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## Between Ourselves

### THE COVER

The picture on the Cover is that of the famous piece of Arab architecture, the Giralda, at Seville, Spain. This tower, built in 1184 C.E., once formed part of a great mosque, begun in 1172 C.E. and completed in 1195 C.E. It now comprises a vast cathedral. With the exception of the last storey, which serves as a belfry, the Giralda in its present form dates back to the days of the Muwahhid ruler of Spain, Abu Yusuf al-Mansur (1183-94 C.E.).

"According to Contreras, the Giralda is regarded as the most expressive monument of the Mohammedan dominion; and, despite all that has been said of its Moorish structure and primitive African style, it in his opinion is a perfect work of art" (A. F. Calvert, *Moorish Remains in Spain*, London, 1906).

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"Muhammad is . . . the Messenger of God and the Last of the Prophets . . ." —THE HOLY QUR'AN 33 : 40  
"There will be no Prophet after me,, —THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

VOL. XLV No. 7

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# THE BASES OF THE ARAB WORLD

## Islam a significant element in the composite being of an Arab

## Islam and Christianity the two greatest forces to stem the tide of aggressive materialism

### The extent and nature of the Arab world

From Morocco, on the shores of the Atlantic, to Iraq, on the Persian Gulf, stretches the Arab world — an area which surrounds the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and links together the three continents of the Old World: Europe, Asia and Africa.

In this area of the Arab world there are today eleven independent States and some half-dozen non-independent countries. The eleven independent States are Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, the Lebanon, Libya, Su'udi Arabia, the Sudan, Syria and the Yemen, which compose the League of Arab States, and the newly independent Tunisia and Morocco. These eleven countries, most of which have become independent during the last decade, are now full-fledged members of the United Nations.

In this whole area, the same aspirations and urgings dominate the souls of human beings and rage within their bosoms: the aspiration to attain or preserve their freedom, the aspiration to restore the unity of purpose and being, which had characterized the area for centuries but was shattered under the impact of British and French intervention after World War I, and to rejuvenate and reform social institutions and practices.

The question which usually arises is: What do these people have in common? What makes them "Arabs"?

It is not the racial element which underlies their common identity. Today's "Arabs" are the product, ethnically speaking, of countless peoples and groups which had inhabited the Mediterranean region for millenia prior to the advent of the Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula.

Nor is the unifying element, which underlies the common identity of the Arabs, exclusively religious. Arabs are Muslims, Christians or Jews; and there are Jews, Christians and Muslims who are not Arabs. So none of the three faiths identifies the Arabs exclusively.

The unifying element which underlies the being of all Arabs is cultural, linguistic and national. They all speak and write the same language, read the same literature, and think in terms of the same categories and concepts which are part of their linguistic-literary-cultural heritage. It is this cultural-literary-linguistic identity, plus

the feeling of a common destiny, common problems, and common aspiration, that makes the peoples of the region stretching from Morocco to Iraq, and from Syria to the Yemen, feel that they have one national identity, despite the multiplicity of their religions, political statehoods, and social and economic institutions.

### Islam a significant element in the composite being of an Arab

There are between 400 and 450,000,000 Muslims in the world. There are some 80,000,000 Arabs. Some of the 80,000,000 Arabs are non-Muslim — several million Christians, 9,000,000 to be exact, and several hundred thousand Jews. Thus two propositions can be made: (1) not all Muslims are Arabs, and (2) not all Arabs are Muslims. Nevertheless, it must be equally said that Islam is a significant element in the composite being of an Arab and a crucial milestone in Arab history and in the development of Arab traditions and culture; and Arabism is equally a significant element in Islam.

### Islam not alien to the Hebrew-Christian traditions

One preliminary clarification about Islam must be made at the outset. Islam is integrally within the Hebrew-Christian tradition of religions. It is not alien to that tradition, but an integral component of it.

Islam, in its own conception of itself, is an extension of the Jewish and Christian tradition, rather than an isolated faith or a substitute faith.

Just as Christianity looked upon itself as a fulfilment of Judaism, so does Islam look upon itself as an extension of Judaism and Christianity.

### Islam the most misunderstood among Christians

Islam, although in many respects very close to Christianity, is perhaps the least understood of the great religions or even the most misunderstood among Christians. This is in a way surprising as Islam was born in the full light of history and not in the dim past

developing out of myth and folklore. The beginnings of Islam are well known, its founder Muhammad is fully recognized as an historical figure and its Holy Book, the Qur'an, is preserved intact. On the other hand it is perhaps not so surprising, because when Islam began to spread, it spread predominantly in Christian countries and was considered, especially by the clergy, as a rival and not as a co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord. It was considered to spread dissension and not devotion to God, and enlightenment in matters material and spiritual. Thus from very early times an antagonistic attitude developed and led to the Crusades, and to the idea which prevailed in the late Middle Ages and even during the period of the Reformation that the Muslims or the Saracens, as they were called, are the last wrath of God poured out over mankind before the end of the world. Luther, for instance, was fully convinced that the Pope and "this devil Muhammad" were the two arch-enemies of the true believer. No wonder then that very little good about Muhammad and Islam is known to the Christian West.

#### A brief life-sketch of the Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad was born in Mecca either in 570 or 571 C.E. of a highly-respected but poor branch of an otherwise rich clan. His father died before he was born, his mother when he was six years of age. He was brought up by his grandfather and then by his uncle, and spent considerable time with bedouins in the desert. Later he accompanied caravans as far as Syria. He must have been highly esteemed as a young man among his fellow citizens, because he received the by-name *al-Amin*, the trustworthy. He married a rich widow, Khadijah, and was a devoted husband. He was of a contemplative nature and went frequently to a lonely spot outside Mecca to fast and to meditate. One day while in deep meditation he received a revelation. A voice called him and demanded, "Recite in the name of thy Lord". At first he had grievous doubts whether this was a genuine call from God or not. But the stream of revelations flowed with only minor interruptions.

The concept of revelation in Islam is that Muhammad was just the mouthpiece of God, the channel through which God's work to mankind passed. Muhammad himself, his thinking and his feeling and his will had no influence whatsoever upon the revelation. The complete revelations are called the Qur'an.

What was the message of Muhammad? When we read the early chapters of the Qur'an, which were revealed in Mecca, we find it was a Judgment Message, a message calling for repentance, a message to arouse his fellow men to fear God and to mend their ways.

"When the heaven is cleft asunder  
And when the stars are scattered  
And when the seas gush together,  
And when the graves are turned upside down,  
Each soul shall know what it has accomplished or kept back.  
O man! What hath misled thee against thy generous Lord,  
Who hath created thee, moulded and shaped thee aright?"

How was he received by his fellow citizens, the Meccans?

He was laughed at, ridiculed, derided. "A crazy fool," was he, "telling fables, of the Ancients. What! when we shall have died, and become dust and bones, shall we indeed be judged?" As the agnostic Sadducees of old — or as the Athenians when Paul spoke about the Resurrection — laughed and mocked, likewise the Meccans of Muhammad's time heaped ridicule upon his head.

His comparatively few followers were so badly treated that they fled to Ethiopia and were welcomed by the Ethiopian emperor. Later they returned, Muhammad and his family were ostracised and almost died of starvation. For twelve years he underwent such persecutions but he never wavered in bringing the message of the Lord to his people. When finally he was informed that the Meccans plotted to kill him, he and his true friend Abu Bakr fled to Medina, a city north of Mecca, which welcomed him.

Here he was confronted with city government, and the revelations lose some of their ardent flavour and begin to deal with principles of government, administration, civil laws, etc., thus laying the groundwork for the juridical code of Islam.

The early followers of Islam which Muhammad attracted to himself were all men of sterling qualities. Abu Bakr had the by-name of *al-Siddiq* (the truthful friend), and 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab was stern, straightforward and utterly sincere. When Muhammad died at the age of 63 and consternation spread among the Arabs assembled in Medina, when unrest and revolt were in the air, and the fate of the new faith hung in the balance, Abu Bakr stepped forward and solemnly proclaimed to the seething crowd: "O Muslims! Muhammad has departed from this world. Whosoever has followed Muhammad, Muhammad is dead, but whosoever has followed God, God lives and will never die." With these shining words, the crisis was past, and the people of Medina shouted: "*Allahu akbar, la illaha illa Allah wa Muhammadun Rasul Allah*" — "God is great, there is no God besides God and Muhammad is his Messenger". This is in short the origin of Islam and its founder.

#### The chief tenets of Islam

The chief tenets of Islam are first: faith in *Allah*, the Arabic word for God. God is Supreme, Omnipotent, the Absolute Ruler of the universe; Creator, Sustainer and Judge of man. The only reasonable attitude of man towards God is voluntary surrender, and submission to His will: that is *Islam*; and the one who commits himself into the care of God is a *Muslim*.

A Muslim is required to say his prayers five times a day, facing towards Mecca, the place where God revealed himself.

He is also required to give alms to the needy, to the wayfarer. Certain percentages of a person's income are set aside for this purpose.

Furthermore, the believer should fast for one month from sunrise to sundown. That is the fast of Ramadhan.

Lastly, but only if he can afford it, a Muslim should once visit Mecca and perform the pilgrimage.

These are, of course, not the only subjects dealt with in the Qur'an, but they constitute the five pillars on which the faith rests.

Many of the Old Testament figures, patriarchs and prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an and Jesus is called *Ruh Allah*, the spirit of God.

#### In Islam man is considered a moral being responsible to God for his deeds

After its inception, Islam spread faster than any other religion. It is true it followed the victorious Arab armies which swept like a tidal wave from Arabia to the borders of India in the East and to Morocco and Spain in the West, but it is wrong to suppose that it was enforced by the sword. Large numbers of the people in those countries accepted Islam voluntarily, and those who did not received the status of protected citizens and were permitted to worship God according to the precepts of their own religion. In fact, during the glorious period of Islam under the Omayyads in Damascus and the Abbasids in Baghdad, open discussions between Muslim and Christian theologians were held before the Caliphs.

It takes many volumes to relate the wonderful freedom of thought in the vast empire of Islam during this period, the advances in science, in medicine, and the field of art, which were made while Europe was smothering under the darkness or gloominess of the early Middle Ages.

It is sufficient to say that Islam has survived the storms of the ages and is today a living faith cherished by 400 to 450 million people. From North Africa to Pakistan they form almost one solid bloc. Indonesia is largely Muslim. Malaya is Muslim; there are over 40,000,000 Muslims in China and about 40,000,000 in the Soviet Union.

Wherever the Muslim faith is alive, and not reduced to an outward formality, faith in God, as the Creator, Preserver and Judge of mankind is alive; man is considered a moral being responsible to God for his deeds; private property is respected; and charity, generosity and honesty are considered fundamentals in man's behaviour. Thus the faithful in Christianity and in Islam are the two greatest forces today to stem the tide of aggressive materialism in the world of today.



(GOD is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth)

# VIEWS OF ISLAM ON INTEREST

## USURY AND INTEREST

By DR. ANWAR IQBAL QURESHI

**The confusion in the minds of Muslims about interest and usury due to the superficial charm of the present European civilization**

The superficial charm and glamour of the present European civilization has so captivated the common mind that instead of reasoning the expedients of Europe are adjudged to be the standard of right and wrong, and the appreciation and condemnation of actions. The soundness of an opinion or the righteousness of an action is exclusively determined in the light of mere European practices and precedents ; every problem or action contrary to them is evil. Hence, according to the majority of the so-called pretenders of learning and wisdom, this is the only correct approach to knowledge. Consequently Muslims had to forsake many principles of Islam and began to feel a weakness in their religious injunctions. This led many Muslim young men to contemplate a radical change in numerous religious matters and several modern thinkers adopted an apologetic attitude in the defence of Islam. For instance, they strove to remove the blot of the prohibition of usury from the forehead of Islam, which as we shall show later was very rightly strictly prohibited by Islam. The writer has examined the problem of the Islamic prohibition of usury in the light of the latest economic research, has valued it according to the standpoint of the present economists and has shown that the decree issued by Islam fourteen hundred years ago was not only perfectly right but an unmixed blessing for humanity, and really conducive to the welfare of human societies. The prohibition of interest is an issue concurred upon not only by Islam but almost all the religions of the world and the majority of ancient philosophers. The Greek and Roman thinkers had also forbidden interest in their days, and it had been similarly prohibited by the Bible and the Old Testament. But the Jews have often striven to transgress the limits

imposed upon them by their religion and the Christians have followed them. In this field, the easiest step taken is the christening of usury as interest and thereby transforming its sense. The usury was prohibited and interest was sanctioned, although this demarcation solely lacks proof as the difference between these two is really of minor importance.

Similarly, to hold the custom of interest on personal commercial credit essentially reprehensible and to accord sanction to a corporate commercial enterprise which from the beginning of the seventeenth century has been styled the banking system, would be tantamount to condemning theft and legalizing robbery, viz., an offence committed by an individual is unlawful and injurious but if it is committed in collusion with several persons it becomes lawful.

A vague misunderstanding exists in circles which are not intimately acquainted with the intricacies of modern economic theory that there is a general agreement among economists about interest. This is far from the truth, and I have discussed various theories of interest to show how wide is the difference and that there is no unanimous or generally accepted explanation as to why interest should be paid and at what rate it should be paid.

**Western writers themselves regard interest as a weak spot in the science of economics**

The following observation of an eminent economist of Harvard University in his well-known book may be read with interest and benefit:

"The theory of interest has for a long time been a weak spot in the science of economics, and the explanation and the determination of the interest rate still gives rise to more disagreement amongst economists than any other branch of general economic theory."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately a group of people exists in Islamic countries which, under the belief that Islam is a rational religion, tries to reconcile Islamic theories with modern practices. For instance, with the onslaught of capitalistic economy, it becomes fashionable to believe that modern

<sup>1</sup> Haberler: *Prosperity and Depression*, p. 195, League of Nations, 1st Edition.



society could not exist without interest, and Islam, too, did not prohibit interest: it only prohibited usury. I, for one, do not believe in these unauthorized and so-called liberal interpretations. I believe that such persons, in view of the emphatic injunction of the Qur'an against interest, have done a great disservice to the cause of Islam by arguing that Islam has not prohibited interest, and that it has only prohibited usury. Interest and usury are mere words which easily shade into one another; for what is considered a reasonable rate of interest today may be regarded as a usurious rate tomorrow. Some of the Central Banks of Europe after the First World War were charging 8 to 9 per cent interest,<sup>2</sup> which rate today is regarded as usurious even in some of the so-called backward countries. Some Muslim enthusiasts, who have been blinded by the false light of modern civilization, and are today living in a world whose very civilization is built upon interest, say that what Islam prohibits is usury and not interest. But one may pertinently ask as to what they do mean by usury. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines usury as follows:

"Practice of lending money at exorbitant rates of interest especially at higher interest than is allowed by law."

But what is an exorbitant rate of interest? A rate of interest which is considered as very moderate and reasonable today may be considered as very exorbitant and excessive tomorrow.

During the Second World War many governments were able to borrow at 2 per cent interest per annum, which rate was considered unthinkable during the First World War.

Islam has set a very clear-cut law about the rate of interest. Any rate of interest above zero, according to Islam, is usury. There is another misconceived notion amongst many economists of the older type that modern society depends for its progress on savings, and savings can only be encouraged by allowing interest.

### **Keynes supports Islam, which exposed some thirteen centuries ago the view that increase in savings leads to an increase in investment**

The classical school of economists has very much emphasized the importance of savings in a modern community. And they have advocated that the only way to increase savings is to increase the rate of interest. A low rate of interest, it was asserted, would retard the progress of savings. It was mainly on this account that it was said the Islamic system which prohibits the charging of interest is not a workable proposition in a modern community, because the prohibition of interest will seriously check the rate of saving and thus make the community poorer and poorer in capital goods.

The fallacy that a low rate of interest discourages savings has been thoroughly exposed by the experiences of the last war, when the United States of America was able to save much more at 2 per cent than it ever could during higher rates of interest. The modern economic theory has shown that savings are not determined by the rate of interest, but on the contrary they are determined by the rate of investment. The most commendable and praiseworthy feature of the Islamic theory is that by abolishing interest it encourages investment to the furthest possible limit and thus provides adequate safeguard for the accumulation of savings which are the result of investment. In this connection the observations of Keynes<sup>3</sup> are again very interesting; for he fully corroborates and conforms to the view put forth by Islam some thirteen centuries ago. Keynes exposes the fallacy that increase in savings leads to an increase in investment.

"An individual by increasing his own savings, reduces the savings of others, so he does not add to the rate of the savings

of the community, and therefore does not add to the demand for securities. The individual saver has no direct influence on the rate of investment, whether he buys securities or not. He may buy securities or add to his hoarding of money, whichever he prefers, but since other people are saving less, because he is saving more, they are buying less securities, parting with money they formerly held. The question of how wealth is held, whether in money or securities, has only the slightest connection with the interaction of investment and saving. As fast as one man increases his saving by reducing his spending, other men's incomes fall off and they save less as much as he saves more."

To sum up, when investment increases incomes rise to the point at which savings increase equally, but if the desire to save increases, incomes fall off so much that on balance saving is no greater than before. It is through changes in income that the equality of savings and investment is preserved. Thus the level of income is determined by the rate of investment and the desire to save; given the desire to save, the level of income that will rule is governed by the rate of investment. And given the rate of investment the level of income is determined by the desire to save. A change in the desire to save is powerless to alter the actual amount of saving done by the community as a whole, for the actual rate of saving is determined by the rate of investment which is being undertaken. The rate of investment determines the rate of saving, and given the rate of investment, the desire to save determines the level of income. The level of income is always such as to equate the rate of saving to the rate of investment. An increase in thriftiness does not by itself cause an increase in capital accumulation.

An analysis of the Western theories of interest shows the wide differences amongst the economists even as to the simple question: Why is interest paid? The latest theory about interest is that of Lord Keynes, and we have quoted him to show that interest is only a conventional phenomenon and the high rate of interest is a great obstacle in the way of world prosperity and progress. It is strange to observe that even a profound thinker like Lord Keynes and others became the slaves of their circumstances and cannot see beyond their noses. When Keynes wrote his book the rate of interest in England was 3 per cent. So Keynes regards 3 per cent as a reasonable rate of interest. Now the Government of Pakistan is able to raise loans at 2½ per cent. The short-term borrowing rates of many governments have varied from ½ to 1 per cent. Keynes finally admits that a properly run community may be able to bring down the rate of interest to zero. Is it not likely that this normal rate may even be further reduced? It seems to us that Keynes, being the victim of his environment, does not take enough courage in his hands to condemn outright the charging of interest, to which conclusion his theory naturally leads him. There is no escape from the conclusion that fixed rates of interest are highly detrimental to world progress.

### **Islam on interest**

The Holy Qur'an has laid down rather strict injunctions with regard to interest on money. These injunctions are repeated over and over with the same force and emphasis. Let us now see what are those injunctions of the Holy Qur'an on this point:

"Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the devil hath prostrated by (his) touch. That is because they say: Trade is just like usury; whereas God permitteth trading and forbids usury. He unto whom an admonition from his Lord cometh, and (he) refraineth (in obedience thereto), he shall keep (the profits of) that which is past, and his affair (henceforth) is with God. As for him who returneth (to usury) — such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

2 Memorandum on Money and Banking, League of Nations.

3 The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money..

"God hath blighted usury and made almsgiving fruitful. God loveth not the impious and guilty" (2: 275-6).

Later, the Holy Qur'an has warned the swallows of usury with such a force and rigour that it is not to be found in the case of other sins and faults. The words of the Holy Qur'an in this connection are characteristic:

"O ye who believe! Observe your duty to God and give up what remaineth (due to you) from usury, if you are (in truth) believers.

"And if ye do not, then be warned of war (against you) from God and His messenger. And if ye repent, then ye have your principle (without interest). Wrong not, and ye shall not be wronged.

"And if the debtor is in straitened circumstances, then (let there be) postponement to (the time of) ease; and that ye remit the debt as almsgiving would be better for you if ye did but know" (2: 278-280).

Before the advent of Islam it was customary in Arabia to charge compound interest on all debts. The Holy Qur'an forbade this practice in clear and unequivocal terms. For instance:

"O ye who believe! Devour not usury, doubling and quadrupling (the sum lent): Observe your duty to God, that ye may be successful" (3: 130).

It has been clearly pointed out in another section that such transactions will not elevate their financial condition, but will lead them to the same state to which the Jews were led:

"Because of the wrong-doing of the Jews We forbade them good things which were (before) made lawful unto them, and because of their much hindering from God's way.

"And of their taking usury, when they were forbidden it, and of their devouring people's wealth by false pretences. We have prepared for those who disbelieve a painful doom" (4: 160-1).

And again in another section it is mentioned:

"That which ye give in usury in order that it may increase on (other) people's property hath no increase with God; but that which ye give in charity, seeking God's countenance, hath increase manifold" (35: 39).

