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JANUARY 1966
Between Ourselves

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ISLAM'S ROLE IN COMBATING MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN

The coloured peoples in South Africa, Rhodesia, the United States of America

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. And God has full knowledge of all things”
(The Qur'an, 33 : 40)

“There is no prophet after me” (The Prophet Muhammad)

VOL. 54 No. 1 JANUARY 1966 C.E. Ramadan – Shawwal 1385 A.H.

Man's inhumanity to man is not a new phenomenon in human society. It has in fact been co-existent with mankind. It manifested itself in its worst form in human bondage. Looking in retrospect one can understand it; for then the emphasis was always on the nation, the group or the race. He who belonged to that group, race or nation, could alone claim special privileges by virtue of his belonging to it. Sanction for this inhuman conduct was also sought in religious beliefs. As observed, such a state of affairs could be intelligible then. But that it should even persist to exist in our midst today, to say the least, is plain anachronism and deserves the condemnation of all right-thinking people everywhere. In saying this we are conscious that we would be reminded by the protagonists of “apartheid” in South Africa, where colour distinction has even crepted into the places of worship, that the claim to equality, for instance, by the African Rhodesians with the white settlers did not, and could not, obtain between man and man, especially in worldly affairs. True. But that discrimination based on racial or colour factor could be introduced in a country like South Africa even in a house dedicated to the worship of God shows to what untold lengths those possessed of an exaggerated sense of superiority and instinct of possessiveness would go in order to preserve their privileges in the outside world as against those who happened to be under-privileged for one reason or the other.

The conception of humanity as one nation, notwithstanding the diversity of races and colours and languages overcoming all geographical boundaries, it would appear, is something which seems to be beyond the ken and reach of our present civilization. One would have thought that the modern civilization, with all its inventions and control over the forces of nature — steam power, oil power, electric power, transmission by wire and aerial transmission, which have followed each other so rapidly in our living memory — would have enabled mankind readily to understand this verity and also to devise ways and means of practising it in their daily lives. Evidently increase of power over the forces of nature without increased wisdom to direct the use of power is a great source of danger to man as he is. Man has decisively failed to keep abreast of the practical advances of exact sciences in the matter of his relationship with his fellow-beings. It is true that the dawn of the era of unlimited control of the forces of nature has made many minds dream of a world community free from racial or geographical ties. To them this was a desirable and understandable end; for in it they saw the salvation of mankind. They accordingly projected their dream into founding some important world unions dealing with, for instance, postal traffic, health, trade, emigration, immigration, industry, etc., with the aim that ultimately this divided world of ours would learn to live as it was one big family. But when one looks around, one is dismayed to
see that the chances of such a dream ever becoming a reality are extremely slender. For the process of intellectuals is, in the other hand, even more of the man than ever before. Neighbours are living in constant fear of each other. The amelioration of distance has created a situation which does not bode well for the future of mankind. Man with all his knowledge has failed to live in the neighbourhood. It seems man cannot step up social institutions, new social and political and industrial relationships side by side with the progress in scientific knowledge.

Where, then, lies the hope for mankind? The answer to this challenge should be found by each of us but, in the final analysis, that part of the fact that man's true enemy is within himself. With him it is a question of reconstructing his ideas. This can be done in the first place by a re-statement and re-affirmation of the message of fraternity with a wider greater and more intense meaning behind it. It has to be realized by each one of us that if mankind is to preserve its soul, its dignity, its happiness, it should have recourse, once again, to the moral sources from which its present-day civilization has sprung. The basic factor of our moral, economic and spiritual structure is the recognition of the fact that every man possesses an immortal soul. It is the recognition of this value of the human soul in all classes of society that opened new vistas of freedom to mankind. It put the slave who had not been regarded as part of the human species on an equal footing with his fellow beings. It established equality between man and man, equality before God, the same rules of conduct and the conditions of salvation for all. Here let it be said to the eternal glory of Islam that it was the first and the foremost to go beyond this. When turning to the pages of the Qur'an, read the selfsame statement only differently worded: “O ye men! We have created you of a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may know each other. Verily in the sight of God, the best of the nations is the most pious in deeds. Surely God is Knowing and Aware.”

Indeed, one could multiply the number of such edifying and inspiring excerpts and verses from the religious books and writings of the prophets and saints of all religions. Such words and phrases do indeed create a desire for a better world order, and they do create a fundamental change in men’s minds, but they definitely do not suggest how to express that change in practice and conduct. For is it not a fact that the declaration of the fatherhood of God and that we are all children of God has been preached in one form or another from the pulpit, say, of the Christian world for the last two thousand years and yet the net result of this continual treatment of doses of these admirable ideals is that the behaviour of the present white Christian crowds in South Africa, Rhodesia and other parts of the world is indistinguishable from that of the crowds that believed in the virtues of clannism and tribalism before the advent of Jesus? The answer that is made to reject this criticism is that Christianity has not been tried and has not been given a fair chance! Such an answer may satisfy some, but one wonders if it will satisfy those who know that 2,000 years is a very long period.

To emphasize our point further let us go to the land of Egypt in 640 C.E. When the Muslim conquerors sent a deputation of their ablest leaders with the message of the fatherhood of God and the childlike relationship of all men. They came to the city of Egypt, headed by a Negro whose name was `Ubada, as the ablest of them all, the Archbishop Cyrus exclaimed “Take away that black man. I can have no discussion with him.” The scared Archbishop, to his astonishment, was told that he had been commissioned by `Amr Ibn al-`As, the Commander of the Muslim army, and that the Muslims held Negroes and white men in equal respect and that they judged a man by his character and not by his colour.

“Well, if the Negro must lead, then he must speak genteely,” ordered the prelate, so as not to frighten his white auditors.

The reply of the Muslim Negro `Ubada shows the spirit of Islam. ‘Ubada said, “There are a thousand blacks as black as myself amongst the companions of our commander. I and they would be ready each to meet and fight a hundred enemies together; we live only to glorify our God and to enrich the poor with our wealth, so long as we have the wherewithal to stay our hunger and to clothe our bodies. The world is taught to us, the next world is all.”

This was 1,400 years ago. But the spirit of the Christian prelate Cyrus of Egypt rules the conduct of a large section of mankind even today. The word is always still sufficiently strong to make the ingredients of the world. The rich amongst the Muslims show no signs of consciousness of class. Islam has achieved this not by preaching platitude and reading homilies, but by designing special social structure, deeply rooted in the spiritual equality between man and man and which is its own.
THE "SQUARED" KUFIC WRITING*

Its application in artistic decoration

The possibilities offered by Kufic as a means of decoration are infinite

By E. J. Paris-Teynae

Kufic and Black Africa

In black Africa there is a population of several million people for whom Islam, its religion, its scriptures and language, customs and traditions, has been the principal role of attraction right up to our own times. The territories bordering on the southern Saharan regions are those most impregnated with this attitude.

However, outside the "non-conformist areas" of ancestral animist traditions, which are met with in more southern latitudes, this culture — or rather civilization — of Semitic origin, is everywhere present, more or less apparent where it is more or less pure.

Throughout many of the different peoples of Africa, the size of the artisan class is limited, just as it is in many parts of the world. And it is noticeable that during the course of history it was often reinforced from outside sources, from neighboring countries. This was because there was almost permanent contact between different peoples due to the infiltration, political or commercial, of foreign ethnic groups.

Today many local artisans, especially in the urban districts, for whom mere "copy-work" has become unattractive, allow their natural gifts to degenerate instead of developing them. They are interested only in commercializing their output of this kind of work. In the West, an often false conception of African art only accentuates this disequilibrium, thus opening the door to the middle-man of doubtful artistic taste. So with the exception of the artisanal territories which are typically animist, there is a good deal of "borrowing" in evidence, often from the north and northeast of the continent.

Contrary to what some readers might think, the aim of this study is not to innovate, but to ameliorate, sometimes to embellish, a local art, a form of ART — just that. The possibilities offered by Kufic as a means of decoration are infinite. To mention only the commonest, there are leatherwork, objects in metal and wood, embroidery on cloth or tanned skins, mural painting or sculpture, and tile-flooring or mosaic work.¹

Who has not seen at least one splendid copper tray, and been intrigued by its geometric decoration, or the "mysterious signs" to be seen on it?

It is my hope that this study, and particularly the illustrative figures, will help the African artisan to develop his professional aptitude. I hope it will help him, not only to support himself by his work, but to do this with taste and refinement. It will perhaps be for him a means of expression having infinite possibilities, for ART is an expression of the soul, of the personality (which is by far more profound and more real than the mere individuality).

I. THE ORIGINS OF KUFIC

The reader will probably not be very familiar with the diverse types of "Arab calligraphy" which he may have


1 At Gao, in 1939, some 12th century funerary steles were discovered. They are of Spanish-Arab origin, of the Andalusian Kufic type (see Bulletin de l'I.F.A.N., B, Volume 12, 1940, pp. 416-440).
noticed, either in reviews or on monuments in Spain, North Africa or the Middle East. Here, therefore, is a brief historical résumé and a genealogical scheme:

PHOENICIAN

ARAMAIC  HEBREW  BRAHAMI  GREEK

PALMYREAN  NABATEAN  ESTRANGELO  SYRIAC

SINAITIC  KUFIC  EASTERN ARABIC

MAGHREBIAN ARABIC

In this résumé Phoenician may be disregarded, and Hebrew is known universally. From Greek are derived the Western types of writing, and from Brahmi those of India and the neighbouring countries. We may regard this as the first period. We will deal solely with Aramaic. This does not seem to be anterior to the 13th century B.C. and the formation of Nabatean (second period) will date only a short time before our own era. Nabatean will also have been used in the 4th century C.E. (inscription at al-Nemara, 328 C.E., Figs. 1 and 2).

Fig. 1: Inscription anterior to Islam (date 568 C.E.)

... Inscription at Harran in Ledja, date 568 C.E. It marks the final stage of the changes from Aramaic writing to the Kufic of the first Muslims” (M. Waddington)


Fig. 2: Inscription after the Prophet Muhammad (undated Sabaeen inscription at Ses, date uncertain, but after the Prophet)

Translation: “O! my God! Grant pardon to Muhammad, son of Walid, and by Thy mercy make him join Thy servants who do good works.” (“Translation approximate, inscription deteriorated.”—Author.) Ref: “Inscriptions sémitiques” by De Vogue, 1887, p. 116

As a reminder, we will recall that the ancient writing of the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen and Su’udi Arabia) was Himyarite (or “musnad”) from the name of Himyar, son of Saba’ and great-grandson of Qahtan, the first king of the Yemen. These semi-nomads, whose presence on the high plateaus of the Yemen in the 2nd century B.C. has been recorded in history, were extant up to the 6th century C.E.

The characters of this writing, which seems to have no apparent connection with Nabatean, were very distinct and at the time of the Prophet Muhammad had already fallen into oblivion.

The sources of Himyarite are said to be Sabaean and Qatabanite (ref. Contenau, Arts et styles de l’Asie antérieure).

Fig. 3: Himyarite writing

Funerary inscription at Hureyda, Sabaean epoch, 7th century B.C. (The British Museum)

Apparently only the lam-alef can be said to have its origin in this writing (see the last character shown on the right of the inscription).

II. KUFIC IN GENERAL

“The two oldest monuments displaying essentially Arab writing, up to the present time, are two inscriptions of the 6th century C.E. These have shapes which make a contrast with the round writing on the papyri of the 7th century, and resemble the other Arab writing, the one termed Kufic. There seems little doubt that this name is derived from the town of Kufa (Iraq), one of the oldest cities of Islam, since it was founded in 638 C.E. and was overshadowed only by the rising glory of Baghdad, founded only 130 years later.” So says the Encyclopaedia of Islam, which fixes both the name itself and its approximate epoch.

The authors of this work seem to be less affirmative on the subject of a common source having two tendencies. But we can leave to the palaeographic experts the task of fixing the “one and only” birthplace of these two modes of expression of the same thought.

“In the 7th century,” they say, “appear two kinds of writing, clearly differentiated: the inscriptions on stones and coins are traced in a rigid and angular fashion, probably necessitated by the choice of materials used. On parchments the writing is round and cursive.”

Independently of the choice of materials, which would influence the mode of writing, there seems to have existed, from the very beginning, a special kind of writing for monuments. Further, the work already quoted states that “... the author, Ibn Shihna, mentions it in these terms: al-khatt al-kufi al-muwallad, which probably means that it was already known as an artificial writing, derived from the original one”.

Maghrebian Arabic (North Africa), which has preserved a very archaic appearance, is a derivation of cursive Kufic, which started about 912 C.E.

The cursive writing, which has become classic, bears the name naskh, naskhy, nesky (variant rehany). The innovator of this type of writing is said to be Ibn Mokla — the period was some time during the 4th century A.H. (about 1100 C.E.).
Example of neskh

Fig. 4: Cursive Arab writing, Neskh
The beginning of a phrase.

The final development of the cursive was the thuluthi writing.
Example:

Fig. 5: Cursive Arab thuluthi writing

which is the end of a phrase. Then there was the thuluthi, or three-fold writing, with exaggerated interweaving (a degenerative trend of the Abbaside era at Baghdad).

Karmatic writing at Miqyas (Egypt)

Karmatic is a derivation of Kufic. It was very much in use in Egypt during the Fatimide era, and about 100 C.E. Its name comes from the Karmates (al-Qaramatah), who were nomads having family ties with the Wahhabis, who occupied this country in 891 C.E. (Ref. Nouerey).

Fig. 6: Arab Kufic Karmatic writing

Translation: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." This Muslim maxim, being met with very frequently, will often be used as an example, its characters being quite simple to follow.

Examples of Kufic

Fig. 7: Kufic Arab writing (768 C.E.)
Inscription at Miqyas of Roda, Cairo (after G. Marcais), dated 797 C.E.

Fig. 8: Kufic Arab writing (797 C.E.)
Inscription at the mosque of Touloun at Cairo.

Fig. 9: Kufic Arab writing (965 C.E.)
Inscription on a mihrab at Cordova, 969 C.E. (after G. Marcais).

This mosque was built a century before the founding of Cairo (986 C.E.), about 870 C.E.

Fig. 10: Kufic Arab writing (1136 C.E.)
Inscription on the Great Mosque of Tlemcen, 1136 C.E. (after G. Marcais).

This last example is of the type called "Almoravide". This term comes from an Arabo-Berber dynasty which ruled over the Western Maghreb at this period, and whose place of origin is the present-day Mauretanian.

III. THE "SQUARED" KUFIC

This mode of writing (more exactly drawing) is little known today. Some of the designs resemble geometric themes or drawings.

J. Marcel, who accompanied Bonaparte on his expedition to Egypt, seems to have been one of the first Western savants to describe it. He says, in his Manuel de paléographie arabe, published in Paris (1828) : "Some Middle Age inscriptions have a peculiar shape and are wholly composed of straight lines, interconnected by strokes always parallel to each other, or perpendicular and cut off at right angles. There are no rounds or curves." This is a very good description, and the subject was dealt with again in 1877 by Prisse d'Avennes, author of L'Art arabe au Caire.

Later on two qualified writers made a serious study of these "word-puzzles" in 1881 and 1890 (Messrs. R. Bey and W. Innes Pasha, both members of the Egyptian Institute).

R. Bey places the majority of the themes studied by him in Egypt as between the 9th and the 15th centuries C.E.

From where or whom came the first idea of these intriguing figures? The above references do not appear to give any clues, but R. Bey's theory is that, since the Traditions (Hadiths) prohibited the pictorial reproduction of living beings, we can assume that decorative art took on other means of expression, such as flowers, foliage and geometric figures. He says on this subject: "The letters of the alphabet,
very graceful and decorative in themselves, which the Muslim calligraphers have interlaced in mural inscriptions, sometimes very intriguingly, enabled them to practise decorative art without infringing the precepts of tradition."

The same author says later, when pointing out the oddness of some of the figures: "... other mosques have, on the inner sides of their arches, inscriptions often containing some favourite verses from the Qur'an, in 'squared' Kufic characters, arranged in a single 'monogram', which is often difficult to decipher, and looking so much like geometric figures that the majority of those who look at them have no idea that they contain legible characters."

Though the prime basis of construction is the square, it is rather rare to see the general layout of the motif as a square, with two equal sides. Rectangular panels, widths of frieze, colonnades, the pediments of doors, etc., abound in these decorative themes.

Symmetrical rectangular theme. The sentence is read from the right as far as the middle of the panel. The part on the left is illegible, the aim being decorative symmetry.

