islam* (1974), it "served at once as the inspiration of Muslim life and the commentary on what was done under that inspiration; its message transcended any particular circumstances yet at the same time served as a running guide to the community experiences, often down to seemingly petty details." The Qur'an (literally "recitations") touches on everything from manners—"O believers, do not enter houses other than your houses until you first ask leave and salute the people thereof..." (XXIV, 27)—to the largest questions of spiritual import: "O believers, fear God as He should be feared, and see you do not die, save in surrender" (III, 97).

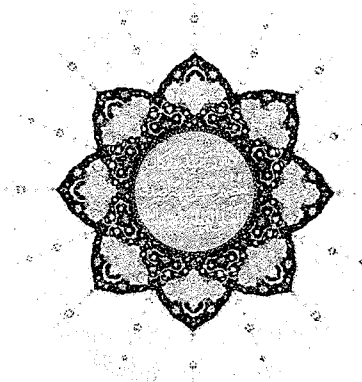
Scholars distinguish between two main parts of the Qur'an, the whole of which consists of 114 *Surahs* (chapters) of varying numbers of *Ayahs* (verses). The early *Surahs*, revealed to Muhammad while at Mecca, focus upon ethical and spiritual teachings: "Then he whose deeds weigh heavy in the Balance shall inherit a pleasing life, but he whose deeds weigh light in the Balance shall plunge in the womb of the Pit" (CI, 6). *Surahs* revealed later at Medina, however, concern social legislation and the politico-moral principles for constituting and ordering the community. Verses such as "God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land..." (XXIV, 54) point to a concern with the rightful rule.

According to tradition, Muhammad received the verses of the Qur'an at irregular intervals from around A.D. 610 to 632. Many of Muhammad's devout followers memorized the

Qur'an, and for a time no comprehensive written collection of the *Surahs* existed. After the Prophet's death, and especially after the battle of Yamamah (633), where many who knew the words by heart fell in combat, fear of losing the record of God's word spurred meticulous collection efforts. Several versions resulted. But a desire for consistency led the third caliph, 'Uthmān (ruled 644–656), to order its consolidation, producing the authoritative 'Uthmānic recension now used. 'Uthmān then had all other copies destroyed.

'Uthmān's version, compiled by a handful of learned Muslims, arranges the chapters approximately according to length (except for the opening chapter, longest first). Yet Qur'anic specialists have assembled a rough chronology and identified a handful of recurring themes. The essential message is that there is only one God, Allah, who will judge men by their earthly deeds on the Last Day. Men, therefore, should endeavor to worship God and to act generously in dealings with others.

As Islam became established during the centuries after Muhammad's death, theological and legal questions inevitably arose. What was the correct way for Muslims to pray, to live, to do business, to govern? To deal with such questions, a succession of distinguished theologians and jurists employed three methods: study of the Qur'an; consideration of the precepts and practices of the Prophet, as handed down by tradition; the use of independent reason to apply the first two to problems that arose. (Sunnis, the majority of Muslims, believed that independent reason ceased to be a valid method after the ninth century; Shiites believe that it still is.) The Qur'an remains the ultimate authority to all Muslims, but pious believers have frequently differed over points of interpretation. For example, the Shiites argue that passages on divorce allow temporary marriages for a fixed dower; the Sunnis, however, find no Qur'anic support for such temporary arrangements.



*Qur'anic quotations are from *The Koran Interpreted*, translated by A. J. Arberry (© George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955).

less Westernized minority of political activists. Beginning with the decline and fall of the old Westernized elites in the mid-20th century, and the entry into political life of more authentically popular elements, the ideal of the secular nation came under challenge and in some areas has been decisively defeated.

Nowadays, for the first time in many years, even nationalism itself is under attack and has been denounced by some Muslim writers as divisive and un-Islamic. When Arab nationalists complain that the religious fundamentalists are creating divisions between Muslim and Christian Arabs, the latter respond that the secular nationalists are creating divisions between Arabs and other Muslims and that theirs is the larger and greater offense.

The attack on secularism—seen as an attempt to undermine and supplant the Islamic way of life—has been gathering force and is now a major element in the writings of religious fundamentalists and other similar groups. For these, all the modernizing leaders—Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, the Shah in Iran, Faruq, Nasser, and Sadat alike in Egypt, the Ba'thist rulers of Syria and Iraq, and their equivalents elsewhere—are tarred with the same brush. They are all apostates who have renounced Islam and are trying to impose neo-pagan doctrines and institutions on the Muslim world. Of all the Muslim states, only one, the Turkish republic, has formally declared itself a secular state and legislated, in its constitution, the separation of religion and government. Indonesia, by far the largest Islamic state, includes belief in one God among the basic constitutional principles but does not formally establish Islam. Virtually all the others either proclaim Islam as the state religion or lay down that the laws of the state shall be based on, or inspired by, the holy

law of Islam. In fact, many of them had adopted secular legislation, mostly inspired by European models, over a wide range of civil and criminal matters, and it is these laws that are now under strong attack.

This is of particular concern to the two groups which had, in law at least, benefited most from the reforms, namely women and non-Muslims. Hence the phenomenon, paradoxical in Western but not in Muslim eyes, that such conventionally liberal causes as equal rights for women have hitherto been espoused and enforced only by autocratic rulers like Kemal Atatürk in Turkey and Mohamed Reza Shah in Iran. For the latter, this was indeed one of the main grievances of the revolutionaries who overthrew him. It has been remedied under their rule.

Until the recent impact of Western secularist ideas, the idea of a non-religious society as something desirable or even permissible was totally alien to Islam. Other religious dispensations, namely Christianity and Judaism, were tolerable because they were earlier and superseded versions of God's revelation, of which Islam itself was the final and perfect version, and therefore lived by a form—albeit incomplete and perhaps debased—of God's law. Those who lacked even this measure of religious guidance were pagans and idolaters, and their society was evil. Any Muslim who sought to join them or imitate them was an apostate.

Some medieval Muslim jurists, confronting a new problem posed by the Christian reconquest, asked whether it was lawful for Muslims to live under non-Muslim rule, and found different answers. According to one view, they might stay, provided that the non-Muslim government allowed them to observe the Muslim religion in all its aspects and to live a full Muslim life; according to another school, no such thing was possible, and Muslims whose homeland was conquered by a non-Muslim ruler were obliged to migrate, as the Prophet did



The harem, no pleasure-den, was simply where women and children lived in a Muslim house.

from pagan Mecca to Medina, and seek a haven in Muslim lands, until in God's good time they were able to return and restore the rule of Islam.

One of the tests of civility is surely tolerance—a willingness to coexist with those who hold and practice other beliefs. John Locke, and most other Westerners, believed that the best way to ensure this was to sever or at least to weaken the bonds between religion and state power. In the past, Muslims never professed any such belief. They did however see a certain form of tolerance as an obligation of the dominant Islamic religion. “There is no compulsion in religion” runs a much quoted verse in the Qur’an, and this was generally interpreted by Muslim jurists and rulers to authorize a limited measure

of tolerance for certain specified other religious beliefs, though of course without questioning or compromising the primacy of Islam and the supremacy of the Muslims.

Does this mean that the classical Islamic state was a theocracy? In the sense that Britain today is a monarchy, the answer is certainly yes. That is to say that, in the Muslim conception, God is the true sovereign of the community, the ultimate source of authority, the sole source of legislation. In the first extant Muslim account of the British House of Commons, written by a visitor who went to England at the end of the 18th century, the writer expresses his astonishment at the fate of a people who, unlike the Muslims, did not have a divinely revealed law and were therefore reduced to the pitiable expedient of enacting their own laws. But in the sense of a state ruled by the church or by priests, Islam was not and indeed could not be a theocracy. Classical Islam had no priesthood, no prelates who might rule or even decisively influence those who did. The caliph, who was head of a governing institution that was state and church in one, was himself neither a jurist nor a theologian but a practitioner of the arts of politics and sometimes of war. There are no popes in Islamic history and no political cardinals like Wolsey or Richelieu or Alberoni. The office of ayatollah is a creation of the 19th century; the rule of Khomeini an innovation of the 20th.

In most tests of tolerance, Islam, both in theory and in practice, compares unfavorably with the Western democracies as they have developed during the last two or three centuries, but very favorably with most other Christian and post-Christian societies and regimes. There is nothing in Islamic history to compare with the emancipation, acceptance, and integration of other-believers and non-believers in the West. But equally, there is nothing in Islamic history to compare with the Spanish expulsion of

Jews and Muslims, the Inquisition, the autos-da-fé, the wars of religion, not to speak of more recent crimes of commission and acquiescence. There were occasional persecutions, but they were rare and atypical, and usually of brief duration, related to local and specific circumstances.

Within certain limits and subject to certain restrictions, Islamic governments were willing to tolerate the practice, though not the dissemination, of other revealed, monotheistic religions. They were able to pass an even severer test by tolerating divergent forms of their own. Even polytheists, though condemned by the strict letter of the law to a choice between conversion and enslavement, were in fact tolerated, as Islamic rule spread to most of India. Only the total unbeliever—the agnostic or atheist—was beyond the pale of tolerance, and even this exclusion was usually enforced only when the offense became public and scandalous. The same standard was applied to the tolerance of deviant forms of Islam.

In modern times, Islamic tolerance has been somewhat diminished. After the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683, Islam was a retreating force in the world, and Muslims began to feel threatened by the rise and expansion of the great Christian empires of Eastern and Western Europe. The old easy-going tolerance, resting on an assumption not only of superior religion but also of superior power, was becoming difficult for Muslims to maintain. The threat which Christendom now seemed to be offering to Islam was no longer merely military and political; it was beginning to shake the very structure of Muslim society. Western rulers, and, to a far greater extent, their enthusiastic Muslim disciples and imitators, brought in a whole series of reforms, almost all of them of Western origin or inspiration. These reforms increasingly af-

ected the way Muslims lived in their countries, their cities and villages, and finally in their own homes.