#### THE MEANING OF THE ARABIC WORD *Ribaa'*. ISLAM PROHIBITS EVERY SORT OF INTEREST

It must be noted that the word for usury used in the Holy Qur'an is *Ribaa'*. It is therefore necessary that we should try to explain at length the connotation and the significance of this word. The word *Ribaa'* means "increase in anything", that is "addition". In its technical sense, the Arabs used it to denote the "additional amount" which a debtor paid to his creditor in consideration of the time he was given to use the creditor's money. This is what we call interest. At the time when the Holy Qur'an was revealed the following were the types of interest-transactions, which the Arabs named as *Ribaa'*:

- (a) A person sold a certain thing to another person, agreeing to receive the sale money at a certain fixed time. If the purchaser could not pay the purchase money within the prescribed time, another "leasing-time" was allowed to him with the addition that he agreed to pay an increased amount;
- (b) A person lent another a certain amount for a fixed period on condition that after the expiry of that period the borrower would pay the principal with a fixed sum as *Ribaa'* in addition; and,
- (c) The creditor and the debtor agreed on a fixed rate of *Ribaa'* for a certain fixed time. If within that time the debtor failed to repay his loan with the agreed amount in addition to it, he would then be required to pay at an increased rate of *Ribaa'* for the additional "easing-time".

The word *Ribaa'* has been used in the above sense in the Holy Qur'an. It will be seen that for all practical pur-

poses there is no difference between usury and the more recent version of it called interest. The latter word has been coined just to deceive ourselves, and allow the same old robber in a more presentable form.

It may be pointed out in this connection that the Qur'anic orders were first issued in a general manner, but fuller details were issued later. This was exactly the way in which commandments against the drinking of intoxicants were issued, that is, stage after stage.

This fact would become quite clear if we compare closely (and scrutinize) the Meccan verses with those revealed at Medina, keeping in view this principle of "gradual, or step by step revelation". It is thus clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an concerning the prohibition of "interest":

- (i) Receiving interest is a peculiar characteristic of the Jews, who devour others' property unlawfully;
- (ii) Thereafter Muslims were forbidden to receive compound interest:  
"O ye who believe, do not devour compound interest."
- (iii) After this had been accomplished the Divine Law-giver thought it fit to prohibit all sorts of interest dealings:

"And God has permitted trading and forbidden usury."

In this connection usury implies all sorts of interest, whether compound or simple.

#### Islam wants productive debt to be incurred in co-partnership

The above clear and unambiguous facts make it plain that Islam has strictly prohibited every sort of interest transaction. But this should not be taken to imply, nor could it ever be calculated to imply, that Islam forbade business on credit. It need not be pointed out that in the present economic system of our civilization, it is not possible to imagine our routine life being smoothly led without credit and borrowing. Borrowing or debts may be classified into two types; one, contracted with a view to fulfilling our daily domestic needs and necessities of life. This is technically called "Unproductive Debt" in economics. The other type of debt is that which is incurred to enable the borrower to do business. This is technically called "Productive" or "Income-producing Debt".

Realizing the significance and need of the income-producing debt, Islam has allowed its followers to conduct business in co-partnership. In the present economic system, loans for business are advanced on fixed rates of interest, without any condition whether the enterprising debtor gains a profit or suffers a loss in his enterprise, with the result that the debtor is bound, under all circumstances, to pay the amount due as interest to his creditor. Profits in commercial undertakings are never fixed but fluctuate with market conditions. The rates of interest also fluctuate from time to time. But under the present economic system, the debtor is bound to pay at the end of his debt contract at the very fixed rate at which he borrowed from his creditor in the beginning, although in the market the rate of interest might have changed considerably.

When profit decreases on account of a dull market — many a time it almost disappears — the interest at a certain fixed rate becomes an unbearable burden for commercial undertakings. Islam has offered the best solution for this difficulty; it has left fixation of rates of interest in commercial debts open and has enjoined upon the capitalist to become a co-partner in the business and equally share profit or loss with his debtor. Socialism has excluded interest, but no satisfactory arrangement has been suggested for the procurement of capital.

Capitalism, on the other hand, amply arranges for capital, but ensures antagonism between the tradesman and the capitalist as it fixes the interest-producing power of capital. Islam has carefully avoided this and placed the capitalist and the tradesman on one level, almost uniting their interests. If there is a person who possesses capital but does not possess the experience or skill required for an enterprise, and there is another, who does not possess the required capital but possesses the skill or experience necessary for the enterprise, Islam has unified their interests by declaring that the capital of the former with the skill or experience of the latter may lawfully and profitably be united to produce profit in the transaction. This profit will be equitably shared by these two partners, one by virtue of his capital and the other by virtue of his skill or experience. In such transactions it is the tradesman who alone conducts the business with the capital of his partner — the capitalist — but both are entitled, according to the Islamic system, to receive their equitable shares of profit or loss.

In view of these circumstances it is evident that for commercial undertakings Islam has successfully and satisfactorily provided the capital (without the encumbrances of interest).

#### **Non-productive loans for domestic needs must be given without interest**

As regards those types of debts which are incurred to satisfy certain unforeseen domestic needs or necessities of life, Islam has fully realized the importance of these types of debts. But inasmuch as these debts are incurred, not with a view to acquiring profits but with the object of gratifying our daily domestic needs, Islam has accorded special treatment to such types of debts. It has been provided that these loans must be without interest. Furthermore, in special circumstances it has ordered that if the debtor is in straitened circumstances, his debts may be written off.

In addition to fixed rates of interest the other two bans of modern society are speculation and forward transactions. We shall deal with these below.

#### **Speculation and Islam**

Similar in character to interest-transaction is speculation, which was greatly in vogue in Arabia side by side with "interest" at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The tremendous evils of illegal profiteering on the masses have been fully experienced by all of us in the world war. The fabulous rise in the prices of the necessities of life from time to time is due, among other causes, mainly to speculation profiteering.

The famine in Bengal in India in 1943 was, to a great extent, caused by profiteers. From the latter half of 1942 to the first half of 1943 prices of cloth in India rose by 300 per cent. At that time it was stated that the rise in the prices of cloth was mainly due to the fact that the country did not produce enough cloth to meet its requirements; as there was a growing demand from the military for cloth supplies, and the import of cloth from other countries had been completely stopped. There was also an increase in the exportation of cloth to the war-fronts. But when the Government declared its policy to control the cloth supply and threatened to confiscate all those stocks of cloth that remained unsold within a certain fixed time limit, it was clearly seen that profiteers had already had a full stock of one year's needs of the country within their clutches and that it was mainly due to their machinations that there was a stupendous rise in the prices. The more recent example of this was the heavy rise in the price of coffee in the United States of America in 1954, which later Government investigations showed was mainly

due to speculation and cornering of the market by some powerful vested interests. Islam strictly prohibits such speculation. The following few traditions of the Prophet Muhammad are quoted in support of this view:

"It is related on the authority of Ma'mar who said that the Prophet said: He who accumulates stocks of grain during shortage of it (with a view to profiteering later), is a great sinner."

"It is related on the authority of 'Umar (may God be pleased with him!) that the Prophet said: One who imports grain from outside and sells at the market rate, his maintenance is blessed, (while) he who withholds grain from sale in view of estimated dearness in future — he is thrown away from God's pleasure."

#### **Forward transactions and Islam**

Under the present economic system forward transactions of agricultural products have been legalized. Most of the Western economists regard such transactions as desirable. But a great majority of the representatives of the farmers and cultivators have looked upon such transactions as definitely harmful to their interests and have always protested against them.

Islam has definitely illegalized such transactions, as these are, according to Islam, harmful to people on the whole. Islam permits present, but not future, transactions. This theory of Islam is now being acknowledged as sound by the economists of Europe, at least in war economy. They have painfully realized now that the present tremendous rise in prices has been caused mainly by illegal profiteering and by forward transactions. Accordingly many countries have now illegalized many such forward transactions. One of the greatest defects of the present economic system is the recurring appearance of a trade-cycle, which is mostly accelerated by the increasing craze for speculation. Islam has clearly illegalized it.

Islam regards all such transactions as definitely harmful to society and has pointed out that trade cycles, which cause a great disruption in the present social organization, are the result of the brisk activity of the forward transactions. This, however, should not under any condition be considered any limitation by Islam on proper trade or commerce. As a matter of fact Islam very much encourages it. The Prophet Muhammad in his earlier days took an active part in trade and commerce. Islam has not only made lawful for its followers trade and commerce but has persuaded them to pursue it vigorously. It has, on the other hand, strictly prohibited all sorts of speculations and has painfully warned its followers from indulging in forward transactions. It has made lawful only those transactions that relate to the present and not to the future. We quote a tradition in support of this view:

"It is related on the authority of Mu'aadh that he heard the Prophet (on him be peace!) saying: Evil indeed is that man who withholds sale of grain in anticipation of shortage (thereby expecting rise in prices). If God Almighty causes fall in prices, he is unhappy, but if there is rise in prices, he is happy."

"It is related on the authority of Anas (may God be pleased with him!) that the Prophet (on him be peace!) prohibited dealings in fruits as long as they were not ripe. It was asked, 'How to know their ripeness?'. He said, 'Until they grow red'. Then he said, 'Do you think that any one of you would be able to take the property of his brother if God were to stop fruits from ripening?' In the account given by Ibn 'Umar it is stated that the Prophet (on whom be peace!) prohibited purchase and sale of date trees, until the dates ripened, and from dealings in ears of corn until they grew (ripe and) white, or they were safe from calamities. He prohibited both the seller and the purchaser from such transactions."

#### **Difference between profit and interest**

Most of the opponents of the Islamic theory regarding interest assert that when profit is allowed by Islam, and when

it also allows unearned income, there is no justification in prohibiting interest which is only a profit on the lending of capital. We shall discuss this matter at some length later, but we might mention here that in this matter Islam has endorsed and confirmed the view of the Christian Church.

Aristotle and other ancient philosophers also held similar views. Islam, in the same spirit, allows profits, but prohibits interest because the effects of fixed interest-bearing loans are very detrimental to business, trade and industry.

### **The effects of fixed interest-bearing loans on business**

This is perhaps the most crucial point of our thesis. It is commonly asserted that when Islam has allowed trade, it has allowed profits, and when it allows unearned income in the form of rent from land and income from property and profit from sleeping partnership, what justification is there for not allowing interest on business loans, most of which are productive in their nature? This prohibition in the eyes of critics becomes all the more objectionable when they are told that even in modern commerce, trade and industry, Islam permits the income received by the shareholders of the companies but objects to the income from bonds and from other fixed interest-bearing securities. Apparently this seems a very formidable objection and many well-read Muslims who do not possess adequate knowledge of the intricacies of the working of the modern economic mechanism have been influenced by these objections and have even gone to the length of declaring that all these loans are of an impersonal type and are granted for productive purposes, hence the interest earned from such investments does not come under the category of *Ribaa'*, which Islam had prohibited, keeping in view the conditions then prevalent in Arabia.

### **Islam's way of providing clear solutions to economic problems that baffle us today**

We think such persons have done a great disservice to the cause of Islam. As Muslims it is our faith that the teachings of Islam as a religion are not confined to the desert peninsula of Arabia alone. We believe and believe rightly that the teachings of Islam are universal in their bearings and are applicable to all countries, societies, civilizations, and to all times.

The study of modern sciences, and that of economics in particular, has enlarged our faith in the teachings of the Qur'an, and the reading of the most advanced treatises on economics has convinced and confirmed our belief that Islam provides very definite solutions for our problems; and those problems which seem most baffling to us today and the best minds of the modern progressive world are unable to solve, Islam provided very easy and clear-cut solutions several hundred years ago. We shall shortly proceed to discuss the solution provided by Islam.

It is asserted that if the borrower of money is able to earn an income by its use, why should the lender be deprived of this? But it may be asked, if the borrower incurs a loss by the use of borrowed capital, why should the lender be allowed to insist on his "pound of flesh"? Islam provides the middle way. It says that you should lend your capital to those who stand in need of it. If they gain by the employment of your capital, you should share the gains with them. If unfortunately they lost in their venture, you should be prepared to share the loss also. It should not be "heads I win, tails you lose".

### **DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHAREHOLDERS AND BONDHOLDERS**

This is simple enough and needs no further elaborations to show why Islam is against the lending of money. It is against lending it at a predetermined contract of repayment with additions whether the borrower gains or loses and in which the lender has the right to insist on his pound of flesh: it is usury. But if the money is lent, and gains and losses are shared, it becomes a business partnership. It is very much encouraged by Islam, because Islam knows that capital is essential for the development of trade, commerce and industry. The difference between fixed rates and non-fixed rates is not imaginary, or a mere case of hair-splitting and allowing a thing by another name, as it is sometimes asserted. It is far from being so. It will become very clear if we ask what the difference is between a shareholder of a company and a bondholder of a company; for Islam allows shares provided the companies are engaged in legitimate business which has not been banned in Islam, such as buying and selling of liquors, etc., and prohibits bonds. Those who are not fully acquainted with the modern business mechanism are likely to quote this as an extreme instance of hair-splitting. We have already remarked that this is far from the case. There is a fundamental difference between bondholders and shareholders. The shareholders are the owners of a company. They have a right to have their say in the management and the affairs of the company. The Board of Directors who manage the company are all elected by the shareholders and can be removed by them. They manage the affairs of the company on behalf of the shareholders and the policy of the company is eventually determined by the shareholders.

As the shareholders are the owners of the company they share its fortunes as well as misfortunes. They earn good profits when the company is doing well and they get negligible or even zero profits when the company is not doing well. On the other hand the bond-holders are the creditors of the company. They have only lent some money to the company at a fixed rate of interest. They are not the owners of the company. They have no voice in the management of the company.

As long as the company remains solvent they receive their fixed rate of interest irrespective of the rates of profits earned by the company. If they have lent say at 6 per cent and the company is earning a profit of say 10 per cent, they will continue to receive only 6 per cent while the shareholders will get 10 per cent. On the contrary, when the company is not doing well and is not earning any profits the shareholders will get no dividend while the bond-holders will continue to get their 6 per cent, and if the company is declared bankrupt they will have the first lien on the assets of the company.

The fixed rate of interest exercises a very tyrannical influence during the period of depression and seriously retards recovery, which is one of the greatest maladies of the modern world.

### **Some concluding observations on the tyranny of interest**

In the olden days, production could not be expanded owing to lack of capital. But now in a number of rich countries there is a super-abundance of savings and large sums of money are simply lying idle. We find simultaneously with this super-abundance of capital a very large class of unemployed persons. People are unemployed because the capitalists do not find it worth their while to invest their funds in the fields where the rate of returns is less than the current rate of interest. For instance, if the current rate of interest is 4 per cent and money is invested in irrigation works which directly yield only 3 per cent, then according to the capitalistic view, irrigation is unproductive. The money will not be

invested in irrigation works, however useful these may be for society. The result is that the capital remains idle on the one hand, the resources remain undeveloped on the other.

All public works, however conducive they may be for the benefit of society, remain undone in an interest economy if the yield from such works is less than the current rate of interest. Had there been no pre-determined notion of fixed rates of interest many more useful things would have been done. It is here we think that the *Zakat* plays a very significant role. Islam penalises those who keep their funds idle. A tax of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent is imposed upon all those savings which remain idle for a year. If the modern capitalists had to pay a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent tax on their idle funds, they would have taken steps to invest these funds, and thus created employment and prosperity, and it would have been no burden on them to pay the *Zakat* dues, because they would have been getting some income on their investments. Some economists, for example, Professor Robinson, have been asserting that interest acts like a sort of sieve and sifts out only those works that are able to pay for themselves. It helps in the proper allocation of resources and encourages only the better paying works.

They assert that as capital is still limited and there are a number of competing ends, we must economize the use of capital and allot it only to the best paying works.

This theory has now been thoroughly exposed by Lord Keynes, who asserts that investments create their own savings, and the public works must be increasingly used to cure unemployment.

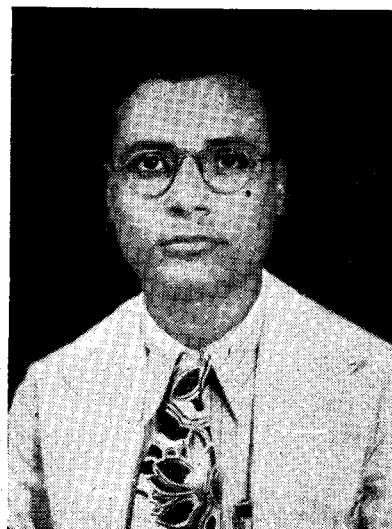
In an extreme *laissez-faire* economy, these arguments of Professor Robinson have a good deal of force. For in such an economy if brothel houses and breweries pay more than residential houses and water supplies, the former are certainly to be preferred to the latter.

But this type of economy is slowly giving way. In a world which is getting more and more mindful of the rights of the under-dog, and welfare has come to play an important rule in the economies of the leading countries of the world, it is becoming clearer that interest should not be allowed to exercise its tyranny and it should be subordinated to the general welfare of society. This is exactly the approach of Islam, and it will repay the world if they would study the Qur'an with this end in view.

# SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE AND ISLAM

Islam contains essential conditions for scientific  
enquiry and progress

By M. RAIHAN SHARIF



**"If one analyses the fundamental principles of Islam one can easily understand that they contain the essential conditions for scientific enquiry and progress. Oneness of God is one of the cardinal principles of Islam ; this principle has the conditions indispensable for scientific investigation by establishing the belief of one universe and one nature. This at the same time has done away with the imaginary division between natural and supernatural elements of the universe. The emphasis in Islam on universality has been founded on this cardinal principle of the Oneness of God, which has saved the Islamic philosophy from the split between a secular and non-secular life."**

**Science is based on the conception of uniformity in the laws of nature**

A scientific attitude, it is said, depends on three conditions, and unless these three conditions are fulfilled, there can hardly be any scientific progress in any age. The three conditions are :

- (1) Faith in the universe as a homogeneous unit ;
- (2) Acceptance of laws of nature as uniform ; and
- (3) Reliance on particulars as a guide to inductive truth.

Evidently, the first two conditions are very vital. Unless one conceives of the universe as one unit, it is not possible to conceive of universal laws. Supposing one thinks that the universe in its various regions or even in various planets is

ruled by different divinities, gods and goddesses, and there is an atmosphere of jealousy and competition among these ruling divinities, gods and goddesses, how can there be a conception of universal laws that may claim uniformity of truth and validity for the control of the universe as a whole? On the other hand, the mysteries of nature which are pursued by the scientists in their scientific enquiries for establishing truths are also, then, divided and sub-divided to narrow realms, and laws of nature cannot be uniform. If one divides the universe into natural and supernatural categories, even then the homogeneity of the universe and uniformity of nature disappear. That is why the foundation of scientific knowledge is laid on one universe, one nature and for that matter on one world.

Faith in oneness of nature may be expressed in spiritual terms as faith in oneness of God. Religious faith is thus based on nature. In the past, various religious faiths grew with divergent conceptions about the universe, and consequently they gave humanity a confused picture of nature. In the Greek and Roman faiths, distinct places of importance were given to gods ruling the planets like Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Neptune and so on, while the conception of ruling gods was also extended to the forests, the seas, the mountains, the storms, and so on. Similar tendencies have also been very significant in Hindu philosophy and religion. As against such inclinations, the religion of Islam had its birth in the heart of deserts. The vast expanse of the deserts may have built the background of one nature and one universe, offering favourable climate for the evolution of a faith pronouncing oneness of God. By accepting oneness of God, it is easy to establish oneness of the universe and uniformity of the laws of nature. Such beliefs give scientific inquiry a favourable environment. It is to be noted that for scientific inquiry, the mere conception of oneness of the universe is not enough. The Christian and Jewish theology in Semitic religious faith accepted miracles and supernatural powers, a phenomena which may be said is unfavourable to scientific approach. It is pointed out by many that the Christian and Jewish prophets appeared as superhuman beings with the exhibition of miraculous powers and stood in the way of scientific progress by not creating the necessary scientific atmosphere.

Besides this, to conceive of one uniform universe free from the distinction of natural and supernatural elements is not enough. For proper scientific inquiry, not only nature has to be conceived as undivided and that uniformity is also present in the particulars, but one has also to emphasize the value of one particular phenomenon or datum; for science not only needs the general laws but also the small particulars (that is individual phenomena and data) to test the general laws. That is why faith in inductive and deductive processes of inquiry is associated with scientific pursuit.

### **The principles of Islam contain the essential conditions for scientific development and progress**

If one analyses the fundamental principles of Islam, one can easily understand that they contain the essential conditions for scientific inquiry and progress. Oneness of God is one of the cardinal principles of Islam; this principle has created the first two conditions indispensable for scientific investigation by establishing the belief of one universe and one nature. This at the same time has done away with the imaginary division between natural and supernatural elements of the universe. The emphasis in Islam on universality has been founded on this cardinal principle of oneness of God which has saved the Islamic philosophy from the split between a secular and non-secular life. The Qur'an has proclaimed that the whole world is the place of worship and the Kingdom of God extends to every part of the universe. The Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd has given the philosophic explanation of nature's undividedness and homogeneity. There is evidence that the renowned philosopher Spinoza was greatly influenced by Ibn Rushd's philosophy. Apart from the fulfilment of the first two important conditions, it is possible to point out that the third condition is also adequately satisfied in the Islamic philosophy, which takes into account the details of the individuals. This latter attitude is particularly manifest in the treatment of subjects

like human dignity and human relations. Although Muslim thinkers were influenced by Greek philosophers, particularly Aristotle, Muslim scientists did not rely simply on deductive methods inherited from the Greeks. One philosopher, Ibn Taimiyyah, conclusively proved the inadequacy and incompleteness of Aristotle's logic. Evidence shows that Islamic philosophers gave due importance to the inductive method alongside the deductive. In short, there is an intimate relationship between the fundamental Islamic philosophy and the essential conditions for a scientific approach. It is therefore not strange that with the advent of Islam, the advance of science was promoted and left uninterrupted for centuries until the atmosphere was changed by intellectual inertia and social and political disorganization.