Fig. 11: Decorative panel in squared Kufic. For purposes of symmetry, the sentence is also written backwards

Translation: "There is no god but God, Muhammad is His Messenger." This theme appears in a large number of Arab figures. In some, the upper part of the characters ("letter-stems" to be exact) is elongated upward, and harmonious combinations of these 'stem-colonnades' are assembled to form minaret-domes. (They are said to be modelled after the mosque at Mecca)

Fig. 12: Squared Kufic (Regular) in honour of the Prophet

Squred Kufic (Regular).

Translation: "By the blessing of Muhammad." To be seen on the mosque of Sidi Bou Medine at Tlemcen, at the palace of Bahia at Marrakesh, at the Sahrij and Sherratine madrasahs of Fez, etc.

Fig. 13: Example of a panel in Squared Kufic showing how the characters have been reversed

Regular Kufic, but a rectangular theme (noted by Niebuhr (W. I. Pasha)).

Translation: "O God! Show mercy to me and to those of mine."

IV. STUDY OF ANCIENT THEMES

With rare exceptions, the artist starts with a rectangular panel. (This already appears to be no simple matter.) A simple rule seems to preside over the construction of the whole, and one can safely say that this form of art, like nature, "abhors a vacuum." In other words, the artist leaves as few empty spaces as possible.

In a definite measured space the letters, which have always the same thickness, are distant from each other by an interval which must always be of the same thickness as the letters. This is the rule, and it must always be respected.

However (perfect not being of this world), it has been noticed that this rule of design is not often observed, and that the artisan, at the end of his imagination or his patience, has been content to use a "mask" in order to fill an empty space in his theme.

As even the educated man found it difficult to follow the fanciful evolution of this kind of writing, everybody seemed satisfied with the result. We shall also see that in certain cases, where the phrase or maxim is not very well adapted to the theme decided on, these "marks" (quick "escape-routes") became more or less obligatory.

The first motifs have been selected for their simplicity. The themes can readily be followed, the reading being facilitated by the shape and running layout of the letters.

According to the writer J. Marcel (previously quoted) the ancient characters are as follows:

Fig. 14: Ancient Arabic characters

And those added later:

Fig. 14a: More recent Arabic characters

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
In Fig. 15 (in which the construction, from the artistic point of view, leaves much to be desired) we notice that the constructor has had recourse to "masks", represented by shaded portions. (Taken from the work by Prisse d'Avennes, Vol. 30).

**Fig. 15:** Irregular squared Kufic (with "masks")

![Irregular squared Kufic](image)

*Translation:* "In the name of God, that which God wills"

Another arrangement of the final H (actually more often employed) is that whereby the artist eliminates the two points on the left side to the theme, and all that is necessary to eliminate three other masks is to draw the leg of the M towards the right. (Reconstitution on Fig. 15a.) This theme is of the rectangular type, irregular (i.e. having "masks" or "dummies").

**Fig. 15a:** The same motif, modified in order to reduce the number of these "masks"

![The same motif, modified in order to reduce the number of these "masks"](image)

*Translation:* "There is no god but God, Muhammad is His Messenger"

This theme (Fig. 17) decorates an arch of the mosque of the Sultan Hasan at Cairo. Unfortunately the artist was unable to avoid two masks (shaded), which renders the motif irregular. As many of these inscriptions have deteriorated with the passage of time, errors have been noted, although there is the possibility that the reproduction by the authors of the works quoted has been erroneous. Example: "Muhammad" in this figure has become incomprehensible (taken from Study No. 6 of W. I. Pasha).

**Fig. 17:** Ancient panel in squared Kufic (but irregular)

![Ancient panel in squared Kufic (but irregular)](image)

Figure 16 is a better one than the preceding: there are no masks. An interesting feature — the ancient shape of the arms of the lam-alif. (Taken from the manual of Lanci, Vol. XXI).

**Fig. 16:** Ancient panel in regular squared Kufic

![Ancient panel in regular squared Kufic](image)

*Translation:* "To God, the empire of the past and of the future"

**Fig. 18:** Symbolism in an ancient theme, in regular Kufic, in honour of the Prophet

![Symbolism in an ancient theme, in regular Kufic, in honour of the Prophet](image)
Fig. 18 shows the motif on the tomb of the Sultan Malik al-Mansur Qalawun (Muristan), 14th century (684 C.E.). (Reference: M. van Berchem, pl. 30). The name of "Muhammad" is repeated four times. (This tomb would be dated about 1285/1340 C.E.)

This composition belongs to a small number of themes which it would be logical to attribute to a special school, probably connected with Sufism. An interesting detail is the curious reversal of the first M when compared with the second, the separation being an H. When analysed in detail, this inscription gives the impression of a cryptographic heresy! Decorative Kufic abounds in irregularities, and fancy often holds complete sway.

It would seem as though this figure was meant purposely to deceive the eyes of the profane, which became lost in these mazes and bizarre contortions — something which can be achieved by no other calligraphy in the world. It is a quadruple type (i.e. legible on all four sides); a regular square, two sides equal and having no masks. Symbolism — to be dealt with later.

Fig. 19 shows an Arab inscription at the Alcazar of Seville in Spain and merits special attention. Spread out very extensively as a symmetrical pediment, it has confused many students by its singular shape and its numerous crosses. It seems to have been deciphered for the first time — in our present era — by the Spanish "Arabicist" R. Amador de Los Rios, who mentions it in his book on the Arab inscriptions of Seville (Madrid, 1875). As translation the author gives Y non vencedor sino Allah ("No one can conquer without the help of God").

**Fig. 19a: Explanation of anomalies found in this theme**

The legible parts are units of black mosaic, the blank space being represented by white tiles.

Why did the composer of this motif so deform his subject as to render it almost illegible? Recourse to Muslim savants has produced no reasonable explanation. Yet there must be one. Naturally, we are not here concerned with the left-hand side of the motif (the part located beyond the central axis) but solely with the representation in Fig. 19, which normally reads from right to left.

As previously explained, the reversal (or lateral inversion) of a decorative theme is due to a desire for symmetry on the part of the artisan or composer.

The real explanation is as follows: the blank spaces portray the theme itself, but it has been put upside-down (top to bottom), so that the theme can be correctly read only by a person looking downwards at it from a higher part of the building.

If we inspect Fig. 19a, which is the exact representation of these blank spaces between the letters of the legible phrase, we notice the same mask "A" and the same mistakes in drawing or design (1-2-3).

Are the crosses indispensable to the construction of the theme? Apparently they are not, since it would have been possible for the artisan to have composed his motif as in the experimental reconstruction seen in Fig. 19b, based on the same construction of the drawing. (Only the beginning has been reconstructed — by using the same method the whole composition would be completed, if desired.)

In this way certain faults in design can be made to disappear, but the mask "A" in the top right corner still remains, though of necessity modified.

Seen upside-down, this reconstruction is just as legible as it is the right way up. Why did the artisan compose it in this way? Is the decorative panel contemporary with the construction of the building (about 1353-1364 C.E.), or was it added later during the 15th-16th centuries, Mudejar epoch, Islamo-Christian?

If the answer is in the negative, the theme is probably the work of a Sufi, for did not one of them say: "If the Christians have the cross, the Muslims have the soul!"

**V. COMPOSITION OF THEMES**

In order to construct a theme, a rectangle is necessary. (When actually finished, the artisan will have produced a decorative motif in tiles or other suitable materials.) To start with, we will select a word or short phrase.
Example: Timbuktoo, in Arabic Tmkbttou, six consonant letters. In Fig. 20 (1, 2, 3) various possible forms of ornamental transcription are shown. In (4) we have a harmonious and well-balanced ensemble. Here the symmetry helps to tone down the difference between the letters and their individual shapes.

We notice at once that, by eliminating the diacritical points which differentiate them, many characters in Arabic are identical. Therefore when reading, we must “feel our way” a little in order to get the true meaning of a word or sentence.

Example: the letters b n t i
       ... f and q
       ... ‘ayn and ghayn

What should always distinguish the OU from the M, and vice-versa, is the “point of departure” of the leg of the letter viewed with regard to its centre (although in the early days this differentiation was not often adhered to).

In (5) we have the OU in its three positions (initial, medial and final). In (6), the M in its three positions. Note that in its medial position the M is frequently reversed.

In (7) there is a series of ancient characters borrowed from works already mentioned. The “Muhammad” of the central figure is not recent and this form is not met with very frequently.

(8), (9) and (10) are examples taken from the book by Bourgoin, Pl. 5, No. 4. In (9) chiefly, it is evident that the extract shown is part of an ensemble, and that this configuration of the characters is conditioned by the space available. It is to be noted here that the tha is used less frequently in the Middle East than in Black Africa. We also appreciate the reader’s difficulty in recognizing certain characters. This extract is taken from a panel of regular squared Kufic containing no less than 175 characters (without a single “mask”) from the mosque of the Sultan al-Malik al-Muayyad (1414 C.E.).

Example 10 is unique of its kind, or possibly an error by the copyist, by reason of the unusual form of ‘ayn. Finally, in (12) we again have the Muslim formula-device, taken also from Bourgoin, Pl. 5, No. 3, showing distinctly the tolerance or latitude existing in this form of decorative representation of construction dealt with above, are but little appreciated by Arabists.

1 Name of Berber Tuareg origin. According to the Tarikh al-Sudan (1900, p. 36), Boktou was an elderly woman responsible for the security of a camping site in the 11th/12th centuries C.E., and who suffered from a physical deformity which was readily apparent—a voluminous navel. Tin or ten, feminine of in (a place-name), often a sign of ownership (even temporary), sometimes a well, a pond, dune, or clump of trees, etc. In Moorish, prefix zenaga—having the same meaning as ban (Arabic), which is used to draw attention to something. The inhabitants of the town use the pronunciation Tombuktoo, but the nomads still say Timbuktoo.

(To be continued)
PICTORIAL ART IN ISLAM

By Dr. So‘aad Maahir

"It is not advisable to generalize (on the ban) and to apply it on all occasions, in all places, and to all countries. It has no other raison d'être than to safeguard the adoration and glorification reserved for God alone. . . . We must therefore uphold the impartial opinion that Islam has never banned the human or animal figure in an absolute and categorical manner. It is also quite evident that aversion to and prohibition of this kind of drawing or painting was at one time justified by the desire of pious Muslims to keep their co-religionists from idolatry of any kind. That particular age has long since passed away, and yet even today there are those who still repeat the old legend about the aversion of Muslims to pictorial art, even though such an assertion does a grave disservice to Islam and to Muslims generally. It is logical that the disappearance of the cause brings about the cessation of the effect, and that aversion and prohibition are no longer necessary."

Why the pre-Islamic period Arabs did not develop pictorial art

The Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula were not appreciably active in the plastic arts except at the two extremities, the Banu Mundhir, who lived on the frontiers of the Sassanide State, and the Banu Ghassan, who lived on the frontiers of the Eastern Roman Empire. To the south, in the Yemen, the kingdom of Ma‘n and that of the Sabaeans had been set up, and remains found in those regions showed the progress made, and the refinement attained, in the applied and plastic arts. The reason for this is clear. The desert climate of the peninsula, the nomadic life, the frequent moving on in search of fodder and pasture, had always prevented the evolution of this form of art, which above all needs a society which is stable. However, this must not be taken to mean that the arts were entirely absent from Arab life. The Arab interest in poetry is proverbial. With poetry can be included oratory and knightly activities, and in all three reached a high degree of excellence. Ibn Khaldun says, "The only art the Arabs knew was poetry."

When the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sassanide State surrendered to the victorious Arabs, a large number of Arabs settled in those countries. The Caliphate transformed their towns into capitals of the Muslim Empire, which at that time stretched from the north of India on the east to the Atlantic on the west. Damascus was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate and Baghdad that of the Abbasides. For the Arab who had abandoned the nomadic life for that of a town dweller, the change of environment was bound to bring about changes in his way of life. He had to get used to living with nationals of the newly-annexed States, and to preserve intact the different manifestations of their civilizations — those which appealed to his taste and which had the approval of Muslim law. From that period onwards the Arabs lived in palaces, surrounded themselves with guards and maior-domos, built residences and public edifices. In his *Proleomena* Ibn Khaldun admits that "... when compared with those of previous empires, the buildings and workshops in the Islamic community are not very plentiful in proportion to its
potentialities. When loyalty to religion weakened, and the
taste for splendour and luxury became their ruling passion,
the Arabs became pupils of the Persians. They imitated their
trades and their buildings and they were driven by the urge
towards refinement and general well-being."

**Opinions on pictorial art of three schools of thought**

Concerning pictorial art in Islam— the subject of this
article — opinions are numerous and tendencies divergent.
Muslim savants and founders of schools of thought in Islam
formally prohibited it, taking as justication the Traditions
attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. A second group com-
posed of Orientalists decided that it was permissible, alleging
that these texts taken from the Traditions were apocryphal.
A third group held a middle view. This group included
scholars of the "reforming" school of thought and archaeolo-
gists who can in no way be described as Orientalists. They
explained in detail the reason for the prohibition advocated
by a number of people and testified, with supporting proof,
that the human figure in art was permissible.

In the following paragraphs we will deal with these
differing opinions.

*The views of Nawawi*

The Commentary of the Imam al-Nawawi on the *Sahih*
of Muslim includes a chapter entitled "On the Prohibition of
the Reproduction of the Forms of Animals". Here we find
the following, "Our colleagues and other scholars have
affirmed that the pictorial reproduction of the forms of
animals was rigorously forbidden; that it was a serious
offence, punishable by severe sanctions laid down by the
Traditions against the transgressor, whether the offence be
committed in the course of his trade or profession, or whether
it be undertaken for the benefit of another person. It is
categorically unlawful; for it is a counterfeiting of the
creatures of God, whether such figures be copied on cloth, on
a carpet, a dirham, a fils (small coin), a vase, a wall or other
object. But it is not forbidden to draw or paint trees, moun-
tains and other objects where there is no animal form. Such
is their judgment concerning reproduction. But if an artist
attaches the picture of an animal on a cloth hung on the wall,
on a garment in general use, on a turban or other object,
unless that happens to be his trade, his works are banned.
However, in the case of a carpet that is in constant use, a
bolster, pillow or other object that is made by craftsmen,
there is no prohibition. The above measures are applicable
whether the object in question is flat or projecting. Such is
briefly our opinion on this question. And this is also the judg-
ment of numerous scholars, among whom figure the Compa-
nions of the Prophet, their disciples and adepts. It is the
opinion of al-Thawri, of Malik, of Abu Hanifah, and others."

*Western orientalists hold that the Qur'án does not prohibit
painting and sculpture*

As to the Orientalists, led by the French Orientalist
Father Lammens, and the Professors Creswell and Arnold,
these state that in the Qur'án the only prohibition of painting
and sculpture is to be found in the chapter al-Ma'dah (*The
Food*), verse 90, which says: "O you who believe! Strong
drink, *maysir* (games of chance), stones set up and divining
arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil's work. Shun it
therefore that you may be successful." According to some
commentators the "stones set up" referred to idols or large
blocks of stone which the Arabs worshipped and from which
they asked favours in return for offerings and sacrifices. This
verse, therefore, in no way prohibits painting or sculpture.
Further, they maintain that the prohibition is based on certain
Traditions attributed to the Prophet, among which appear the
following: "The persons who will undergo the greatest
suffering on judgment day are those who counterfeit the
creatures of God"; "The makers of these copies will be
beaten, and they will be ordered, 'Give life to what you have
created'"; "He who has such images will be ordered, on
the day of the Last Judgment, to breathe life into them, and
he will not be able to do so." These traditions are apocryphal
and express only the opinion current among the scholars of
that period when the collection and transcription of the
Traditions was undertaken, that is to say, in the third century
of the Hijrah (9th century C.E.). To corroborate their state-
ments they had recourse to the fact that the Companions
of the Prophet had preserved *objets d'art* and ornamented
articles selected from booty captured at the time of the
Muslim conquests.

*The Herat school (end of the 16th century)*

*The portrait of a princess*
Some coins of the days of the first four Caliphs bear effigies and human faces

The Orientalists also refer to coins minted during the first Muslim epoch, during the reign of the first four Caliphs, known as al-Raashidun. The "dinar" of Khalid Ibn al-Walid, in the year 15 or 16 A.H., bore effigies as the Roman coins did. The dinar of 'Umar, minted in Iraq in 18 A.H. (640 C.E.), also bore human faces, like the dinar of the Chosroes. During the Umayyad dynasty, Mu'awiyyah had dinars minted. On one side was the statue of a person carrying a sword. There is also in existence a coin dating from the time of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil 'ala' Allah (Abbaside era). On one of the sides appears a man driving a camel. Another dinar dating from the time of the Caliph al-Mutadid bi 'l-Lah carries on one side the effigy of the Caliph holding a cup, on the other that of a musician playing an instrument. And coins of this type are numerous.