These changes were rightly seen as being of Western origin or inspiration; the non-Muslim minorities, mostly Christian but also Jewish, were often seen, sometimes also rightly, as agents or instruments of these changes. The old pluralistic order, multi-denominational and polyethnic, was breaking down, and the tacit social contract on which it was based was violated on both sides. The Christian minorities, inspired by Western ideas of self-determination, were no longer prepared to accept the tolerated but inferior status accorded to them by the old order, and made new demands—sometimes for equal rights within the nation, sometimes for separate nationhood, sometimes for both at the same time. Muslim majorities, feeling threatened, became unwilling to accord even the traditional measure of tolerance.

By a sad paradox, in some of the semi-secularized nation-states of modern times, the non-Muslim minorities, while enjoying complete equality on paper, in fact have fewer opportunities and face greater dangers than under the old Islamic yet pluralistic order. The present regime in Iran, with its ruling clerics, its executions for blasphemy, its consecrated assassins, represents a new departure in Islamic history. In the present mood, a triumph of militant Islam would be unlikely to bring a return to traditional Islamic tolerance—and even that would no longer be acceptable to minority elements schooled on modern ideas of human, civil, and political rights. The emergence of some form of civil society would therefore seem to offer the best hope for decent coexistence based on mutual respect.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

570: Muhammad born in Mecca.

610: Muhammad receives first revelation.

613: Muhammad begins preaching notion of single God and other revelations to fellow Meccans.

622: The *Hijra*. Muhammad and his followers move to Yathrib (Medina).

630: Muhammad captures Mecca.

632: Muhammad dies and is succeeded in Medina by 'Abū Bakr (ruled 632–634).

634: 'Umar (634–644), former lieutenant of Muhammad, succeeds 'Abū Bakr as caliph and organizes an Arab empire.

644: 'Uthmān (644–656), an Umayyad, becomes caliph and continues expansion.

656: First *fitna* (civil war). 'Uthmān's murder. The attempt of Muhammad's companion 'Ali to assume the caliphate sparks a five-year civil war.

661: 'Ali murdered. Umayyad dynasty (661–750) established in Damascus. A pious opposition to Umayyad rule develops, however, and support increases for the claims of the 'Alids (descendants of Muhammad through 'Ali) to the caliphate.

680: Second *fitna*. The murder of 'Ali's son Husayn by the Umayyads at Karbalā'.

744: Third *fitna*. A six-year civil war erupts, supported by pious religious scholars, Shiites, and converts in eastern Persia. It brings down Umayyads, but an 'Abbasid (a kinsman of Muhammad through his uncle 'Abbas), not an 'Alid, comes to power.

750: 'Abbasids establish Muslim empire at Baghdad, replacing Arab empire of Umayyads.

861: 'Abbasid caliphs become puppets of officers of Turkish elite guard. Provinces increasingly fragment.

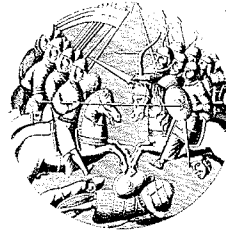
929: 'Abd al-Rahmān III of Cordova adopts the title of caliph.

969: Ismā'īli Shiite Fatimids conquer Egypt (held to 1171); found Cairo.

1044: Seljuq Turks occupy most of Iranian Plateau.

1058: 'Abbasid caliphs crown Seljuq leader Tughril Beg as sultān (temporal leader), with support of Sunni religious leaders.

1099: First Crusade. Jerusalem conquered by European Christians.



1157: A Seljuq officer's son, adopting the title Shah (king), suppresses a Turk rebellion in Persia (at Khorasan) and builds an Iranian empire in opposition to 'Abbasids.

1220: Genghis Khan, leading Mongol horde, sweeps through Iran and destroys Shah's empire.

1250: Crusader King Louis IX of France invades Egypt. Egyptian Mamluks, slave soldiers of Sultān Salih Ayyub, defeat the French and assume power in Egypt at Sultān's death.

1260: Battle of 'Ayn Jalut. Egyptian Mamluks, now the best trained force in Muslim world, defeat the Mongols in Syria.

1369: Timur (Tamarlane), from Transoxania, conquers most of Islamic world, from Delhi in India to Damascus and Anatolia.

1405: Timur dies. His empire crumbles except for small Persian remnants.

1453: Growing Ottoman state captures Constantinople and makes it the capital.

1501: Isma'il defeats Turkmen confederation that rules Persia and proclaims himself Shah, founding the Safavid dynasty and establishing Shiism as religion of the realm.

1517: Ottomans take over Syria and Egypt.

1520: Süleyman the Magnificent becomes sultān of Ottoman Empire.

1526: Süleyman's troops defeat Hungary at Battle of Mohács.

1551: Ottomans establish suzerainty over North Africa except Morocco.

1552: Russia conquers and annexes Kazan.

1556: Russia conquers and annexes Astrakhan.

1744: House of Sa'ud, a petty emirate in central Arabia, makes alliance with 'Abd al-Wahhab, a strict fundamentalist leader. Viewing the Ottoman religious establishment as impious, the militant sect gains control of Medina and Mecca and raids religious centers in Iraq, laying the foundation for today's Saudi Arabian state.

1783: Russia annexes Crimea.

1798: French forces under General Napoleon Bonaparte invade and occupy Egypt.

1801: Allied British and Ottoman forces expel the French, allowing an Ottoman officer, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha to rule Egypt as viceroy.

1803: British East India Company places Indian Mughal emperor under their "protection."

1839: The Tanzimat (1839–76), a series of educational and legal reforms, is begun by Sultān Abdulmecid (1839–61) to preserve Ottoman state through modernization.

1868: Khanates of Kokand and Bokhara become Russian protectorates.

1881: Tunisia made a French protectorate.

1882: British occupy Egypt.

1907: Anglo-Russian convention establishes exclusive Anglo-Russian spheres of influence in Iran, Afghanistan, and Tibet.

1908: Young Turk Revolution in Ottoman Empire leads to the transfer of real power from the sultān to parliament.



Süleyman the Magnificent

1914: Ottoman Empire enters World War I allied to Germany.

1917: Balfour Declaration—Britain promises to support establishment of a national home for Jewish people in Palestine.

1918: Arab world partitioned among the European powers following World War I.

1919: Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk (father of the Turks), organizes Turkish resistance to postwar European occupation and partitioning of the Ottoman Empire.

1921: Persian cavalry officer Reza Khan takes control of military in Iran.

1923: Turkish National Assembly declares Turkey a republic and names Atatürk first president.

1925: Reza Khan deposes last Qājār Shah and adopts the title for himself.

1941: Anglo-Russian forces invade Iran, force Reza (Khan) Shah to abdicate to his son, Mohammad Reza Shah.

1947: Pakistan emerges an independent state after the partition of British India.

1948: U.N. partitions Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. State of Israel is created. Arab neighbors invade but are defeated.

1949: Dutch recognize Indonesian independence.

1951: Libya becomes independent.

1952: Officers led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser topple Egyptian monarchy.

1954: Anglo-Egyptian Treaty—British troops agree to evacuate Suez Canal zone.

1956: Nasser nationalizes canal zone; Israel, Britain, and France attack Egypt, but U.S. and USSR pressure them into withdrawing.

1958: Egypt and Syria merge to form United Arab Republic. Alliance dissolves by 1961.

1962: Algeria wins independence.

1979: Shah of Iran deposed; Ayatollah Khomeini comes to power.

1979: Soviet troops invade Afghanistan.

1980: Iran-Iraq War begins.

1988: Iran-Iraq War ends.

1989: Soviet troops withdraw from Afghanistan.

1989: Ayatollah Khomeini dies.



THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, 1979-1989

by Shaul Bakhash

Ever since they made a revolution and seized power 10 years ago, Iran's clerical leaders have considered themselves to be engaged in a unique experiment to create an exemplary Islamic state, based on Islamic law and superior to both capitalism and communism. "We should be a model to the world," Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, former speaker of Iran's Majles, or parliament, said two years ago.* "We should be able to present Islam as an alternate model for human society." According to the Chief Justice, Abdol-Karim Musavi-Ardabili, the establishment of a true Islamic state has not been attempted for 14 centuries, not since the Prophet established his exemplary community in seventh-century Arabia.

Other Muslim states today also espouse the concept of Islamicization. But the Ira-

*Rafsanjani was elected president of Iran on July 28, 1989, eight weeks after Ayatollah Khomeini's death on June 3.

nian experiment is unique. In Egypt, secular leaders may pay lip service to Islamic law, but they run a basically secular state. In the Pakistan of Zia ul-Haq (1977-1988), the soldiers ruled, although Zia banned alcohol, reimposed canonical Islamic punishments, and introduced non-interest banking to win the support of the religious leaders. In Iran, however, it is the clerics who rule. A cleric is the *faqih*, the supreme leader. Clerics dominate the chief offices of the state, the security agencies, and the judiciary. They and their followers determine and enforce the norms of social morality, of dress, and of female modesty. The clerics are responsible for state ideology. They make the laws, and on the basis of Islamic criteria, senior Islamic jurists judge their acceptability. The very legitimacy of the state is said to derive from the authority vested in the clerics and the vice-regency they enjoy, as heirs to the mantle of the

Prophet. During his lifetime, Ayatollah Khomeini was said to derive his authority as the *faqih* from this divine mandate.

But the Islamic Republic was also born out of revolution. And it is this combination of religion and revolution, by now so inextricably woven together as to be indistinguishable, that explains the character of the Islamic Republic and of the Islam which its leaders articulate. The interweaving of religion and revolution is reflected in the very names the revolutionaries have chosen to give to the institutions of the revolution: the Foundation of the Disinherited and the Martyrs' Foundation, the revolutionary committees, the Revolutionary Guards, and—a kind of morals police—the Mobile Units of God's Vengeance. It is reflected also in the new names given the great squares and main avenues of Tehran during the post-revolution frenzy of renaming: Freedom Square, Revolution Avenue, and the Square of the Imam of the Age.