In the tenth century, al-Farabi adopted an Aristotelian method of classifying all sciences; al-Khawarizmi, on the other hand, infused the contemporary Muslim viewpoint in the classification of sciences; in this he clearly distinguished between the broad groups of Islamic jurisprudence and foreign sciences. These foreign sciences were typically called philosophy (i.e., *falsafa*) in which numerous theoretical and applied sciences were included in various branches, e.g., meteorology, mineralogy and chemistry in the branch of natural sciences (*ilm-tabi'i*); mathematics; theology and metaphysics; ethics, family or social sciences (including economics; and political science and administration. Muslim society, however, was not in favour of branding these sciences as foreign to demarcate a zone of intellectual isolationism and create an invidious distinction in the field of knowledge. In response to this social urge, al-Ghazali classified sciences into two main groups: religious and non-religious. In Ibn Sina we find the most acceptable classification; he divided the sciences into two main classes: (i) theoretical sciences seeking truth, and (ii) applied sciences seeking welfare.

Interestingly indeed, Ibn Khaldun divided the sciences into (i) traditional or cultural, and (ii) philosophical. Some writers, again, divided the sciences in even more general terms, such as admirable sciences, abominable sciences and neutral sciences. Thus most of the attempts at classification exhibit the anxiety to reflect the objectives for social welfare. It is, however, true that social welfare in those days was not a secular concept and excluded atheistic or non-Islamic attitudes. The characteristic attitude to scientific knowledge and inquiry has been beautifully expressed in al-Ghazali's reported statement: "A grievous crime indeed has been committed against religion by the man who imagines that Islam is defended by the denial of the mathematical sciences, seeing that there is nothing in revealed truth opposed to these sciences by way of either negation or affirmation, and nothing in these sciences is opposed to the truths of religion."

### **In the hey-day of Islamic civilization, Muslim Spain was the centre of scientific knowledge and discoveries**

Under Islamic civilization, the pursuit of scientific inquiry assumed a remarkable role in Muslim-ruled Spain. Beginning from the tenth century, seekers of scientific knowledge in Western countries had been attracted to the centres of learning in Muslim Spain and disseminated, in their turn, the cultural features of Muslim life to the Western world. It is said that the *must'aribs* were largely responsible for the spread of Muslim culture in the European countries because they were profoundly influenced by the Arab culture in Spain and even went to the length of preferring Arabic to their languages, Latin and Romance. In fact, there was a deep undercurrent of co-operation between Christians and Muslims on the cultural level despite the jealousies and conflicts on the surface. This co-operation is said to have opened the way for

1 Vide W. M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazali* (London 1953), pp. 34-35, translated from the original autobiography *al-Munjid min al-Dalal*.



Muslim intellectual leadership in Europe. As early as the tenth century, Pope Sylvester II gave recognition to this intellectual leadership and introduced the Arab astronomy and mathematics. This movement gradually gathered momentum and by the eleventh century Toledo, Spain's leading centre of learning, grew into a nucleus for the development and propagation of Arab sciences and culture. It is in this centre that in the twelfth century Bishop Raymond started his regular school for the translation campaign of Arab sciences in which a large number of renowned writers joined with unprecedented zeal and interest. This intellectual gateway transmitted the scientific knowledge that laid the foundation of European renaissance and liberation of thought that built the so-called Western civilization on an intellectual plane.<sup>2</sup>

Besides Spain, other Muslim countries were, at that period of history, passing through a phase of new venture towards building a higher level of economic and cultural life founded on expansion of industry and commerce. Commerce forged the links of contact with non-Muslim countries and paved the way for transmission of cultural influences to these countries. Sicily was another source for the transmission of Muslim culture to Europe. Muslim mastery over the high seas was then one of the singular contributory factors, the fascinating tales of Sindbad the Sailor being only an indication of such a background.

In that age, it was undoubtedly the scientific attitude that held the pursuer of knowledge and truth in a distinctively high esteem in Muslim society. The American Orientalist, Professor Grünbaum, says in his book *Medieval Islam*, Chicago 1953: "The dominant attitudes of Muslim society favoured the scholar as a normative pattern of human character and activity". On the other hand, Western writers have called the Muslim civilization a great civilizing force because of its emphasis on knowledge and truth. This is, however, natural and in keeping with the goal of Muslim society, which is human evolution. The military objectives of this civilization were only subordinated to the human objectives.

Al-Beruni's well-known work, *Chronology of Ancient Nations* (1000 C.E.), gives a wonderful analysis of the nature and methods of scientific inquiry. Al-Beruni's method of inquiry and research seems to be a combination of deductive and inductive methods. According to him, research is a process of venture to seek truth with an inquisitiveness freed from prejudice, partisan spirit and jealousy. It is in this perspective that a seeker of truth has to proceed and leap into the unknown from the known. Al-Beruni's inspiring influence could therefore establish a tradition of an unprejudiced scientific inquiry, which was shattered only by the intellectual apathy of the Middle Ages. Ibn Khaldun's scientific treatment of history was a healthy return of that tradition in the fourteenth century, although the setback could hardly be retrieved in full.

#### **Islam accepts trade, industry and commerce as essential bases of human society**

However, it is to be stressed that from its very inception, the Islamic way of life accepted farming, industry and commerce as its economic foundations. The verses of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet related to economic life suggest this in unequivocal terms. Apart from them, one may get scattered glimpses of revolutionary concepts and theories in the statements of various schools of thinkers and theologians. The "purity" school (*al-Safaa'*) echoed a revolutionary socialistic cult (as implied in the slogan, "Every

man is either an artisan or a trader"). Even to al-Ghazali, the propounder of the moderate school, man has to earn his income as a means to establishing his claims in the perpetual life of the hereafter, and this earning of an income means the organization of an economic system for individual and collective efforts. That is to say, a Muslim society certainly needs economic progress, and to accomplish this and distribute the results of it in an equitable manner, it also needs planned economic development. Opposition to economic progress and planned economic development can never be based on valid postulates and principles of Islam. It is the need of economic development that made general and technical education indispensable and placed educators, scientists and technicians on the highest rung of the social ladder. There was, however, variations and exceptions in this general pattern. For instance, Arab economics of industry and commerce deviated into a feudalistic system in Persia under the shadow of intellectual stagnation and decay in the Middle Ages. In the same way, the bureaucracy of Abbasid rule, in conspiracy with military fief-holders, worked towards deprecating the importance of industrial and commercial technicians. It is true that theologians and the intelligentsia did not support this unhealthy deviation. But yet the deviation succeeded in doing much harm — a colossal harm, so to say — to civilization. It was this deviation that gathered momentum as stagnation set in and arrested all kinds of technical progress which is the keystone of economic advancement and prosperity. In the present age, a renaissance has developed in the Islamic world for regaining that lost keystone and establishing its ability to earn economic and spiritual leadership in the various latitudes and longitudes of the globe.

2 Vide Bernard Lewis, *England and Arabic Learning*, London 1952.

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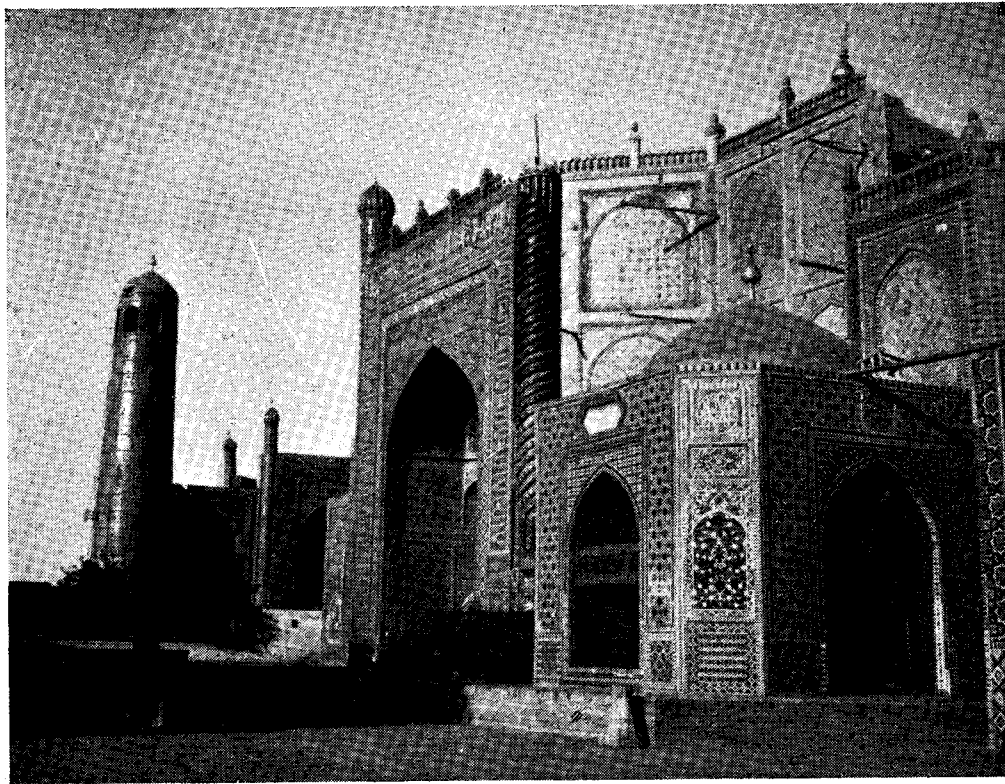
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# SULTAN MAHMUD of GHAZNAH, AFGHANISTAN (b. 971 C.E.)

A much maligned Muslim personality

By NUR AHMAD

**Sultan Mahmud was the greatest Sultan of his age, and a great gifted ruler who established a vast empire and embellished it with the light of learning, and who gave peace and happiness to the vast millions of his subjects. He was not a Hun, tyrant nor an avaricious and capricious Sultan in that medieval time. Toleration was the keynote of his success.**

## A brief account of Sultan Mahmud's life and character

Sultan Mahmud the Great was a great conqueror and a very learned Sultan of the tenth and eleventh centuries. He played a prominent part in the early Muslim history of India and Asia. Though his father, Subuktagin, laid the foundation of the Ghaznavide Empire, Sultan Mahmud was the real founder and architect of this vast empire. It was he who prepared the field for the establishment of the Muslim empire in India. Sultan Mahmud was born between the 1st and 2nd November 971 C.E. His mother was a daughter of the Amir of Zafulistan. He received his education at the hands of a prominent scholar and was well versed in various branches of literature. He knew the Qur'án by heart and was a great scholar in the *shari'ah* and Qur'anic laws and tradition. His father taught him statecraft, principles of good administration, and these principles are embodied in a book called *Pandenama*, and during the lifetime of Subuktagin he was appointed Governor of a province, and thus received practical training in statecraft and administration. So we find that the Sultan Mahmud was fully equipped to

play the role of a great hero and emperor in his age. He may be compared with Alexander the Great or Napoleon Bonaparte, but in some respects he was a greater hero than either.

His early life is shrouded in mystery. His whole life and career has been blackened and distorted and misrepresented by some biased historians and mostly non-Muslim writers. He has been depicted as a great bigot, a zealot, a robber, a scourge of humanity, a freebooter, the prototype of avarice incarnate, as a breaker of Hindu temples and idols, a drunkard and a lover of unnatural offences. In this distant age, let us try to find out the true character of Sultan Mahmud and his great achievements, and let us remove the cobwebs of malicious prejudices, misrepresentations and wrong notions, and reveal the true character of Sultan Mahmud the Great. Those who extol Mahmud for propagating Islam in India by the sword do him great harm as a true Muslim and bring discredit to Islam, which enjoins universal tolerance and positively forbids forcible conversion, and the Qur'án clearly commands: "Let there be no compulsion in religion".



Sultan Mahmud was a pious Muslim and his religious policy was based on Islam's broad tolerance and principle of freedom of worship and non-compulsion. He did not force any Hindu to give up his religion and adopt Islam, nor did he kill a person for the sake of his religion. With reference to his religious tolerance, the British historian Elphinstone, in *The History of India*, p. 293, writes: "It is nowhere asserted that he ever put any Hindu to death except in battle or in the storming of a fort". Sir W. Haig in his edited *Cambridge History of India* (p. 45) says: "Though zealous for Islam he maintained a large body of Hindu troops, and there is no reason to believe that conversion was a condition of their service. Under Sultan Mahmud, Hindus enjoyed perfect religious freedom."

#### **Sultan Mahmud could not be accused of spreading Islam in India by the sword**

The Hindus were entrusted with high and responsible posts. The names of Tilak Rai, Hazari Rai and Soni are some of the prominent Hindu military officers of Sultan Mahmud. Sultan Mahmud was a conqueror, and he did not make any distinction between Hindus and Muslims; out of his seventeen invasions of India, two were against Muslim princes, as others were against Hindu rajahs, and all his Central Asian military expeditions were against the Muslims. If he invaded the Hindu rajahs, he similarly invaded the Muslim sovereigns of Iran and Transoxiana. He was never motivated on his invasion of India by a religious mission of spreading Islam in India. Like other Muslim conquerors of India, he was never led by the spirit of a Muslim missionary to convert Hindus to Islam or by a spirit of the *Jihad*, as some historians in their zeal to extol his virtues have alleged. Sultan Mahmud was a great Muslim of his age and a greater sultan. As the poets and learned men received munificence and patronage from him they have, in their zeal to extol him in the eyes of bigoted Muslims, extolled and misrepresented him as one whose mission in life was to destroy idolatry and temples. He certainly knew the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an commands the utmost tolerance in matters of worship, and even forbids the wounding of the feelings of non-Muslims by abuse of the god of the idol-worshippers. His policy of destroying some temples with idols was secular and political, and never religious, and more, because these temples were used as treasure houses and fortified places, and resisted his onward march. It is now transparently clear, from the fact that he never destroyed any other temples and when once peace was declared, he granted the widest freedom of worship and freedom and safety to all the conquered.

Dr. Ishwara Topa in his book *Politics in Pre-Moghul Times* (pp. 46-47) testifies to this fact in these words: "It may also be observed that the temples of India which Mahmud invaded were the storehouses of enormous and untold wealth, and also some of these were political centres. The temples were in fact broken during the campaign for reasons other than religious. In times of peace, Sultan Mahmud never demolished a single temple." This proves conclusively that Sultan Mahmud, being a true Muslim, was not a zealot or bigot or iconoclast or idol-breaker quite contrary to the liberal spirit of Islam as some zealous admirers have shown him to be. Even at his capital, Ghaznah, the Hindus enjoyed full freedom under Sultan Mahmud. Al-Ma'arri in his book *Risalat al-Ghufran* (p. 153) writes that Hindus were given separate quarters at Ghaznah and were allowed to observe their religious rites and ceremonies free from any hindrance or restriction.

#### **Sultan Mahmud, besides being a great soldier, was also a highly cultured man and a lover of learning**

Sultan Mahmud's life ambition was to establish a Central Asian Empire with himself as its head.

Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, the author of *Majma' al-Ansab*, writes that it was Jai Pal, the Rajah of Waihind, whom Subuktigin twice defeated, who marched out and caused Sultan Mahmud to conquer Ghaznah, and this was the main reason for the first invasion of India; subsequent invasions were due to political and military causes and not to religious motives.

Sultan Mahmud was equally eminent as a highly cultured man and a lover of learning and the learned, and his achievements in the fields of peace, art, culture, science and learning, and in the spread of knowledge, were as great as those of any other kings and emperors like Caesar Augustus, Caliph Harun al-Rashid, Caliph Ma'mun, Caliph Hakam and others. He has made a great contribution to the noble cause of Islamic culture and civilization. Sultan Mahmud was an erudite scholar and a fine poet. 'Awfi in his book, *Lubab al-Albab*, has preserved some of Sultan Mahmud's poetical compositions. He was a lover of Islamic law and traditions.

Mahmud was a great patron of letters. The literary renaissance of Islam was largely due to his munificence and patronage. The *Tarikh* of Ibn Khalliqan testifies to this. Sultan Mahmud loved the society of learned men and invited them from distant countries (*vide The Tarikh-i-Mas'udi* by Abul-Fadhl Muhammad Husain al-Baihaqi (pp. 232 and 245)). His family and patronage attracted a large number of scholars, poets and philosophers from all parts of Asia, and his capital became an illuminating centre and fountainhead of light and learning. When he conquered a town or city he collected all the choicest works and sent them to Ghaznah. The author of *Tarikh-i-Guzida* records that he spent 400,000 dinars every year on the galaxy of learned men at his court. M. Elphinstone in his *History of India* (p. 290) says: "He showed so much munificence to individuals of eminence that his capital exhibited a greater assemblage of literary genius than any other monarch in Asia has ever been able to produce."

Some of the learned men who gathered together under the patronage of Sultan Mahmud were (1) Abu Raihan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, a most eminent scholar, author of the famous work *Tahqiq Milal Hind*; (2) Abu Nasr Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-'Utbi; (3) al-Farabi, the famous philosopher; (4) Abu 'Ali Sina (Avicenna), the great thinker and physician; (5) 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Muhammad Ibn Isma'il al-Salabi, the learned author of a metrical history of Iran; (6) the famous poet Firdousi, of the *Shahnama* fame; (7) Ansari, the philosopher, linguist and scientist; (8) the poet Daqiqi; and (9) the poets 'Asjadi Marvie and Manuchihr Balkhi.

As a highly cultured man, endowed with an innate love of learning and learned men, and an extensive admiration for everything beautiful in art and science, Sultan Mahmud's achievements were not confined to art, literature and science. He established numerous *maktabs*, *madrasahs*, colleges, mosques, museums and libraries. He constructed the Celestial Bridge, a mosque of matchless grandeur built of marble and granite at Ghaznah, and furnished with gold and silver lamp candelabras and costly carpets. This mosque was the wonder of its time. In the vicinity of this mosque, Sultan Mahmud established a large university and attached to it a huge library and a fine museum. Around the mosque there were three thousand resident quarters for teachers and students of the university. The teachers were paid regular salaries and the

students were given scholarships and stipends from the State funds.

### Three principal false legends invented by the detractors of Sultan Mahmud

Sultan Mahmud had a fine taste for architecture. The real character of this most cultured and erudite Sultan has been interwoven with some unreal and imaginary legends and anecdotes with the malignant purpose of blackening his name and reputation in the eyes of the world. It has been alleged that Sultan Mahmud was a bastard, or a son of a concubine. This story is based on some alleged couplets of Firdousi, but it has now been proved that no such couplets or quatrains were composed by Firdousi, and these are not found in his *Shahnama*. These must be the work of some of his enemies, who composed these calumnies about him in verse and ascribed them to Firdousi.

The second legend about Sultan Mahmud, which is widely circulated in history textbooks, is that he promised to give a gold dinar for each verse of the *Shahnama* to be composed by the poet Firdousi, but when the *Shahnama* was presented to him he refused to pay the promised golden dinar for each verse and wanted to give a silver coin for each verse. The great poet Firdousi was heartbroken, and composed a satire calling Mahmud a bastard. It is said that after Firdousi's death he sent the promised dinars to him and they were received by his daughter.

The whole story appears to be a concoction and purely and simply an afterthought invention. First, because there is no reference whatsoever to this story in any of the histories or records or writings of the contemporary Arab and Persian historians and writers who left detailed accounts of the reign of Sultan Mahmud. The Persian historian 'Aini, a contemporary of the Sultan and a bitter critic, does not mention this legend. Had these stories of satire and alleged breach of promise been true he would surely have taken these weapons to discredit the Sultan. Nizami al-'Aruzi, who wrote his *Chahar Maqala* one hundred and fifty years afterwards, invented these stories, but he has not mentioned even his source of authority or information. It is only subsequently that this story found a place in history and literature. Even the authorship of *Chahar Maqala* is in doubt, and the manuscripts found are full of contradictions and discrepancies. So no reliance can be placed on this cock-and-bull story invented by the author of *Chahar Maqala* one hundred and fifty years after Sultan Mahmud's death. Secondly, all available sources of this story or legend are discrepant and contradictory on vital points. Even the name, nativity, parentage, dates of birth and death of Firdousi, commencement and completion of the *Shahnama*, even the number of verses embodied in it, Firdousi's access to Mahmud, Mahmud's order to compose the *Shahnama*, the presentation of the same to him, his perfidy and final repentance, are differently given in different books and are conflicting and contradictory (*vide*, *A Literary History of Persia* by E. Browne, Vol. II, p. 129).

### Firdousi and Sultan Mahmud

Thirdly, Firdousi himself says that the *Shahnama* was completed in 400 A.H. (1010 C.E.) and that it took him thirty to thirty-five years to complete. So it is evident that Firdousi commenced the *Shahnama* either in 365 or 370 A.H. (875 or 880 C.E.). In other words the composition of the *Shahnama* was commenced twenty-three years before the accession of Sultan Mahmud to the throne of Ghaznah. So the story

of Sultan Mahmud's order to Firdousi falls to the ground, even according to Firdousi himself, as the *Shahnama* took thirty-five years to complete while Sultan Mahmud's reign lasted thirty-three years only, and the story of the presentation of the *Shahnama* to Sultan Mahmud also falls to the ground, as the commencement of the *Shahnama* began two years before the Sultan's accession and the presentation two years after his death. This proposition is supported by other facts. In any case, the *Shahnama* was not written according to the undertaking of the Sultan. Even *Chahar Maqala* does not say that the *Shahnama* was composed by the order of the Sultan. All this and the charge of bastardy against the Sultan stands no scrutiny as he was a legitimate son of the daughter of the Amir of Zafulistan.