The Orientalists add that this state of affairs was not confined, as far as objets d'art and coins are concerned, to the effigies and decoration appearing on articles of plunder, but that there were other examples found in houses and the larger buildings.

The 'Ummayyad dynasty decorated their palaces and houses with designs and inscriptions. Here we will mention the "Pavilion of Amra," a hunting lodge 150 miles east of Haman built in 93 A.H. (711 C.E.). Its rooms, corridors, domes and vaults are decorated with frescoes representing hunting and bathing scenes, girl dancers and almost nude women, as well as symbolic representations of the gods of Greek poetry and philosophy. There are others representing the different periods in the life of man — adolescence, the prime of life, and old age, as well as the vault of heaven with the stars and constellations, drawings of birds and animals and floral decoration.

The pictorial art in the palaces of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods

The Orientalists have called attention to the palace of Mashita in the Syrian desert, which, as its appearance and plan indicate, was a public edifice frequented by numerous people. From the artistic point of view, this palace is characterised by the arabesques carved in the limestone façade at the entrance, some 18 ft. in height. In this building floral and animal motifs and geometrical designs predominate. Archaeologists place the construction of this palace at 125 A.H. (742 C.E.). The Palestinian Archaeological Service has discovered at Harbet al-Mafjar, north of Jericho, the palace of the Umayyad Caliph Hisham 'Abd al-Malik. The floor of the bathroom is covered with mosaics, and it is considered to be an example of the finest mosaic decoration of the Umayyad period. One fragment shows a pomegranate tree at the foot of which one can see gazelles and a lion springing on its prey.

As regards the Abbaside dynasty, archaeologists have discovered during excavations at the town of Samarrā ruins of palaces and houses whose walls were decorated with water-colours representing dancing women, animals and birds in hunting scenes, fish swimming in the water, horsemen and monks. These palaces date from about the third century A.H.

However, Muslim decorative art was not limited to the furnishing of objets d'art or objects of pleasure, or to the beautifying of buildings and monuments. The Muslim artist also sought to bring into prominence the literary masterpieces of the time by illustrating them with drawings and decoration. From the 5th century A.H. (11th century C.E.) onwards, schools of illuminating were formed during the reign of the Abbasids at Baghdad. These schools were characterized by "Sunnite" tendency. Under the Fatimid caliphate, in Egypt and North Africa, the "Shi'ite" tendency predominated. And yet, to our knowledge, neither of these sections forbade this kind of artistic work. These schools of art flourished during the Mongol period (7th and 8th centuries A.H. — 13th and 14th centuries C.E.). Later on followed the schools of Taimouriyah (11th century A.H. — 17th century C.E.), Safawiyah (10th to 12th centuries A.H. — 16th to 18th centuries C.E.), as well as the Hindu school.

Graphic art in the service of science and learning in early Islam

All the schools of graphic art dealt with the different problems of science and learning with the help of drawing and illustration. They reproduced works on pure science, such as the manuscript of al-Hiyal al-Jami' bayn al-Im wa l-'Amal of Ibn al-Razzaz al-Jizri, and Kitab al-Tiryaq, a translation of Gallienus. There were also works on zoology and botany, including Kitab al-Baytarah by Ibn al-Ahmad, Manafi' al-Hayawan by Ibn Bakhtishei, 'Ajīb al-Makhtuqat by al-Qazwini, and Kitab al-Hasad al-Shir, or the Treatise of Dioscorides (the Greek physician). Literary manuscripts, especially those of the anecdotal type, offered to the Muslim artist unlimited scope for his creative skill and originality. In consequence, these books and manuscripts abounded in pictures and drawings. Among the more famous we can mention Kitab Ktilah wa Dimmah, translated by 'Abd Allah Ibn al-Muqaffa', the Maqamat of al-Hariri, Kitab al-Aghani by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, and the Kitab Shah Nameh (the Book of Kings) of al-Firdusi, a kind of Persian epic dealing with the main events in the lives of the kings of Persia and their
history up to the time of the Islamic conquest. There was also Kitab al-Manzumaat al-Khams by Nizami, which is considered to be one of the finest Persian works of the sixth century.

Another point of interest — graphic art was not confined to scientific and literary works. It also spread to religion and history. Artists brought out the Kitab Jami' al-Tawarikh of Rashid al-Din, and Kitab al-Athar al-baqiyah 'an al-Qurun al-khaliyyah of al-Berouni (in which the author is interested in the history of religions). There were also the Kitab Tarikh of al-Tabari and the Kitab Mīrājnameh, or the story of the Mīrāj (Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad).

When dealing with these scientific, literary or religious subjects Muslim artists were chiefly concerned with embellishing the text and thus, by force of circumstance, their imagination and feelings did not play a very important part. That is why their work has a purely material significance. They were interested in the letter, without giving much thought to the spirit which might lie behind it. This is in no way a reproach aimed at the Muslim artist, for the primordial and essential object of all these Muslim schools of graphic art was to bring into prominence the text of a work and not to paint isolated pictures. However, it is fitting to make an exception of the Hindu school, as from the reign of Emperor Jehangir and the Muslim emperors who succeeded him.

The “reform scholars” and the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad on pictorial art

Returning to the third group, composed of “reform scholars” and archaeologists other than Orientalists, this school of thought considers that the contempt for the pictorial reproduction of humans and animals goes back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and that it had as its basis the feeling of horror caused by paganism and idolatry, as well as the scorn for luxury and high living at a time when asceticism, temperance and the campaign for the divine cause were the personal affair of every individual Muslim. This group maintains that the prohibition of pictures and statues is linked with the veneration and respect with which they were at that time surrounded. It further states that the scholars who collected and assembled the Traditions banning pictures and statues were in no way attributing to the Prophet mere idle or pointless statements. The only reproach that can be levelled at them is that they took this ban to be absolute.

The views of the Egyptian scholars, the Shaykh Shaawish and Dr. Zaki Hasan

The late Egyptian scholar the Shaykh Shaawish, referring to this, stated as follows: “It is not advisable to generalize (on the ban) and to apply it on all occasions, in all places, and to all countries. It has no other raison d'etre than to safeguard the adoration and glorification reserved for God alone.”

For example, how can we categorically prohibit the taking of photographs when they can materially contribute to the preservation of the legitimate rights of man? One instance is the photographing of persons killed or injured in accidents. Such photographs are put on public display by the Government so that relatives of the victims might recognize them. This could facilitate the application of the laws of succession, and those laws dealing with matrimonial bonds, the payment of long-term debts, and so on.

Photography could quite well be a means of warning the public against thieves and swindlers. The Shaykh Shaawish enumerates the qualities and the benefits which might accrue from the picture. He says: “It is important in natural history and anatomy, and it also helps in the cure of a large number of diseases.” He concludes by saying: “Among the fundamental regulations of Muslim law, we quote those which judge the means used in order to attain a definite objective. If the evidence or the details obtainable from a picture form the basis of legal judgments, of diagnoses, or of a scientific discovery, its use is incontestably legal from the juridical point of view. Again, if it is used for decoration or for wholesome pleasure its use is also permitted. But if it becomes an object of veneration and adoration, and is considered to be a source of blessing, it is categorically forbidden, and both the artist and the purchaser will suffer the pains of hell.”

The opinion of Egyptian scholar, the late Dr. Zaki Hasan, is as follows: “The reproduction of the human or animal form in all their varieties was a matter of disgrace at the time of the Prophet and the beginnings of Islam. It is possible that scholars have exaggerated the various aspects of this aversion by quoting Traditions attributed to the Prophet which underline the categorical nature of the ban.” Then he adds that “. . . . he is not of the opinion that this ban constitutes an essential precept of Muslim belief, but rather that it is justified because its aim is to keep Muslims from the worship of idols. It is inadmissible that the ban be absolute from the day when Muslims left the phase of idolatry far behind, when their power became paramount, and when pictures and photographs came to have undeniable scientific advantages.”

Art and human nature

If now we turn our attention towards nature and trace the purposes of God in His creatures, we note that God, who created man, also caused art to “run in his veins”, and thus every man is a potential artist. There is no need for any proof of this. We have only to refer back in history to the primitive age to see that the cave-man covered the walls of grottoes with graffiti and statues. What is more, this species of man had neither religion nor guiding principles and made no distinction between what is morally right or morally wrong. But let us pass on from the cave-men to consider the primitive beings of our own times — the children. We notice that they quite spontaneously make use of pictures and drawings to express their sensations and impressions. It is the only means of expression available to them, as they have not yet reached the age when they can use their tongues to express themselves. The fine arts are essentially a means for the expression of human sentiments and feelings, which have their beginnings in the consciousness of man, and which he exteriorises in the form of poetry, prose, music, dance or the graphic arts.

Plastic arts are to non-Arabs Muslims a means of self-expression

However, if we consider the Islamic world as a whole, we see clearly that Islam was revealed not to one race or one people or one special community, nor at any one precise time, but that it was revealed to all men, living in all places at all times, without any exception. Let us also remember that the number of Muslims living in the world at the present time has reached about 300 million, and that among these there are about 80 million Arabs, only a part of whom live in the Arabian Peninsula. These considerations will allow us to form an opinion supporting the argument of those who believe that the artistic portrayal of the human and animal figure is permitted in Islam, and who consider that the aversion to this practice was limited to the early days. The reasons for this conclusion are given below.

Continued on page 19

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15
“BATIK” CLOTH OF INDONESIA

A Speciality of Java

Meaning of the word “Batik”

Batik cloth is a speciality of Java. Beautiful and intricate designs are printed on the cloth by a traditional method of waxing and dyeing each successive stage of the pattern until the whole is completed in all its varied colours. Originally found in Java alone, the use of Batik cloth has spread to all parts of Indonesia, although its manufacture is still carried on only in Java. Used in former times for Javanese traditional costume, today Western dress, both for men and women, and household goods and decorations are made from batik as well.

This pattern is called "Tjuwiri"

In High Javanese the word for batik is seratan, which means “written” or “drawn”, but which also has the connotation of being done by hand. The word batik itself is derived from the word titik or tik, meaning “a little bit” or “a drop”.

The batik motifs are derived partly from primitive symbolic decorations, but they have been much influenced by Indian, Chinese and Arabic decorative art. The present-day patterns are a development of these earlier influences, modified and embellished according to time and custom. Each pattern bears a name, and certain patterns are used only for special occasions, such as weddings, whilst some are peculiar to one district alone.

It is known that in the 13th century batik was the monopoly of the Javanese Sultans and their families, but later its use and manufacture spread amongst the whole of the nobility, and finally to all the people. Up to the 13th century the colours used were blue, from indigo, and white, but about that time red and yellow were added, and in the 17th century a red-brown colour, from the soga plant, was discovered. Soon other colours were added, such as a brown extracted from the bark of the Morinda Citrifolia, and a yellow from the Curcuma Domestica. All these colours, naturally, were vegetable extracts.

Several modern developments have contributed to the rapid advancement of the batik industry in Java. First was the manufacture of white cambric, which enabled greater quantities of batik cloth to be produced. A second improvement was the invention of a stamping instrument, which to some extent has replaced the original handwritten method, although the latter is still used and hand-written batiks are much treasured. Finally, the introduction of chemical dyestuffs has also helped to modernize the batik industry.

Manufacture

First the cloth is cut into the required lengths, and washed to cleanse it of all starch and dressing which might prevent the dye from penetrating the threads. Then it must be given a light starch in order to keep the wax on the surface during the batik process, and to facilitate the process of dissolving or dropping-off the wax. The cloth is then dried and beaten until it is smooth and fine, to make it ready for printing.

The old method of drawing the pattern, and that still used for the most expensive batiks, is for it to be drawn in wax on the material by hand, using an instrument called a “tjanting”, consisting of a copper bowl and nib with a wooden handle. Copper is used since it retains the heat of the boiling wax for a long period. There are different sorts of tjanting used for different types of figures — dots, lines, double lines, etc. The writer works with the material spread over a frame, with a bowl of boiling wax on a small fire by her side, into which she dips the tjanting. A written batik takes from three to six months to manufacture, and the writing is usually done by women. The outlines of the figures are smeared with wax, and the spaces to be omitted from the dyeing are filled with wax on both sides of the material. Within the outline ornamentation is sketched, generally known as “isen”, often in the form of conventionalised fruit and flowers.

The quicker method, taking in all about one month, is for the pattern to be printed on the material by means of a copper stamp called a “tjanting tjak”. The cloth is spread over a kapok-filled mattress for the stamping process. Various stamps are used for each batik, a different one for each stage of the pattern.

When the pattern has been written on both sides of the cloth it is sent to the men-workers for the first dyeing. The first colour to be given is always blue, the shade and intensity varying according to the way in which the colour is applied. These parts are then covered with a thick layer of wax. To give a special marbled effect on the parts already dyed, the thick covering of wax may be cracked in various places so that the new dye may penetrate.
The dyeing is completed in successive stages, the parts not being dyed at each stage are covered with wax, which is later scraped or dissolved off. Two kinds of wax are used, one soft and easily erasable, and the other adhesive and hard, and capable of withstanding the heat of the black and brown dyeing. The wax is usually a combination of different waxes, blended according to the temperature the wax is required to withstand during the dyeing process. Hence the chief consideration in mixing the wax is the melting point required of it.

The dyestuffs vary according to the area. In the north of Java chemical colouring alone can be used; in southern Java a combination of chemical and vegetable dyes; in the Banjumas, Jogjakarta and Ponorogo regions only vegetable dyes are employed. The actual dyeing process is complicated. Such chemicals as caustic soda, salt, naphthol, lime and ferrosulphate are used to get the desired effect, either in combination with the dye or as a wash after the cloth has been dyed. A solution of lime, for instance, is often used to x the colour of a dye to prevent fading. A particular shade, known as the Soga Djawa, requires twenty to thirty dyeings to get the correct shade, and many colours require considerable skill on the part of the workers to achieve.

Motifs

Batik decorating consists of main frames, giving the appropriate decorative pattern, and illustrative frames, embellishing the main pattern. Patterns may be either “definite” in form (repeated at set intervals over material); “free” (with no fixed repetition); or “unlimited” (continuous). The geometrical patterns generally show Indonesian influence, whilst the free forms are based on Hindu, and sometimes Chinese, designs.

Often the batik has a border, known as the “kepala”, of different design from the main motif. A favourite motif for such a border is the “tumpal”, which consists of one or more rows of isosceles triangles, filled in with other designs such as plants and spirals.

One of the best-known patterns is the “parang russak”, which occurs in a variety of forms. Formerly, this motif is only permitted on the clothing worn by the nobility. In form and slightly overlapping. “Kawung” is the name of the sugar palm tree in the Sundanese (West Java) language, and possibly the name derives from the pattern’s similarity to a cross-section of the fruit, showing the seeds. Related to the “kawung” motif is the “djamprang” pattern, which basically consists of a row of circles, touching but not overlapping. The circles are filled in with rosettes and other designs.

The motif of the Garuda bird, from Hindu mythology, is very often to be found on batik. Sometimes the entire bird is represented, but often it is only the wings, the wings and the tail, or just one wing. The wing motif is called “lar”, and the tail “sawat”, and these designs are often used on men’s court dress in Jogjakarta and Surakarta.

Another design often employed is that of the mountain. Mountains hold a special place in the early religions of Indonesia, and even today Mount Agung in Bali and the Tengger Mountains in Java are held to be sacred. A stylized version of a mountain is used in batik design. The rock motif is the one which is found in the batik art of Tjirebon, and a practically identical pattern also represents clouds, the chief difference lying in the fact that the rocks are presented vertically on the material whilst the clouds are horizontal. Another symbolic design is the flame, representing magical powers. It is used particularly for border decoration, and is often stylised as a reversed question mark.

This is a traditional art which is still very much alive today, and is encouraged by a Batik Laboratory in Jogjakarta, which runs courses in the basic techniques and knowledge of batik.
JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM —
WHAT UNITES THEM AND WHAT SEPARATES THEM?

By Maryam Jameelah

Truth, according to the Holy Qur'an, is universal and eternal. If truth is one, then religion must also be one. The Holy Qur'an teaches that an all-Merciful God has sent His prophets to reveal His Divine message to every people and called upon them to follow the path of righteousness. Therefore all the great religions possessing sacred scripture are united in regard to certain fundamental spiritual values. According to the Holy Qur'an, the discrepancies between them arise from a thorough confusion of the originally Divinely revealed truth with fallible human interpretation of that truth. Therefore it is obligatory on Muslims to respect truth wherever found, while at the same time to combat vigorously and fearlessly erroneous ideas which lead to evil.