Both religious and revolutionary zeal explain the puritanical impulse of the revolution, the social conformity demanded of Iranians in public. In winter, in the ski resorts north of Tehran, men and women must ski on different slopes. Practically speaking, women can no longer swim on the Caspian coast, the playground of the middle class under the Shah. Women may not even appear in bathing suits in their own homes if they can be seen by neighbors. One wealthy Tehran homeowner has shut down his private pool, feeling it unfair for himself and his son to swim when his wife and daughter cannot do so. Women cannot appear unveiled in public. An excessive show of hair or lipstick or a dress too tight

around the hips may earn a woman a reprimand or bar her from entry into a store or government office. In periods when the puritanical impulse is running high, a woman even risks arrest and sentencing to a specified number of lashes. Male members of Iran's soccer teams must wear shorts that cover their knees. It required several rulings from Khomeini himself last year to permit light music to be played on the radio, Western entertainment programs and films to be shown on television, and chess to be accepted as a religiously permissible pastime.

For apolitical members of the middle class, the worst of the revolutionary fervor is over. People no longer expect revolutionary committee members unexpectedly to enter homes to search for liquor and playing cards or to round up guests if men and women are mixing at a party in ways considered immodest. Upper-middle-class women wear make-up, more daring clothes, and people drink in the privacy of their own homes. But a lingering fear of the knock on the door remains. A chasm has opened between public and private life. A popular saying in Tehran has it that under the Shah, Iranians prayed in private and drank in public; under the Islamic Repub-



On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran after 15 years in exile (and 16 days after the flight of the Shah). Khomeini became Iran's supreme spiritual leader in December 1979.

lic, they pray in public and drink in private.

France's revolutionaries sent the enemies of the revolution to the guillotine. Iran's revolutionaries have sent thousands before the firing squad for similar counter-revolutionary crimes and "crimes against the people." But the revolutionary courts in Iran have also charged their victims with crimes that revive a dimly-remembered Qur'anic vocabulary. Hundreds were executed for "making war against God" and "spreading corruption on earth"; hundreds more on charges of blasphemy or for being *taghutis*, worshipers of Mammon. Still others were sentenced for sharing in "the crimes of Lot," like inhabitants of a present-day Sodom and Gomorrah.

In the Islamic Republic, as was the case in Paris during the French Revolution, the year is now punctuated by a seemingly endless chain of public festivals (or mourning days) that celebrate and mark religious and revolutionary events and, most often, a combination of both. Iran of the Islamic Republic mourns the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, who died on the plains of Karbalā' in the seventh century, on one day; it celebrates the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran and shouts "death to America" on another. On Fridays, the Muslim sabbath, tens of thousands attend Friday prayers in open spaces in cities across the country. The mass Friday prayer meetings are a combination of family outing, communal get-together, and political and religious rally. The government uses the Friday sermons to expound and elaborate on government policy and religious practice, although it is often difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. The

same themes are treated in Friday sermons throughout the country. In Tehran, the sermon is delivered by one of the leading clerics of the regime. Dressed in clerical robes and turban, he delivers the sermon while resting one hand on the barrel of a rifle—a symbol, as he is meant to be, of piety and power, authority deriving from divine sanction and the barrel of a gun.

Like much else, history, too, has been turned upside down. If under the Shah official history was a celebration of monarchy, in the Iran of the ayatollahs the object of celebration is the sacred history of religious resistance to the Shah's supposedly autocratic, impious, and excessively Western-inspired rule. The Shah in 1971 celebrated 2,500 years of monarchy and depicted himself as the latest in a line of illustrious Iranian kings. In the new history books of the Islamic Republic, the kings are denigrated, while turbaned religious teachers, mystics, Islamic jurists, and martyrs for the faith are proclaimed heroes. Under the Shah, Women's Day celebrated the abolition of the veil in 1936. Today, the veil is back with a vengeance, and Women's Day coincides with the birthday of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, depicted as the symbol of both female modesty and revolutionary commitment. Some criminal laws of the Islamic Republic apply specifically and only to those who held office under the Shah after June 5, 1962, the day on which Khomeini was first arrested—as if the only modern history that really matters began when the Islamic forces girded themselves to overthrow the Shah's secular state.

The Shah's technocrats discussed public policy in the language of development economics. Today, public discourse and debate

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is usually framed in the vocabulary of Islam. In debating a tax law some years ago, the Majles (about half of whose 270 members were then mullahs) argued whether a tax imposed by the Imam Ali on horses and mules in the seventh century constituted a precedent for income taxes. In 1986, Mehdi Bazargan, Khomeini's first prime minister, now in the opposition, urged Khomeini in an open letter to make peace with Iraq. He based his argument on the example of peace treaties signed by the Prophet 13 centuries ago; Khomeini, in turn, rejected his suggestion by citing the example of the unrelenting struggle of the Old Testament Prophets against idolatry and unbelief.

Like the French and Russian revolutions, the Iranian Revolution had from the beginning an international dimension, but this too bore an Islamic imprint. In the first year of the revolution, Mohammad Montazeri, one of the younger, militant clerical leaders, and his numerous gun-toting followers insisted on leaving Iran and entering other Islamic countries without passports or visas: Islam, Montazeri said, has no borders. Iran did not initiate the bitter eight-year-old war with Iraq. But once the Iraqis invaded in September 1980, and especially after the tide turned in Iran's favor two years later, the war, too, was treated as a religious war, of Islam against unbelief. The teenage volunteers of the paramilitary forces—known as the Mobilization of the Disinherited—wore bandanas emblazoned with dedications to the Imam of the Age, whose coming will inaugurate the reign of Truth and Justice. The Iranian offensives were given names that resonated with the great mo-

ments of Islamic and Shiite history: Badr, Karbalā', Muharram, Dawn of the New Age.

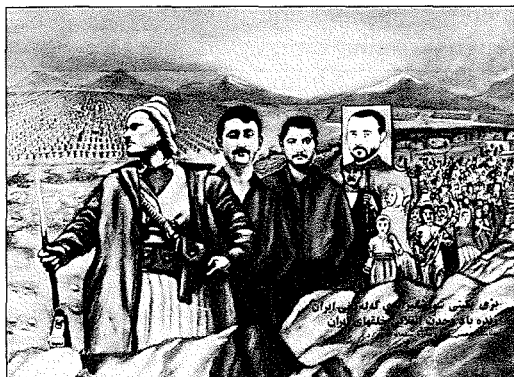
Iran's aim, Khomeini said, was to see an Islamic state established at Baghdad—and beyond. The war also became a crusade to restore Muslim rule to the Holy Land. "The road to Jerusalem lies through Baghdad" was one of the slogans of Iran's revolutionary armies. The war reinforced the belief that the tide of Iran's Islamic revolution would sweep the Middle East and the rest of the Islamic world. "Our revolution is not tied to Iran," Khomeini remarked last year.



During the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, up to one million Iranian women took one month of military training to ready themselves as reserves. Here, a chador-clad "bassidji sister" takes aim.

"The Iranian people's revolution was the starting point for the great revolution of the Islamic world."

Iran's leaders have maintained that Iran will "export" its revolution only by means of example and ideology and not by means of force. In fact, the clerics have not been above sponsoring clandestine opposition groups in other Muslim states and encouraging bombing, assassination, and hostage-taking as a means of extending the reach of the Islamic Republic. But even the export of ideology and Islamic propaganda have exacerbated Iran's strained relations with



"Unite in one aim, Iranian Revolution: Long live Iran's people revolution," says this propaganda poster from around 1979.

other Muslim states. Khomeini each year encouraged the 150,000 Iranians who made the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca to join in demonstrations to "disavow the unbelievers." This great gathering of Muslims, he insisted, had a political as well as a religious purpose—to unite Muslims against the "world-devouring" great powers and the autocratic, un-Islamic rulers of Islamic states. He and his lieutenants had no reservations about publicly denouncing other heads of state. It was, they held, an Islamic duty to denounce the wrongdoer.

Iran's leaders have claimed not only a universal significance for their revolution but also leadership of all Muslims for Khomeini himself. "Today, the Imam [Khomeini] has regency over 50 million Muslims," Ayatollah Ali Meshgini said last year. "Tomorrow, God willing, he will rule over one billion Muslims." It was as spiritual leader of the Muslim world, and defender of the interests of the worldwide Islamic community, that Khomeini in February 1989 pronounced a death sentence upon Salman Rushdie, whose book, *The Satanic Verses*, contained material deemed insulting to Muslims. Rafsanjani made an official visit to the Soviet Union in June, shortly after the Ayatollah's death, where he addressed Muslim audiences in the Caucasus.

He reported on his return that even Soviet Muslims wept when he mentioned Khomeini's name.

But ultimately, as Iran's leaders themselves emphasize, the most powerful message of the Islamic revolution will derive from the exemplary model of the Islamic Republic itself. The eyes of the entire Muslim world, Chief Justice Musavi-Ardabili has said, are on Iran. "Failure for the Islamic Republic," according to the former president Ali Khamenei, "means failure for Islam." Iran's clerics measure their success in part by the degree to which they have succeeded in asserting Iran's independence, standing up to the great powers, and reaffirming Iran's Islamic identity in the face of a threatening and alien Western culture. But they also made a revolution in the name of social justice, equality, and prosperity, and their superior ability to manage the economy.

The Iranian revolution was a reaction to excessive signs of Westernization under the Shah. But it was also a reaction among upwardly mobile young men and women to what they rightly or wrongly perceived as inequities not only of wealth and privilege but also of access to jobs, housing, and education.