The other legend about Sultan Mahmud is that when he conquered Somnath and was about to break the idol Lingam, the Brahmins fell at his feet and offered to give gold and silver equal to its weight, and that the Sultan broke the idol, saying he wanted to be known rather as an idol-breaker than an idol-protector. This story and legend is also fictitious and cannot stand on historical evidence. It is not supported by records of contemporary historians and writers who have recorded minute details of the conquest of Somnath. It cannot be true as lingam or phallus everywhere in India were and are in all cases made of solid stone and were not hollow and full of treasure; and when broken huge treasures came out of them cannot be a fact. Had this story been true, it would surely have been mentioned in contemporary literature, history and other records, and in the poems of Farrukhi and other poets, and also in the Sultan's letter on his Somnath victory to the Caliph of Baghdad. The famous traveller al-Biruni in his book *Hind* has given elaborate details how lingams are made, and has not mentioned any hollow lingams.

Similarly, other legends relating to the Sultan about his inordinate love for Ayaz, the boy slave, and while drunk embracing and possessing him, are also fictitious and cannot be true as he was a pious Muslim and did not drink. Other legends about him do not bear historical scrutiny.

A story has been fictitiously invented and recorded by some later writers and historians that on his deathbed the Sultan is reported to have asked his treasurer to bring all his treasures, and when he saw them heaped up before him he wept bitterly at the sight, so great was the avarice and greed of the Sultan. His sorrow and weeping, if any, has been distorted and misinterpreted as a sign of greed and avarice, but in actual fact Sultan Mahmud, who was a great scholar and poet, saw on his deathbed the utter vanity of human greatness, power and wealth, and might well have sighed at the transitory character of power, wealth and life. The Sultan's generosity was proverbial, so the charge of avarice fades away before the solid historical and overwhelming evidence of his generosity and munificence. In his *Short History of Muslim Rule in India* (p. 55), Dr. Ishwari Prasad remarks about Sultan Mahmud as follows: "The Hindus represent Sultan Mahmud as a veritable Hun, and the Mussalmans as a great saint, and *Waliullah*. The impartial observer must however record a different verdict. To him, the Sultan was born a leader of men, a just and upright ruler, an intrepid and gifted soldier, a dispenser of justice, and a patron of letters, and deserves to be ranked among the greatest personalities of the world".

Sultan Mahmud was the greatest sultan of his age, and a great gifted ruler who established a vast empire and embellished it with the light of learning, and who gave peace and happiness to the vast millions of his subjects. He was not a Hun, tyrant nor an avaricious and capricious sultan in that medieval time. Toleration was the keynote of his success.

## The Jewish Problem is not Racial, but refers to Nationality and to the Property of the Arabs of Palestine

Entire absence of freedom and conscience in Israel

By THE REV. ELIAS ANDRAOS

Missionary of St. Paul, Buenos Aires, Argentine

On 23rd March 1957, *El Pueblo* published a letter by Md. Enrique Martines Codo entitled "Catholicism and Antisemitism". Perhaps Mr. Codo may have noticed some anti-Semitic tendencies in some really restricted circles of extreme nationalists, but I doubt if anti-Semitism is an Argentine evil, as the reflections of Mr. Codo seem to convey. The Argentine nation is hospitable, generous and friendly to foreigners, and therefore it is very difficult to believe that it could be led by a sentiment so contrary to its genius. A demonstration of it is the more or less privileged position enjoyed by the Jews in this country: absolute freedom of conscience, freedom of commerce, freedom to express without hindrance their opinions in the press, in broadcasting and television, free access to public employment, universities and professions, even the enjoyment of a privilege unique in the world — the privilege of observing the Sabbath rest, if not officially recognized, at least facilitated in Argentine, because all public authorities, tribunals, schools and banks close their offices on the Sabbath Day. In no place in the country, to the best of my knowledge, has any collective action of violence against Jews occurred. Anti-Semitism has little place among us. Therefore I see no use discussing this theme in public.

But on the other hand, such letters as I am commenting upon are, in my opinion, rather harmful, because they turn away public attention from the real problem created by the establishment of the State of Israel, are misleading public opinion of the Catholics in this country, and spread confusion about a problem of great importance.

The Palestine problem is not a racial one, and if we have to speak about racialism, it would be better to denounce the Zionist racialism dominating the State of Israel with virulence and fanaticism. But of this I shall speak later on.

I say that the Palestine problem is not a racial one, but a problem of elementary justice and common sense. The State of Israel has been created at the expense of the peace-loving inhabitants of a country. Therefore, Israel is an aggressor, having intruded upon a foreign house by illegal means. An accomplished fact does not exonerate the guilty, nor does the consent given by the United Nations or any other international organization. The victims, the Palestinians, continue to claim the property taken away from them in a violent and unjust way. What would we, the Argentine people, do if Zionism took possession of one of our provinces under the pretext that its co-religionists were in need of a "national home"? If we rose to expel the intruders and to recover our homes and lands, a moralist would be wrong in calling us "anti-Semites", even if he referred to texts of the Bible or encyclicals of the Popes.

As regards the accomplished facts, a *de facto* occupation does not create rights. The Palestinians have never recognized, nor will they ever recognize, the State of Israel, in the same way as Argentine has never recognized the occupation of the Malvinas Islands by Great Britain. According to the most elementary principles of law, the Zionists in Palestine are and will remain illegal aggressors. Calling them by that name and demanding their expulsion is no crime of defamation, nor does one become guilty of "anti-Semitism" by it if one protests against a flagrant injustice and demands the expulsion of an illegal aggressor. Mr. Codo ends his letter by the following reflection: "What we want to make clear here is that a Catholic may back a war against Israel, if that war is justified; that means if Israel puts herself in the position of an aggressor country, without any extenuating circumstances or justification, no one will attribute the backing of such a war as an anti-Semitic sentiment".

That is an opinion which (theoretically) may be quite conclusive, but is absolutely erroneous in the concrete case of Israel, because it starts from a false hypothesis; this means that provided Israel does not start a new aggression, we can consider it as a legitimate State and treat her accordingly. This unfortunately is the error which a

growing number of Catholics in favour of peace with Israel make in good faith.

### Flagrant usurpation

But nobody has the right to ignore that Israel has occupied a country which has not been hers, has usurped lands not belonging to her, has given her Israeli followers houses, olive-gardens, vineyards and fields not belonging to her. What will you call that? There are 800,000 to 900,000 Palestinians who for nine years have been living in miserable camps in unhygienic conditions and in terrible want of food. All this is the fault of the State of Israel, which expelled them from their lands and is not prepared to allow them to go home to their own country or to recover their possessions. Does anybody then doubt that Israel is not an unjust aggressor?

If some people, moved by other sentiments, of which anti-Semitism is one, attacked Israel, we would be the first to ask them to purify their intentions and to throw from their hearts all that looked like racialism and anti-Semitism. We shall not justify the aggressor nor shall we desist from fighting for the restoration of the property taken away unjustly from its legitimate owners. Don't you believe that when dealing with the human problem of the Palestine refugees people talk overmuch of the phantom of anti-Semitism and keep silent about the injustice perpetrated by Israel on hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have lost all they had?

People condemn anti-Semitism if the victims are Jews. That is right. We are the first to condemn a theory which at the same time is anti-human and anti-Christian. Nobody, whoever he may be, must be persecuted for his race or religion. We are all children of the same God, our Father in Heaven. Religion is a personal matter which everybody has to follow according to the commandments of his conscience. But if that is right in the matter of the people of Israel, it will remain equally right if the Israelis transformed themselves from victims to victimizers. And that is what is happening now in the State of Israel, where the victims have transformed themselves into victimizers, where the authorities and the people, each one in their special sphere of activity, profess the most narrow-minded, intransigent and fanatic racialism of hatred, sworn vindictiveness, and express an outspoken resolve to wipe out from the State of Israel all traces of what is not Jewish, and in the first place all this is Christian.

### Political racialism

Making use of a pretext which a persecutor always finds ready at hand, the Israeli authorities have taken a series of unjust measures to the detriment of the Arab inhabitants which restrict their freedom of working and travelling. According to the laws existing in Israel, the Arabs are not free to travel inside the country without a special permit granted by the military authority. The Israeli authorities have taken measures to legalize the expropriation of fields, olive-gardens, vineyards and houses belonging to the Arabs. The only crime they are accused of is that of not belonging to the Jewish people. About two hundred Arab villages have been totally or partially destroyed during or after the war of 1948. Their names have been published in the *Rabita*, the official bulletin edited by the Melchite Catholic archdioceses of Haifa, Nazareth and Galilea. Two completely Catholic villages have been blown up together with their churches and parsonages: Ikrit on 25th December 1952, and Kafar Bur'um on 16th September 1953.

The Arab inhabitants of certain villages have been declared absent, so as to supply a legal justification for the authorities to usurp the houses and the lands and to transfer them to Israelies. The official gazette in December 1953 published 45 decrees of expropria-

tion of 40 villages situated in the north of Palestine and comprising a total of 300,000 dunums, or about 35,000 hectares. Om al-Fahm lost 110,000 dunums of 140,000, al-Teire (Haifa) lost 21,000 of 30,000, al-Taibah lost 26,000 of 36,000, etc. The list grows longer every day.

### Religious racialism

From the religious point of view, the State of Israel is fanatically racial and anti-Christian. It is true, the constitution speaks of absolute freedom of conscience. The authorities keep away from being involved officially in untimely or compromising declarations. The most elementary political prudence advises them to do so when their State is in its initial stages, but the future is as yet uncertain. They prefer to make use of military pretexts or of laws apparently concerning the security of the State, as those to which I have referred above. But the rabbinical authorities, the deputies of the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament), the newspapers and the people in general, having no interest in the international repercussions of their activities, give free vent to their anti-Christian hatred and to their racial passions.

### Satan's messengers

In a circular published by the Grand Rabbinate in December 1952 to warn the public against Christian apostolate, this is what we read: "Four hundred messengers of Satan, the missionaries, and among them baptized Jews, have come down on the country like a swarm of locusts".

Public opinion in Israel does not admit freedom of conscience such as it is understood by the civilized world, although the Zionists claim it for the benefit of their co-religionists in the countries where they are welcomed; for them the conversion of a Jew to Christianity is a real act of treason against the fatherland. In the session of the Knesset on 17th July 1954, a deputy declared: "A Fifth Column is gnawing the fundamentals of the State. . . . The situation of the missionaries in Israel is not equal to their situation in other countries. The religion of Israel is a national religion. Religion and nationality have always been inseparable among us. . . . Who abandons the religion of Israel is a traitor" (the newspaper *Hatsofe* for 18th June 1954). The same newspaper wrote in 1953: "To fight the mission is an obligation of all social classes. . . . The missionary will only disappear if he realizes that to us all he is Enemy Number One" (*Hatsofe* for 17th November 1953).

Another deputy of the Knesset, Mr. S. Lorentz, of the Agudath Israel Party, interpellated the government, saying about the "intensification of the plague of the missionaries", and added: "For a Jew who changes his religion is a traitor to the very existence of the State, and a sect of converts is a malicious lepra in the nation's body. It is a potential fifth column". In the secondary schools of Jerusalem the teachers dedicated a whole hour in March 1953 "to speak against Christianity, declaring that Jesus of Nazareth has been one of the many false prophets who have appeared in Israel, and that a baptized Jew is worse than a pagan".

In Jaffa at the end of the school year of 1954, posters written in very big letters were fixed to the doors of shops of those fathers who sent their sons to Christian schools: "Attention! The proprietor of this shop sends his sons to a school of the Christian mission and declines to bring them to a Hebrew school".

### They incite to rebellion

On 25th October 1954 the newspaper *Mamodia* published a declaration by the Rabbi S. Amoti, in which he said:

"Rise against apostasy! Catch on the street those who sell themselves for twenty pounds and tell them 'Clear off from the Holy Land!' Go ahead and sell yourselves as slaves to those who yesterday wished to murder you. Clear off from her! On the streets the names of those who sell their souls to Baal must be published. They must go away from our country and eat our bread no more. Dismiss those employees from their jobs, who send their sons to the mission! They must find no place in our country. We know days when the Cross ruled over the Holy Land, the same Cross which yesterday murdered us and today murders those who search protection under it, that Cross which has murdered millions of Jews in each generation and did not raise a finger to spare us even only a single blow of death, that Cross that dominates us today in our very houses."

In Haifa on 15th April 1954, on Good Friday, a mob of fanatical Israelies broke the gates of three Catholic cemeteries — the Melkite Catholic, the Latin and the Maronite — and profaned the tombs, treading and stamping on the Crosses. In view of this sacrilege the religious authorities, led by His Excellency Monsignore Georges

Hakim, the Melkite Catholic Archbishop of Acre, Haifa, Nazareth and Galilea, and Monsignore Vergani, the *Vicaire* of the Latin Patriarch, asked for justice in a memorandum handed to Ben Gurion, the Prime Minister of the State, without entertaining great illusions about the result of their step. They declared in their memorandum: "Many of our churches have been plundered and profaned and in some cases destroyed. The Holy Cross, the symbol of Christianity, has been destroyed and profaned; the same thing must be said about the Christian cemeteries. The churches of Ikret, Kafar Bur'um, Tiberias, Safad, Ain Karem, Wadi al-Jamal, Sahamata, al-Damun and many others have been demolished and profaned by the Jews".

All the complaints presented by the Christian authorities concerning these acts against our churches can still be found in the archives of the Ministry of Public Worship, without any decision having been taken about the punishment of the Jewish criminals or to avoid the repetition of such crimes. Finally, we have seen the three Christian cemeteries of Haifa, property of the Melkite Catholic, Latin Catholic and Maronite community, being assaulted on Good Friday and all the holy crosses destroyed and profaned in a most shameful manner.

### Must we support Israel?

And to show that nothing has changed in Israel, that racialism continues to inspire the internal politics of that country, we publish here a last quotation taken from the *Rabita* for February 1957, page 13. In an editorial, "Error Upon Error," the Review edited by the Melkite Catholic archdiocese of Galilea enumerates the errors committed by the policies of Israel during the last three months — the treacherous attack on Egypt, the slaughtering of undefended Arabs in the Gaza Strip, the inhuman treatment inflicted on the refugees. It proceeds to add: "But let us set aside the Gaza Strip, its inhabitants and its problems, in order to occupy ourselves with a problem of special importance: the so-called obligation of the Christians of the West to back in the Orient the Jews of Israel and the necessity of modifying the politics adopted by the Christian authorities until now, policies based on the idea that the future of the Arabs is one without distinction among Muslims and Christians.

"... Israel treats the Christian minority in the worst manner. Recently the churches have been destroyed or blown up. Only in Israel have cemeteries been profaned and crosses broken down. Only in Israel after the armistice two Christian villages — Kkret and Kafar Bur'um — have been destroyed and their inhabitants left wandering from one place to another, hungry, in search of refuge in stables and caves. In spite of our protests the ecclesiastical property has been for eight years in foreign hands. The Christians are considered as traitors in the same way as the other Arabs; their lands are confiscated, and the possibilities to earn their living are denied to them and they are excluded from public employment.

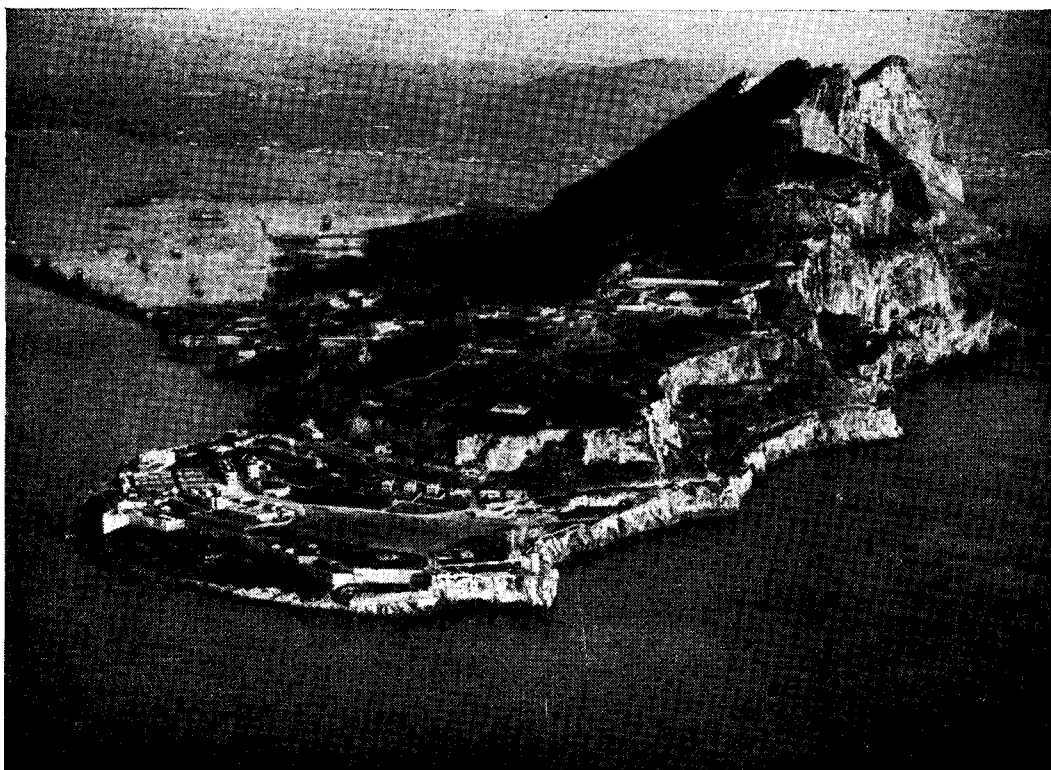
### Change of policies necessary

"Therefore, Israel must repair her many errors, if she wants that we change our policies. We write this in the interests of Israel herself, for we must live in Israel. Someone has said: 'Israel has been established and will not disappear any more'. We say that if Israel wishes to survive, she must act with equity towards others and treat the minority as she wishes the world to treat the Jewish minority."

### Conclusion

The Zionists are in a weak position when they talk about anti-Semitism and protest against it if it hits their co-religionists. Having won a strip of land to establish a State of their own, they have given free vent to a narrow-minded, fanatical, intolerant and outspoken racialism. What a clamour would fill the files of periodicals and broadcasting stations if a Catholic prelate gave vent to diatribes far less than those made by the Grand Rabbinate of Israel, which calls us "messengers of Satan" and which prints lies and calumnies such as "The Cross kills those who take protection beneath it and has murdered millions of Jews". Or, if we incited our people and told them what the Jews really were and what the Rabbi Amoti has said about the Jews converted to Christianity — "clear off from our country and do not eat our bread".

Instead of protesting so much against an imaginary anti-Semitism in Argentine, it would perhaps be better to tell the Zionists of Israel to begin at home to fight the bad racialism dominating the new State.



## GIBRALTAR

### A reminder of the glorious days of Muslim Spain

Crossing the Atlantic from the New World, bound for Mediterranean ports, one obtains a first glimpse of the Old World as one nears the Pillars of Hercules, two small mountains standing fourteen miles apart, one at the northernmost point of Africa, the other the extreme south-western tip of Europe, and both, as one approaches them, shrouded in a haze which subtly exaggerates the distance around them and between them. Here, according to ancient myth, came Hercules in the course of his labours to steal the Golden Apples (oranges or tangerines) of Hesperides, daughter of Hesperus, God of the West and otherwise known as the Evening Star. With one wrench of his mighty arms he tore a great cleft in the mountain and allowed the waters of the inland sea to flow through to the ocean. And the steep shores thus divided still remain clothed in a vague and mythical magnificence, as if it were the waters of time itself that flowed between them into eternity, giving no hint of the present worlds behind them. On the one hand, invisible, is Europe, its railroads and industrial cities, and on the other the long chain of the Atlas Mountains reaching out across the hidden vastness of North Africa. And here one sees merely two small mountains, facing each other enigmatically, as though the mists of mutual ignorance, across the narrow passage now known as the Straits of Gibraltar.

Gibraltar itself, strategic outpost of the British Empire, is the northern Pillar, which on closer view looms up very steep and abrupt, a sharp rock standing out against the European shore, and it seems a particularly fitting landmark to be skirting past at the outset of an excursion into Arab countries, for its name is a perverted form of the Arabic words "*Jabal Tariq*", meaning "Mount Tariq", and the Rock of

Gibraltar was originally named after the leader of the Arab and Berber Muslims who crossed the straits and invaded Europe in 711 C.E.