Although by analogy the adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the philosophy taught by Confucius, may rightfully claim their religions as originally Divinely revealed, it is the Jews and Christians who are specifically referred to in the Holy Qur'an as “The People of the Book.” Since they have always been most crucially involved in Muslim history and are those with whom Muslims had most frequent dealings. Therefore it is worthwhile finding out where they agree with each other and where they differ. Enduring respect and understanding of sister faiths is held essential by the Qur'an for Muslims. I detail below a brief outline of some essential characteristics of Judaism and Christianity from the Muslim point of view.

What separates Islam from Christianity

(1) From the Islamic point of view, the strict uncompromising monotheism of Judaism is ruined by its exclusive, nationalistic character. Hence the Shema, which is to Jews what the Shahadah is to Muslims, runs as follows: “Shema Yisrael, adoni alaheynu adoni achud!” or “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!” Thus it is understandable why this nationalistic feeling is fundamental to the Jewish creed. With very rare exceptions, a non-Jew almost never adopts Judaism unless because of marriage. Like the Hindu religion, Judaism is regarded by its adherents as a family inheritance. The Jews intend to remain a small, but select, minority in the world and do not try to propagate their faith to non-Jews, because converts are not welcome.

(2) Jewish doctrine regards belief in the Hereafter as wholly irrelevant to Orthodoxy. Indeed one searches in vain throughout the hundreds of pages comprising the Old Testament for any clear, unambiguous reference to the Day of Judgment or reward and punishment in the after-life. Jewish doctrine believes in the collective immortality of the Jewish people and puts almost no emphasis upon individual salvation. Instead, prosperity in Palestine as God’s promised land for His chosen people is substituted. Although many great Rabbis in the Talmud and later definitely expressed their belief in the Hereafter, they spoke in their personal capacity only, and never regarded it as essential Jewish doctrine.

(3) Because of its nationalistic character, one who is born a Jew is always considered a Jew, both by Jews and Gentiles, even should he reject all Jewish religious beliefs including belief in God, and renounce all Jewish religious observances. Thus we find the phenomena of referring with keenest pride to, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein’s contribution to human advancement as part of the Jewish heritage.

(4) Jewish religious observances revolve largely around the Sabbath, on which every Saturday from sunrise to sunset must be devoted entirely to worship, and manual work, even the lighting of a stove or the switching on of a light, is absolutely prohibited. In the Old Testament the Mosaic Law decreed death as the penalty for anyone who dared perform work on the Sabbath. This conception of the Sabbath is wholly foreign to Islamic teaching.

(5) While the consumption of alcoholic beverages is regarded by Islam as one of the most serious social crimes deserving of very harsh punishment, Judaism regards the moderate use of wine as one of the good things in life. When a pious Jew takes a glass of wine, he recites reverently: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Who has given us to drink of the fruit of Thy vine”. Indeed Judaism regards the moderate use of alcoholic beverages as a positive good, and thus wine is an important part in many Jewish religious ceremonies.
(6) *Kiddush Ha-Shem* to the pious Jew is a rough equivalent of what *Jihad* means to Muslims. *Kiddush Ha-Shem* means literally in Hebrew “The Sanctification of the Name of God,” which regards suicide and the killing of one’s wife and children in times of calamity to keep them from falling into sin as the noblest act of martyrdom. Jewish literature, both in Hebrew and Yiddish, is filled with references to and unstinted praise of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*. This is entirely alien to Islamic teachings which prohibit suicide under any circumstance.

**CHRISTIANITY**

**What unites Islam and Christianity**

(1) The Christian wholeheartedly concurs with the Muslim that God is a universal God concerned with the well-being of the entire human race and not just “His Special Chosen People”. God’s truth, according to Christianity, is a universal truth applicable equally to all times, and all places. Therefore, the Christian, like the Muslim, seeks to win as many converts to the faith as possible and propagate it in every part of the world.

(2) Christianity and Islam are in complete agreement that belief in reward and punishment in the Hereafter is the very essence of religion, and indeed the source of all higher moral and spiritual values, and that rejection of the crucial importance of the after-life renders all other religious beliefs meaningless.

**What separates Islam and Christianity**

(1) Islamic teachings regard the Christian dogma of the Trinity as a definite compromise of monotheism with polytheism. The Christian anthropomorphic conception of God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost has from its inception been propagated by the utmost encouragement of the use of religious statues and paintings, particularly by the Roman Catholic Church.

(2) On the question that Orthodox Christian dogma, both Catholic and Protestant, demand the acceptance of Jesus Christ as God in the form of man who by His crucifixion atoned for the sins of all mankind or be doomed to eternal Hell-fire. Christianity and Islam are irreconcilable.

(3) In Muslim eyes, the greatest defect of the Christian religion is its lack of any authentic Divine Scripture. The Mus'lim regards the Gospels as merely four of the many apocryphic biographies written about Jesus Christ in a language utterly foreign to him (Greek), and not canonized until centuries after his death. As for the Epistles, the Muslim cannot understand why St. Paul’s letters, which were merely his own instructions to the various Churches in the Roman Empire, should be inserted as divinely inspired.

(4) The Muslim cannot help but regard the Christian religion as hopelessly corrupted by Greek, Roman and Persian paganism from the very beginning. These pagan influences are not regarded by Christians as extraneous innovations to be condemned and combated, but as essential dogma and practice.

(5) The Muslims cannot but frown upon the Christian’s readiness to accept fallible human authority as infallible even on those questions which concern most fundamental doctrine. Hence the priestly hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and the prevailing view fashionable among Protestants nowadays that since every man is his own priest, we are absolutely free to believe and do whatever we want. Thus Muslims find that some so-called “liberal” Protestant Churches have taken the liberty to renounce the doctrine of Hell and some few, like the Unitarians, believe in the Hereafter altogether.

(6) The bland acceptance of the schisms within Christendom which run so deep that Eastern Catholics, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, with its numerous subdivisions of splinter sects, amount to separate religions confronting each other as hostile rivals. Each of the three main branches of Christianity possesses its own authorized version of Scripture unacceptable to the others, and entirely separate mutually exclusive churches, i.e., a Roman Catholic, for example, is prohibited to offer his prayers in a Protestant church, and should he do so, the priest will condemn this as a mortal sin. Likewise Protestant missionaries are sent to Roman Catholic countries and vice versa to convert, just as they would convert non-Christians.

(7) Both the Muslim and the Jew unanimously condemn Christian dogma for the rejection of Divine Law as no longer necessary because Paul decided to replace the “Law” with “Love”. This substitution of the “Law” with “Love” is utterly incomprehensible to either the Jewish or Muslim mentality, which regards faith as meaningless without its tangible expression, and voluntary obedience to God’s commands in every detail of his life as indispensable proof of one’s devotion to Him.

In conclusion, the attitude of a Muslim towards “The People of the Book” is that while he conforms to the teachings of the Holy Qur’an which instruct him to shun association with them in evil deeds, he should never refrain from co-operating with them in any righteous cause.

**PICTORIAL ART IN ISLAM—Continued from page 15**

There are approximately 420 million non-Arab Muslims belonging to communities, civilizations and races differing profoundly from the Arab race of not only the Arabs of today but also those of the time of the Prophet. The Muslims of the Far East number some 200 million, among whom are 90 million Indonesians and 50 million Chinese. The remainder of these are to be found in the Philippines, Burma and other islands of the East Indies. An interesting point — the Malaysian Constitution stipulates that Islam is the official religion of the State. Islam spread to the Far East towards the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century A.H. (9th-10th centuries C.E.).

In the Hindu-Aryan bloc there are 200 million Muslims, of which 70 million are in Pakistan and the rest divided between India, Iran, Tibet, Turkestan and Turkey. In Europe it is reckoned that there are 70 million, of whom 30 million are in Russia, particularly in the Balkan peninsula and the south of the continent. In the two Americas, Muslims number some 20 million, and in Africa 50 million, of which 23 million are in Nigeria and the east and south of the continent.

If we study the history and the degree of civilization of these peoples, if we get a fairly accurate idea of the significance of their customs, traditions and community conditions, we will find that the fine arts, especially the plastic arts (and painting in particular) were for them a means of attaining knowledge and learning, and indicated the level of their respective civilizations. With some people they were a means of self-expression. If we take all these facts into account and judge them at their true value, we cannot accuse Islam of having failed to adapt its laws to suit all periods of time and all geographical milieux.

*JANUARY 1966* 19
THE HIJRAH CALENDAR — L
DURING THE LIFETIME OF

BY THE NAWAB MI

SOME APPosite QUERIES

One of the great questions which requires attention of the Muslim world is the present system of the Hijrah Calendar.

King Faysal of Su’udi Arabia is a very enlightened monarch and deserves congratulations of the entire Muslim public for proposing to hold a conference of the Muslims of the world on the occasion of the coming Hajj.

At this meeting Muslims should consider all the vital questions which affect the well-being of Muslims as a whole, as no other body is competent to take any decision on questions which are important and have a great bearing on the social and religious life of the Muslims of the world.

It is a fact that the pre-Islamic Arabs had no calendar of their own, though they had twelve lunar months, each one of them starting from the appearance of the crescent. The year was calculated from some important event like the “Year of the Elephant” or some other event.

The Jews have also a lunar calendar like the Hindus of India, and in order to bring the seasons to coincide with the solar system they add one month to the twelve months after three years. The lunar year was similarly treated by the Arabs, who added another month after three years, so that the Hajj period fluctuated 11 days every year and came back to the same season after three years. The lunar year is of 354 days while the solar year is of 365 days 6 hours 27 minutes.

Thus the Hajj always fell during the same season like Easter Day of the Christians, or the Hindu festivals of Holl and Dewali, with a fluctuation of one month.

The Hindus, Jews and Christians add the thirteenth month under a regular system which cannot be changed at the whims of anyone, however influential, but the Quraysh, who had absolute power in Arabia and were not a learned people, used their power arbitrarily, which affected the “four sacred months” when there could be no war in the whole of Arabia. These months were Rajab, Dhu ‘l-Qa’dah, Dhu ‘l-Hijjah and Muharram.

The last Hajj which the Prophet performed fell on the 17th February of the solar month of 632 C.E., according to the calculations made by some learned chroniclers. This means that on 17th February it was 10th or 9th of Dhu ‘l-Hijjah, and this lunar month Dhu ‘l-Hijjah fluctuated between February or some portion of March like Easter, which is always between March and April. This shows the Arab anxiety to keep the Hajj in the time of moderate climate. By this calculation Ramadan fell between 15 October and 15 November, when the climate is moderate. During moderate climate spiritual powers are high and the Qur’an was revealed during this month of the moderate climate, as borne out by the fact that the Prophet on his return from Mount Hira’ known as “Mount of Light” asked his wife, Khadijah, to cover him with a blanket as he was shivering from excitement caused by the revelation.

The Prophet did not make any change in the system of months in spite of the conquest of Mecca two years before the last Hajj.

Abu Bakr Siddiq (d. 634 C.E.) also did not make any change. During the fifth or sixth year of the Caliphate of ‘Umar (d. 644 C.E.) Khazraj (tribute money) came which was entered in the treasury books as for Sha’baan. This struck the imagination of ‘Umar and he remarked “which Sha’baan — this year’s or last year’s?” He was also pressed by Abu Moosa al-Ash’ari and others to write dates and y be written, but where was the year of the cal

‘Umar convened a meeting in order to not scientists and only a few were literate, importance of which was felt by everybody scientists of ability, but somehow this was ne

Some Companions of the Prophet Romans be adopted, while others prefer the consensus of opinion was against adop against the solar system or the system of calendar should start from the Hijrah Hijrah (Migration of the Prophet) took pl third month of the Arab year, and it press that the calendar should start from the y Muharram as usual.

‘Umar, who was a very wise man but calculating month of the third year without the Ramadhan about which there is a definite to observe the fast from daybreak to sunset.

In the time of the Prophet the length of hours, or a little more. But the elimination season of Ramadhan but also the season on the health of the pilgrims who come from I believe, should be treated as paramount observed during the hot weather hundreds from Muzdalifah because they could not b. Such was not the case in the time of the Pro

The effect of the innovations on Ramadhan

Take the case of Ramadhan falling on the sun rises at 3.30 a.m., but the darkness the time when one has to stop eating. This means a fast of 19½ hours out of the three days in the month of June when put a fast of nearly four days at a stretch in that

Islam is a world religion and not or has been made most difficult in some case Holy Qur’an that He has not intended t Muslims. The Hijrah calendar, as it mark founded by ‘Umar the Great with the full dropped altogether, though no religious was made after the Prophet by the Muslim the difficulty which was felt by ‘Umar in

A FEW QUESTIONS SUGGESTED BY THE ABOVI

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
NI-SOLAR OR PURELY LUNAR
THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

AMMAD YAMIN KHAN

FOR MUSLIM SCHOLARS

A month’s letters. The date of the month could

establish a calendar. The Arabs of Medina were

question of introducing a new calendar, the

was a job which should have been entrusted to

Muhammad suggested that the calendar of the

Arabian Persian calendar, both of which are solar.

g calendars which were very old, but was not

ing the thirteenth month after every three years,

ing the calendar from an event connected with

ed: 1) the date of the birth of the Prophet,

the date of the Hijrah. It was agreed that the

ar. Then came the question of the month. The

in the month of Rabi ‘l-awwal, which is the

a difficulty. But after discussion it was decided

of the Hijrah but months should begin from

as not a scientist, left out the thirteenth inter-

zing its effect on the season of the Hajj, and

the fasting day used to be approximately twelve

the intercalating month had upset not only the

the Hajj. The Hajj period is most important for

over the world. The question of their health,

elved that during the Hajj when it is the

pilgrims collapse at Mina after their return

the strain. Sometimes cholera also breaks out.

Muhammad.

and the Hajj was very glaring.

at the month of June. In London, for instance,

ins to disappear a little after 1 a.m., which is

ets at 8.30 p.m., when the fast can be broken.

ours. In Scandinavia the sun does not set for

g to see the midnight sun. This means

ined to Arabia and the observance of its tenets

and impossible in others. But God says in the

make the religion of Islam “a difficulty” for

a turning-point in the Muslim history and was

prowal of the Muslims of the time, cannot be

ecity, strictly speaking, is attached to it as it

public to serve a particular purpose of removing

ing accounts of the public treasury.

‘Umar did not live long after the establishment of the era to experience the evil effects

of the elimination of the intercalating month. ‘Umar possessed a master mind and would

have certainly changed the calendar in order to bring it to coincide with the solar system if

he had experienced the Hajj falling in the hot weather, taking toll of Muslim lives of those

who gather together in Mecca to perform one of the principles of Islam ordained by God.

For practical purposes the Hijrah Calendar has given place for accounting to the solar

calendar which was made in the time of Julius Caesar long before the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Christians, who still observe the date of the crucifixion by lunar months at Easter,

have adopted the Julian Calendar for their secular purposes and count from a supposed year

of the birth of Jesus Christ, for which there is no definite proof.

In Muslim countries like India the Hijrah Calendar was the official year, but during the reign

of the Mughul Emperor of India, Akbar the Great (d. 1605 C.E.), a difficulty was

experienced in the collection of land revenue according to the Hijrah Calendar, as the crops were sown

and harvested according to the seasons fixed for them by nature. Therefore in 988 A.H. (1580 C.E.),

which was the 25th year of his reign, a new calendar called the Fasli, starting from 1st July,

was introduced, but it was called the 25th year of the Fasli so that it may be considered to

coincide with the beginning of his reign.

As the Christian world controls the finances of the world all Muslim countries have

adopted the Christian era as their secular calendar when dealing with other countries. Pakistan

was recently obliged to start the budget year from 1 July. Iran has its own calendar, which

starts on the Naurooze (the New Year Day), based on the solar system. It is desirable that the

Hijrah Calendar should not lose its importance, which can only be possible if it is

brought to accord with the solar system as was in the Prophet’s time.

This can be done only by a representative Assembly or Conference of learned scientists of

the entire Muslim world such as is being convened by the learned King of Su‘udi Arabia

during the coming Hajj.

Another important point which this Conference should be asked to decide is to find a

way so that the ‘Id al-Fitr and the ‘Id al-Adhaa be observed throughout the world on the day

when they are celebrated in Mecca, which is the centre of the Muslim world, and should

not be left to different villages, cities or countries to celebrate them according to the visibility

of the moon in their respective places.

Pakistan has recently made some improvement by taking away this authority from the

hands of those who cling to the old antiquated method of seeing the moon in each place.

It is worth remarking that throughout the dominions of the Sultan of Turkey the first of the

month of Ramadan and the two ‘Ids were observed on the same day as in Istanbul. The

present chaos of different days in the Arab countries is a development of the poet-dismember-

ment period of the Turkish Empire.