The revolution did result in a transformation of the ruling classes. The old ruling elite of court and government under the Shah was decimated by execution, purge, forced retirement, and self-imposed exile. The great industrialists and businessmen lost their factories and banks; today they are mostly abroad. In the bazaar, new men with access to the ruling clerics and the valuable import and investment permits that only the government can issue have edged out the old merchant families. Even within the clerical community, middle-rank clerics, hungry for power and ready to espouse a revolutionary agenda, have

edged out the old clerical families and dominate the new regime. Many young men have made their way up through the revolutionary organizations and by way of revolutionary activity to positions of great prominence. Mohammad Ali Raja'i was a street peddler and school teacher before he became prime minister of the Islamic Republic. Another unknown, a member of "the students of the Imam's line" who occupied the American embassy and took American hostages in 1979, became a deputy foreign minister. Khamenei, now Khomeini's successor as supreme leader, was a middling cleric in the provincial capital of Mashhad before the revolution. In the army, senior military command is often in the hands of officers who were lieutenants under the Shah.

The revolution, however, promised material rewards to the masses, not only to members of a new ruling elite and their allies. These promises are embedded in the constitution. They are echoed in revolutionary rhetoric. Members of parliament, Friday prayer leaders, and government officials routinely castigate businessmen as "capitalists," "leeches," and "bloodsuckers." They speak of the working class and of the downtrodden as the true and deserving children of the revolution. On the eve of the 1988 parliamentary elections, Khomeini urged voters to elect deputies devoted to "the Islam of the barefoot people, the Islam of the deprived and the meek," and to reject candidates favoring "capitalist Islam, the Islam of the arrogant . . . in other words, American-style Islam."

But war, revolutionary turmoil, mismanagement, a swollen and cumbersome state sector, the flight of talent and capital, and plunging oil revenues have played havoc with the economy. Huge cranes still hover, as they did when the Shah was overthrown 10 years ago, over uncompleted apartment and office blocks. The revolu-

tionaries believed they would create a new economy, free of the Western imports, machinery, and technology that the Shah relied on. In fact, they have promoted the same projects—steel, gas, petrochemicals, consumer durables, copper, automobile assembly—as did the Shah.

The choice, then as now, has been dictated by Iranian strengths and realities rather than by servility to the West, as the revolutionaries believed. Even in areas where Iran should excel, progress has been meager. As in other Third World revolutions, the Iranian revolution has created, through expropriation and nationalization, a huge, cumbersome, and inefficient state sector in industry and in other areas of the economy. Productivity is generally down. The government subsidizes basic commodities, but meat, butter, sugar, and tea are all rationed. And even rationed goods are not always available. Middle-class families supplement their needs on the open black market, where supplies exist but are much more expensive. The arrival of a fresh supply of chickens is likely to send housewives and husbands scurrying to the neighborhood grocery. Inflation has been high, unemployment widespread, and housing shortages severe.

Moreover, there has been very little agreement among the senior jurists on the issues of social justice, the role of private business in the economy, and the degree to which, under Islamic law, the state can tamper with private property in order to ensure the more equal distribution of wealth. Over the past three years, the Majles has passed a series of laws touching on these issues. All were struck down by the 12-member Council of Guardians, a body of senior jurists empowered to veto legislation it considers in violation of the constitution or Islamic law. The Council struck down laws that would have permitted the distribution of arable land, the na-

THE SUNNI-SHIITE SCHISM

The greatest rift within the Muslim faith originated during the seventh century and remains open to this day. Historian Stephen Humphreys here offers a brief account of the schism:

After the Prophet's death in 632, the majority of the Muslim community in Medina chose as their leader one of Muhammad's oldest companions, 'Abū Bakr. He took a title which emphasized his political functions—Deputy of the Messenger of God ("caliph"). 'Abū Bakr, however, did not claim supreme authority to interpret revelation. God had vouchsafed guidance and salvation to the community of believers as a whole. As the community's plenipotentiary agent, the caliph, Bakr believed, must try to ensure sound faith and conduct among Muslims. But he was in no way to be a final arbiter of religious truth. This point of view (much elaborated during later centuries) became the kernel of Sunni Islam.

A minority, however, rejected both the election of 'Abū Bakr and the frame of mind which underlay it. This group held that Muhammad's closest kinsman by blood and marriage, his

cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, had the only rightful claim to leadership over the Muslim community. They also asserted that Muhammad had designated 'Ali as his successor and that 'Ali had religious priority as the first male convert to Islam. Among the partisans of 'Ali (*shi'at 'Ali*) two ideas quickly took root. First, religious and political authority must be united in one man. Second, leadership must be invested in the descendants of 'Ali himself. In the Shiite view, the essence of leadership was religious authority, and their preferred title for the head of the community, "imam," underlined this point.

Though 'Ali's adherents resented the caliphate of 'Abū Bakr and his first two successors ('Umar and 'Uthmān), they provisionally accepted their rule. But when acute political and social tensions within the community led to revolt (656) and then to the death of 'Uthmān, some of the rebels proclaimed 'Ali as the new

tionalization of foreign trade, the takeover by the state of urban private land for low-cost housing purposes, and the extension of state control over the domestic distribution of goods.

The deadlock between the Council of Guardians and the Majles does reflect the interests of different constituencies and social groups. The Council of Guardians has consistently articulated a position protective of property rights—but not exclusively. Very often, the legislation proposed by the government, approved by the Majles, and opposed by the Council of Guardians would have extended state control over the economy rather than transferring wealth from rich to poor. In addition, just as in the early American Republic there emerged broad and narrow constructionists of the Constitution, in Iran, too, there have emerged broad and narrow constructionists of Islamic law. For example, when the Majles passed a law permitting the government to seize the property of Iranians who

were abroad and failed to return to Iran within a two-month period, the Council argued that the government would have to prove on a case-by-case basis that the property targeted for expropriation was acquired illegally. When the state, alleging a critical housing shortage, wanted to take over private urban land to build low-income housing, the Council ruled the law could be applied only where the government could prove that the crisis existed.

The position on Islamic law taken by the Council of Guardians has made it difficult for the revolutionary government to legislate on even the most ordinary matters, including income tax. A special ruling from Khomeini was necessary to permit the levying of other than canonically prescribed taxes. Two years ago, under wartime conditions, the Majles sought to increase punishments for hoarding and profiteering. But the legislators discovered that, under Islamic law, hoarding applied only to six items: wheat, barley, raisins, ol-

caliph. 'Ali, however, never secured his claim to the office. Instead, a bitter but inconclusive struggle with 'Uthmān's clan (the Umayyad) ended with 'Ali's murder in 661 by a third-party extremist. The majority of Muslims now accepted the Umayyads as the heads of the community, albeit with some misgivings. 'Ali's partisans refused to accept the situation and undertook a century of struggle to regain the caliphate for his descendants.

In 750, a Shiite-inspired revolt overthrew the Umayyad dynasty, but the new caliphs, though kinsmen of the Prophet, were not descendants of 'Ali. Once established, they adopted the majoritarian (Sunni) point of view. Toward the end of the eighth century, many elements within the Shiite movement turned away from political activism toward pietism. In these circles the doctrine grew that the imam held supreme religious authority even if he could not wield political power as caliph. Moreover, the imam's teaching was now held to be divinely guided and thus infallible. By 873, the 12th imam disappeared from human view; his followers (the "Twelvers") believed

that he would ultimately return to institute a reign of justice, but until that time the proper stance was one of watchful waiting and outward submission to the powers that be.

Around 1500 a radical Shiite sect, the Safavids, seized power in Iran. Once in power, the Safavids aligned themselves with the hitherto quiescent Twelver movement and made it the official religion of Iran—a status which it holds to the present day. During the intervening centuries, the Twelver Shiite clergy have often kept their distance from the regime in Iran, but they did not actively oppose monarchy. Only in the late 19th century did certain Iranian religious leaders openly call for limits on royal power, and only during the 1960s and 1970s, largely under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, did they begin to demand the abolition of the monarchy and to assert that the clergy should take a leading political role.

Some 85 to 90 percent of Muslims in the world today regard themselves as Sunnis. The largest Shiite community is that of Iran, but large communities are also found in Iraq, Lebanon, and Pakistan.

ives, oil, and dates—a list clearly deriving from the staples of the common diet in an earlier Islamic era. Today, though, dates and olives are not an important item of the Iranian diet; and as one deputy pointed out, raisins were plentiful. The items in short supply and liable to hoarding and profiteering, he said, were pharmaceuticals, automobile spare parts, and consumer durables. In another case, the Guardianship Council refused to allow the Majles to set punishments for certain crimes, arguing that under Islamic law each individual judge is free to set the punishments he deems suitable. Not long ago, the Council of Guardians struck down a new labor law that provided for minimum wages, rights of collective bargaining, maternity leave, and employer contributions to workmen's compensation. Such provisions were common provisions of labor laws under the monarchy. But the Council now argued that the state could not interfere in contracts between consenting adults.

The advocates of a broad interpretation of Islamic law attempted to resolve this impasse by appealing to Khomeini himself, and by seeking from him rulings on matters of property, social justice, and state authority that would allow them to overcome the objections of the Guardianship Council. Occasionally, Khomeini issued such rulings. For example, he declared that the state could collect income taxes in addition to



At the Qur'anic school of Faizieh in Qum two Muslim scholars read and discuss the holy text. Ayatollah Khomeini himself studied at Faizieh.

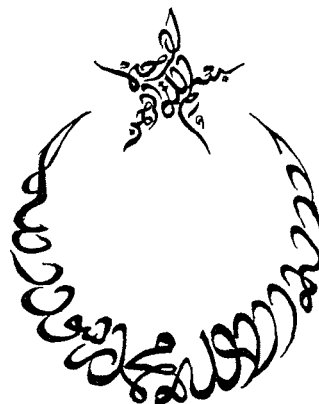
the canonically prescribed levies. In a ruling of January last year, he claimed unusually broad authority for the Islamic state. Such a state, he asserted, could suspend agreements or even the primary requirements of Islamic law, if the interests of the Islamic community required it. The broad constructionists latched on to these rulings to claim for Khomeini the right to unquestioned authority as the *faqih*, or supreme jurist. In the absence of the Hidden Imam (see box, p. 60), Khomeini said last year, the rule of the *faqih* is God's rule. "When the supreme jurist issues an order based on the interests of Islam and the society, that order is an order from God, a religious edict." It must, therefore, be carried out.