It was less than a century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad that the Arabs, having already had an empire that reached to the borders of China, the gates of Byzantium and the Atlantic, and was larger than Rome's at the height of her glory, launched under the direction of Tariq Ibn Ziad their hazardous invasion of Spain. Tariq crossed with twelve thousand Arabs and Berbers, landed at the bay west of the rock which bears his name, and camped for the night, knowing that Rodrigo the Visigoth, then Warlord of Spain, had word of the Arabs' intentions and was on his way to meet them with a well-equipped army numbering thirty thousand. Tariq's men awakened at dawn to find that the entire sailing fleet which had brought them over had been burned during the night by their own leader's order. It was then that this one-eyed warrior — he had lost an eye in combat and the Spaniards speak of him as Tariq al-Tuerto — "Tariq the One-Eyed" — gathered his men and delivered his famous oration: "Oh men! Where is escape? The sea is behind you and the enemy before you: by God; you have nothing left you but steadfastness and perseverance. Your enemy's armed forces confront you, and they have plentiful supplies; while you have no recourse but your swords and no sustenance except what you take from the enemy's hands. I am not warning you of a fate from which I myself have any escape. You know that I am the first to answer the summons I have issued. When the two armies clash in battle I in person shall attack the tyrant Rodrigo — and slay him, *in-shaa' Allah*. So on with me to the attack! For if I perish

later I shall have rid you of Rodrigo, and you can always find another leader, valiant and steady, to command you. And if I perish before I reach him, carry out my plan of battle and be fierce in the onslaught ! ”

And Tariq's ability proved adequate to the ambitious venture thus begun. Rodrigo was defeated, the Arabs shortly overran the greater part of the peninsula, and only twenty-one years later, with Spain long since subdued and pacified, they had penetrated into Gaul and were forging into the country as far north as Tours.

In 711 C.E., when the Arabs entered Spain, conditions in Europe were at the nadir of disorder, the standards of living and of personal safety were extremely low, Latin learning was forgotten and practically nothing remained of what the Romans had created, borrowed or established.

As soon as the Arabs had taken possession of Spain, they set themselves to the task of civilizing the country. The people of Spain, says Henry Smith Williams in the *Historian's History of the World*, were rewarded after the advent of the Muslims “with a gentleness and tolerance and a growth of intellectuality and commerce that leads one to question if the Arab domination of Europe could have been the horror it is usually imagined”. The Arabs introduced their advanced methods of farming, including their system of irrigation and the use of silos and windmills, and agriculture flourished. Artisanship and industry developed; commerce prospered. The Arabs instituted hospitals, public baths, asylums, pharmacies, libraries and universities. Three hundred years of this fruitful labour culminated in the glories of Cordova under 'Abd al-Rahman III (d. 961 C.E.). Spain became not an

outpost, but one of the centres of Muslim culture. Europeans came to the schools of Spain to study chemistry, medicine, surgery, higher mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. Roger Bacon of England, Albertus Magnus of Germany, the great scholars of all Europe attended the Arabian schools of Spain. Arabic became the classical language of Europe and Arabic textbooks the sole source of learning.

It was Europe's demand for translated Arabic works which later restored the Latin tongue as the learned language of Europe and made possible the Renaissance. For Greek philosophy and science had “blossomed in the Arab gardens of thought while they withered in the stony soil of Rome”, and it was only when the influence of the Muslim schools had for several centuries been filtering across the Pyrenees and had finally fertilized the soil that Europe entered upon the development of its modern civilization.

The battle of Tours, which is supposed to have checked the further advance of the Arabs into Europe, if battle it was, was a Pyrrhic victory, in which, as Anatole France expresses it, “the art and civilization of the Arabs fell before the barbarism of France”. It meant that Europe went a devious path and delayed its awakening for many generations, only to arrive in the end, and by the self-same source, at exactly what had been opened up to it when Tariq landed at Gibraltar.

This oft-repeated “saving of Europe at Tours” is very difficult to reconcile with the fact that the Arabs at a later period occupied the south-eastern part of France (Garde-Frainet, near Nice), and north-western Italy as well as Switzerland to the German border.

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*The Armed Forces of Tunisia are taking part in the great parade organized on 20th March 1957*



*The Prime Minister of Tunisia, Mr. Habib Bourguiba, is seen in the first row of the National Armed Forces on 20th March 1957. Behind him are members of the Armed Forces. In the first row are seated members of the various Tunisian delegations.*

## Su'udi Arabian Delegation



*His Royal Highness the Amir Faysal, Crown Prince of Su'udi Arabia (second from right), in conversation with prominent Muslim Arab personalities on the occasion of the Independence celebrations of Tunisia.*

*Our picture shows (left to right): His Excellency Mr. Mahmud al-'Alami, Ambassador of Morocco in Tunisia, the Prime Minister of Morocco, Si al-Bakka'i, His Royal Highness Prince Faysal of Su'udi Arabia and His Excellency Mr. Taieb Annabi, the Ambassador of Tunisia in Su'udi Arabia.*

## The Womanhood



*A section of the Youth Movement of Girls that took part in the Independence celebrations.*

# TUNISIA



*...Boufguiba (on the dais) at a march-past of the  
... Behind him are standing the commanders of  
...med Forces.  
...the various delegations that have come to share  
...Tunisia's joy.*

## hood of Tunisia



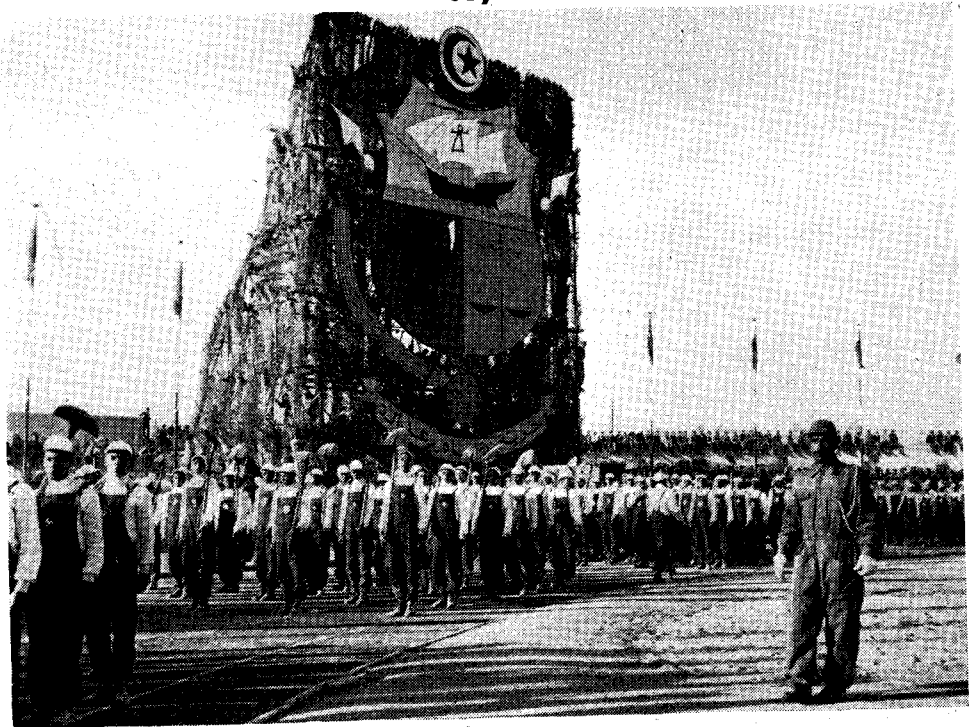
*...s that took part in the first year of Independence  
...celebrations.*

## Security



*A contingent of the Police Force of Tunisia taking part in the National Festival of  
Independence on 20th March 1957.*

## Joy



*A picture which typifies the happiness of Tunisia on 20th March 1957 — the day  
on which she celebrated her first year of Independence.  
The insignia of the country has for its motto three words (seen in the picture  
written in Arabic): Liberty, Discipline, Justice.*



# NEW TUNISIA

## A Review of Tunisia's Achievements during one year of Independence

The Revision of the Judicial System,  
the Abolition of Polygamy, Sub-  
mission of Divorce to the Decision of  
the Tribunal, the three most daring  
achievements of the Bourguiba  
Government during 1956-57



*The Prime Minister of Morocco, Si al-Bakka'i, is being greeted by the Prime Minister of Tunisia, Mr. H. Bourguiba, at the airport of Tunis. He has come to Tunisia to take part in Tunisia's Independence Day celebrations on 20th March 1957.*

### General geography

Tunisia, a country of nearly four million inhabitants, is a large avenue of plains following the double façade of her coastline. Her capital, her principal towns and most of her smaller towns are ports. Apart from the northern littoral area, her climate is steppe-like. To the south and east of the Ridge, the influence of the Sahara prevails. The basins give way to open plains above which isolated mountain ranges rise. Tunisia covers an area of 79,000 square miles, or a quarter of that of France. Tunisia's latitude lies between 37° 20' N. and stretches to her extreme point south of Rhamadès, below 30°. In this eastern part of North Africa, at 10 miles north-east of Bizerta, is the most northerly point of the whole African continent.

### Tunisia's resources

The total mining output represents in value about 8 per cent of national production. It is worth noting the importance of ore in total railroad returns (62 per cent), in port traffic (as much as 90 per cent in the case of Sfax) and in export value (a third on an average).

Superphosphates are produced by two installations : one at Sfax, capable of 90,000 tons output of triple superphosphates having 44 per cent phosphoric acid, and the other near Tunis, with a capacity of 60,000 tons of superphosphates at 16 per cent. As these totals amply cover local needs, the

surplus available for export is appreciable: more than 28,000 tons of lead-metal were produced in 1955.

Tunisia's various agricultural activities are strictly dependent on rainfall and the nature of the soil.

The unproductive area covers 14,000 square miles out of a total of 36,000. Nearly 16,000 square miles are cultivated or under development, while forests cover 4,000. Thus there remain about 16,000 square miles representing roads, etc., which are not cultivated although they are productive.

Cereals in the north and centre cover 4,000 square miles, vineyards 150, citrus fruits 24 with 800,000 trees, olive trees 2,920 with 27,000,000 trees. There are also 250,000 almond trees, 8,500,000 fruits trees of various kinds and finally 3,000,000 date-palms in the oases.

### The olive tree

A few decades ago the cultivation of the olive tree took on a systematic and rational aspect. The olive groves today make up a modern forest of more than 27,000,000 trees covering a surface of more than 1,700,000 acres.

The 1956-57 harvest produced approximately 80,000 tons. Furthermore, new plantations are in progress at the rate of some 500,000 trees per annum, giving rise to ever-increasing commercial prospects.

Olive oil production accounts for some 20 per cent of

agricultural income and 8 per cent of the national income ; in other words as much as ores.

Olive oil is, moreover, the Tunisian's "protective nourishment" — he consumes an average of over 2 pints per month.

### Towards independence

On 3rd June 1955 Tunisia accepted, as a "step forward", a reorganization within the framework of internal autonomy.

Less than a year later, on 20th March 1956, this substantial and decisive stage had been left behind. National independence was solemnly recognized first by France and then by many other countries in the world.

unquestionable rights and absolute principles — have always been allied in their minds with prospects of friendly and co-operative relations with France.

On 14th April 1956, Mr. Bourguiba, by accepting the premiership, gave concrete expression to the desire of the Neo-Destour and the National Front to take over the full responsibilities of government.

About a year has now elapsed since the formation on 14th April 1956 of the first government of independent Tunisia. Difficult though it may be to judge a government's policy on a short-term basis, it might be useful to outline the action taken by the Bourguiba Government, bearing in mind that outlines can only give a general impression of the work

### Child Welfare in Tunisia



*Realizing that the future of a country depends on child welfare, the Tunisian Government, under the able leadership of its Prime Minister, Mr. H. Bourguiba, has founded a Village of Children where waifs are taken care of. Our pictures show children learning to read and write.*

This was an even more decisive step as a result of which Tunisia was able to determine her own internal régime, reform her former institutions or create new ones ; in short, construct the modern State to which she aspired.

Consequently, on 25th March 1956, the Tunisian people were called upon to elect its National Constituent Assembly.

National independence, a constitution: these two fundamental ambitions which the country had achieved following the setting up of national organizations, particularly the Neo-Destour, were received with the greatest satisfaction.

Tunisia's independence has in effect been built around the Destourian Party during twenty-five years of struggle and activity.

Mr. Habib Bourguiba and his companions based their political activity on the possibility — and the necessity — of settling the problems arising out of the Protectorate by negotiation between France and Tunisia in mutual respect. The sovereignty of the country and its independence —

accomplished and of the work that remains to be done.

Since its first months of office, the Bourguiba Government has laid the foundations of what has rightfully been called an "Institutional Revolution", marked above all by the reform of regional administration and by judicial reforms and promulgation of *Statut Personnel Code*—the nationalization of *Habous* lands or the unification of the various teaching orders. The carrying out of the new law demands much more effort on the part of the administration than did their elaboration.

The need for a plan for the development of Tunisian economy has been frequently emphasized, but such a plan will involve much preparatory work and research for both present and future projects.

The chief aims of the policy outlined to the Assembly by Mr. Bourguiba on 17th April 1956 were as follows:

to reinforce and make effective the foundations of Tunisian independence both at home and abroad ;

to forge ahead with a bold but judicious policy designed to liberate the national economy from the dead weight of out-of-date methods and unemployment, and to enable it to expand rapidly.

Therefore, the activities of the Government can be considered under the following heads :

constitutional ;  
economic and cultural ; and,  
diplomatic.

### The reform of the administration

After attending to the most urgent matters, the Government turned its attention to the establishment of the State's authority. The Government started the work of reforming

### The French Delegation



*The French delegate, Mr. Mitterand, is arriving at the Airport of Tunisia to take part in Independence Day celebrations on 20th March 1957*

the regional administration along three main lines: modernization, stabilization and efficiency.

The Government has given women the right to vote at the age of 20, on condition that, as a symbol of their emancipation they abandon the veil, and at the same time a reform of the registration of births and deaths has been instituted.

Undoubtedly, the revision of the judicial system and the abolition of polygamy have been the most daring achievements of the Bourguiba Government.

The first task of the Ministry of Justice was to reform the actual administration which has to carry out the new legislative arrangements. Traces of the Protectorate rule were still in evidence, but when the functions of the French Government commissioners ended on 5th May 1956, the Ministry was able to carry out a more rational regroupment of the administrative and technical services, create a chancellery to deal with the personnel management of the

magistracy and, most important of all, to appoint Tunisian magistrates, and thus bring a true feeling of nationalism to the Tunisian legal system.

All religious courts have been dissolved and absorbed into the secular courts, which were increased in number from 18 to 37, and the subsequent wider distribution of criminal courts will result in a speedier and more effective fight against crime.

### New legislation

Following the above-mentioned reforms, the Government announced the end of the judiciary powers which the Governors had inherited from the former chiefs, and in the true spirit of democracy obtained the consent of the Sovereign to a decree passed on the 31st May 1956, by which the members of the Husainite royal family became subject to the same laws and restrictions, and enjoyed the same rights and privileges, as every other citizen.

The most important reform was the *Code du Statut Personnel*, which became applicable to Muslim Tunisians on 1st January 1957. The text of this law is marked by its conciseness, and basically by certain innovations which, although in step with modern times, are by no means contrary to the spirit of Islam (such as new guarantees of women's rights and the safeguarding of her interests, divorce to be submitted to the decision of the Tribunal, the abolition of polygamy, the regulation of marriage by fixing a minimum age, etc.).

The Tunisian Israelites remain subject to their own present laws for the time being, and a decree dated the 12th July 1956 rules that for the time being the code applicable\* to Tunisians who are neither Muslims nor Israelites shall remain as before, based on the French Civil Code.

Finally, a Higher School of Law has been created in Tunis so that magistrates having passed through it will possess a thorough knowledge and understanding of judicial matters and will thus be fully equipped to carry out their mission.

### Labour

The Government's action in this sphere is mainly legislative and its first task is the modernization and simplification of the Labour Laws.

An urgently needed decree passed on 30th April 1956, in addition to instituting regional commissions to encourage friendly collaboration between professionals and agricultural workers, has considerably improved the lot of the agricultural worker by:

- (a) fixing a minimum wage and laying down conditions of bonuses for the harvest, technical efficiency, seniority, etc. ;
- (b) limiting working hours and providing for a day of rest ;
- (c) regulating the manner of indemnifying dismissed workers ; and,
- (d) providing for the establishment of social services responsible for family allowances and old age allowances.

Two Labour Exchanges are being built, one in Tunis and one in Sfax, with the object of:

- solving the unemployment problem ;
- national assistance ; and,
- organizing spare time education.

A policy is in force of sending young Tunisian workers to France to specialized centres in order that their professional education shall proceed more rapidly so as to replace those foreign workers who are being relieved of their jobs,

and to fill the new need for specialists which will result from the development of the Tunisian economy plan. From 15th April to 12th September 1956, 420 young Tunisians enrolled in centres of concentrated professional studies, of whom 45 were technicians and metallurgists. Particular efforts are being made to spur on young officers and qualified workers, whose number is tragically small.

### Public Health

The avowed policy of the Bourguiba Government is to make the public health system a truly national organization which would grow and develop so as to meet the needs of the whole population.

#### 1. *The National Element :*

- (a) The World Health Organization: In May 1956, Tunisia was admitted to the World Health Organization and became a member of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- (b) Red Crescent: The Red Crescent of Tunisia which was dissolved by the French on the grounds that it duplicated the French Red Cross in Tunisia has been

consultations. In addition 22 new posts have been created for doctors under contract to attend to school hygiene and epidemics.

- (c) Rural Medicine: The measures taken to encourage its development include the grant of a large subsidy to doctors sent to poor rural areas (all Public Health doctors have the right to free lodging), the extension of the network of free medical aid and the grant of a large supply of hospital equipment.
- (d) Training: A programme of theoretical and practical medical training has been drawn up with the help of the World Health Organization, who have also supplied demonstration material, and a year's course of midwifery has been instituted with living-in facilities for students.

### National Education

The National Education is undoubtedly the realm in which the Government wishes to make the most rapid progress.

#### 1. *Primary Education :*

- (a) Expansion: Five hundred new classes were started in 1956, bringing the total number of primary

### The Spanish Delegation

*The Spanish Delegation which has come to join in the first year of Independence celebrations is being received by the Tunisian officials.*



reformed as the only national association and will be affiliated to the International Red Cross.

#### 2. *Growth and Development*

- (a) Decentralization: A plan has been put before the Ministry for the creation of five sanitary regions centred round the towns of Tunis, Sousse, Sfax, Le Kef and Gafsa.
- (b) Revision of Duties: By a change around of duties, the Ministry has been able to create posts for part-time doctors with a view to speeding up out-patient

school students to 236,000. This necessitated the immediate recruitment of 500 new teachers, whose number now totals 5,600, and an extension of teachers' training schools.

- (b) Reforms: Henceforth, the first year of study in the primary school will be held entirely in Arabic instead of in French and Arabic as hitherto, to eliminate the strain of bilingual studies for young children. As the course of study is adapted to the needs of the new Tunisia, Arabic will obviously

become the principal tongue, although this does not mean that the study of French will be omitted from primary education.

The diplomas for primary students and for primary teachers are now held under Tunisian regulations.

- (c) Free Education: The nationalisation of the Qur'anic modern schools (private schools) — 210 schools, 974 teachers — will increase the number of pupils who benefit from free public education to 40,414. It will also make possible the standardization of the programme for primary education.
- (d) Social Work: Social work in primary education has consisted mainly of the development of school canteens, and taking over the cost of school equipment.

## 2. Secondary Education

- (a) Expansion: In 1956 an increase of 900 to 1,000 pupils was anticipated, a considerable addition to the number of 2,537 secondary school pupils registered in 1955.
- (b) Zitounian Schools: On the other hand, the strength of the Zitounian (i.e., the old traditional Islamic) schools has decreased and it will take some years to establish a sound modern tradition through this form of education. As a beginning, the first stage of Zitounian education was recently recognized by a diploma, and the *Tahsil* (secondary diploma) will be recognized in June 1959. The new training college for teachers will obviously help in this modernization.
- (c) Examinations: The Tunisian *baccalaureat* was created in June 1956. This is intended to recognize the studies carried out in those establishments under the Ministry of Education, and to take the place of the present Diploma of Sadikian Studies. This *baccalaureat* will denote the final stage of the projected reform of Tunisian secondary education, and is at the moment only a transitory diploma, very similar to the French *baccalaureat*.
- (d) Equipment and Books: The Fund for Children has provided the Ministry of Education with a credit of 75,000,000 francs for the purchase of books and equipment for all secondary schools.

## 3. Higher Education

Three new centres of higher education have recently been established:

- (a) Day Training College for Teachers, open to Tunisian students who have passed the *baccalaureat* and an entrance examination. During the three-year course, which is entirely free, each student receives a monthly grant of 30,000 francs, and on graduation is appointed direct to a secondary school.
- (b) Law School, which offers a three-year course to students who have attained a specified standard of education and who have passed the entrance examination.
- (c) Centre for Economic Studies, which provides elementary and higher education in economics and organizes research in economic problems.

## The Tunisian woman

On the day when the text of the law regulating personal status, which created so much interest, was published, a second 20th March dawned for the Tunisian woman.

The Tunisian woman, oppressed by abusive customs and usages, being at last like everybody else, has received the right to vote. Politically matured by the events of recent years, she is worthy of this new privilege which abolishes a state of affairs which, legally speaking, by depriving her of civic rights, put her on the same footing as habitual criminals and lunatics.

Who is this Tunisian woman, so pleased with her new prerogatives? What does she do? What is her present, and what is her future?

The description is easy: a broad smile, a mixture of modernism mingled with a touch of conservatism varying according to region, a thirst for knowledge which goes even further than the proverbial curiosity attributed to her sex; all this is dominated by irresistible courage.