On account of the interval of a period of ten days from the visibility of the moon at

Mecca, the whole world knows the day when the gathering and address at Mount ‘Arafat

are to take place. The ‘Id al-Adhaa should be celebrated the next day after that throughout

the world. God has taught mankind modern methods of communications, and Muslims should

benefit by them.

1 Courtesy, the Editor, The Muslim World, Karachi, Pakistan, for 29 January and 5 February

1966.
(1) The pre-Islamic Arabs followed a lunar calendar which they used to bring in line with the solar calendar by adding a thirteenth month once every three years. The times and seasons were counted by the Muslims by the then prevalent calendar from the time of the first Revelation of Mecca for thirteen years in Mecca. The verse about the Laylah al-Qadr was an early Meccan revelation. So also is Chapter 44, which mentions the Laylah Mubarakah. The Muslims, while at Mecca knew that the first revelation was on the Laylah al-Qadr in the month of Ramadhan. Is it not a fact that during those thirteen years the Laylah al-Qadr used to be sought in Ramadhan according to the lunar-solar calendar then in vogue?

(2) The verse ordaining fasting in the month of Ramadhan was revealed in the first year of the Hijrah at Medina. And did not the Muslims in the first nine years at Medina follow the same calendar of 37 months in three years in observing Ramadhan?

(3) The verses of the Qur'an criticizing the arbitrary method of the Quraysh in adding a thirteenth month every three years and declaring that there are only twelve months in a year and that it has been so since the beginning of time (9:36-37) were revealed in the month of Shawwal in the year 9 A.H. and read out by ‘All at the Pilgrimage two months later to give the widest publicity to the same. Did this verse condemn only the arbitrary method by which the Quraysh were adding the thirteenth month without any method? Or was it a condemnation of the procedure of bringing the lunar calendar into line with the solar calendar by adding a month once in every three years? The Qur'an 9:36 says that twelve months in a year had always been the correct count from the beginning of time. Has there been any proof of twelve lunar months of 354 days being regarded as a year by any Prophet before Islam? Of course there were always twelve months in a solar year. And there was the lunar count which was made to synchronize with the solar year by intercalating a month once in every three years; 354 days forming a year was something which never existed prior to Islam.

(4) Assuming that after the revelation of the above-referred to verses in 9 A.H., the Muslims began to stop adding a month in every three years because of The Qur'an 9:36, then was it not a tremendous change? Was 9 A.H. or 10 A.H. one of the intercalating years, and did the Prophet expressly forbid it? Or was it done after the lifetime of the Prophet?

(5) If the count of twelve lunar months of 354 days is correct, does it not mean that during the first nine years at Medina, fasting was observed in the wrong months? Assuming that because the verse about fasting was revealed in the first year A.H. after three years by the customary intercalation what should have been Shawwal according to the 354 days a year calendar would have been the Ramadhan in Medina according to the calendar in vogue and another three years later what would have been Dhu ‘l-Qa‘dah according to our present method would have been the Ramadhan of Muslims in Medina? As Ramadhan was a must of Islam, if intercalating of months were to be stopped, it should have been stopped at the time the verse about Ramadhan came. It was not done. Why?

(6) What are the historical facts available about the meeting of the Companions of the Prophet in which ‘Umar fixed the starting-point of the Calendar from the Hijrah? When they counted the years, did they take into account years of 354 days only? And why did they start from Muharram while the Hijrah had taken place in Rabi’ al-awwal? Or is it because that by looking back in retrospect with the measure of 354 days a year, and because they had for nine years followed the intercalated calendar, what they regarded as Rabi’ al-awwal at the time of the Hijrah was really Muharram according to the yardstick of the 354 days calendar? At any rate, is it not evident that the decision of fixing the calendar and the 354 days yardstick was not made by the Prophet himself under Revelation, but by the Council of the Companions after the lifetime of the Prophet?

ANCIENT ARAB COINS DISCOVERED IN NORTH-WEST CHINA

By Yen Chi

Chinese peasants have excavated three ancient Arab coins of gold in north-west China.

They are described by Hsai Nai, Director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in a recent issue of Kao Ku, the Chinese archaeological monthly.

The earliest coin was minted in 702 C.E. during the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik of the Umayyad dynasty, the next in 718 C.E. and the last in 746 C.E. during the reign of the last caliph of that dynasty.

They are the first coins of the Umayyad dynasty and the earliest Arab coins ever discovered in China.

These coins, 0.1 cm. thick, with a diameter from 1.9 to 2 cm. and weighing 4.2 or 4.3 gm., are inscribed in the Kufic script on both sides with quotations from the Qur’ān, the designation “dinar” and the dates of minting, according to the Muslim system of reckoning.

The coins were unearthed in April 1964 in a Tang dynasty (618-907 C.E.) tomb on the outskirts of Sian, capital of Shensi Province in north-west China. The structure of the tomb and other objects unearthed suggests that the tomb dates from the middle or late Tang dynasty.

Historical records show that friendly contacts between China and the Arab world became frequent in the Tang dynasty. The first Arab embassy, sent by the Caliph ‘Uthman, was received at Changan (now Sian) by the Emperor Kao Tsung of the Tang dynasty in 651 C.E.

In the following 150 years no less than 36 Arab embassies and missions from Caliphs Abu l’Abbas, Abu Dja’far and Harun al-Rashid, reached the Tang capital. They were known as envoys from “Ta Shih”.

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
MODERN POETRY AND LITERATURE IN EGYPT

By Muhammad Fahmi

“We can say that novels and story writing are now as important in modern Arabic culture as in European, although the duration of this new phenomenon is no more than fifty years. Radio and television, the theatre and cinema, and the press, are greedy consumers of this kind of literature. Some of the story writers of this generation like Yusuf al-Siba’i and Ihsan ‘Abd al-Quddus enjoy immense popularity and thousands of readers because of a certain erotic element in their work, but they lack the higher quality of the others who are dealing with social and psychological problems.”

Mahmud Samy al-Barudi’s share in starting the neo-classical movement in Egypt in the latter half of the 19th century

If we examine all aspects of modern poetry and literature in Egypt we find that the development of these two cultural activities is intimately associated with the social and political events that have happened in the country since the middle of the nineteenth century. The renaissance began to achieve its fruits as a result of the expeditions of students from Egypt to Europe, and especially to France, since the days of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, the founder of the dynasty which ruled in Egypt till recently. The eminent figure who can be considered as marking the commencement of the modern movement in poetry was Mahmud Samy al-Barudi, who served first with distinction as a general in the Army and became afterwards the Minister of War. In the main, it was the officers who assimilated foreign education and culture. Among the officers were to be found engineers, doctors, writers, poets and directors of government departments in the different fields of administration. Owing to the early start of the renaissance in Egypt this country achieved miracles in the Near East since the days of Muhammad ‘Ali. The entire country was mobilised for these activities and mainly for the wars which Egypt fought in the different countries in that area: the war in the Sudan, that in Syria, that in Greece, another in Su‘udi Arabia, and even the war in Turkey where the Egyptian troops came close to knocking on the doors of the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1840 the Treaty of Constantinople put a stop to all these military activities. The energies which had been generated in the camp of battle had to seek other means of expression; literature and poetry formed one of these outlets. Mahmud Samy al-Barudi published a book which was the key influence in the revival of poetry in Egypt and the Arab world. The renaissance began with the resurrection of the masterpieces of classical Arabic literature, and it was precisely that book of al-Barudi which contained the best selection of ancient Arabic poetry. But he himself was also a great poet in his own right. We can call his poems as well as the renaissance which started with him the neo-classical movement. Not long afterwards, however, there took place the British military occupation following the defeat of the Egyptian forces in 1882. Although the British occupation affected the development of Egypt in regard to politics and the industrialization of the country which had begun with Muhammad ‘Ali, it left the field of culture quite free. Egypt became a cultural centre in the area; many intellectuals from the Arab countries which were all occupied by the Ottoman Turks fled to Egypt and sought refuge there. Moreover, the agriculture and irrigation system which Muhammad ‘Ali had successfully begun continued to develop during the British occupation. The economy, which had been in difficulties during the last days of Isma’il Pasha, began to flourish again. Many families became rich. This prosperity in the economic field contributed to development in the social life, which naturally gave its fruits in the culture of the country.

The most famous figure in the Arab literary world. Professor Dr. Taha Hussayn, now 77 years old

Women in Arab countries enter social activities

The Egyptian leaders and thinkers organized their resistance against the British occupation on cultural and political bases. The press played a very important role. Most of the writers for the press were poets or men of letters or
famous orators. The wide diffusion thereby gained by these authors for their works resulted in considerable development in literature.

As woman had not yet entered into social activities there was no space in literature for novels or short stories. Writers were limited to poetry and politics. As Arabic literature had no traditional theatre, an incipient theatre had to begin by adopting French pieces for the theatre and transforming them to accord with an Arab taste and mentality. As the measures of classical Arabic poetry are fundamentally musical, a musical theatre emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of the pieces were performed by singers (the most celebrated being Salamah Hijazi) with poetry forming the basis. The influence of the works of Molière on the nascent Egyptian theatre cannot easily be over-estimated. The changes in society were very deep towards the end of the nineteenth century and European civilization, which had been suspect before, was now extensively and easily adopted not only by the upper classes but by the majority. As woman plays a very important role in European society this factor had consequently to affect modern activities in Egypt. An eminent judge named Qaasim in Amin was the first to champion the rights of women in the first decade of the twentieth century. He was bitterly opposed by the conservatives, but Qaasim Amin was very courageous and continued his support in the face of unimaginable difficulties. After about twenty years his efforts bore fruit; for the first time women participated in social activities in an Arab country.

Sukaynah, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad's nephew

It is true to say, however, that the obstacles against women participating in social or cultural activities arose neither from Arab or Islamic traditions. They were due to Turkish influences rather than Arab. In the golden age of Islam women enjoyed a prominent place in Arabic literature, so that in the first century of the Hijrah we find the names of women famous as singers, poets, and critics. One thousand years before modern European civilization, Arab and Islamic history furnishes us with the names of women who, exactly as in 17th and 18th century France, ran salons where poets, writers and men of letters would meet in order to discuss poetry, criticize contemporary literary developments and listen to music. Sukaynah, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad's nephew, received at her house in Medina poets and singers; these events at her home were important manifestations of the contemporary culture. Sukaynah herself was a critic of refined taste in poetry. That which happened in Medina no more than fifty years after the death of Muhammad happened also in Baghdad in the second century of Islam and also in Spain during the Islamic occupation. Sisters of kings and ladies from royal families opened the doors of their houses to the poets and men of letters and composers; many of these women were themselves poets and critics. In Spain the name of Walladah, the daughter of the Imam Caliph Mustakfi, is very well known in Arabic literature by virtue of her association with Ibn Zaydun, the greatest poet in Hispanic-Arab literature. In many important sources, particularly al-Azhani of al-Isfahani and the Dhakhirah of Ibn Bassam, we find vivid accounts of all these activities.

The leaders of the neo-classical school

Shaouy

Returning, however, to the Egyptian scene, we find that after al-Barudi came Sabry, Shaouy and Hafez Ibrahim, all belonging to the neo-classical school. Shaouy was foremost in the creation of this school and his contribution was recognized in 1927 in a great ceremony in Cairo where delegates elected from amongst poets in different Arab countries crowned him Prince of Arab Poets (Amir al-Shu'ara'). Shaouy was the poet laureate of the royal palace during the reign of 'Abbas II and Fu'ad, the father of King Farouk. Since his childhood he had been patronized by the Khedive Isma'il, who sent him to Europe to study in France; he returned after some years to Egypt to write his famous poems on events in the Arab and Islamic world. So great was the reputation of Shaouy that his shadow never permitted any other poet to take an important place beside him. Because of his musical talent and creative genius he was able to influence the entire Arab-speaking world. Educated in France, he profited from his French background to produce for the first time in the whole course of Arab history plays in verse; these were entitled Majnon Layla, Cleopatra, Cambyses, 'Ali bek al-kabir, 'Antarah. He chose the subjects of these plays from ancient Arab traditions and the history of Egypt during the Persian invasion, the Greek period and the end of the Mamluk epoch just before the advent of Muhammad 'Ali. These pieces enjoyed great success with the public and reinforced his reputation to such a point that it is until now still considered inassailable. Although there is at present a poet in Egypt named 'Aziz Abazah who, following the line of Shaouy in the poetical theatre, has achieved about ten pieces, most of them successful, yet Shaouy remains his ideal and master.

Khalil Matran

Amongst the thinkers and writers from the Lebanon, Syria and Iraq who took refuge in Egypt was a famous poet named Khalil Matran, more or less contemporary with Shaouy. At the same time as the neo-classical school was flourishing with the success of Shaouy, Khalil Matran began to establish the romantic school. Owing to the unassailable prestige of Shaouy the works of Matran, which began to appear toward the end of the nineteenth century, failed to produce a comparable effect on the public, notwithstanding their great intrinsic merit. After the end of the First World War a new poet and writer named al-'Aqad began for the first time to attack Shaouy and his school; in fact, a group consisting of al-'Aqad, al-Mazini and Shukry concentrated their attacks against Shaouy. These three poets and writers were deeply influenced by English literature. Shukry himself, who was considered the founder of the group, had graduated at an English university. Al-Mazini and al-'Aqad together published a book criticizing Shaouy, and his successor Matran, and the poetical tendencies to which his work had given rise. Shaouy, as the poet of the royal palace and amir al-Shu'ara', had to compose poems on important political events in the Middle East. These tours de force, which were realized in traditional classical forms, found no favour with the school represented by these three poets. They limited themselves to subjects where the feelings and emotions of the individual could find expression, a subjective art as opposed to the more public themes of Shaouy. These poets established the basis and principles of the romantic school by their reviews and discussions more than with their poetry. Yet they themselves were thoroughly saturated in the classical works of Arabic literature, and the revolution which they had attempted was realized by a group of young poets called the Apollo Group.

The Apollo Group and its influence on the development of romantic poetry

The Apollo Group is the most important phenomenon in modern Arabic poetry. It was established in 1930. The
founder of the group, Dr. Abu Shaadi, was exactly contemporary with al-'Aqqad. He published a magazine of poetry called Apollo. The young poets gathered around him and his magazine, and although it was published for only three years its role in the development of modern poetry could not have been more influential. Most of the poems published in this magazine had proved uncongenial to the taste of other editors. Dr. Abu Shaadi himself was a disciple of Khalil Matran, but the ultimate sources of the main influences upon him are to be sought in English literature and Greek mythology. Though Abu Shaadi's Poems were not of the first quality, his efforts as the founder of the group and editor of its organ were nevertheless so effective that almost all the famous poets of the generation which followed were from the Apollo Group. It gives some idea of the prestige of Shauqy when we find Dr. Abu Shaadi, although he differed radically from him, announcing Shauqy as the honorary president of Apollo. This makes no difference to the work of the group, being merely a diplomatic gesture from Abu Shaadi in order to profit from the reputation of Shauqy for his group.

Only now did romantic poetry which had begun with Matran start to flourish due to the ceaseless activity of the Apollo Group, and thus the romantic school took its place in the history of modern Arabic literature. Amongst the famous poets of Apollo could be found 'Ali Mahmud Taha, Ibrahim Naaji, Saleh Jawdat al-Sirafi, al-Shabbi, al-Tijani, Mahmud Hasan Isma'il and Muhammad Fahmi. These names comprise not only Egyptians but also votaries of the muse from other Arab countries. Many other disciples in the Arab world followed the principles laid down by the Apollo school.

A great event happened in Egypt immediately after the end of the First World War which changed all aspects of life in the country. This was the civilian revolution of 1919 against the British occupation. This revolution was the key factor which altered all forms of culture, tradition, politics, economics, poetry, theatre, novels and music in the country. In politics it resulted in the independence of Egypt, which was officially declared in February 1922, and Fu'ad as King of Egypt issued the Constitutions which allowed the formation of political parties and parliament with the consequent development in the press and works of writers and thinkers. Up till now, although Arabic prose had been changed from the classical style, it continued to be influenced by classical models. In order to achieve parity with the changes the revolution had produced in other fields the prose style then obtaining had to be freed and modernised.

Dr. Taha Husayn

The first man to attempt this modernisation of Arabic prose was Dr. Taha Husayn. This man, who is still living, is the most famous literary figure in the entire Arab world. Although blind, he never allowed this to inhibit his genius. He had been sent to France on a university mission before the First World War and there he became deeply versed in French literature and in Ancient Greek. This enabled him to introduce to the Arab world the works of Sophocles, Euripides and the Greek philosophers, as well as the masterpieces of the most famous French writers. He has published about 80 works, many of them dealing with aspects of Greek and European culture. The two most influential figures in modern Arabic literature have been he and al-'Aqqad; we find in every Arab country disciples of both of them. Al-'Aqqad, who died two years ago, was a self-made man who instructed himself in Arabic and English literature, whereas Taha Husayn, whose background was more academic than the equally famous master of the theatre, Tawfik al-Hakim. Thanks to the works of Tawfik al-Hakim the modern theatre and novel have attained a considerable standard of excellence. His first novel, entitled 'Awdah al-Ruh (Return of the Spirit), is a work which has affected and influenced all that came after it. He has published about 60 pieces for the theatre in prose; these together form the theatre of Tawfik al-Hakim, which is now considered as an independent school within modern Egyptian literature. The subjects of the works of al-Hakim began in a romantic spirit and then developed towards realism.