Khomeini, however, was generally reluctant to issue rulings on specific items of legislation on which the senior clerics and the leadership had been divided. He preferred to propose mechanisms for resolving differences and to leave the difficult decisions to his own quarreling lieutenants. Last year, for example, he appointed a special committee composed of senior jurists of the Council of Guardians and the three branches of government to mediate differences between the Council and the Majles. Earlier, he had suggested that a two-thirds majority vote in the Majles would suffice to establish the necessity for laws appearing to contravene Islamic dictates. But these mechanisms did not resolve parliament's difficulties with the Council of Guardians over matters of property and Islamic law. Khomeini himself subsequently retreated somewhat from his extreme formulation regarding the virtually unlimited authority of the Islamic state.

As late as Khomeini's death on June 3, 1989, many items of controversial legislation were still pending. The major doctrinal issues regarding the application of Islamic

law to questions of property and social justice remained unresolved. Khomeini, however, had articulated a fairly clear position on these issues, even if, in the end, he proved unable to win consensus among the senior clerics behind his view. He believed that the preservation and continuity of the Islamic community itself overrode all other considerations, that Islamic law could be applied to the problem of governing modern societies, and that jurists must find in the law solutions to modern-day problems. Shortly before he died, in "a fatherly reminder" to the jurists of the Council of Guardians, Khomeini wrote that the problems of today's world could not be resolved by the hairsplitting theological and legal disputes of the religious seminaries. It was incumbent on the jurists, he said, to show that Islam could resolve complex social, political, and economic problems and administer the affairs of this world. A similar plea was expressed earlier by Chief Justice Musavi-Ardabili, when he argued for "a dynamic and living" jurisprudence that would change with the times.

During the first decade of the revolution, Iran's clerics and leaders argued the seemingly arcane points of Islamic law regarding raisins and hoarding, freedom of contract, and maternity rights. They pursued such matters with energy and conviction because they believed that larger questions of social justice, property rights, and state authority were at stake. Their conflicts over Islamic law are a reminder that, in the Iranian case, revolution and religion go hand in hand. The revolution is constantly being shaped and defined by the Islamic movement that helped to bring it about. Islam—variously defined—remains the ultimate source of legitimacy.



VARIETIES OF MUSLIM EXPERIENCE

by Mahnaz Ispahani

In the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire, it was the exclusive prerogative of the sultan to build a mosque with more than two minarets. But when the Caliph Sultan Ahmed (ruled 1603–17) ordered the Blue Mosque built in Istanbul with six minarets, he was told that the sacred Haram-e-Sharif in Mecca must boast more minarets than any other mosque in the Muslim world, and it had six. Sultan Ahmed promptly commanded that a seventh minaret be added to the mosque in Mecca so that he might fulfill his fantasy in Istanbul. His will was done. The Blue Mosque was built with six minarets within the astonishingly brief span of five years.

Except in the speeches of fundamentalist mythmakers and rabblers, the power to exercise such supreme dominion over the entire community of believers, the umma, has long since departed from the Muslim world. Today no aspirant to Muslim

power—no ayatollah, no moneyed Arab monarch—can rightly claim the Ottomans' imperial reach.

The Islamic world—including the some 40 nations in which Muslims constitute the majority of the population—is a rich assortment of peoples and cultures. It is united, in fact, only by the prevalence of poverty. Beyond the borders of the desert oil kingdoms, Muslim societies are poor and developing, confined by their lack of political, economic, and military resources. They face the ample, simultaneous difficulties of modernization: sprawling, densely populated cities immobilized by traffic; unceasing migration from the countryside; restless, disease-ridden slums filled with second-generation rural migrants. Visible everywhere is the constancy of construction and the constancy of decay.

The many disorientations of development have provided fertile ground for Mus-

lim fundamentalists, and certainly, during the decade of Khomeini, it was they who came to people the world's imagination. Yet if we scan Islam's numerous geographical redoubts we are quickly assured of the diversity of Muslim pasts and patrimonies. Modernists, reformers, secular nationalists, and fundamentalists are everywhere arguing about the proper balance between miracle and reason, between universalism and local culture, between the community and the state in the Muslim world.

Muslim spokesmen of earlier eras of tumult, of the 19th and early 20th centuries, were also preoccupied by these questions. Yet, by and large, they presented a face of Islam far different from that presented by more recent militant fundamentalists. These early spokesmen—including the South Asian educator, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–98), and the philosopher-poet, Sir Mohammad Iqbal (1876–1938)—were Muslim modernists who argued for reconstructions of Islam's universal principles, and for the faith's association with humanism, rationality, doubt, historical reckoning, and scientific advance. It was their successors—Muslim modernists and secular nationalists—who led the fight against Western colonialism. Yet the modernists' notions of rebellion and their blueprints of economic and social progress were inspired by Western teachers. From Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–70) in Egypt to Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) in Pakistan to Sukarno (1901–70) in Indonesia, Muslim nationalists turned what they had learned from the West against their colonizers, or their various Muslim monarchs, and fashioned new

societies in their own images.

Secularists took power in Sunni Muslim societies as disparate as Tunisia and Indonesia. But their inheritance is perhaps nowhere more vivid than in modern Turkey. Mustafa Kemal Pasha, known as Atatürk (1881–1938), was a Turkish soldier and secular nationalist who followed the example of earlier Muslim modernists, the Young Ottomans, who had been active during the 1860s and 1870s. On the bones of the Ottoman Empire he set about building a modern Turkish Republic. In 1919, abandoning Istanbul, the city of the caliphs, he made Ankara the capital and turned it firmly toward the West. In 1922, through a resolution of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, he terminated the Ottoman sultanate; in 1924, the Assembly, on Atatürk's recommendation, abolished the caliphate and banished the Ottomans. Atatürk based his case before the Assembly on the need "to cleanse and elevate the Islamic faith, by rescuing it from the position of a political instrument, to which it has been accustomed for years." His dream was fully realized in 1937, when secularism was enshrined as the central tenet of the constitution.

Thousands of miles away and a decade later, in the multi-cultural society of Indonesia, a rural-born engineer named Sukarno led a secular crusade to free his country from Japanese and Dutch imperialists. In 1949, he finally succeeded. Sukarno, too, frequently stressed the need to separate public state from private faith. Today, Indonesia, with 174 million people, only 12 percent of whom publicly profess other faiths, is the largest Muslim country in the world.

In Shiite Iran, however, the quarrel be-

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The Mosque of Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul—also known as the Blue Mosque—was built between 1606 and 1611, a remarkable feat of construction even by today's standards.

tween monarchs, modernists, secularists, and revolutionary ulema (clergy) over Islam's role in politics has had a different resolution. The frail Qājār Shahs of the 19th century were succeeded by modernizing monarchs, the Pahlavis. (Echoing the emphasis placed on the pre-Islamic past by many secular leaders of Muslim states, they adopted a name that invoked pre-Islamic memories.) These Shahs tried to strengthen the state's institutions as well as to encroach on the establishments of religion. But some of Iran's Shiite ulema resisted, and partly because they continued to control powerful and independent religious organizations, they were ultimately able to wrest control from the Pahlavi state. Their victory was sealed by Khomeini's revolutionary rise to power in 1979.

By preaching his fiery brand of religious transnationalism, by insisting that "neither

East nor West" was his ruler, the Ayatollah transformed Shiite Islam's message into an anti-Western crusade. More than 7,000 people were executed for the glory of the Islamic Revolution, while another half a million Iranians, many of them young men, died in a remorseless eight-year war with Iraq. Nevertheless, Khomeini's message was taken up by radical Islamic movements throughout the world. The example of his revolution encouraged a violent circus of religious zealots, inflammatory mullahs, and transnational terrorists who brandished bombs and held hostages in the name of their Islam.

Radical religious peoples, Shiite and Sunni, placed their stamp on recent Islamic and global politics. They stormed the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979. They assassinated Egypt's presi-

dent Anwar Sadat in 1981. They have been participants in the battle over Beirut since 1975. They provoked bloody riots in Algeria in 1988. They recently instigated deadly rioting in India and Pakistan, purportedly to protest the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. And in Indonesia, on the islands of Sumbawa and Sumatra, radical Muslim preachers have begun to deliver incendiary sermons.

In Western societies, the turbaned sweep of Khomeini's theocracy revived the dread chimera of a Muslim monolith, nearly one billion strong. The irony is that most Westerners share this image with the fundamentalists. The former fear it; the latter revel in it. To Westerners, it poses the constant threat of terror; to fundamentalists, it is the harbinger of triumph for the umma. This Islamic monolith, however, is mythical. The map of Islam is colored by many cultural particularities. Or, as an eminent Turkish art historian once said to me, there is "no Islam in general."

The diversity of Islam is captured—to take the most pleasing example—by its aesthetics, of which architecture, along with calligraphy, has always been a principal expression. The familiar forms of Islamic design—the dome, the minaret, the calligraphic inscription—are everywhere inflected by radical regional variations. As there is no single Islamic culture, so there is no single Islamic architecture. Urban designs and buildings which fulfill Islamic functions—the palace, the mosque, and the bazaar—are adapted to local materials, customs, climates, levels of knowledge and technology. The mosque, of course, is omnipresent, but even its manifestations are myriad. While Istanbul's skyline is filled with the undulations of Ottoman domes, on Indonesia's islands curved domes vie with an angular geometry more responsive to monsoon rains, revealing an Islamic architecture at enviable ease with complexity.

The Indonesian mosque may be represented by the national Istiqlal mosque in Jakarta: Modern, domed and daunting, it was designed (in the spirit of Indonesian tolerance) by a Protestant. But in parts of Java, to complicate matters, there is not a domed mosque in sight. There, mosques conform to the traditional wood "pendopo" style: pavilions with pitched brick or corrugated iron roofs.