The most striking fact of all in this sudden evolution is the Tunisian woman's immediate adaptation to the demands of her new life. Scarcely a day goes by without her giving proof of the astonishing ease with which she has accomplished this.

Yesterday cloistered and practically indifferent to any problem outside her own domestic circle, today she may be a teacher, doctor, official, social assistant — among other professions — and takes an increasing part in the life of her country, participating in every conceivable national activity. She studies, indulges in sport, marches past in one place in masculine attire, appears in another still at times wearing the veil, though this is now far from being an impediment to her further progress.

The movement does not stop there, however. It is even spreading as far as semi-modern and distinctly traditionalist circles where the woman wrangles, discusses politics and social problems, always passionately interested in new events.

The Tunisian woman, whose character is composed of moving contrasts, is fully aware of the long road which lies in front of her. She knows her weaknesses, the main one being the ignorance of which she is often a victim, and which she is now fighting with all her strength, taking courses organized for the illiterate and taking care, above all, to see that her children, both girls and boys, are properly educated.

## The Government and information services

When choosing his first independent government, President Bourguiba created a Secretariat of State for Information, whose function is to supply information to various ministerial departments on the one hand and to the local press and foreign correspondents on the other, by means of three main channels:

- (a) The Radio: The Tunis radio station has now become the Radiodiffusion Nationale Tunisienne and in March 1957 the installation, formerly under the direction of Radiodiffusion, was run by the Tunisian Government.
- (b) The Cinema: This is one of the most important channels of the Secretariat of Information, who are in touch with the directors of cinemas, grant permits for films to be shown in Tunisia and also control the production of the fortnightly Tunisian News feature. The aim here is to encourage the production

of films in Tunisia, particularly those with a Tunisian background. Finally, a new legislation for the cinema industry is being drawn up.

- (c) **The Press:** The Tunisian Press Institute was opened at the Secretariat of Information in November 1956. Its primary task is to train young journalists for the Press, and in some cases to train them as officials of the Information Services and as Press Attachés at Tunisian Embassies. The Institute also aspires to become the meeting place for an exchange of ideas between Tunisian and foreign journalists.

#### **Finance and economics**

The Bourguiba Government's trend of policy in the economic and financial spheres can be distinguished, its policy being based on the principles of respect for private property, increasing savings and encouraging private enterprise. It is its hope that Tunisia will soon have a national Mint, while remaining in the franc area.

#### **The Budget**

Since it was principally the state of the country's finances which led to the French Protectorate, the Government was determined to produce a well-balanced budget for 1956/57. This would be an essential mark of Tunisian independence and would contribute towards the restoration of Tunisian prestige.

#### **The Algerian policy of the Bourguiba Government**

The danger to Tunisia's frontiers caused by the war in Algeria, together with the ties of tradition, language and culture which binds Tunisia to the Algerian people, explain the interest taken by the Bourguiba Government and the Tunisian people in a solution of the Algerian problem.

Mr. Bourguiba and the Tunisian Government have tried to take effective action to help our Algerian brothers in their fight against colonialism.

The action taken by the Tunisian Government was both thorough and realistic. Mr. Bourguiba has often, and emphatically, asserted the solidarity of the Tunisian people

with the Algerian people in their fight against colonialism, and he has told the French Government that "there can be no harmony in Franco-Tunisian relations until some solution recognizing the right to independence of the Algerian people has been found".

#### **The Tunis Conference**

The Tunis Conference was an event of historic importance, and an important step towards the realization of a North-African group.

The Heads of State of Morocco and Tunisia (in the presence of representatives of the Algerian Resistance) met at Tunis (for the first time in the history of the two countries) to exchange their points of view and to agree on a common foreign policy.

As a result of the Conference, a joint declaration was published which stated that the Heads of State "had agreed that Morocco and Tunisia should co-operate in a concrete manner, and should remain in permanent contact to arrange the best means of serving the interests of the sister countries of Maghreb, while awaiting the signing of a treaty of co-operation and alliance which the two Governments had agreed to draw up".

Speaking of this Treaty, Mr. Bourguiba said that "we had decided on a treaty of alliance whose effects will be felt over the whole of North Africa. It is the first positive manifestation of the coherent policy arising from our renewed unity. The bases of this treaty had just been defined, and the agreement will be signed for a period of twenty years, tacitly renewable at a conference to be held in Morocco at the wishes of H.M. the Sultan.

"The concord in policy of our two countries will be shown in the near future by the common attitude we will take at the United Nations on the problems of Algeria and the Near East."

The second step accomplished towards the realization of the North-African group was the conclusion of a "Treaty of Brotherhood and Neighbourliness" signed with Libya on 6th January 1957. The Treaty states the solidarity, for better or for worse, between Tunisia and Libya. Each party will consider itself directly involved by any threat or attempt against the other.

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## Our Debt to the Moslem World<sup>1</sup>

By JOHN CLARK ARCHER

*The Christian and the Muslim have yet to reach a constructive understanding by means of mutually sympathetic and objective study*

"Since problems of cultural inheritance and the preservation of peculiarities in a people's heritage seem nowadays in some quarters in process of closer scrutiny — not to say arbitrary solution — than for many decades, or centuries, previously, we have occasion and incentive therein for a re-examination of some of the cultural results of relations between Islam and Christendom, especially our own indebtedness, if any, to Islam. But, apart from any passing mood or practice of our own day, which would preserve the 'native' and reject the 'foreign' in a national situation, we have a recurring obligation in the direction of historical perspective and for the building of a reasonably international society well guided by lessons of the past and using any worthy elements of human progress.

"Our present task might seem at first glance almost highly theoretical — that is, our exposition of 'our own indebtedness'. Nor would we merely point to American collections of books, manuscripts and the arts which exhibit the gifts of the Islamic movement. We have in mind the West and the fact that we are heirs of the West and of its inheritance. We have in mind also our future and whatever may be built in it. And the fact is of moment that America and the West are 'Christian' in contrast with the 'Moslem world'. The Christian and the Moslem have yet to reach a constructive understanding by means of mutually sympathetic and objective study. Their two worlds have stood consistently in opposition, religiously opposed, at least, whatever they have exchanged in general culture. Certain Christian writers of our own time have commonly begrudged Islam its values. One of them who has peculiar competence went at least thus far in the issue of *The Moslem World* of October 1916, page 347: 'Both Arabs and Turks borrowed everything that had to do with culture, except their languages, from others'. And Christian apologists have continually emphasized 'the dead weight of Islam'. There is, of course, a corresponding Islamic apologetic, as in *The Islamic Review*, which rejects Christianity (except for Christian elements which authentic Moslem tradition holds). And some Moslem writers of the day, especially in India and Egypt, are giving Islam added credit as an urgency of culture.<sup>2</sup> Certain Moslem apologists of liberal attitude are interpreting Christian ideas in the light of what they take to be the very essence of Islam — a striking method of interpretation such as Christianity has often used, e.g., in its theory of Christian doctrine as the fulfilment of non-Christian faiths.

"Among less apologetic students, also, there are differences of opinion on the origin and character of Moslem and Christian ideas and institutions, for example, the 'Roman', the 'Byzantine' and the newer 'pre-Byzantine'

schools of interpreters. As one of these students looks off dispassionately towards Mecca — or, towards Baghdad or Cordova instead — what values can he detect along the intervening, westward routes of Islamic expansion? Are there convincing evidences in the various records of the intervals that Western culture is definitely indebted to the Moslems? And, if so, is it a debt to their originality, or only to their agency? There are many records worth examining, although all the facts, one feels, are not available; and there are many items worthy of enumeration and commentary in a review of the essential situation. Whatever the present writer may lack in technical competence at certain points in this survey, he disclaims, in general, an apologetic interest, and is not unaware of any 'feeling' in dealing with the Islamic-Christian field, which, religiously, at least, is so highly controversial.

"In further restriction of our field of inquiry and survey, let us ask about Arab influence — rather than Moslem in general — on certain parts of the West during chosen eras. This would take us to the East at first, for the question is involved of Arab (Moslem Arab) originality. It would take us from Islam's original location in Arabia out to Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo (Fostât) and, eventually, to Cordova, within the period of the first century and a quarter of the Moslem movement, introducing us to such close associates of the Arabs as Persians, Hellenistic Greeks, Armenians, Copts, Berbers and Iberians — a scene quite complicated in itself and yet fully illustrative of the Arab's role. Damascus, a very ancient, pre-Islamic foundation, represents a midway point of mediation, where significant influence was soon exerted upon Islam; whatever effects the Moslems themselves may have accomplished. Baghdad was virtually a Moslem foundation (762 A.D.) intended to be new and unhampered by alien elements. And, although Baghdad is a sign of Islam's eastward course, it represents Greek influence on Islam and through Islam an influence on the West. It might properly exhibit, none the less, whatever there was of Arab originality. Cordova was a Moslem city of the West (with certain prior constituents). If Baghdad might exhibit what the Arabs had to give, Cordova might symbolise their actual gifts.

"But we have moved inevitably by our reference to these two cities into a further era of Islam, into our own ninth century, for in that century Baghdad was the seat of the Moslem Golden Age, with Cordova as a worthy rival in most particulars. In this same century, likewise, Sicily was flourishing under the Moslem Aghlabids as a medium of great influence. And a third era must be distinguished, even though all three stand together in close sequence, a third era culminating in Baghdad, with the finished work of al-Ghazali (d. 1111 A.D.) and, in Cordova, with the death of Ibn Rushd

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy *The Moslem World*, New York.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* by Tarachand, 1936.

(Averroes, d. 1198 A.D.). Taken as a whole, the dominance of Arab factors in the Islamic Empire extended through five hundred years until 1200 A.D. But the fortunes of Baghdad and Cordova waned perceptibly during the tenth century, and even during the days of Ibn Rushd, Toledo was the chief seat of Moslem learning in Spain. By 1200 A.D. the 'spiritual' rather than any imperial splendour was the measure of Moslem influence. And again how complicated had the racial scene become! In Spain alone were not only Arab, but these Spanish, Moorish and other elements — lingering remains of Slavic, Saxon, Roman and Phoenician.

Muhammad's originality consisted of selection

"I.—What had the Arab to contribute to the West — or anywhere? Arabia was the cradle and Arabs the original people of Islam. When Islam was born the land was comparatively barren and the people destitute of higher culture. Could any good thing come out of such a Nazareth? Yes, they had their language, as was said, a most extraordinary medium of expression, which during the lifetime of Muhammad had acquired the character of 'the tongue of the angels', had become the sole language of God's final revelations — but more of this later. And some would say they had their music and a modicum of poetry, either pre-Islamic or early Moslem. We all would say that they had their religion, whatever our opinion of its origins, and that they had their Prophet. Although much has been written, often indisputably, to show Islam's original indebtedness to Judaism, on the one hand, or to Christianity, on the other, not to mention such pagan ingredients as the Ka'bah and the Hajj, Islam must be counted an original religion.

"Precisely what do we mean by 'originality'? Originality is possible, surely, apart from origins. Intensity of devotion to an ideal and effectiveness in the promulgation of it may guarantee the devotee's priority and independence. Of course, time-sequences and human associations may not wholly be ignored, and least of all recorded acknowledgments of debt, but there is convincing evidence of originality in the very exercise of sensitive, acquisitive, selective and creative powers, such as Islam had and exercised, both in Arabia and beyond. Wise choices and definite rejections were made repeatedly in the course of Islam's broadening experience. Take the case of fiqh, or canon law — or, call it simply Law, since in early Islam the State and Church were one. It gave full play, in matters not precluded by Koranic statements, to the exercise of judgment (ra'y, opinion), to the use of common-sense on a qadis or judge's part, especially in the years before the Law was systematised under the Abbasides (ninth century A.D.). When Islam fell heir to, e.g., Roman Law, in Syria and elsewhere, Roman elements were then made to fit Islamic usage. And what was true of Law (Islam's problems were at first political) was in a commensurate degree true later of Theology. Islam was able both in Law and in Theology to develop and establish a variegated orthodoxy.

"Mohammed himself has this peculiar claim, among others, to originality — he was selective. Reared a pagan, learning much about Judaism and Christianity, he declared himself, however, the 'restorer' of the 'religion of Abraham' which had been corrupted.<sup>3</sup> This, to him, was the original sound (cf. hanif) religion, in contrast with the 'guidance' (huda) of the Jews and Christians. After all, who taught Mohammed to be a monotheist? Neither Jews nor

Christians did, apart from his own common-sense. His 'Unity' was for the times an innovation which even before the founding of Baghdad had probably had this effect, at least, on Christendom: it fed the Christian image-controversy, inspiring the iconoclasm of the eastern Emperor Leo (717-740 A.D.), in spite of the strenuous opposition of the Western Church. And, in spite of Leo's own successful opposition to Islam, his elevation of the serfs to civil liberty may have been partially inspired by the comparatively classless society of the Moslems. Abstemiousness, also, was another of the Prophet's own ingredients of the pure, Abrahamic religion, which has had its novel influence.

"The religion of Islām must, therefore, itself be counted a definite contribution of the Arabs — an element frequently omitted in discussions of the Moslem 'legacy'. As Gustav Diercks said fifty years ago in his *Die Kullur der Araber*:

'This tremendous movement came out of Arabia borne by Arabs. The Caliphate and its sole dominion was established by the Arabs, ruled by them and regulated on Arabic principles. The Arabic book of religion, the Koran, and its tongue provided articulation (Bindeglieder) for all Moslem lands. The very spirit which infused the Moslem world was Arabic and it was the basis, the driving force (Motor) of culture.'

"He called it amazing that a mere handful of Arabs could win their way abroad so easily, whatever help Syrians, Berbers and others gave them (but his interesting solution of the quick conquest of Spain was the receptive presence there of a previous Semitic, Phoenician, culture!). He, however, used the term 'Arab', or, at any rate, 'Arab, culture,' sometimes very loosely (im allgemeinen!), not reckoning exactly on the many racial factors, as we must do in any fair analysis today.

"By implication, at least, Diercks makes his own distinction between cultures, which others have made in terms of 'East' and 'West', thereby accounting for 'implacable' differences. There is indeed an East and there is also a West, with cogent connotations of mutual dissimilarity. On the whole, accordingly, Islam is Oriental and Christianity Occidental (Christianity was a religion of essentially Eastern origin, but it has developed forms conspicuously in contrast therewith, as anyone knows who examines the modern history of Christianity in the Orient). But lest we emphasize unduly such a contrast in our present study, let us further analyse the setting of our problem: A map indicative of political, ethical, artistic and religious ideas and institutions would not only show 'East' and 'West', but would draw a line somewhere between Syro-Armenian and other regions eastward, i.e., between Byzantine and Eastern regions, and would distinguish — for certain periods — the eastern from the western Mediterranean, thus differentiating between the 'Classical' and the Oriental spirit and content of Western literature. It would show Arabia in comparative isolation and exhibit in many colours, now blending, now blurred, the extensive belt of Islam from Gibraltar and the Pyrenees on the west to indefinite borders in the east — the colouring due to many racial and other elements pre-Moslem and, perhaps, pre-Christian. Baghdad, for example, on this map would be composite: a city planned by an Arab, a Persian and a Jew, erected on Sasanid soil with at least some Sasanian materials, and welcoming, especially during its Golden Age, the physical and cultural merchandise of the world, including things 'Indo-European'.

"Although the Arabs had no structural taste or skill, and found native craftsmen in their eastern provinces who built in their own peculiar style,<sup>4</sup> the mosques, palaces and

<sup>3</sup> Cf. The Koran, 2: 129; 3: 89.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. S. Briggs in *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 156.



schools retained an unmistakable individuality of their own, in spite of such adoptions, for example, as the dome, the minaret and the horseshoe arch. Was it Arabic religion dominating culture? Did not the minaret answer the need, whether of Bilal or later mu'ezzins, of elevation for the summons to public prayer? Religion was served by the dome and the arch, also. And unquestionably, religion provided through its sacred script the principal ornamentation of mosques and other public buildings, even as religion prohibited their use of 'representations' (images, etc.). The Kufic script attained a high degree of excellence and was widely used, being freely adopted by the Christian West for use in art and architecture. To a great extent, therefore, the Arabic language in itself was a contribution to a general culture. But we may not ignore yet another aspect of this language, quite apart from its religious content, and that is the language as a competent medium for all sorts and aspects of ideas. Its structural complexity as a general medium stands in amazing contrast with the original simplicity of Islam. It has played, on this account, its own conspicuous part in the development of Moslem thought and in the transmission of ideas, especially in the West. It is of no small moment that culture should have a language through which it may express itself.

"There was also in Baghdad a certain original Arab stock of poetry and music, and the Arabs were both inventors and improvers of musical instruments, such as the guitar, certain harps and flutes and the tambourine.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps there had been Persian influences through the state of Hira, and Byzantine influence through Ghassan on Arab music prior to Islam, yet there was earlier still an indigenous Arab (Semitic?) theory and practice. One writer<sup>6</sup> seeks to prove the Greek origin of Moslem music, even while he lists, along with what he calls 'West Arabian' (Hedjazi), 'two modes, Arabic, not Greek'. Evidence of Greek influence is, of course, abundant. There is, likewise, abundant evidence that the Arabs themselves improved upon this musical heritage, both in theory and in practice. In poetry, a definite contribution of the Arab to form was perfect rhyme (even the Koran, which eschews poetry, is composed in rhymed prose) and a contribution of this to content was a type of platonic love, the pure devotion of the lover to a conventionally idealized and physically unattainable mistress. There was in early Baghdad love aplenty for 'water, wine, gardens bright and faces fair' (Abu Nuwas), yet there was also a poetic cult of singers of the truly martyr spirit of enraptured lovers living and dying chaste. This type of poetry was destined later to affect the West as a peculiar expression of knightly virtue, as mystic compensation, at the lowest, for fleshly self-denial, and at the highest, as the realization of the divine Beloved. Baghdad under the 'religious' Abbasids furnished a congenial soil for this, in contrast with the earlier pagan, sensuous mood of the Damascene Umayyads.

"With reference now to early Arab ideas, apart from original Islam-as-such, perhaps little need be said immediately in further evidence of their originality. Ideas, after all, are less tangible than mosques, guitars and poetry, and yet it was unfair to imply that the early Arabs had no ideas of their own. They did draw freely upon other sources — such was their disposition, as we have said. And their chief source was Greece. But in Islamic mysticism as it developed in the East there was something appropriately original. On the contrary, in the realm of reason (the Islamic 'aql) the source was Greek.<sup>7</sup> In Damascus first of all under Christian theologians, such as the famous John of that city, Moslems indulged in dialectic, examining in this way the articles of their faith, a

faith supremely based on revelation. In Iraq, Greek science and philosophy were made accessible to Moslems by certain Syrians, and rationalistic speculation (cf. the 'free-thinking' Mu'tazilites) gained headway. This was a notable development which in time, though reluctantly, became a part of orthodoxy — by no means, however, to the extent to which Thomist scholasticism transformed the theology of Rome. Islamic mysticism, however, enjoyed a wider, more enduring triumph, whether positively or even as a reaction against sub-original, especially scholastic, orthodoxy. There may have been, to some extent, for mysticism, Greek inspiration (neo-Platonic), but mystical elements were actually native to Islam.<sup>8</sup> There is indeed a long line leading not too deviously from the place of Mohammed's first auditions, Mt. Hira, to the Confessions of the great scholastic mystic al-Ghazali; and Sufism, with all its varied elements, is pre-eminently Moslem. The mystic way, likewise, was a notable development which represents through al-Ghazali a new kind of orthodoxy through the 'destruction' of philosophy. Previously Ibn Sina (Avicenna) had merely separated theology and philosophy, realizing that Greek and Islamic thought could not be reconciled. Moslem mysticism has been influential mainly in the East. In the West, Greek reason was predominant.

"The conclusion of our scanty treatment so far of Arab originality is this: the original stock of the Moslem Arab was chiefly his essential religion, together with an adequate linguistic medium through which to express his peculiar devotion; and he had the flexibility of language and the dispositional tolerance necessary to accommodate himself to strange surroundings over which he exercised control. All this made him the driving force in his own reconstruction of a new civilization, to which, nevertheless, he as well as others were indebted.

What did the Arabs take with them to the West?

"II.—We turn now to what the Arab took with him to the West. We thus journey from Baghdad to Cordova, and on the way, or at least upon arrival, we become aware of a somewhat abrupt transition. Cordovan Islam is somewhat different from Baghdadi, although Islamic unity prevails throughout, and the Arab is therein the dominating personality. But Spanish Islam is more in the Umayyad tradition of Damascus, by reason of the blood succession in its Cordovan Caliphate. And Spain and Iraq were at extremities. Had we not looked at the essential Arab in his native setting we might think his brother of the Western migration to have been merely a purveyor of culture. True, the West profited more from the Arab's transmission of culture than from his originality. The West spurned the Arab's Islam as a religion, bitterly rejecting its monotheism and its iconoclasm, and practising, even with its own Christian monasticism, far less human brotherhood and abstemiousness than were characteristic of Islam. In the name of religion the West launched against the Arabs and their compatriots (too late, however, for our present purposes) a series of wars whose motives mainly were relief for European over-population and success in the commercial enterprise of Genoese and Venetians. But during earlier centuries the Arabs of Spain — and of Sicily — had brought, on their part, gifts to the Latin West. Islam

5 Ibid., p. 361.

6 Gardiner in *The Moslem World*, October 1916, p. 355.

7 See any standard treatise on the subject, e.g., O'Leary's *Arabic Thought*, Macdonald's *Muslim Theology*.

8 See Archer's *Mystical Elements in Mohammed and Nazmi Anabaww, Sufism in Islam*.

was more than a military invasion: it was a cultural invasion. Even as Islamic art came into being in the East amidst mutually hostile Sasanid and Hellenistic cultures, so also in the West amidst hostilities, through the instrumentality of 'enemies' of Christendom came new cultural forms of art, architecture, science, literature and philosophy. Even as any Thabit may court his lady in the enemies' preserve, so culture laughs at handicaps and barriers.