Mahmud Taymur and Tawfik al-Hakim

In the novel the first creation of its kind was Zaynab, by Dr. Husayn Haykal, who was an eminent political figure as well as a writer. This was a fresh start in Egyptian literature. Although Dr. Haykal did not follow it up with other works in the same genre it was considered as the technically perfect Arabic story which nevertheless follows the European scheme of story writing. After the generation represented by Haykal and Tahir Lashine, there came on the scene the famous master of the short story, Mahmud Taymur, and
Najeeb al-Mahfuz, the best novelist in Egyptian literature

Al-Hakim was followed in the field by Najeeb al-Mahfuz, who is, all things considered, the best novelist in Egyptian literature. He is influenced by the pre-Revolutionary Russian writers Dostoevski, Turgeneff, Tolstoy and Gogol. The works of Najeeb al-Mahfuz in Arabic are no less effective than those of the Russian novelists in Russian, indeed are comparable to their models in the quality alike of their inspiration and craftsmanship. His novel The Trio is a masterpiece in three volumes dealing with the history of an Egyptian family through three generations. This great work is challenging all other novelists and is still unsurpassed. He is now 55 years of age, still in the full vigour of his creative genius, and is preparing other works for publication.

Yusuf Idris

The generation that followed Mahfuz comprises young novelists and story writers, the most eminent amongst whom are Yusuf Idris. He has published some half a dozen works, novels and short stories, as well as two pieces for the theatre. The difference between this generation and the former is roughly equivalent to the difference between the generation of Dostoevski and Tolstoy and the post-revolutionary novelists in Russia. This is not to say that this group of novelists in Egypt is pursuing the same principles as in Russia, but there are some similarities in their respective points of view concerning Socialism rather than Communism. Al-Tukhi, al-Sharuni, Lotfi al-Kholi, Nu'man 'Ashar, Yusuf al-Siba'iy and Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus are the most conspicuous names in the new generation. Many of their works have been adapted to the cinema and the theatre, as in the case of Mahfuz. We can say that novels and story writing are now as important in modern Arabic culture as in European, although the duration of this new phenomenon is no more than fifty years. Radio and television, the theatre and cinema, and the press, are greedy consumers of this kind of literature. Some of the story writers of this generation like Yusuf al-Siba'iy and Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus enjoy immense popularity and thousands of readers because of a certain erotic element in their work, but they lack the higher quality of the others who are dealing with social and psychological problems.

The modern theatre

The modern theatre originated, after a fashion, one hundred years ago when the Khedive Isma'il built the Opera House in Cairo. It was designed for the celebrations for the opening of the Suez Canal. Most of the kings and queens of Europe were invited, amongst them Napoleon III and the famous Empress Eugène of France, and Queen Victoria, in addition to other monarchs from the Orient. The opera Aïda, which was composed by Verdi at the orders of the Khedive Isma'il, had its premiere at the new opera house. Many European theatrical groups and orchestras came year after year to perform in this building.

Four kinds of theatre can be distinguished. At the end of the 19th century the Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals and writers who had taken refuge in Egypt translated many plays from French and other European languages to be performed in the different theatres which at this time were being opened in Cairo. Many actors and actresses started this kind of cultural activity in Egypt, the most outstanding amongst them being George Abiad and his wife Dawlat. Egyptian upper-class society, especially in Cairo and Alexandria, showed great enthusiasm for this kind of art. Another form of theatre established in both these cities was a musical drama depending more on singing than on acting. Here the plot and action are less important than the songs, mostly settings of poems which explain the events in the plot. This phase, which occupied the first twenty-five years of the present century, had as its luminaries such names as Salamah Hijazi and Munirah al-Mahdiyyah. As we observed before, comedies by Europeans were adapted and Egyptianized for performance in certain comic theatres in Cairo and Alexandria. This kind of theatre was exceedingly popular because it accorded well with the Egyptian character as the people are fascinated by comedies. A dramatic theatre proper began in the first years of the century. The most prominent figure was the great dramatic actor Yusuf Wahby, who after training in Italy returned to Cairo to establish the Ramses Theatre. He is considered the doyen of all dramatic actors in Egypt. Thus a tradition of acting came into being, and this provided dramatists with the means of expression they required in order to establish the theatre as a valid branch of Arab art. With the establishment fifteen years ago in Cairo of a Higher Institute of Acting this ideal may now be said to have been realized.

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HOW ZIONISM THREATENED THE PEACE AT SUEZ

NEW REVELATIONS OF A PARTICIPATING STATESMAN

By Benyamin Matovu

Many of the facts presented in this article have never before been revealed. They come from an unimpeachable source—a participant in the planning of the attack on Suez in 1956. His anonymity is preserved because he is still active in his country’s affairs.

Nine full years have now passed since the nations of the world faced these momentous events brought to a head by the Anglo-French intervention after the Israeli attack on Egypt, on 29 October 1956. The Suez Crisis at the time ranked with the Berlin blockade and the Korean hostilities as the gravest threat to the peace of the world in the post-war era.

The passage of time has not only given the analyst the advantage of perspective but has provided him with a number of valuable accounts of the events. In most instances the new material has borne out the suspicion at the time that (a) there was collusion between Israel and Britain and France, and (b) that Anglo-French policy was directed primarily at the humiliation or removal of President Nasser and not simply at securing the guarantee of freedom of passage through the Suez Canal. There is nothing substantially new in this. Sophisticated observers in 1956 could see behind the propaganda façade and what happened ultimately confirmed their fears that Britain and France were moving on a collision course toward a showdown with Nasser. But what of Israel? How did she fit into all this?

Those who recall this period may well remember the expressed feeling of ambivalence in England and the United States by people who could not bring themselves to condone the flagrant Anglo-French aggression but who nevertheless managed to excuse and even, in some cases, to welcome the Israeli attack on Egypt. There was Israel—the bastion of western democracy in the Middle East—alone, outnumbered and surrounded by a host of Arab nations bent on her destruction. Soviet arms were pouring into Egypt and Syria—Egyptian-directed fedayeen marauding, slowly bleeding the tiny country to death—and then came the dramatic announcement of 24 October that a unified military command had been established between Egypt, Syria and Jordan as a prelude to crushing Israel. Now was the time for Israel to do something, before the new Soviet arms could be mastered, before the Arabs could fully co-ordinate their forces. If ever there was provocation, here it was. Israeli mobilization followed and then the strike into Sinai.

The Anglo-French intervention ensued, “allegedly to separate the combatants”. How many today recall the then typical reaction of those who believed that the British and French had done Israel a disservice by interfering? “Israel and Egypt should have been left to fight it out” went the refrain from those who believed that Israel had been robbed of a “clean victory” over the Arabs. Israel helped fortify this image by denouncing the intervention. But the image, at last, is nearing its well-deserved burial. The new material on Suez has been its undertaker.

It now can be reliably documented that Israel was the key factor in Suez—that Israel initiated the plan for Anglo-French intervention and that Britain and France would not have, and could not have, moved against Nasser without a deep Israeli penetration into Sinai. Conversely, Israel would have been incapable of the deep thrust against Nasser without the promise of Anglo-French intervention.

Israel’s road to Suez reaches back as early as 1954 when Egypt emerged as Israel’s enemy number one, through the rise to power of Gamal Nasser and his bid for Arab leadership and unity. Albert Hourani in A Vision of History has succinctly made the point:

There happened what those who had followed closely the development of the Palestine problem had feared, that it became a universal problem intruding into every political relationship in the Middle East and making it more difficult.

Israel’s policy aimed at circumscribing Nasser’s freedom of action by exposing his weakness. Significantly, Egyptian diplomatic successes were followed by Israeli military reaction bent on humiliating Nasser. The attack on Gaza in February 1955 was the reaction to Nasser’s successful negotiations with Britain over the evacuation of the Canal Zone. In November of the same year, after the conclusion of the Syrian-Egyptian defence agreement, Israeli forces smashed Syrian positions on Lake Tiberias. The Jerusalem Post subsequently declared:

We hope that the Israeli raid has convinced many Syrians that the military pact with Egypt has increased the danger to Syria instead of guaranteeing Syrian defence.

This policy of using force without the intention of settling differences between Israel and its Arab neighbours was the personal credo of David Ben-Gurion and the select group of activists within Mapai—the Government party. The retirement of Ben-Gurion at the end of 1955 did not remove him from the arena of power. Operating through his loyal and
dedicated followers in the military and in the cabinet, he was able to exert such influence that Prime Minister Sharett's sincere attempt to secure peaceful co-existence between the Arabs and Israel was undermined at almost every stage.

The Nasser regime in Cairo in its rise to power championed the cause of Arab rights in Palestine — but at that stage Nasser was under fire from extreme Arab nationalists. It was openly alleged that he had sold out to the British and Americans. The Moscow press had branded him a bourgeois reactionary. Another source of disquiet was the rumour that he was actively seeking a modus vivendi with Israel — the frontier separating the two countries had been relatively quiet and free from marauding bands ever since the overthrow of the monarchy and the ousting of Farouk. The details of Nasser's peace efforts with Israel are only now coming fully to light, hastened by the recent revelations of Maurice Ohrbach, British Member of Parliament. Ohrbach affirms that he had several meetings with Nasser at that time and that Nasser asked him to act as a go-between in an effort at breaking the circle of hatred and animosity. But the receptivity of the Israeli Prime Minister, described by Nasser as "my brother Sharett," was being undermined by the Ben-Gurion activists who had not only doggedly resisted attempts within the cabinet at following up Nasser's peace feelers but had also perpetrated, behind the back of the Prime Minister, a number of moves which must go down as classic examples in the history of the struggle for power between military and civilian authority in the modern state.

Ben-Gurion is once reputed to have said that the function of Israel's foreign ministry was to justify the actions of Israel's defence ministry. This represents an accurate description of the situation which prevailed during those years. There were two major enterprises embarked upon by the activists in frustrating Sharett's peace efforts. One was the launching of a spy operation aimed at sabotaging British and American-owned establishments in Cairo and Alexandria while making it appear the work of Egyptian extremists. Egyptian authorities uncovered the plot directed at the disruption of the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations over the withdrawal of troops from the Suez Canal base and the turning of American policy against Nasser. This was the origin of the Lavon Affair, named for the Israeli defence minister, who insisted that the operation was launched without authorization. Under pressure, Lavon resigned and was replaced by Ben-Gurion, whose return to public life presaged the eclipse of Sharett's peace policy efforts.

Eleven days after the return of Ben-Gurion two platoons of Israeli paratroops crossed the armistice line east of Gaza and, using rocket weapons unfamiliar to the Egyptians, attacked a military camp. The operation yielded 38 dead Egyptian soldiers. It came just shortly after Nasser had visited Gaza and had told his troops that there was no danger of war — that the demarcation line with Israel would not be a battlefront. For Nasser, the Gaza raid revealed more than anything else that Israel was not interested in a settlement. In Nasser's own words:

"28 February 1955 was the turning point. This disaster was the alarm bell. We at once started to examine the significance of peace and the balance of power in the area."

The subsequent events leading to the purchase of Soviet arms are well known and need not be belaboured here. Giza revealed not only the thrust of Israeli policy — the end of the Sharett peace initiative — but the inferiority of Egyptian weaponry to Israel's. What is not generally known is that the immediate antecedent of the Gaza raid was a secret arms agreement between Israel and France in late 1954 which was the outcome of lengthy negotiations between the French ministry of defence and their Israeli counterpart. These secret discussions were opposed by the Quai d'Orsay (French foreign ministry) because it was feared that supplying up-to-date arms to Israel would force the Arabs to turn to the only remaining possible supplier — the Soviet Union. But the military could think of only one thing — the French Army fighting the Arab liberation movement in North Africa. If handled correctly Israel might be encouraged to take care of Nasser which — so the French believed — would decapitate the nationalist rebellion in North Africa. The activists in Israel needed no encouragement. Ben-Gurion very early had shown where his sympathies lay. On three separate occasions in 1952 the Arabs at the United Nations asked Israel to support a call for discussions on Tunisia. Israel, taking the side of France, refused.

By June 1955 the first serious discussions of preventive war by Israel with the active support of France were undertaken. Behind the backs of their foreign ministries the military of both countries visited, formulated plans and concluded agreements involving supply of the latest French tanks and jet fighters to Israel. All this took place months before the purchase of Soviet arms by Egypt. It explains the urgency of Nasser's plea for arms from the West for protection against a better-armed and aggressive Israel. Britain and the United States stood by the weapons limitation clauses of the Tri-Partite Treaty for the Middle East — unaware (until much later) that the third partner to the agreement (France) was supplying munitions to Israel.

By the autumn of 1955 the development of the Algerian rebellion had led French foreign policy to move closer to that of their defence ministry — now well up to its neck in league with the Israelis. Events in Beirut meanwhile were moving swiftly to the crisis stage. The Soviet arms agreement announced by Nasser in September had broken the West's monopolistic position as arms supplier to the Middle East and confirmed that the area had become the newest arena of the Cold War. Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden, with American support, decided a peace offensive must be waged to arrest a rapidly deteriorating situation. He chose the traditional Guildhall speech in November for a policy statement aimed at resolving the differences between Israel and the Arabs. Eden called for compromise on the conflicting territorial claims by an adjustment of boundaries. His speech was well received in Cairo but Israel, and Zionists in the West, protested vehemently. As a result Eden abandoned the move, satisfied at least that his efforts had improved Anglo-Egyptian relations. But the brief honeymoon with Nasser yielded to misunderstanding and foundered on Britain's attempt to bring Jordan into the Baghdad Pact.

Early in 1956 France agreed to supply arms not only for Israel's defence but for a preventive war against Nasser. By March, after the dismissal of Gliubb Pasha by King Hussein and the riots in Bahrain against Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd (both events blamed on Nasser), the Egyptian leader became Britain's target for humiliation or removal. Action was pressed on Eden lest Britain be ejected from the Middle East.
Israel was the key element. In early April the London correspondent of the New York Times reported:

"This seems extreme... But in Whitehall, the assumption is that if Nasser is encouraged, he will spoil the later Minister Eden and Macmillan's plans to stop the oil supplies... It is symptomatic that more attention is being paid now to a war arising from Arab ambitions than from a preventive campaign by Israel."

Britain's policy was rapidly swinging to a point 180 degrees from that enunciated at the Guildhall. Meanwhile in Israel the resignation of Sharret as foreign minister in June allowed for full ideological harmony between Israel's defence and foreign ministries and total commitment to activism.

The early weeks of the Suez Crisis, after the nationalization of the Canal company by Nasser on 26 July, saw Britain and France frustrated in their attempt to humble Nasser. The much-flaunted French military preparations were directed at an invasion of Egypt after the anticipated breakthrough in the functioning of the Canal. The old Canal company had connived at disrupting traffic by withdrawing their pilots, but Nasser surprised all by maintaining the flow of ships through the waterway. A new pretext had to be found. Fearful that her reputation with the Arabs would be compromised, Britain, almost to the very end, resisted the temptation to join with the French in urging Israel on. But Eden was under strong pressure from within the Tory party not to let Nasser off the hook.

Israel nevertheless forced the pace. For some time a plan had been on the drawing-boards for a large-scale Israeli raid but with the limited object of destroying the Egyptian jedaiveen bases near Gaza. But this would hardly have provided the pretext for Anglo-French intervention. It was Israel who proposed the expansion of the assault to include a deep thrust into Sinai — apparently aimed at the Canal.

The French first discussed this possibility with the British during their meetings in Paris at the end of September. Foreign Secretary Lloyd opposed the idea but Eden was interested and asked for time to consider. The British prime minister was irrevocably won over after the conclusion of the U.N. deliberations the week of 5 October. The clamour of the Suez rebels at the Conservative Party Conference and the threatened resignation of Harold Macmillan forced the hand of the Prime Minister Eden and Lloyd down to 16 October and during their meeting with Prime Minister Mollet and Foreign Secretary Pineau the plot was hatched. Britain would lead the Anglo-French assault against Egypt after the Israeli thrust into Sinai. The British insisted that details of the Israeli operation be kept from them as protection against the charge of collusion. The Israelis would co-ordinate their moves with the French. The attack would take place the week of the American elections in November — this was an essential condition insisted on by the Israelis from the very start. They were confident that President Eisenhower would be too worried about offending Jewish voters to take an anti-Israel stand. Eden, as well, believed Zionist pressure would immobilize American action at that time.