In Bangladesh, meanwhile, another major Muslim society of over 100 million people, the fusion of cultures, and of colonialism and modernity—of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, of British rule and American effort—are visible in its sacred and profane structures. Decaying temples and stupas coexist with old mosques built in brick, the common medium of Muslim Bengal. One such mosque, more than 250 years old, today looks out upon the "Raj Video Store" in Old Dhaka. Here, in the world's largest delta, it is the terrible omnipresence of water and of poverty which determines the scale and nature of Islamic construction and decay. Only a few tall 15th-century Sultanate mosques and a few grand 17th-century Mughal forts survive. And even their fragile remains fall prey to the "brick hunters," poor scavengers among the ruins of cultures who dismantle the remnants, stone by stone, to build new shelters.

In such extraordinary diversity, the fundamentalists see a danger: a faith diluted, an umma divided. To them, geography, ethnicity, and nationalism are pernicious obstacles to Islamic unity. Liberal Muslim politicians and thinkers also value the universality of Islamic principles; they, too, venerate revelation, prophecy, and text. And they have worked to unite the umma through such organizations as the Islamic Conference and the Islamic Development Bank. Yet they are not undone by Is-

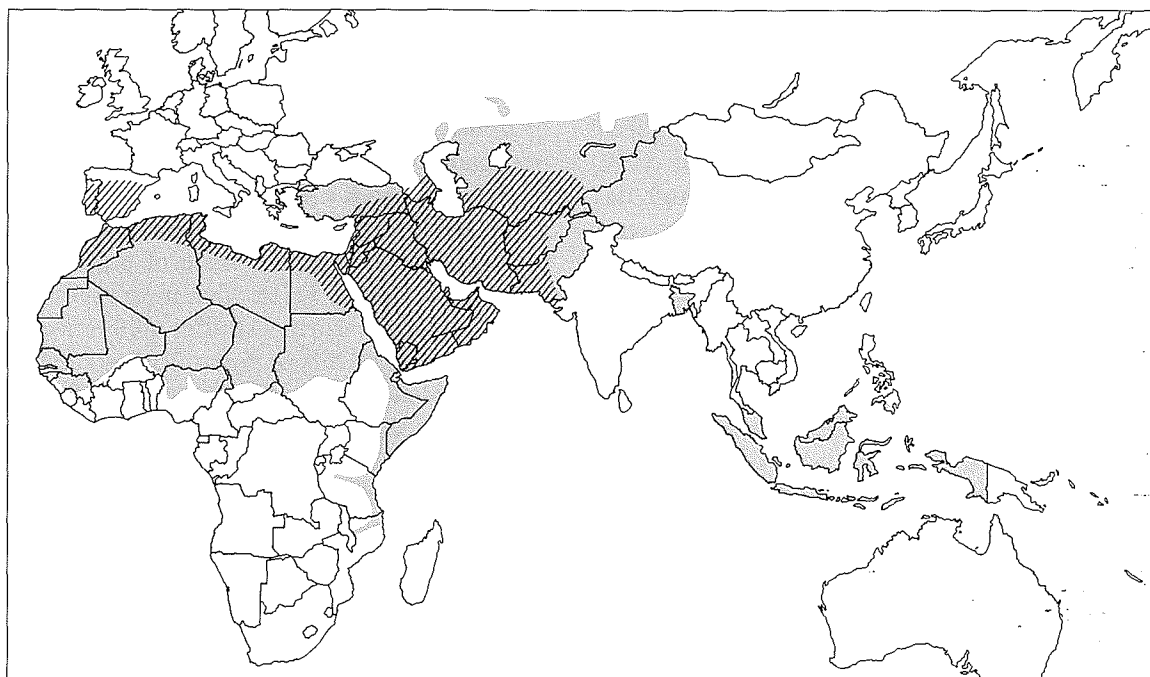
lam's diversity. In it, they find a faith enduring. They accept that, unlike religion, cultures and politics have geography.

But wherever he lives, the modern Muslim—and even more so the secular Muslim—stands on precarious ground between fundamentalism and assimilation. While aware of the various intrusions of the West upon his society, the modern Muslim does not see the solution to the difficulties of development in the abandonment of all Western political ideals. He (or she) considers education, pluralism, and democracy as necessary conditions for social progress and is disturbed by encroachments of Islam upon the state. The modernist does not argue, however, that progress depends upon the absence or abandonment of Islam. Instead, he insists, it requires that Islamic history be read dispassionately.

Mohammed Arkoun, an Algerian professor of Islamic history at the Sorbonne, ar-

gues that while Muslims need not engage in debates about modernity solely on Western terms, they must abandon their "theological" and "mythical" approaches to history. The failures of Islam must be studied as readily as are their successes. In Karachi, Pakistan, Dr. Akhtar Hamid Khan, a venerated champion of community development, has sharply criticized Muslim myth-makers for aspiring to the wrong goals: Some Muslim leaders, he has said, are still looking for their own Holy Roman Empire. And in Jakarta, Abdur Rahman Wahid, the leader of the 40-million-strong Nahdatul Ulema ("The Awakening of the Ulema"), the largest, rural-based Muslim organization in Indonesia, has openly defended intellectual freedom and the separation of Islam from the state.

In Indonesia, orthodox Islam is strongest in the coastal areas of Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Sulawesi. Yet Java, where the

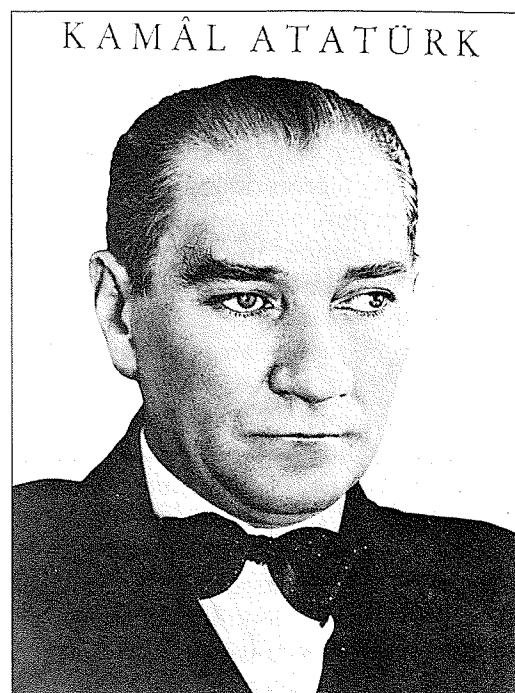


A map of the Islamic world. The shaded zones indicate those nations or areas in which the majority of the population is Muslim. The hatched areas show Muslim lands during the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid (786-809).

majority of Indonesians live, is almost recklessly syncretic, its popular traditions enriched by the histories of Buddhism, Hinduism, Kebatinan, local mysticism, and a late-spreading Islam. The island is home to the incomparable Borobudur, the early medieval Hindu-Buddhist shrine to meditation. From its towering gray terraces, hundreds of stone Buddhas gaze calmly across the world. Many Indonesians comfortably carry names which assert the glory of the Mahabharata, an ancient Hindu epic, while delivering their daily prayers to Allah. In Jogjakarta, the cultural capital of Java, the Muslim sultan, Hamengku Buwono X, communes with the area's most powerful spirit, the Goddess of the Southern Seas. She is said to meditate in one of the sultan's royal mosques. The ceremonial columns of his keraton, or palace, are colored in the gold of Buddhism, the red of Hinduism, the enscripted black of Islam, and the green of Java. Culture, in Indonesia, conspires to reinforce the state's efforts to separate itself from the faith.

The powerful Indonesian state enforces Panca Sila, or the five principles—belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, social justice, and “democracy through deliberation.” After a fateful encounter with communists in 1965 (in which more than half a million people were killed—many by ardent Muslims—and the Partai Komunis Indonesia was banned), the state has required all its citizens to profess a religion, but any public deviation from the secular ideology of Panca Sila is considered a crime. President Suharto's New Order government promotes Islamic rituals and funds Muslim schools and mosques, but it prohibits their politicization.

In Turkey, as in Indonesia, it is the military which defends the separation of Islam from politics. Aware of their religious and secular legacies, their Islamic



The Father of the Turks, born Mustafa Kemal, created the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

and European heritages, Turks today are also wrestling with questions about the role of Islam in modernity. In the cities, a preoccupation with Europe is still evident. Turkey's leaders seek a place not merely in Europe's defense but also in its economic and political systems. On the issue of publication of *The Satanic Verses*, that most recent yardstick for measuring Muslim adherence to Western standards of rights, Turkey took an ambiguous stand. Although the chief of religious affairs suggested that it would be “preferable” not to publish the book in Turkey, the book was not officially banned. As one Turkish architect put the matter, “How can an aspirant to the European Community ban a book?”

Still, rural Anatolian Turks and Islamic groups are resisting Atatürk's legacy. To many of them, this is a post-secular era, and Atatürk is yesterday's man. Over the years, (although the state has kept Islam under its

control), Atatürk's inheritance has been significantly diluted, in order better to integrate it with the Islam of Turkey's masses. As an Ankara professional recently said to me, Atatürk has become "an empty fetish."

That may be hyperbole. But Atatürk's revolution is certainly being challenged. Consider the delicate question of dress. Atatürk forbade the wearing of traditional garb such as the fez and prohibited the turban and other religious clothing outside religious buildings or ceremonies. Turks were quite literally ordered into Western attire. Recently, though, Turkish leaders have become embroiled in a tense controversy with religious radicals (backed by Iran) over whether university women should be permitted to wear turbans, or religious headcoverings, to class. After much national discussion this year, the Turkish courts paid tribute to the resilience of secularism by ruling that such headdress was in violation of the constitution. Echoes of the controversy still linger.