"By the tenth century the whole basis of life throughout Spain was profoundly influenced by Islam,' and with the capture of Toledo in 1085 by the Christian forces the way was effectively opened for the spread of that influence to the rest of Europe.<sup>9</sup> In this century, of course, the great Islamic Empire still bounded Christian Europe on many sides, and not until about 1500 did Europe break away and get beyond Islam. Until Toledo's fall the prevailing influence in the Moslem West was Arabic (in the East, Turkish elements had only just then begun to get political control). But in studies of our day the term 'Arab' is being used with greater caution and more exactitude — the giver himself is examined with the gift. There were Berbers (a majority) among the early Moslem conquerors — Tariq was a Berber. We have mentioned other racial strains as well. Historians have lent confusion to the scene by uncritical use of such terms as Arab, Moor, Saracen and Turk, even as some rulers and anthropologists today abuse the good name 'Aryan'. Fifty years ago Lane-Poole (in his *Moors in Spain*, page 13) set a bad example by using the word 'Moor' to signify Arabs and other Mohammedans of Spain, remarking, nevertheless, and again mistakenly, that 'properly it should only be applied to Berbers'. Ribera, a specialist in the history of Cordova, has proved that the Moors of Spain were overwhelmingly Spanish in blood, although they thoroughly absorbed Arabic culture. Trend has penetratingly observed,<sup>10</sup> relative to much inter-marriage between Moslems and Christians in Spain, that 'the more Arab names a man bore the less Arab blood he had in his veins!'. Although it may sometimes be possible to trace the Arab strain more exactly by a closer scrutiny of genealogical and related sources, such as al-Baladhuri's and Ibn Hazm's *Ansabs*, we must be content here with what may rightly be called merely Arabic in the situation symbolized by Cordova.

"We said symbolized by Cordova, whose era of competitive brilliance was the tenth century, during which it was the most civilized centre in Europe, especially under the great ruler Abd-ar-Rahman III (916-941). But it was even then the flower of previous planting, and it was later on that some aspects of its influence were yet more prominent, i.e., in a subsequent time of political confusion when Greek philosophy was known in Spain through rediscovery by means of Syriac and Arabic translations, a time when also there were obvious acknowledgments by many Christians of their obligation to Islam. The debt was manifold, chiefly linguistic, artistic and ideological — a debt partly definite enough for a just evaluation, partly intangible. But when has the clear proof of influence waited entirely upon exact measurement!

"Perhaps the most readily measured items are linguistic. Arabic was a richer and more flexible tongue than Latin or any other of Europe, including Greek. No Western tongue can equal it in the variety of its verb forms and of its verbal nouns. It was the reasonable and altogether adequate channel of Greek learning to Islamised lands (had

it not been for the Arabs, Greek culture would only have come back into Europe too late, if at all). It not only served to transmit ancient learning, but contributed a liberal vocabulary through which new ideas might be expressed. The abundance and variety of Arab terminology in the Iberian peninsula are in themselves overwhelming evidence of the West's indebtedness. Many Western tongues hold borrowings from Arabic, whether names of places, commodities or ideas. There are many in the vocabulary of trade and navigation alone; but we would not emphasize mere words, which in themselves are not indubitable signs of cultural effects. There is no necessary psychological connection between a certain Hadramauti qal'a and its sole inscription, 'Allah,' or between an American dollar and its legend, 'In God we trust'. Words are somewhat like coins. Moslem coins have been found in a wide belt across Russia and over the Baltic into southern Scandinavia — beyond the pale of Islam. And yet mere words, as Arabic script, do represent a contribution.

"The adaptation (adoption?) of Arabic letters for decorative purposes has been mentioned. This is one of the first examples of direct, persistent Arab influence on Christian art. Fra Lippo Lippi's 'Coronation of the Virgin' shows Arabic lettering — almost undecipherable — on the scarf held by the angels (cf. Arabic as 'the tongue of the angels'). Oriental fabrics with Arabic lettering were often made up into priestly vestments. There is a gold coin<sup>11</sup> of 774 A.D., struck by 'Offa Rex' of Mercia, which is 'actually a copy of an Arabic coin'. On one face this Christian coin bears the legend — unconsciously (?) inconsistent — in Kufic Arabic, 'There is no god but Allah,' followed immediately by what appears to be (the writer has seen only a reproduction) the rest of the Moslem 'witness', 'Mohammed is the messenger of Allah'. But, for that matter, many Europeans who had accepted Islam knew no Arabic! While Moslem scribes themselves strove with religious zeal as well as worldly skill to perfect their sacred characters, Christians used them in defiance of Islam on textiles, ivory, metal and other articles (whose craftsmanship in itself was generally superior to anything of the sort done by the Arabs). For Moslems themselves, their script was the chief means of ornamentation. Diercks remarked,<sup>12</sup> but not convincingly, that 'the only peculiarity of Arabic architectural style is the predominance of ornamentation over construction, and perhaps herein lay the excellence of their many buildings in the Golden Age'. Yet many buildings were abominably constructed. The various styles of script, especially the Kufic and the Maghribe monumental, were early and universally used for decorative purposes.

"Architecture is as tangible as language, and in this field, also, it can be said that Arabs made a definite contribution. And in their giving they fully equalled the achievement of the West, i.e., Rome. Take the great Mosque of Cordova, for instance, begun in 786, enlarged from time to time, and standing in magnificent proportions in the tenth century. It exhibits a system of vaulting based on intersecting arches. In fact, for the sake of elevation of roof in the enormous sanctuary there was built a second range of arches beyond the height of the Roman columns appropriated in the building of the lower storey. Whatever the Spanish Arab's architectural inheritance, Roman or Byzantine, or pre-Byzantine, he developed in Spain a tradition of design which had persistent influence. He developed the horseshoe arch, for example, realising more than others both its structural and its decorative possibilities. The 'Moorish' Puerta del Sol, Toledo, was a combination of an outer, higher, pointed horseshoe arch and an inner, lower, round arch in one gate

9 Cf. *Legacy*, p. 28.

10 Cf. *Legacy*, p. 6.

11 See *The Moslem World*, October 1916, pp. 432-2.

12 *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

way. The Arabs seem often to have employed more curvature in their arches than was customary with Romans and Byzantines. That is, they pulled in the ends of the semi-circles and of the pointed horseshoes. Such developments are perfected in later 'Gothic' architecture.

"A further portion of the West's debt to things Arabic is represented by ideas — and herein the Arabic language is involved again, and Arabic literature. We enter this field, however, with great caution, for it holds often only disappointing confusion. Many comparative studies must yet be made for the sake of better comprehension of Islam's bequest. Further inquiry must be made, for example, for Western quotations from Arabic authors, for explicit acknowledgments of dependence. Dr. Asiny Palacios, of the University of Madrid, has said that Dante's 'Divine Comedy' is indebted to Ibn Arabi (Ibn al-'Arabi), the arch Sufi of the thirteenth century, and the other Moslem mystics. There was a European (Paris) school of 'Averroists' until well into the sixteenth century (yet Averroes was largely rejected by his fellow Moslems, and rejected, too, at last, by Christian Schoolmen). But we have set a limit to the field of inquiry, 1200 A.D., or thereabouts. This enables us to make a distinction which the case deserves.

"It seems clear now that only after the capture of Constantinople in 1204 by the Crusaders did the West get the real Aristotle. Probably this was the Aristotle used ultimately by Thomas Aquinas, although among doctrines of Islamic origin actually to be found in the Sunna are references to Ibn Rushd and to his materials as quoted by Maimonides.<sup>13</sup> Before 1204 only a garbled, incomplete Aristotle was available. In Arabic translations which were again done into Latin the West had his 'Logic' — no, there was of this a Latin edition of the Greek before Islam — and parts of his 'Organon'. In the twelfth century all of 'Aristotle' was available to the Latin West by way of Spain. Cordova had been the seat of study of 'Aristotelian' treatises since about 800, especially the physics, metaphysics and psychology,<sup>14</sup> but it was Aristotle sometimes as interpreted by neo-Platonists, and always as defined in Arabic. However, our immediate reason for saying all this is to point out that thus intellectual inquiry began — or was unusually stimulated — in Europe within the realm of religion.

"Think, if you will, of the effect at that time on practical, legalistic Roman Catholicism, of rationalistic inquiry, intellectual speculation, Greek dialectic! Apart from any adoption of specific Arab formulae, and any examples of literary dependence, there are undeniably evident in Europe certain effects of Spanish Arab toleration. Someone has spoken of this as 'the only favourable legacy which Islam had bequeathed'. The toleration was Islamic, the 'marvellous flower of Hispanic thought' was Greek — and the Arab was the carrier of both. His influence in the West, therefore, was, on the whole, more rational than mystical, even to the exposition of 'wisdom mixed with unbelief'. In contrast, Spanish Christianity was more legalistic than speculative (Islamic 'fundamentalism' is a comparatively late reaction within Islam). Yet Western Christendom responded to the general shock of a liberalising Islam.

"There is no room here for more than this general appraisal of the philosophical impact — the field is too vast, and many of its chief contents too well known, although many problems linger with it. We have indulged already perhaps too much in what Ibn Khallikan called 'beaten thoughts'.<sup>15</sup> But Ibn Hazm might be cited in illustration of one important phase of Moslem influence which will bear with profit further inquiry. He is especially valuable today

for his contributions in the eleventh century to comparative religion. He was an 'Arab' (really Muzarab) scholar of Cordova during troubled times of civil war,<sup>16</sup> whom Nicholson has called 'the most original genius of Moslem Spain',<sup>17</sup> and Gibb 'the founder of the science of comparative religion',<sup>18</sup> and Guillaume — following Ibn Khallikan — has called him the composer of 'the first systematic higher critical study of the Old and New Testaments'.<sup>19</sup> Ibn Khallikan said of him, 'his knowledge was of the most varied kind',<sup>20</sup> and al-Maqqari reported that the 'Unitarian' ruler al-Mansur remarked at his tomb, 'All scholars have to apply to Ibn Hazm when in difficulty'.<sup>21</sup> Ibn Hazm was severely critical, not only of non-Moslem faiths, but also of sects, in Islam, especially the scholastics,<sup>22</sup> and as Ibn Khallikan observed, frequently attacked the imams. But he was intent upon fairness and intellectual honesty in his attacks, desiring, as he said, to be 'scientific'. He, of course, suffered much for his critical activities; and not until a century after his demise were his works made — through the mystic Ibn Arabi — a part of the heritage of Europe.

"It might be interesting to note in passing that al-Shahrastani of Khurasan, author of another Kitab al-Milal wa 'l-Nihal, or 'Book of Sects' (chiefly within the ranks of Moslems themselves), was born twenty years after the death of Ibn Hazm, to whom he apparently, however, was in no way indebted. 'Comparative Religion,' as applied to the study of the great religions, as distinct from an historical or an apologetic account, or even as distinct from a comparative description of the sects of one religion, is a modern, Western undertaking, but after the manner of the Spanish Moslem Ibn Hazm; and co-operation among the great religions as prerequisite to mutual understanding and to the ultimate triumph of what is best in man's spiritual adventure is even yet, after many modern centuries, a novel view.

"We may then, as Westerners and Christians, continue, with profit to many of us and justice to some others, our review and reappraisal of the Moslem's, especially the Arab's, role in Western history, thus serving ever anew and more effectively the great cause of Religion in world culture."

13 Cf. *Legacy*, p. 280.

14 Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, XIVth ed., 2: 354.

15 *Biog. Dict.*, ed. de Slane, I: 99.

16 Cf. Dozy-Stokes, *Moslems in Spain*, pp. 575ff.

17 *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 426.

18 *Legacy*, p. 187; an apparent reference to Ibn Hazm's *Kitab al-Fisal*, or "A Treatise on Differences in Religions, Philosophies and Sects."

19 *Ibid.*, p. 282.

20 *Biog. Dict.*, II, p. 267.

21 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2: 386.

22 Cf. Goldziher, *Die Zahiriten*.

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# SOME SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF ISLAM IN INDONESIA



*Our picture shows the President of Indonesia delivering a speech on the occasion of the Independence Day celebrations at Djakarta.*

## The different approaches to the role of Islam in the national affairs of Indonesia

By JUSTUS M. van der KROEF

**"The very diversity of the Islamic movements in Indonesia, while at one time regarded as a liability in the common struggle against colonial domination, now testifies to the continuing dynamism of the faith and its adaptability to Indonesia's changing social and political needs. Islam's vitality is one of the great assets that the young Indonesian nation possesses in these early and unsettled years of its freedom".**

### The nature of Islam in Indonesia

With its eighty-two million people, an overwhelming majority of whom regard themselves as followers of Muhammad, Indonesia is usually considered to be the largest Muslim country in the world today. Yet anyone who travels through Indonesia is struck by the wide differences in the degree to which Islam is accepted among the Indonesian peoples, between and even within particular localities. President Sukarno, who more than any other public figure represents the new Indonesian State, once remarked that "Islam does not yet flourish among the masses",<sup>1</sup> and indeed, throughout the Indonesian archipelago, with its great diversity of sub-cultures and folk societies, Islam has been mixed with older, animistic and pantheistic beliefs, or as in Java, with the lingering traditions of Hindu-Indian civilization. Though some groups aspire to it, an orthodox Islamic State, its public administrative structure wholly based on the Qur'an, *fiqh* and Muslim tradition, does not exist in Indonesia. On the other hand, Islamic influences have become so closely interwoven in the cultural fabric of Indonesia, in its laws and norms of conduct, in ethical and aesthetic standards, that Islam may be said to have provided an important basis for political and social action and development in the country. It is with some of these that we will be briefly concerned.

Islam penetrated into Indonesia in the twelfth century, at a time when the divers Indonesian folk societies and States long since possessed established social and political tradi-

tions. Autochthonous custom and folk laws, usually referred to as 'adat in Indonesia, proved therefore from the start a barrier to the Islamization of society, particularly in such matters as family and inheritance law. The members of the Indonesian village communities, moreover, were united by many animistic rituals and concepts of common solidarity, emphasizing the bonds between a particular group of people, the land they occupied and the food they cultivated. Islam brought a new ideological orientation: a loyalty to a community of believers that transcended village boundaries. Further, Islam was critical of the animistic character of folk beliefs, involving a host of deities and spirits, and through its proselytizers and schoolmen insisted on applying Muslim concepts of marriage, divorce, inheritance and other interpersonal relations. The result was a curious cultural dichotomy: in most instances Indonesians exhibited little resistance to adopting the former eschatological doctrines of Islam, confined often to acceptance of God's supremacy, Muhammad's eminence as God's instrument, and the belief in an after-life. Yet at the same time the social, economic and political teachings and implications of the faith provoked either a hostile reaction or were so attenuated as to lose most of their character. This dichotomy provided the structural framework within which Islam operates in Indonesian culture today.

### The conflict between the 'adat and Islam

For one thing it renders understandable the continued

conflict between the 'adat and Islam in some areas of Indonesia. As early as the seventeenth century Javanese rulers persecuted orthodox Muslims because of their agitation against the prevailing religious heterodoxy and eclecticism, based on the 'adat, in the courts. Even at a later date resistance among the Central Javanese nobility to Islamic "purism" was in evidence, not the least because of the enduring strength of pre-Muslim Hinduized traditions prevailing among the aristocracy. In more recent times similar clashes between the 'ulama (Muslim schoolmen) and the 'adat preserving nobility have been prominent in the Minangkabau area in West Sumatra, leading to profound social upheavals that aroused the concern of the government. Just prior to and during the Japanese occupation of most of Indonesia in the Second World War the Achin region of North Sumatra was the scene of a bloody pogrom of traditional 'adat chiefs by the 'ulama and their followers. Nor has the conflict necessarily been confined to the *élite* levels of society. Throughout some village communes of Indonesia the influence of local Muslim teachers has led to severe social tensions, due to Muslim attacks on accepted folk usages. For example, according to the Shafi'ite law, which prevails among Indonesian Muslims, the son or sons should inherit twice the amount of the daughter(s), but in not a few areas the 'adat entitles the daughter to a share in the inheritance equal to that of the son(s). Division of standing property acquired in marriage by the spouses is demanded by many 'adat codes, but the Shafi'itic law, as it is applied in Indonesia, does not recognize community of property in marriage to the disadvantage of the wife. Woman's rights to initiate divorce is well defined in most of the 'adat, but in Shafi'itic practice such rights are few, or in fact, non-existent. All this has made for legal uncertainty in a period of rapid cultural change and has contributed to rural restiveness in the absence of undisputed judicial norms.<sup>2</sup> But one should hasten to add, however, that especially prior to the Second World War, the 'adat and Islam in the vast rural hinterlands of Indonesia usually struck something of a balance, allowing application of an 'adat modified somewhat by what was believed to be Islamic legal precept, and satisfied the sense of justice of the local populace and differed from area to area. Only in recent years it seems that the antithesis between the 'adat and Islam, also in the rural regions, has been drawn more sharply.

One of the more remarkable cultural phenomena on the contemporary Indonesian scene is the way in which the 'adat sphere has been "modernized" by other ideologies and in this new fashion has been pitted against Islam. This process was part of the general nationalist awakening in Indonesia which began at the turn of the last century. Many Indonesian nationalists having drunk deeply at the wellsprings of Western Liberal and Socialist thought, also remained, by the very character of their nationalism, oriented towards autochthonous Indonesian values and traditions, i.e., the 'adat sphere. And thus the attempt began to discover the principles of "democratic" and "socialist" ideologies in the Indonesian 'adat, resulting in the proclamation of the virtues of traditional "Indonesian democracy" as practised in the small village and in the emphasis on the village members' control over common resources, their solidarity and mutual help, as being akin to Marxist ideology. At present the fusion of 'adat and some modern Western ideologies has reached its culmination in the *Pantjasila*, or "Five Pillars of the Indonesian State", first formulated by President Sukarno and by many Indonesians hailed as the "official philosophy" of their new country. *Pantjasila* includes belief in God, democracy, humanitarianism, nationalism and social justice, and in explaining these principles President Sukarno stressed

how he "dug them up out of Indonesian soil", that is, merely affirmed them as long-existing *indigenous* values. It is also necessary to note that this fusion of 'adat and Western political and social philosophies is a continuing process, and that certain political parties such as the *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (National Indonesian Party—PNI), the old standard-bearer of Indonesian nationalism with which President Sukarno is affiliated, are among the chief promoters of the process. To that end the PNI has successfully secured for it the support of important segments of the traditional Indonesian aristocracy, especially in Java, which already in the colonial period played an important role as civil servants. We have seen how the aristocracy has long exhibited hostility for the efforts of Muslim proselytizers. Given the enduring



K. H. Idham Khalid, President of the Nahdatul 'Ulama (literally the Renaissance of the Learned) Party.

Mr. Khalid is also Vice-President in the Djuanda Government.

The Nahdatul 'Ulama is the single largest political party of Indonesia.

influence of the nobility in the populous village areas of East and Central Java, the ancient heartland of Javanese 'adat and culture, we understand how the PNI was able to secure such



a resounding victory in these areas over the Muslim political organization in the last national elections.

### The consequences of the dichotomy in Indonesian Islam

The dichotomy in Indonesian Islam has also led to important social and political rifts within the whole Muslim movement in the country. For one thing it contributed directly to the rise of Islamic reform ideologies, for another it gave political expression to what, for want of a better term, had perhaps best be called "folk Islam". By the close of the nineteenth century the dichotomy in the appreciation of Islam by most Indonesians had led to a lowering of the prestige and value of the faith among the younger, emanci-



Muhammad Natsir, General Chairman of the Mashumi (abbreviation of *Majlis Shura Muslimin Indonesia*) Party. Mashumi is the second biggest political party of Indonesia.

pated Indonesians from whose ranks the future leaders of the nationalist awakening were to arise.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the Indonesian had as a rule no difficulty in accepting God and Muhammad, but for the rest clung to animism, magic and ancient folk beliefs grounded in the *'adat*, meant that in the eyes of the younger generation the whole of Islam was tainted by quaint superstitions and anachronisms, unworthy of the devotion of Indonesian moderns. In an attempt to reverse this lack of appreciation some Indonesian Muslims, business men in the larger towns who by their contacts were *au courant* with the new currents of faith in the Middle and Near East, began to propagate the theories of the Wahhabi and new Wahhabi movements, the teachings of *al-Manar* circle in Cairo, and the Islamic modernism prevalent in India and exemplified in such figures as Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school and in Muhammad Iqbal.