The January-February issue of the Council's publication Brief in 1966 reported an item, in the then recent press conference of President Eisenhower, to the effect that at the time of Suez, a warning was given to Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban that despite "possible Jewish sympathy" the United States would act against Israeli aggression. There was much speculation as to what had provoked this warning. Recent revelations have provided the answer. After Lloyd and Eden had returned to London from the Paris meeting on 16 October, the French dispatched a cable to Ben-Gurion —it read simply, "You can depend absolutely on the British". The message, however, found its way to the Central Intelligence Agency and ultimately to Eisenhower. Subsequent reports confirmed that the Israelis would move some time around election day. No matter which way one views this episode — here is dramatic proof that Zionist manipulation of the "Jewish bloc vote" canard had serious consequences on the efforts to maintain peace in the Middle East. In this instance, it contributed to bringing the world to the threshold of World War III.

Ben-Gurion nevertheless upset the plan. He was furious that Britain wanted to protect herself from the charge of collusion with Israel. The Israeli prime minister was determined to tar Britain with Israel's brush and precipitate a final conclusive break between Britain and the Arabs. Perhaps, then, Britain would embrace Israel as a solid, trustworthy ally. But until then Britain could not be trusted. There was always the possibility that at the last moment Israel would be sacrificed for Britain's traditional friends, the Arabs. Accordingly, Ben-Gurion demanded the agreement for collusion be put in writing. Written proof of complicity was the last thing the British wanted, but Ben-Gurion was adamant. The matter was finally settled at a villa in Sèvres on the outskirts of Paris on 22-23 October.

A formal treaty was signed by Foreign Minister Pineau, Ben-Gurion, and Patrick Dean (now Sir Patrick Dean, Ambassador to the United States) representing the British. The discussions at Sèvres involved at various stages Foreign Secretary Lloyd and Prime Minister Mollet. The treaty provided that Israel would attack Egypt with the objective of reaching the vicinity of the Suez Canal in the shortest time possible. An ultimatum — triggered by an Israeli news bulletin announcing that advance units were at the approaches to the Canal — would be issued on Egypt and Israel to cease hostilities and withdraw respectively ten miles east and west of the waterway. After the expected Egyptian refusal, Britain would attack Nasser's air force while grounded. This would serve as a warning to other Arab states if they contemplated an attack on Israel. Anglo-French landings followed to "protect" the Canal.

In light of the recent revelations, it is reasonable to speculate as to what might have happened had Britain not agreed to go along with Israel. The evidence is overwhelming that the original plan for a more modest strike against the jedaiveen bases near Gaza would have been adopted. Israel was determined to strike — but the more limited objective would not have provided the necessary pretext for Anglo-French intervention. A deep thrust into Sinai headed for the Canal was required. However, for this, Israel would require allies in New York at the Security Council ready to use the veto, as well as the elimination of the Egyptian air force, supply drops by air as her troops raced across Sinai, and protection for her densely populated cities. Significantly, American military intelligence at the time considered Egypt and Israel more nearly balanced militarily than ever before — peace, it was thought, was thereby better assured since neither side would dare launch a major thrust independently. Egypt had air superiority while Israeli ground forces were the best in the Middle East. It was apparent that if Israel could repair her deficiency in the air she would be a formidable threat. The reasoning was accurate; Israel's partners were to provide her with what she herself lacked.

When Ben-Gurion arrived at Sèvres on 22 October, he had neither the firm commitment for French air and

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2 The full title is American Council for Judaism. New York.
naval cover and supply drops (France was determined that she would not act independently of Britain) nor British agreement to take out Nasser's air force. It was a hard and fast quid pro quo. Israel provided the pretext in return for British and French military support.

Once the fighting began, it became immediately clear that the Zionist leadership had misjudged the temper of the United States, even when in the throes of a presidential election campaign. President Eisenhower, with substantial bi-partisan support, determined that American interests and world peace called for the rolling back of the attack. No "Jewish vote" was allowed to intervene. Eisenhower later reported that he had called in the Israeli ambassador and warned him not to act on the assumption that America would be divided or immobilized by Zionist interests. The United Nations, on the American initiative, restored the status quo ante.

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THE ISLAMIC REVIEW
THE HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF THE MIRACLE (I'JAZ) OF THE QUR'AN

The development of the idea of the Qur'an being a miracle during the 8th-11th centuries C.E.

By NA'IM AL-HUMSI

(VI)

Al-Qummi, the Mufassir (exegete)

One of the leading scholars in the fourth century A.H. (tenth century C.E.) who discussed the subject of the i'jaz was Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Qummi, the mufassir (378 A.H.-900 C.E.). He treated the subject more on the lines adopted by the mutakallims than the mufassirs. He set an example to other mufassirs by extending the scope of the subject through the utilization of evidence and proof borrowed from the science of kalam and philosophy. And al-'Alim al-Hindi is of the opinion that al-Qummi was firmly convinced that only the nature of the muljizah (miracle) of the Qur'an could be recognized, but that its ramifications and description could not be treated fully. He gave as an example a piece of gold or a beautiful face — both can be recognized but cannot be fully described or analysed. In his opinion it was wrong to maintain that the i'jaz of the Qur'an was by way of survah* or because the Qur'an used terms not very familiar to the Arabs, or because it contained news of the future or was free of contradiction.

Al-Wasiti, the Litterateur and Mutakallim

Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Yazid al-Wasiti (306 A.H.-918 C.E.) is said to have written an authoritative work on the i'jaz of the Qur'an from the linguistic aspect, in which he maintained that the style of the Qur'an was evidence of its i'jaz. The book, however, has been lost, and I have not been able to get any detailed reports of its contents. Al-Rafi'iyy mentions al-Wasiti and says no more than that he preceded 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani in writing on the subject of i'jaz from this angle, and that he was in fact the first to put forward the view about the linguistic aspect of the i'jaz of the Qur'an, and was followed by al-Rummani (382 A.H.-922 C.E.). Al-Rafi'iyy and 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi say that al-Jurjani wrote a commentary on the book of al-Wasiti which he called al-Mu'tadid, and subsequently a shorter commentary as well, before he wrote his famous works Dala'il al-i'jaz and Asrar al-Balaghah. Al-Rafi'iyy comments on this by saying: “I think al-Wasiti merely built up on what al-Jahiz had started, while 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani in his Dala'il al-i'jaz built on al-Wasiti”.* It is obvious, however, that al-Rafi'iyy formulated this opinion on the subject without the benefit of having seen al-Wasiti's book, and I am not convinced of the evidence which justifies the claim that al-Wasiti was the first to champion this view.

Al-Rummani, the Litterateur and Mutakallim

Another writer on i'jaz in this century was 'Ali Ibn 'Isa al-Rummani. Al-Rafi'iyy says that al-Rummani was the third scholar to favour the idea of the i'jaz of the Qur'an from the aspects of style and language (he was preceded by al-Jahiz and al-Wasiti). Ibn Sinan al-Khaflaji in his book Sirr al-Fasahih mentions al-Rummani's view on the i'jaz and says that al-Rummani classified speech into three categories: contradictory (mutanaafir), harmonious in the middle stage (mutala'am fi al-tabaqah al-wusta) and harmonious in the higher stage (mutala'am fi al-tabaaah al-'ulya). In his view the Qur'an was harmonious in the higher stage, and this fact, he maintained, would be obvious to anyone who contemplated over the Qur'an. He also said that the difference between the Qur'an and other speech in regard to the harmony between the letters was similar to the difference between the contradictory and the harmonious in the middle stage. In other words, the i'jaz of the Qur'an in al-Rummani's view was based on the harmony of words and letters.

Yahya al-Yamani on al-Rummani

Yahya al-Yamani, the author of al-Tiraz, mentions al-Rummani's view (vol. III), and criticizes the views of those who maintained that the i'jaz of the Qur'an was based on its style. He holds that the i'jaz is based on both the style and the meaning. His views on al-Rummani somewhat confuse the issue, and it is not clear what specific view al-Rummani had on the subject of i'jaz — and whether he made a distinction between the meaning and the words used to express that meaning or held that the i'jaz was evident in both the words and the meaning. Al-Suyuti (al-Itiqan, vol. II, p. 198 et seq) mentions al-Rummani's view and says that al-Rummani believed that i'jaz was by way of survah and the prediction of

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1 Continued from The Islamic Review for June 1965.
2 For discussion on Survah see The Islamic Review for June 1965, p. 15.
3 See The Islamic Culture, 32nd Year, Nos. 1 and 2.
the future, and also by way of uniqueness — the latter he explained by saying that the style and manner of the Qur’ān was different from anything preceding it, and had a style of prose which surpassed poetry in its beauty. Al-Rummani also maintained that another proof of the ījaz of the Qur’ān was the fact that it could not be matched by people.

**Al-Suyuti on al-Rummani**

Al-Suyuti’s views on al-Rummani are perhaps the most reliable. ‘Abd al-‘Alim al-Hindi summarized Al-Suyuti’s views, adding that in al-Rummani’s opinion the Qur’ān was a muṣījāh because it was not opposed or matched by anyone despite the fact that there were many opportunities for this and a real challenge was offered by the Qur’ān. ‘Abd al-‘Alim al-Hindi also points out that al-Rummani had combined the two grounds of surfah and uniqueness in style as evidence of the ījaz of the Qur’ān, in fact the two arguments were contradictory. He quotes al-Rummani as asking the question, “And how can one find that the style of the Qur’ān surpasses the capacity of mankind?” and answering this as follows: “The only answer to this depends on the taste of the individual. Those with good taste and appreciation of Arabic are alone capable of perceiving this fact. The populace and the foreigners cannot determine this fact and have to rely on the opinion of the learned.”

One interesting fact about al-Rummani in the matter of ījaz is that he collected many of the views previously put forward on this subject, without criticizing or rejecting any. He accepted all that had been said before and tried merely to harmonize and co-ordinate the various views. In the matter of the comparison of literary style he wisely did not decide the issue and explained that it was a matter of taste for the individual.

**Al-Khattabi**

Al-Khattabi (388 A.H. — 988 C.E.) wrote an important book on the ījaz in which he combined a discussion of the two aspects of the subject — rhetoric and kalam. A copy of this book is to be found in Leiden. Al-Suyuti mentions Al-Khattabi’s views in al-Iṣqān, and says: “Al-Khattabi says that many literary scholars have maintained that the ījaz of the Qur’ān lies in its superb style. But they found it difficult to argue this view convincingly, and said that this was a question of taste. It is also said that the style of the Qur’ān was a combination of both the simple and the difficult. It served as proof for the Prophet, and the Arabs failed to imitate it because they did not have such a command of the language or of the meaning of words. The Qur’ān combined the beauty of words with the beauty of style and meaning, and these were the words of the Knowing and the Mighty, for no one possesses such qualities.” He then lists the various ideas contained in the Qur’ān, particularly the predictions about the future and the stories of the past. His arguments on the subject are perhaps summed up by this quotation from his book: “I have said on the ījaz of the Qur’ān something to which some people did not pay much attention. This is the effect of the Qur’ān on the hearts and the influence it has on the mind. No words — whether poetry or prose — other than the Qur’ān could leave such a pleasing effect on the heart. God says: ‘Had we sent down this Qur’ān on a mountain, thou wouldst certainly have seen it falling down, splitting asunder because of the fear of God. And we set forth these parables to men so that they may reflect.’ God also says: ‘God has revealed the best announcement, a Book consistent, repeating its injunctions, whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and their hearts soften to God’s remembrance. This is God’s guidance. He guides with it whom He pleases. And He whom God leaves in error, there is no guide for him.’”

It is noteworthy about al-Khattabi that he included in his treatise much of what has been said on the question of ījaz, but he ensured that there would be no contradiction between these views. He also demonstrated a keen appreciation of the linguistic and other qualities of the Qur’ān, and these he summed up in (1) sublime meaning, (2) beautiful style, and (3) emotional impact.

**Al-‘Askari**

Abu Hilal al-‘Askari believes that the ījaz of the Qur’ān lies in its style, and that for this reason more attention should be devoted to the study of this subject. According to al-Khawali in Al-Balaghah al-‘Arabiyah wa Athar al-Falsafah fiha (p. 28), Abu Hilal said: “Rhetoric should be studied simply because without this it would not be possible to appreciate the nature of the ījaz of the Qur’ān in a realistic and convincing manner. To believe in the ījaz on the evidence of others is not acceptable or appropriate. It is not nice for the faqīḥ who leads others or the knowledgeable person who guides others or the mutakallim reputed for his sound arguments and good proof, or for the real Arab and the Quraishi to know of the ījaz of the Book of God only in the way in which the Negro or the Nabatean knows of it, and to accept proof of it from others.” Abu Hilal’s book, however, is a literary work not devoted exclusively to the ījaz of the Qur’ān. It is concerned mainly with rhetoric and quotes as examples some verses of the Qur’ān and also some poetry. For this reason al-‘Askari did not have a definite or precise view on the ījaz of the Qur’ān; but for him ījaz was viewed mainly from the angle of rhetoric.

The idea of the ījaz was studied by early writers through the medium of rhetoric

**Al-Jahiz Jurjani**

The foregoing analysis of the works of the early writers on the ījaz shows that the idea of the ījaz was studied by scholars through the medium of the science of rhetoric (balaghah), which devoted great attention to the study of the Qur’ān from the linguistic and stylistic aspects. There is no doubt also that the idea of the ījaz of the Qur’ān was one of the main causes for the increased interest in the science of rhetoric, if not the main cause for this. Those who professed the theory of the ījaz of the Qur’ān were from the outset divided into two groups. One group held the view that the ījaz of the Qur’ān is attributable to its rhetorical excellence and superb literary qualities. The other group did not consider that the ījaz of the Qur’ān lay in this respect at all, but in other qualities. The first group was more numerous and stronger. The main supporters of this group thus sought to advance their views by comparing the literary qualities of the Qur’ān with other acknowledged literary works. The famous philosopher and writer al-Jahiz wrote a book entitled Nāzım al-Qur’ān (The Composition of the Qur’ān), and this work is considered the first systematic text on rhetoric. This was followed by another book, al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn (Style and Method), which is acknowledged as a masterpiece on
rhetoric. There are scholars, however, who are of opinion that another writer, al-Jurjani, was the first to write on rhetoric. In my opinion that is not supported by the evidence, although al-Jurjani was the first to treat in a scientific manner the views that had been expressed at various times on the science of rhetoric. Al-Jurjani's book, Dala'il al-Ijaz (The Evidence of Ijaz), supports the view that the science of rhetoric owned its origin to the study of the Ijaz. This view is also supported by another work of al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Bulاغah (The Secrets of Rhetoric). Al-Jurjani in these treatises examines problems of rhetoric and grammar and style and says that it would be impossible for anyone to appreciate the Ijaz of the Qur'an unless he were sufficiently versed in grammar and rhetoric, for only then would he be able to discern the qualities of the Qur'an and see its Ijaz.

Al-Jurjani's treatises on the Ijaz were preceded by works by Muhammad Ibn Yazid al-Wasiti on this subject. These, however, have been lost. Al-Jurjani in his treatises commented in brief on al-Wasiti's works, but when he saw that such commentary was inadequate he embarked upon a more detailed commentary which eventually was embodied in a book entitled al-Mutaddid. Later he felt that even that work was inadequate, and he wrote Dala'il al-Ijaz. The book of al-Wasiti and the commentaries of al-Jurjani thereon are not now extant, and for this reason it is not possible to examine in any scientific detail the relationship between these works and the method of these two scholars in tackling the question of the Ijaz.

Al-Fakhr al-Razi (d. 606 A.H.—1209 C.E.) summarized the work of al-Jurjani and systematized it in a book entitled Nihayah al-Ijaz fi Dirayah al-Ijaz (The Epitome of the Study of Ijaz), in which he presented al-Jurjani's theory in a clearer style. Al-Razi also dealt with the question of the Ijaz in his commentaries on the Qur'an in his books Ma'alin Ustul-al-Din (The Outlines of the Principles of the Faith) and Muhassal Afkar al-Mutaqqadimim (The Summary of the Views of Precedents). He did not, however, bring forth any new ideas on the subject.