During the 1980s, Islamic fundamentalism also encroached upon the Pakistani state. The contemporary struggle over this society's Islamic identity goes back to the inchoate conditions of the nation's founding. The adherents of the mass movement for a separate Muslim homeland during the 1940s were drawn to the idea of leading a Muslim life in a state ruled by Muslims. Yet, the champions of this territorial nationalism were, and could only be, modern or secular Muslims. The founder of Pakistan, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, a Western-educated lawyer, believed in political pluralism, social progress, and the separation of the faith from the state. Shortly after the birth of Pakistan, Land of the Pure, Jinnah made a powerful declaration: "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan . . . You may belong to any religion or caste or

creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State."

Nevertheless, since 1947, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan's political history has been riven by battles between Islamic form and Islamic content. To date, neither Pakistan's politicians nor its ulema have been able to agree upon the definition of an Islamic state. Successive Pakistani constitutions have insisted on the state's fidelity to Islam, while Pakistani leaders have followed an assortment of interpretations and policies. In May 1959, General Ayub Khan, a military modernizer who ruled Pakistan between 1958 and 1969, said, "The miracle of Islam was that it destroyed idolatry, and the tragedy of Muslims has been that they rendered religion into the form of an idol." Ayub passed the most progressive family laws in the nation's history in 1961. They included restrictions on polygamy and child marriage, and they eliminated *talaq* (divorce solely through repudiation).

Similarly, in his constitution of 1973, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a civilian who ruled Pakistan between 1971 and 1977, declared Islamic Socialism to be his party's credo. He also prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. Yet even Bhutto entered into a contest of Islamic one-upmanship with the influential, right-wing religious party, the Jamaat-i-Islami. Bhutto declared the Ahmadis, a controversial Muslim sect, to be non-Muslims. He also prohibited liquor and gambling.

It was not until the age of ayatollahs, however, that a middle-class soldier, General Zia ul-Haq, deftly brought both state and society under the purview of conservative Islam. Reversing the practices of their Turkish and Indonesian counterparts, Pakistan's soldiers, under Zia, imposed the Shari'a (Islamic law) on the state.

Through Islamicization, Zia sought to



Benazir Bhutto listens to the national anthem shortly before being sworn in as Pakistan's prime minister on December 2, 1988. She is the first woman to be elected leader of a Muslim nation.

unify the nation's disparate peoples. He asserted the sovereignty of the laws of God over merely secular laws and barred political parties as antithetical to Islam. Significantly, he tried to retire Pakistan's women from public life. But Zia's Islamicizing efforts did not produce greater national cohesion. Instead, they aggravated schisms among Muslim sects and created painful uncertainty for women.

Everywhere, while fundamentalists such as Zia seek first to unify nations around Islam and then to rebuild the entire Muslim umma, the history-minded Muslim modernists and secularists see such Islamicizing efforts as causes of violence and national failure. Pakistan's bloody war of secession in 1971 (which led to the amputation of East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh) stands as proof that Islam failed to hold together the only modern state that was founded on its behalf.

The map of Islam is more complicated still. It is populated by yet another figure: the fundamentalist-modernizer. Saudi Arabia and the small, dry Arab sheikdoms of the Gulf are, in one sense, divided societies. Saudi monarchs aim to absorb Western technology and expertise and to adopt administrative laws essential to modernization. Meanwhile, in accordance with the puritanical, aggressive reading of Islam given by the 18th-century founder of their Islamic school, Ibn Abdul Wahhab, the Saudi leaders enforce a rigid and punitive social system. (Slavery was not banned until 1962; and to this day no non-Muslim house of wor-

ship may be built on Saudi soil.) Yet this closed, "Men Only" society, where women are immobile and unseen, is rapidly modernizing its economy, thanks to Allah's munificence—oil—and the efforts of outsiders—foreign labor and foreign expertise. Can such a process of compartmentalized change continue, either peacefully or successfully?

The Saudi monarchs, so reliant on Western military prowess, seek, as do their Iranian rivals, to promote their brand of Islam throughout the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia enjoys special influence in poor, economically dependent states like Pakistan and Bangladesh. There the Saudis are commonly said to sponsor their ideological compatriots, religious parties such as the Jamaat-i-Islami, which press first for the establishment of Islamic states and eventually for a reunion of the umma. Like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Sunni

fundamentalist Jamaatis are activist and anti-modernist. Today, Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi warriors may even be spied on the troubled battlegrounds of Afghanistan, killing, and taking no prisoners, for their faith.

The first concern to such fundamentalists, of course, is legislation pertaining to the family, specifically to women. And here again, they work to undo the accomplishments of the early Muslim modernists, many of whom actively helped to improve the status of Muslim women. Atatürk's secularism went important steps further. Polygamy was abolished in 1924; equality between the sexes in education, employment, and family law was established; and by 1934 Turkish women had the right to vote. During the 1950s and 1960s, most non-Gulf Arab Muslim states passed humane family laws which, among other things, restricted polygamy and the rights of men in divorce.

Yet, today, in order to curtail the role of women in Muslim societies, fundamentalists readily exploit local and traditional notions of honor. Above all, they exploit the attitude that control over women is the source of honor for men. Saudi Arabia's women are entirely banished from the public (that is, the male) realm. And in the urban slums of Pakistan, women leave their homes only in "distress" or to fulfill some urgent economic need. In their rural communities, Pakistani men imprison women through an ancient tactic: reverence. Poor peasant women, who must work unveiled in the fields, are viewed by feudal men as entirely without honor. "Feudals," however, and aspirants to their status—who are always in search of honor—cover their women with veils and surround them with four walls.

The social, economic, and political particularities of the Muslim world sometimes thwart the fundamentalists' best efforts to keep women enclosed. In Bangladesh, it is

the overwhelming fact of poverty that breaks Islamic strictures unmodified by history. In the cities, Bengali women with their wretched limbs exposed sit under charred umbrellas in the noonday sun, spending day after long day crushing bricks to earn a living.

In Pakistan, General Zia passed Islamic laws injurious to women, including the Offense of Zia (Adultery) Act of 1979, which blurred distinctions between adultery and rape and prescribed flogging for the "crime." And while he built 7,500 mosque schools, he made no efforts to increase education for women. Yet only a few months after the General's sudden death in August 1988, Pakistan's people, in a unique historical act, elected a young woman, Benazir Bhutto, to become the first woman to lead a Muslim nation in modern Islamic history.

South Asian cultures have been sympathetic to the daughters and wives of their political aristocracies: Srimavo Bandaranaike governed Sri Lanka (1960–1965, 1970–1977) after the death of her husband; Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, ruled India with a powerful hand (1967–1977, 1980–1984). In voting Benazir Bhutto into office, Pakistanis overrode the admonitions of the fundamentalist Jamaat and its allies that, under the laws of Islam, a woman cannot legitimately govern a Muslim state. When I asked her how she might explain her rise to power, Benazir Bhutto pointed to the fact that in Pakistan "while there may be tremendous exploitation of women on one level, on another level there is tremendous respect for women. Heaven lies at the foot of the mother, and sisters are to be venerated, protected . . ."

Meanwhile, Indonesia's syncretic culture allows its young Muslim women, with their heads properly wrapped in Islamic fashion, to convey themselves about town on motorbikes. Inside the mosques of Java, women pray—an uncommon sight in the



The falcon and the car phone: Saudis embrace advanced Western technology while preserving their oldest desert traditions and customs.

Gulf Arab states, or even in Pakistan. In Turkey, an unlikely quarrel between generations of women has erupted. There, women brought up during the heyday of Atatürk's reforms protest against their own daughters (or granddaughters) who seek increasingly public demonstrations of Islamic ritual. Recently, the middle-aged mother of a Turkish friend of mine, a devout Muslim resident of Istanbul who prays daily and dislikes demonstrations, marched in protest against the wearing of turbans by her daughter's generation. Across the Islamic world, such conflicts between the claims of religion and those of culture, secular politics, and economics abound.

Still, it is important to remember that we are living in a time when fundamentalists increasingly define the terms of the Islamic debate. Benazir Bhutto's opposition clamors for the full institution of Zia's legacy: Islamic laws. She is hampered in argument by her sex. Her head and body cov-

ered, she has not yet dared to alter the direction of Pakistan's social policies or to right the juridical wrongs inflicted upon women by General Zia ul-Haq's Islamicizing regime.

Today Muslims in every corner of the world are quarreling about readings of history. In Turkey, for instance, the debate over historical interpretation between Muslim fundamentalists and Muslim secularists has emerged in contests for the control over monuments and their meaning. In which civilization's image, for example, should one know the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul? Born of Justinian's vision and will in the sixth century, this church once spoke of the magnificent capacities of the Byzantines. Its massive dome was inimitable for 500 years, the obsession of generations of Ottoman master builders. (Ottoman efforts to match this great dome may be seen in the mosque of Süleyman the Magnificent.) When he took Constantinople in 1453, Mehmet II transformed the Hagia Sophia into a central mosque of the Ottoman Empire. (It is said that he prayed there the night after he took the city—an act at once astute and symbolic.) Centuries later, on his secularizing crusade, Atatürk banished the Ottoman sultan and ordered the mosque stripped of its earlier religious symbolism: In modern Turkey it is a museum. But today Islamic fundamentalists are agitating for its restoration to a functioning national mosque. Muslims, like all peoples with great memories, are finding that history starts as many debates as it resolves.

BACKGROUND BOOKS

THE ISLAMIC WORLD

As recently as 15 years ago, no serious student of social and political change in the Middle East, North Africa, or South and Southeast Asia paid much attention to Islam. It was obviously the religion professed by the overwhelming majority of the populations in many nations of these regions, and no doubt it had once provided the framework of ideas and sentiments through which Muslims interpreted their own actions and institutions. But that was history. As an ideology in the modern world, Islam could hardly compete with such juggernauts as nationalism and Marxism.