Islamic reform in Indonesia stressed first of all an evangelical return to the Qur'an as the only true source of divinely revealed authority in all matters; secondly, it was averse to traditionalism and legalism, to hoary interpretations of the law of duty by the *'ulama* out of touch with the modern world. Thirdly, it emphasized social and economic reform, urging Muslim business men to enter actively into the mainstream of modern enterprise, improve their commercial skills and efficiency and so win respect for themselves and their faith. Modern education, co-operative and eleemosynary institutions, improved medical care — all were fostered by the reform spirit of Indonesian Islam. Finally, the reform movement urged hospitality to the scientific findings of the modern Western world and exhorted its followers to bring these findings to bear on a new modern Muslim world view that was in tune with Western political and economic doctrines like liberalism, parliamentary government, socialism, nationalism and autarchy. In 1912 Reform Islam in Indonesia found expression in two organizations that have left a lasting imprint on the national scene. The first of these groups was the Sharekat Islam, the second, the Muhammadiyah. The Sharekat Islam began as an association of modern-minded Muslim business men in Indonesia, anxious to protect their interests against the competitive encroachments of Chinese *entrepreneurs*, especially in the textile industry. From this it developed into the first major nationalist party in Indonesia, attracting widely divergent groups with only nominal interest in the Reform Muslim ideology, e.g., Communists, Westernized intellectuals, and segments of the growing labour movement. The more conservative core of Muslim business men became alarmed at this development, and ultimately forced the expulsion of the radicals. As a result the organization lost much support and nationalists and Marxists began to found their own separate groups, frequently viewing the rising Islamic *bourgeoisie* that made up the hard core of the Sharekat Islam with barely concealed suspicion and hostility. More successful was the Muhammadiyah, a non-political service organization, which applied reform principles to social and economic life, founded schools, co-operatives, banks, and generally acted as a catalyst in contemporary Indonesian development.

### The emergence of the Nahdatul 'Ulama

The rise of Reform Islam called forth a reaction from a number of quarters. The political and ideological implications of Wahhabism aroused opposition among the more orthodox and legalistic *'ulama*, especially in East and Central Java, and in 1926 this opposition crystallized in the founding of the Nahdatul 'Ulama (the Association of Muslim schoolmen) in Surabaya.<sup>4</sup> The Nahdatul 'Ulama urged a strict orthodoxy based on Shafi'itic principles and at this time declined to participate in political life (the non-co-operation principle), confining its work chiefly to religious propaganda. This question of co-operation with either the colonial government or with non-Muslim nationalist groups aroused much controversy in the thirties and brought costly dissension in the whole Muslim movement. Basically, the issue was whether or not the Muslim could, by the dictates of his faith, actively participate in the political awakening of Indonesia, seek representation in the semi-parliamentary and representative councils of government existing in the colonial era in Indonesia, and join with the other groups of different religio-political persuasion in a programme of common action. The Nahdatul 'Ulama's answer was, given its orthodoxy, unequivocally negative. But in the Sharekat Islam there were elements favouring a positive answer. Disagreement led to the splintering of lesser groups and a general sapping

of Muslim political strength. It also aroused the suspicion and hostility of non-Muslim nationalist groups, especially among the growing number of Westernized Indonesian intellectuals, the younger generation of aristocrats allied with them, and among the more radical groups of the budding labour movement. Such suspicion was fed by the emergence of Indonesian Muslim groups favouring an Indonesia almost



Kjai Hadji Abdul Wahhab Chasbullah, General Chairman of the Nahdatul Ulama (literally the Renaissance of the Learned) Party.

theocratically Islamic in character, a view that ran counter to the wishes of nationalists looking towards the establishment of a secular republic, structured along the lines of Western parliamentary democracy and carefully separating the religious establishments from public administration.

#### The status of the 'Ulama in Indonesia

By this time the respective adherents of Islamic conservatism and reform had come to be identified in the public mind not only with certain definite national organizations but also with certain social classes. The Reform Islam appeared to be popular in particular among urban Muslim *entrepreneurs* and merchants, often including the most active

elements of the growing Indonesian middle classes. Mixed with the tenets of historic liberalism, parliamentary democracy, social control over capitalism, or outright socialism, the Reform Islam also had its sympathisers among Indonesian students and the budding intelligentsia in the larger towns. In contrast the anti-Wahabhi and anti-Reform Islam conservatives seemed primarily to be located in vast rural areas of Indonesia, especially in Java, Kalimantan (Borneo) and Sulawesi (Celebes). In the villages the influence of the '*ulama*' remains great, and ancient pre-Islamic traditions confirm his place. As most of the Orient, Indonesia also is familiar in its folk society with individuals who stand in a special religious odour towards their fellows, who have reputedly made special study of magic and the healing powers, and whose sanctity lends authority to their *obiter dicta* in village disputes. In Indonesia such potential "holy ones" employ Islam to enhance their stature; they may get the reputation of being experts in the Qur'an and the Hadith, particularly if they succeed in making the pilgrimage to Mecca and return as revered *hajjis* wearing the white fez or *kopiah*. Around them local folk Islamic practices, mixed with traditional legalism and authoritative interpretations of the sacred texts, crystallize; a school may come into being in which instruction consists of little more than ill-understood and truncated Qur'an recitation, and the '*ulama*' may become the caretaker of the village prayer house or *langgar*. All this tends to place him on a special and prestige social level, which not a few '*ulama*' have exploited economically. He and his followers may pool their land or cattle, derive benefits from bequests ostensibly made to advance the faith, including fields or fish-ponds. Thus the '*ulama*' may in time find himself a comparatively wealthy man, entering the retail trade and money-lending business on the chronically impecunious peasantry. Even connections with mercantile interests in the larger and provincial towns may ultimately be entered into, and the '*ulama*' may become the hub of a local, patrimonially and semi-feudally structured enterprise, with tenant farmers tilling his land and young students tending his shop or other establishments.

Prior to the Second World War many if not most of these rural '*ulama*' seem to have been able to establish some rapport with the world of the '*adat*' village out of which they had come forth in the first place, and with varying degrees of success, mixed indigenous animistic and pantheistic traditions with their own doctrines. The resulting mixture, perhaps best described as "folk Islam", differed, of course, from the substance of the Reform Islam as it was adhered to by urban groups. There is considerable evidence that Islam and the '*adat*' established on the religious plane something of a harmonious syncretism, and that the '*ulama*', especially in Java, either because they did not know better or because they did not wish to, did not drive the '*adat*' and Islamic law into sharply opposing camps as they did in some areas of Indonesia, particularly in Sumatra. Indeed, in animistic village feasts and meals, such as the *slametan*, a richly symbolic common partaking of food occurring at birth, circumcision, marriage, death or other important occasions and reflecting communal solidarity, the local '*ulama*' frequently led the proceedings. The extent to which such rural '*ulama*' have been able to become a part of the socio-cultural life of the villages still awaits analysis, but it seems clear that this integration was facilitated by a variety of factors, including the traditional veneration in the village for those claiming special religious competences, as well as by the important economic place they came to occupy in the village social order in the course of time. It seems well to stress the fact that the '*ulama*,' singly or together, might come

into the possession of considerable property through bequests (called *wakap* in Indonesia (Arabic, *waqf*)),<sup>5</sup> the income of which was to be used for religious purposes, the upkeep of a particular shrine or grave, or the founding and maintenance of a *tarikat* or religious school. Thus, through the *wakap* (Arabic, *waqf*), control over sizable property was sanctioned by religious belief, tending to strengthen the *'ulama's* position in the community.

### The *'ulama*, the nationalists and the Darul Islam

While it would not be correct to say that the position of the *'ulama* in the village sphere has markedly altered since the Second World War, it is, however, necessary to indicate that primarily as a result of an increasing political consciousness through the length and breadth of Indonesia their



*Thousands and thousands of people attend the mass meeting at Lanpangan to listen to Arudji Kartawinata of the United Muslim Party (PSII).*

position has become uncertain, subject as it is to the pressure of competing political ideologies. In the war period itself, when much of Indonesia was under Japanese control, the animosities between Muslim leaders and more secularly oriented nationalists tended to increase. This was due, to some extent, to a lingering of the mutual suspicion between the two groups in the early nationalist period, but largely it seems to have been the result of Japanese policy towards the various Indonesian population groups.

Japan made a very definite effort to enlist the *'ulama* and other leaders of the Indonesian Muslim community in the cause of its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and to that end established special courses of instruction and propaganda for the *'ulama* and unified the scattered Islamic groups into a single organization, the Mashumi, which has lasted till this day. Indonesian nationalists were clearly apprehensive of Japan's bid for Muslim support and of the alleged favouritism shown Muslim leaders. In the closing

months of the war, when nationalists pressed the Japanese in granting more and more autonomy to Indonesia and themselves made ready to set the machinery of an independent government in motion as soon as a propitious moment presented itself, the hostility between Muslims and nationalists came to be seen more clearly for what it was: a far-reaching dispute over the entire future structure of the free Islamic State. For the nationalist element independence meant a secularly oriented republic, which, though making its obeisance to Islam as the strongest faith in the country, was based on non-religious political and economic values ranging from nationalism to social justice and variations of socialism. For the Muslims, independent Indonesia signified the possibility of establishing a State essentially Islamic in character. But, Muslim groups today differ as to the degree of Islamization of State and society that should prevail. The Mashumi is perhaps the most moderate. Mindful of other religious groups in Indonesia (e.g., Christians, Balinese, Hindus), it



*Dr. Wirjosandjojo Sukiman, President of the Mashumi (Majlis Shura Muslimin Indonesia) Party.*

advocates a State based on "Islamic principles", saying little as to how these will be implemented. But some Mashumi spokesmen have been outspokenly bitter in their opposition to the secular ideologies of nationalists, referring to them contemptuously as mere "man-made" in contrast with the divinely revealed values of the Islamic community.

Other Muslim groups are equally sectarian. The Nahdatul *'Ulama*, reflecting the legalistic pre-Reform Islam trends in Indonesian Islam, advocates a State based exclusively on "Shafi'itic Law", although as an organization it has now abandoned its pre-war "non-co-operation" policy, participates actively in national and local politics, advocates parliamentary democracy, and has expressed tolerance for



other faiths in its ideal concept of the State. The Nahdatul 'Ulama, which during the Japanese occupation was part of Mashumi, went its own way again in 1952, and as the first national Indonesian election of 1955 has shown, possesses remarkable strength in Central and East Java and in South Kalimantan, notwithstanding the fact that it is widely regarded as a near reactionary force in Indonesian public life by its continued adherence to tenets of traditional folk Islam and pre-Reform Islam legalism. The most uncompromising Muslim movement is, however, the Darul Islam movement, centring in West Java, North Sumatra and South Sulawesi (Celebes). The Darul Islam seeks the establishment of an orthodox Islamic State in Indonesia, a contemporary copy of the Caliphate and for the past five years has waged open war on the national government. The depredations of its bands have by now cost thousands of lives and millions of rupiahs

walking religious law book or a convenient symbol of traditional eschatological beliefs: they, and their followers, are now also identified in terms of political and national aspirations, with definite ways of organizing State and society that compete in the arena of public opinion with other ideologies."

#### **Islam in Indonesia and the other competing ideologies**

One of these competing ideologies, which in the past few years has come to be arraigned in particular against Islam, is the fusion of the 'adat principles and modern secular concepts as embodied in such a doctrine as the Pantjasila. This fusion is, in a sociological sense, a "nativistic" reaction to the many innovations that have come to Indonesia and its folk cultures, yet, it is difficult to draw the lines of conflict between this ideological fusion and Islam very clearly, since



*Mr. Djuanda is being sworn in as Prime Minister of Indonesia.*

*By his side is standing an Indonesian religious dignitary.*

in damage, particularly in the more remote countryside, and the Indonesian army and police have had but little success in stamping out the bands' activities. One undoubted reason for the continued strength of Darul Islam is the fact that to some extent the movement has become identified with other dissatisfactions in the outlying provinces and with the over-centralized and allegedly exploitable character of the national government in Djakarta, dissatisfaction which, as is known, led to the chain of regional rebellions against the central authorities between December 1956 and March 1957. It is clear that no solution of the Darul Islam problem is possible without an amelioration of this regional dissatisfaction.

These different approaches to the role of Islam in national affairs and the development of an active political party system have combined to make of the follower of Muhammad in Indonesia not just a member of one of the world's great religious organizations but a political partisan as well, and the degree to which one takes the Islamic faith seriously also serves nowadays as a measure of one's political opinions. All this has made the 'ulama more than just a

the pre-Reform Islam itself has become so deeply embedded in traditional Indonesian life. One has the impression that it is in particular certain manifestations of Islam, e.g., the uncompromising theocracy of the Darul Islam or the advanced modernism of some of the Reform Islam elements in Mashumi that arouses suspicion in the "nativistic" sphere. Similarly Islam is contested by Communism, yet it would be unwise to ignore Socialistic influences in some of the younger leaders of Mashumi. On this confusing ideological battlefield only one thing is certain, and that is that much of the traditional religio-ideational eclecticism so characteristic of Indonesian folk-life has made way for a vehement partisanism that has also greatly altered the function of Islam. Much of the instability in Indonesia in recent months can be ascribed to this heightened ideological consciousness in all levels of society.

Considered in the light of the results of Indonesia's first national election, held in the closing months of 1955, it is clear that the new political functions of Islam have found a large measure of popular support. The nationalists, with

their twin appeals to the 'adat and secularism, finished first, but were closely followed by Mashumi. The Nahdatul Islam won third place and the Communists fourth. All other parties were left so far behind these "big four" as to reduce their role in national affairs to a very minor one. It was noteworthy that most of the strength of the nationalists, the Nahdatul Islam and the Communists came from densely populated East and Central Java provinces, whereas Mashumi was far and away the strongest party on the other Indonesian islands taken as a whole. It is clear that in the more open, "frontier" type of society beyond Java Mashumi's programme, based on the Reform Islam, appealed in particular to the dynamic, *entrepreneurial* groups long since dissatisfied with the "Java centred" administration by the nationalists. The Nahdatul Islam on the other hand appealed to the more conservative folk Islamic substratum of the rigidified rural society in Java, where the 'adat traditionalism of nationalists and the "common front" line of the Communists also had appeal.

The very diversity of the Islamic movements in Indonesia, while at one time regarded as a liability in the common struggle against colonial domination, now testifies to the continuing dynamism of the faith and its adaptability to Indonesia's changing social and political needs. Islam's vitality is one of the great assets that the young Indonesian nation possesses in these early and unsettled years of its freedom.

#### NOTES

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- 4 J. T. Petrus Blumberger, *De Nationalistische Beweging in Nederlandsch-Indie*, Haarlem, 1931, p. 89.
- 5 B. ter Haar, *Adat Law in Indonesia*, New York, 1948, pp. 144-146.
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## THE DIVINE DIVAN

By WILLIAM BASHYR PICKARD

5.

In the brightness of the light  
I love Thee.  
In the darkness of the night,  
While the stars proclaim Thy might,  
I love Thee.

6.

Shines with million-blesséd beam  
Thy bright sun.  
'Tis Thou I love!  
Rides in rapture's silver dream  
Thy moon above.  
'Tis Thou I love!

7.

See! they laught, the dancing waves,  
On the mighty-bosom'd ocean borne.  
'Tis Thy love my soul enslaves —  
(Happy slave! for ever free  
Bound in bliss eternally!)  
Slave that Thy love's rapture saves,  
Makes all other loves forlorn,  
Makes each day more brightly dawn.

8.

Rapture of the mountains raised on high,  
With snowy peaks uplifted, nigh  
The lucent sky.  
While, round them, snowy clouds go tumbling by —  
This fills my heart and wakes the sigh:  
'Thou art the Majesty and Beauty, Thy true lover, I.'

9.

The little flowers shining in the em'rald leaves,  
Like the pure stars of paradise, where never grieves  
The soul at rest:  
The roses and the rhododendrons and the lilies gaily dress'd,

The jasmi and the jacaranda bloom at Thy behest.  
The golden sunflower's glory,  
The tulip's vivid story,  
The sight and scent of summer flow'rs,  
The beauty of all blossoming hours,  
Where'er they shine,  
These are all Thine.  
Thy lover is forever blest  
In that deep peace,  
Which shall not cease,  
On the Belovéd's breast.

10.

They, too, the sombre trees in shady forest deep,  
Whose interlacing branches overhead do keep  
So close a canopy that scarce the sun can peep —  
These, too, are Thine and in Thine arms do sleep.

11

The sparkling streams that run and dance  
And trill the music of a summer's day,  
These do our human happiness enhance,  
Scattering, where'er they take their winding way,  
A melody that doth entrance  
The listening ear,  
Like voices clear  
Of little children chattering.  
I listen; and the lulling sound  
Ever re-echoes the Belovéd's name around.

12

But not these earthly streams alone,  
Others, abounding from the realms above,  
Flow shinging round the lives of those who love  
Thee, Lord of Beauty, from whose Throne  
Spread the blest gardens fadeless, where are strown  
Blossoms of rapture by Eternal Mercy sown,  
Like lovers ever whispering in sweet undertone.

# ISLAM IN ENGLAND

## The Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust

### LECTURES

Mr. Muhammad Yahya Butt gave a talk at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on the "Unity of Muslims" on Saturday 11th May 1957. It was followed by a lively discussion. The house was divided. Some were of the opinion that the present stagnation of Muslims could be cured by revolution. More thoughtful elements in the meeting tried to discover the causes of lethargy prevalent in the Muslim countries at the moment. The Editor of *The Islamic Review* concluded the discussion by stating that the present degradation was due to fetish worship of whatever had been handed down to the Muslims during the centuries, and the lack of education of people to think on independent lines.

Dr. Sunario, the Indonesian Ambassador, gave a talk on the "Islamic Law in Indonesia" at a meeting held at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on Saturday 25th May 1957. The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, presided over the meeting. His Excellency revealed very interesting facts about Indonesia. He told the gathering that Muslim women in Indonesia had never accepted the veil and that women took keen interest in the social life of Indonesia. He said that Indonesian women had fought side by side with their menfolk in the fight and struggle for freedom and that in the fight they had even undertaken the hazardous task of acting as guerrillas. In Indonesia, he continued, women judges are not a rare thing. He also declared that the percentage of women in the Parliament of Indonesia was considerable.

Mr. Muhammad Yahya Butt gave a talk at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on "A Comparative Study of the Story of Adam and Eve in the Qur'an and the Bible". He claimed that the story as described in the Qur'an was conducive to human upliftment; whereas the story narrated in the Bible contained no guidance or lesson in it. It was followed by a discussion. Mr. 'Abdul Majid, Editor of *The Islamic Review*, during the course of the discussion read out some passages from the well-known book of Dr. S. M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, bearing on the subject.

Mr. A. A. Haidari, lecturer in Persian at the University of London, gave a talk at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, on Saturday 8th June 1957 on "Islam and Nationalism". The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, presided. The speaker said that nationalism was a creation of the Western civilization and had proved a curse to humanity. He distinguished between patriotism and nationalism — patriotism being beneficial and ennobling, whereas nationalism was degrading and should be shunned.

The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Mr. Muhammad Yakub Khan, gave a talk on "The problem of Suffering in Islam" on Saturday 22nd June 1957 at 18 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1. He said that every religion except Islam considered suffering to be a curse on humanity and tried to find a way out of suffering. Consequently, he proceeded to say, all religions had failed to understand the problem of suffering in human society. He said that Islam taught that suffering was a means to purification and elevation and through suffering and hardship real greatness and fortitude was built.

## Jewish-Christian-Muslim Friendship Society

Mr. Muhammad Yakub Khan, Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, presided over a meeting of the Jewish-Christian-

Muslim Friendship Society held at the Holborn Hall on Tuesday 28th May 1957. The Imam said that friendship was a rare thing and it was a very noble enterprise to cultivate it in these days of callous selfishness and greed. He said that religion was the only source which could supply the world with this much needed love, tolerance and friendship. He wished the society every success in its noble enterprise.

## The Pakistan Society

The Sixth Annual Dinner of the Pakistan Society was held on 24th June 1957 at the Connaught Rooms, Kingsway, London, W.C.1. The guests of honour were the Earl and the Countess of Home and the Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.

## The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, at a conference of the World Spiritual Council

The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Mr. Muhammad Yakub Khan, addressed a conference of the World Spiritual Council held at the Spa Hotel at Tunbridge Wells from the 31st May to 2nd June 1957. The subject of the Imam's talk was "Enlightened Human Relationship". It was a select gathering of thinking men and women of England and the Imam's talk was very much appreciated.

## The Pakistan Students' Federation

The Pakistan Students' Federation organized a meeting at Holborn Hall, London, W.C.1, on Thursday 27th June 1957. The hall was packed to capacity and it is estimated that there were more than 500 in the audience. The meeting started with recitation from the Qur'an by the Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking. Mr. H. S. Suhrawardy, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was the speaker of the evening in which he said that it was essential that the Kashmir dispute should be solved because a matter of fundamental importance was involved in the question.

He explained that the question in fact was whether a bigger country could usurp the rights of a smaller country just because it happened to be large and powerful.

## The Imam at a Service for People of all Faiths

The Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Mr. Muhammad Yakub Khan, participated as representative of Islam at a Service for People of all Faiths held at Essex Church, Palace Gardens Terrace, Notting Hill Gate, London, W.8, on Wednesday 23rd May 1957. The Imam read the following verses from the Qur'an: 24 : 36-40, 3 : 63, 2 : 22, 4 : 1, 9 : 13, 2 : 213, which laid stress on the unity of God and brotherhood of mankind.

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