By 1980 scholarly fashions had changed beyond recognition. Every commentator on these regions was now compelled to come to grips with Islam as a powerful, indeed transforming, political force. Perhaps the pendulum has even swung a bit too far. Islam has certainly held its own against competing ideologies in these areas, but except in Iran (and for wholly different reasons, in Saudi Arabia) it has not yet driven its rivals from the field. But Islam undeniably holds a privileged place in nations as geographically and culturally distinct as Morocco and Indonesia; eras of crisis always evoke a deeply felt need to reconstitute society and government on an authentically Islamic foundation—to strive to re-enact in the present generation what the Prophet and his companions so gloriously achieved 14 centuries ago.

The most ambitious effort to convey the interpenetration of Islam and society is by the late University of Chicago historian M. G. S. Hodgson in **The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization** (3 vols., Univ. of Chicago, 1974). Hodgson's style is dense and prolix, and his chapters on economic life and social structure are seriously outdated. Even so, his grasp of the complex impact of Islam is unique, as is his own involvement with his subject. I. M. Lapidus, in **A History of Islamic Societies** (Cambridge, 1988), offers an intelligent, clear, and wide-ranging synthesis of current scholarship. Like Hodgson, the University of California historian tries to deal with the whole world of Islam, from West Africa to Southeast Asia. But his focus on broad

structures and processes leads to a somewhat impersonal presentation. One gains a much less vivid sense than with Hodgson of what was at stake for these people.

Both Hodgson and Lapidus write narrative history on a vast scale. In his concise but formidably erudite essay, **The Political Language of Islam** (Univ. of Chicago, 1988), Bernard Lewis explicates the social and political vocabulary—much though not all of it firmly rooted in revelation—used by Muslims throughout their history. When, as here, individual terms such as “umma” (the community of believers) and “sultan” (used in earlier periods as “government” and in later times as “authority”) become the focus of discussion, they tend to take on a life of their own, as if concepts and attitudes were caused rather than symbolized by words. But altogether Lewis is both perceptive and challenging.

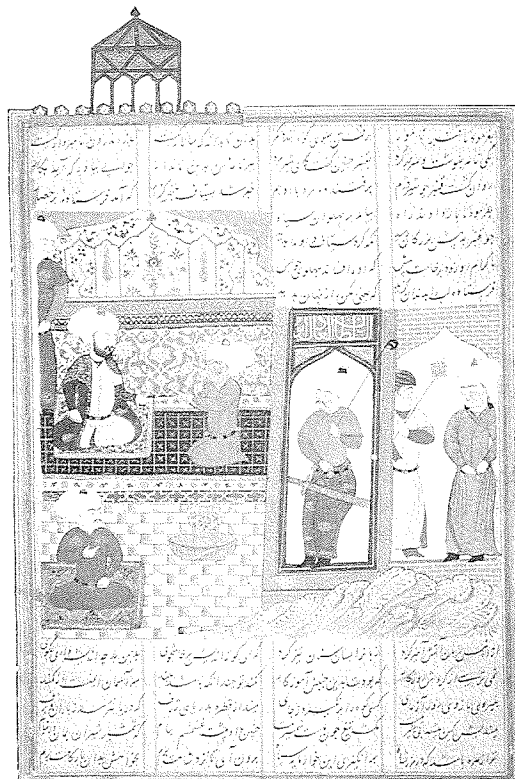
Since Islam was from the beginning not only a system of belief but a framework for political and social action, a knowledge of origins is essential. F. M. Donner, in **The Early Islamic Conquests** (Princeton, 1981), shows how a tribal society in Arabia became the core of a world empire: “The formulation of the umma, the concept of an overriding higher authority, and the strong tendency toward centralization of that authority provided powerful ideological underpinning for the rise of state institutions hitherto unknown in the region.”

Donner's interpretation has found wide acceptance, but its assumptions have been sharply attacked by some, most notably by the Danish Islamicist Patricia Crone. In **God's Caliph** (Cambridge, 1986), she and Martin Hinds propose a radical revision of established views about the relationship between religion and state in the early caliphate. Their view—that for almost two centuries the caliph claimed a nearly inspired authority to define Islamic doctrine—is extremely controversial, but it cannot be ignored.

During the long period between 900 and 1500, Muslims increasingly felt that religion and state had become divorced; the claims of most rulers to be God-fearing were dismissed

as rank hypocrisy. Even so, the profound hope that political life might somehow be redeemed was not lost. Our modern understanding of these issues is based on a series of articles which the Scottish-born scholar H. A. R. Gibb devoted to Sunni political theory. Although some of these date back half a century, they have retained much of their value; a number of them are collected in Gibb's **Studies on the Civilization of Islam** (Routledge, 1962).

The political tradition of medieval Iran, rooted partly in ancient notions of kingship and partly in Islamic constitutional thought, is discussed by A. K. S. Lambton, professor of Persian at the University of London, in **Theory and Practice in Medieval Persian Government** (Variorum, 1980). Perhaps the best introduction to Perso-Islamic thought, however, is an 11th-century treatise by the vizier Nizam al-Mulk, **The Book of Government, or Rules for Kings** (trans. by Hubert Darke, Routledge, 1978)—a powerful and uncompromising statement of royal absolutism, in which Islam's proper role is reduced to legitimizing and reinforcing submission to kingly authority.



It can be argued that the Ottoman Empire was the most deeply Islamicized of Islamic regimes, the one which strove most earnestly to harmonize royal autocracy and Islamic law. By far the best analysis of the institutional and ideological foundations of this durable polity is Turkish historian Halil Inalcik's **Ottoman Empire: the Classical Age, 1300-1600** (Weidenfeld 1973).

Its chief rival, the Safavid kingdom in Iran, originated as a millenarian Shiite movement. As the Safavids consolidated their power after 1500, however, they turned to a more moderate version of Shiism (the Ithna 'ashari or "Twelver" branch) and established it as the official religion of Iran. Shiite political thought was long the stepchild of Islamic studies, but the tumultuous events of 1978-79 in Iran demonstrated its relevance. A good introduction to the subject can be found in two collections of articles: S. A. Arjomand's **Authority and Political Culture in Shiism** (State University of New York, 1988); and Nikki R. Keddie's **Religion and Politics in Iran** (Yale, 1983). Both volumes discuss medieval and Safavid Shiism, but inevitably they focus on contemporary ideas. These not only inspired a political revolution but also reflect a profound ideological ferment within Shiism itself.

Although the Ottoman government appealed to Islamic principles and loyalties down to the very end, specifically Islamic concepts played a declining role (though they were certainly never absent) among the intellectual elite of the empire from the 1820s on. The classic account of this transformation is Bernard Lewis's **Emergence of Modern Turkey** (Oxford, 1961), which brings the story down to 1950. Lewis has been criticized on several grounds—notably his narrowly Istanbul-centered view of political and ideological change and his identification of progress with secularization—but his work remains indispensable. For the Arab provinces (and eventual successor states) of the Ottoman Empire, we have Albert Hourani's **Arab Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939** (Oxford, 1962; Cambridge, 1983, with a new preface), a superb overview whose elegant style complements its massive erudition and precision of thought. Perhaps Hourani's analysis assigns too marginal a role to Islam, but we must recall that until very recently the secularizers

and Europeanists seemed to have the upper hand. Like Lewis's *Emergence*, it is a book of enduring value.

Disillusionment with European ideologies of whatever stamp and a renewed search for Islamic authenticity are signaled in **The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967** (Cambridge, 1981) by Fouad Ajami of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Ajami does not subscribe to the Islamic movement, but he understands its appeal and its roots in political, social, and economic frustration. The Islamic critique of contemporary society in Egypt and Syria is astutely analyzed in Emmanuel Sivan's **Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics** (Yale, 1985). Sivan, an Israeli scholar, correctly locates the radical impulse in the fear that Islam is in danger of extinction before the onslaught of modernity. The political struggle of Egypt's Islamic groups, culminating in the assassination of Sadat, is vividly portrayed in French political scientist Gilles Kepel's **Muslim Extremism in Egypt: the Prophet and Pharaoh** (California, 1985). It is worth recalling that in spite of intense socio-economic frustration and deep popular commitment to Islam, Egypt has not (so far at least) had an Islamic revolution. Kepel shows us that Egypt's fundamentalists failed to understand that the Egyptian masses "had not radically broken with the values of the Egyptian nation as such, values of which Islam is the most important, but not the sole, component."

The collapse of the Iranian monarchy in 1978-79 astonished Iranians no less than everyone else, and the success of the clergy in seizing and retaining power made fools of many wise men. Shi'ite doctrine and ideology are surveyed in the volumes by Arjomand and Keddie mentioned above. The best political analysis of

the establishment of the Islamic Republic is Shaul Bakhash's, **The Reign of the Ayatollahs** (Basic, 1984), though one might fault his focus in the middle chapters on the hapless President Bani-Sadr rather than the leaders of the Islamic Republican Party.

A bold attempt to portray the frame of mind of the Iranian clergy is Harvard historian R. P. Mottahedeh's **The Mantle of the Prophet** (Simon and Schuster, 1985). The author uses the biography (slightly fictionalized) of a Shi'ite mullah to explore the cultural and intellectual roots of modern Iran. Mottahedeh writes with a novelist's touch. At one point, for example, he recreates an episode from his mullah's childhood: "These 20 or so words in Arabic [from the Qur'an] seemed to enter Ali almost at one swallow, but when he recited them back to his father two days later, for the Arabic word *samad*, 'Eternal,' he said *shamad*, the Persian word for 'mosquito netting.' 'Dear son, if you have to speak Persian instead of Arabic in your prayers, at least compare God to something more substantial like *namad* [felt], which is a little stronger and more solid than mosquito netting.'" Mottahedeh's narrative is a bit dizzying in places, but on balance his is the one book on contemporary Iran that must be read.

Finally, we should call attention to the recent book by Leonard Binder, **Islamic Liberalism: a Critique of Development Ideologies** (Univ. of Chicago, 1988). Binder is demanding of his readers, but he squarely addresses a crucial question: What are the prospects for the creation of a liberal political order in the Middle East, and what role (positive or negative) may Islam play in this process?

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