Ibn Abi al-Isba'

The most famous writers on the Ijaz, who followed the pattern set by al-Jurjani, were Ibn Abi al-Isba' al-Qirawani (654 A.H.—1256 C.E.), who wrote Bayan al-Burhan fi Ijaz al-Qur'an (The Statement of the Evidence on the Miracle of the Qur'an), 'Abd al-Wahid al-Zamalik (651 A.H. — 1253 C.E.), who wrote Al-Tibyan fi 'Ilm al-Muttaal' ala Ijaz al-Qur'an (The Treatise on the Science of the Miracle of the Qur'an), Hazim Ibn Muhammad al-Qurtajani (684 A.H. — 1285 C.E.), who is reported to have discussed this subject in his book Minhaj al-Bulaghah (The Pattern of Rhetoric) (there is in Medina a treatise by this writer entitled Al-Burhan al-Kashifi 'an Ijaz al-Qur'an (The Evidence for the Miracle of the Qur'an)).

It is an interesting fact that the term Ijaz soon became a synonym for the science of rhetoric (bulaghah), and its original meaning and significance in connection with the Qur'an was lost, as can be seen from an examination of the works of writers at later times. A writer like Ghiyath al-Din Lutfallah (1035 A.H.—1643 C.E.), for example, wrote a book on rhetoric which he called al-Ijaz fi 'Ilm al-Ijaz (Ijaz — Miracle — in the Science of Briefness) — and this work is confined solely to purely literary matters.

It is also clear that the writers on the Ijaz in the fourth century (A.H.) did not bring forth anything substantially new on the subject. The question of the Ijaz of the Qur'an appeared to be treated mostly by the mu'tassirs and the mu'takallims. Al-Tabari's views on the subject are simple and straightforward, while those of al-Jahiz in the third century were purely literateurs and mu'tazalites. Mutakallims, like al-Ash'ari, - al-Tawhidi and Bindar al-Farisi, devoted through attention to the question of the Ijaz. There were some, however, who believed in so-called freedom of opinion, like al-Mutanabbi, who not only did not believe in the Ijaz of the Qur'an but actually criticized this idea and claimed prophethood for himself and sought to imitate the Qur'an.

The 5th century A.H. (11th century C.E.)

The 5th century A.H. (11th century C.E.) is characterized by an abundance of mu'takallims and writers on the Ijaz. In fact it can be called the golden age of the theory of the Ijaz, for this question was part and parcel of the intellectual and spiritual movement of that time. Philosophy and other sciences flourished in this era, and translation took a secondary role, with the Arabs and the Muslims becoming more original in the arts and the sciences.

Some of those who opposed the idea of the Ijaz of the Qur'an

The most famous scholars to be accused of opposing the idea of the Ijaz of the Qur'an at this time were Qabus Ibn Washamikir, one of the Emirs of Bani Ziyad and king of Tabarstan, the philosopher Avicenna, and the philosopher and literateur Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri. The most famous mu'takallims who studied the subject of Ijaz at this time were two members of the Sh'i'a school, namely al-Sharif al-Murtada, Abu al-Nasr Hibat Allah al-Shirazi (nicknamed Da'i al-Da'a), and three members of the Sunni school, namely al-Baqillani, who was also a literateur, Ibn Surraqqal and Ibn Hazm al-Andalus. There were also two literateurs who studied this subject — Ibn Sinan al-Khafl and 'Abd al-Qahr al-Jurjani, who was also a mu'takallim. The life and works of each one of these scholars will now be briefly discussed.

Qabus Ibn Washamikir

Qabus Ibn Washamikir (403 A.H.—1011 C.E.) opposed the Qur'an. He was mentioned by 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi as one of the scholars who were accused of hostility to the Qur'an. Al-Ra'fi'i mentions Qabus Ibn Washamikir, and defends him. He says: "These disbelievers also allege that the parables and stories of Washamikir were indicative of his opposition to the Qur'an. They maintain that anything that contains literature, wisdom, history or stories is opposed to the Qur'an. It is just like saying that the seven poems — the mu'allaqat — were in their eloquence opposed to the Qur'an. But we have nothing that can prove this contention."

Avicenna

Avicenna (428 A.H.—1036 C.E.) was accused of opposing the Qur'an. I have not been able to find any substantial
evidence on which this claim may be based. Al-Ra'fi'iy mentions this allegation, without giving its source. He says: "The strangest thing I have found is that some people have accused Avicenna of opposing the Qur'ān, and saying that he is an apostate".

Abū al-'Ala al-Ma'arri

It has been claimed by some people that Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri (449 A.H.—1057 C.E.) opposed the Qur'ān in a book which he called Al-Fusul wa al-Ghayār fi Mūjaraṭ al-Suwār wa al-AYat (Chapters on Imitating the Suras and Verses of the Qur'ān). It is said that people commented to al-Ma'arri on what he produced by saying that it had good quality, but that it was not a match for the Qur'ān, to which al-Ma'arri is reported to have replied: "But give this four hundred years, and repetition by people and in mosques, and see what would happen to it." Al-Ra'fi'iy discounts this accusation against al-Ma'arri, and says that al-Ma'arri was so learned that he must have appreciated the quality of the Qur'ān as compared with what he himself was writing. Al-Ma'arri quite obviously felt his own inadequacy, and he used strange and difficult words and his style was rather strained, and he could not hope to pass off his work as a match to the Qur'ān. Furthermore, al-Ma'arri gave up his belief in the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān when he commented on al-Raawandi's works in these terms: "The apostate, the enlightened, and the disbeliever are all agreed that the Book brought forth by Muhammad — May the Peace and Blessings of God be upon him — was one which was evidently miraculous, and which could not be matched by its opponents, for none can imitate its style, its parables, its language, and its poetry. . . . One verse from it — or part of a verse — explains matters in the most eloquent manner." Al-Ra'fi'iy says that no one had forced Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri to say this in favour of the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān, and that he had merely said what he in fact believed to be the truth, and that although he might have had other views on supernatural phenomena which might not have been in conformity with the concepts of the Qur'ān this should not detract from his honesty and objectivity in the matter of the evaluation of the rhetorical qualities of the Qur'ān. Al-Ra'fi'iy therefore rejects outright the suggestion that al-Ma'arri opposed the idea of the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān, mainly in view of al-Mar'arri's reply to al-Raawandi on this subject. Perhaps the truth is that al-Ma'arri at one time may have toyed with the idea of opposing the Qur'ān but subsequently changed his views with the change in circumstances or because of other factors. This is typical of al-Ma'arri who at different times held different views on some religious and philosophical problems, and very often was very hesitant in expressing a definite view, preferring to consider the matter further before deciding.

Al-Sharif al-Murtada

Al-Sharif al-Murtada (436 A.H.—1044 C.E.) wrote a book on the fājaẓ, but this has been lost. 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi says that the loss of this book was unfortunate, because al-Murtada had a great reputation and had original views on the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān which were comparable only to those of al-Nazzam. Some of al-Murtada's views, however, have been reported by other scholars, and some fragments of his works are available at present. He was in the habit of answering in writing questions put to him on religion and theology. Some of his letters are available in Berlin. Two of them discuss the question of fājaẓ, and give his views on the subject. 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi says that al-Murtada also championed the idea of surfah, and that he was perhaps the last scholar to maintain this view. But it is difficult to make a scientific analysis of al-Murtada's views because of the lack of original material. But in some of his letters he says that the best evidence he has on the question of surfah lies in the fact that the difference between the smaller parts of the Qur'ān and the best that had been written by the Arabs was not clear to all people, while the difference between the good writing of the Arabs and the bad was quite evident. Thus the best means for proving the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān is to say that the Arabs could not match it — or, in other words, that God deflected them from this (surfah). 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi comments on this by saying that the argument about surfah was current among Shi'ah mitakallims more than among Sunni mitakallims, a fact which proves the strong connection between the Shi'ah scholars with the mut'aazilites, particularly the early mut'aazilites.

Al-Ra'fi'iy says (without quoting his source): "Al-Murtada, of the Shi'ah school, says that surfah means that God deprived them of the knowledge they need for opposing and matching the Qur'ān. In other words, he says that they are capable in rhetoric, and can match the Qur'ān in style and form. He also says that they could not do more than that, and could not match the meaning of the words, because they do not possess knowledge for this. But this is contradictory and confusing."29

This analysis of al-Murtada's views, however, appears faulty, because “deprived” (salaba) as used by al-Murtada implied that they did possess the knowledge at one time, while al-Ra'fi'iy interpreted the word as meaning that they never possessed the knowledge — in which case they could not be “deprived” of the knowledge if they never had it to start with, and there would be no surfah here. The reason for the confusion here seems to be that al-Ra'fi'iy understands “knowledge” (i'tilum) something other than that understood by al-Murtada — who signified by the term knowledge assisting in the composition of words.

It is interesting here to note a fine distinction between the views of al-Nazzam and those of al-Murtada on surfah. According to al-Nazzam, surfah means lack of opposition to the Qur'ān while there is the capacity to do this. Al-Murtada understands by surfah the lack of ability to oppose because the qualifications needed for mounting this opposition have been taken away (these qualities having previously been possessed by those who were subsequently lacking in them). 'Abd al-'Alim al-Hindi notes that al-Sharif al-Murtada was probably the last scholar to maintain the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān by way of surfah alone. This is perhaps not quite correct, because although subsequent scholars who mentioned surfah combined it with other factors as the explanation of the fājaẓ of the Qur'ān, there is at least one scholar, al-Khaṣafī, who believed in surfah as the sole proof of fājaẓ.

(To be continued)

6 Mr. Berlin Ret. 40.
7 Mr. Berlin Ret. 40, fol. 4a — 56 and 926, 94a.
8 Mr. Berlin Ret. 40 to 46.
9 The fājaẓ of the Qur'ān by al-Ra'fi'iy, p. 144.
A PEEP INTO SUFISM

SUFI POETS

Khwaja ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari, Sana'i, ‘Attar, Ibn Farid

By M. U. H. Nanji

In our discussion of Sufism we have arrived at the classic period in its history which was marked by the emergence of a number of mystical poets. Poetry became the medium through which the mystics openly preached their doctrines of the ethical principle of love of mankind and tolerance towards the other communities. The mystics proclaimed in their poetry and prose that it is the unique light of the same truth which burns in a mosque, in a church, or in a temple. This conception, called the Total Peace, was helpful, politically and socially, in fostering good relations between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minorities."

The emergence of mystical poetry in Turkish literature, with its unique poetic form, was not utilized solely for the purpose of dissemination of Sufi ideas but served also as an outlet for the religious fervour of the Sufis. Dr. Oghuz Turkhan, writing on Turkish mystical poetry, remarks: "In the beginning, Sufism evolved as a philosophical interpretation of the Muslim religion, and developed side by side with the growing rival force of the madrasahs, or religious schools or universities, which expounded the orthodox religious beliefs. Two great philosophers, Farabi and Ibn Sina, gave impetus to the movement in the 9th century C.E. With the growth of Turkish power, Seljuk, and later Ottoman, in the Islamic world, the Sufism movement became firmly established, and the Takya, or mystic circles, flourished in every corner of Anatolia."

Turkish poetry was considerably influenced by Rumi's writings, although he never wrote in Turkish. Turkish poets like Yunus Emre and others "poured forth innumerable 'spiritual couplets' of mystical nature. Indeed, nearly all the Ottoman poets were either Sufis or men who wrote under the manner of the Persian Sufis."

The Sufi philosophy is firmly entrenched in the belief that true existence is God alone and everything other-than-God is but an image of Him in different forms. The image which lies closest to God's Pure Being is man. As long as man remains captive to the illusion of self, he undergoes the tortures of unfulfilled desires and insatiable cravings. The minute he rids himself of his worldly attributes he achieves true existence, which is union with God. References to God as the "Beloved" and man as the "lover" are over-abundant in Persian mystical poetry. "The poets see the presence of God immanent in all beautiful things, but manifested most clearly and most fully in fair humanity. . . . And even as it is God who is mirrored in the fair face, it is God, the poet feels, Who looks through the lover's eyes: God beholds and loves God, and the supreme miracle of Divine self-manifestation is accomplished. . . ."

Persian literature is saturated with Sufism; it has, as it were, "imbued the whole of Persian poetry within its spirit. With the notable exception of Firdawsi, the greater poets all gave expression to its mysticism and ideals; most of the lyricists, it is true, merely employed the metaphors and figures of the system to add beauty to their compositions; but most of the great poets treated Sufism itself as their first concern, and it is to poetry thereby inspired that one must look to find the esoteric meaning of the system." It is in the light of the above remarks that we shall make the first-hand acquaintance of a few Sufi poets.

Abu Sa'id Ibn Abi 'l-Khayr (d. 440 A.H.—1049 C.E.)

Abu Sa'id Ibn Abi 'l-Khayar was the leading poet of the Sufi movement who gave a new lease of life to the quatrain as a verse form and used it with skill to give expression to his mystical ideas. He also set the vogue of symbolism in Persian poetry according to which free use was made of mundane things like wine, womanly love, etc., to describe Divine Love, and which tendency later on became manifest in the writings of Sana'i, Rumi, Sa'di, Hafiz, Jami and a host of other Oriental Islamic poets. We shall not have occasion to deal with the matter of symbolism a little more exhaustively later on in the course of this article. For the present we shall end this brief reference to Abu Sa'id by quoting one of his verses in translation:

"In my heart Thou dwellest — else with blood I'll drench it:
In mine eye Thou gluest — else with tears I'll quench it. Only to be one with Thee my soul desireth — Else from out my body, by hook or crook, I'll wrench it!"

Khwaja 'Abd Allah al-Ansari (d. 481 A.H.—1088 C.E.)

A few years after Abu Sa'id there appeared on the Persian literary firmament a mystic poet who was known as Ansari of Herat or Pir-i Ansari. His works, both in prose and poetry, displayed a remarkable admixture of religious and devotional thoughts. He wrote a biographical work on the Sufis known as Tabqat al-Sufiya, in the Persian dialect of Herat; it is said that this book inspired the poet Jami to write his Nafhaat al-Ins. Another of his famous works on mysticism written in Arabic prose was the Manazil al-Sa'irin, which was widely commented upon. Two lesser-known works in Persian were the Zad al-Arifin (the Book of Saints) and Kitab-i-Isra (The Book of Mysteries). He was particularly well known, however, for his Persian quatrains and his Munajat, which consisted mainly of invocations to God with a sprinkling of counsel to fellow Sufis. A few brief selections from his works will give some insight into the nature of his writings.

1 Islamic Literature — An introductory History with Selections by Najib Ullah, p. 154.
2 The Islamic Review, February 1960, article entitled "Turkish Literature
3 The Persian Mystics, Jalaluddin Rumi by F. Hadland Davis, p. 21.
7 Biographical Dictionary of the Sufis.
8 i.e. The Stages of the Wayfarers.
“O Lord, intoxicate me with the wine
Of Thy love
Place the chains of Thy slavery on
My feet;
Make me empty of all but Thy love
And in it destroy me and bring me back to life.
The hunger Thou hast awakened, culminates
In fulfiment."

“I am intoxicated with love of Thee
And need no fermented wine.
I am Thy bird
Free from need of seed
An safe from the snare of the fowler.
In the Ka‘bah and in the Temple
Thou art the object of my search.
Else I am freed
From both these places of worship.”

Sana‘i

Towards the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century, it fell to the lot of the Persian mystical poet Sana‘i to write the first treatise on the doctrines of Sufism in poetic form. Starting his career as a court poet at Ghazna, he changed over to the ways of the mystics after undergoing a spiritual transformation. He died in 1141 at Ghazna; today his tomb is one of the revered shrines in Afghanistan.

A prolific writer, Sana‘i was the first to use the Masnavi (form of the rhyming couplets) as a medium of expression of his Sufi ideas. He also made a liberal use of the Qasidah (ode), the Ghazal (lyric) and the Rihla (travels) (quatrain). His works are not always of the exclusively spiritual type; frequently there is a curious blending in them of practical and didactic views by side with the mystical. The Hadiqah al-Haqqiqah (The Garden of Truth) is an epic poem of ten thousand couplets spread over ten chapters containing many illustrative anecdotes of saints and mystics. The Hadiqah is said to have influenced the Manqiq al-Tayr of ‘Attar, as also the Masnavi of Jalaluddin Rumi. It deals, inter alia, with topics such as Reason, Knowledge, Philosophy, Unity of God, Futility of Mundane Existence, Mystical Love, etc.

Sana‘i is, however, much better known for his Diwan, which contains lyrical poems. The following of his Ghazals deals with the plight of the soul on this earth.

“Some few days in this world I did remain,
And over earth's surface traversed the wind.
I wandered much, and much I saw of pain,
Though not a night to lust was I inclined.
In wrath no man was harmed by my satires:
From me none gained praise mean and undeserved:
From evil lusts and sensual desires
My pure soul I immaculate preserved.
In those days when my spirit was at ease
Upon mine inwardness no grief had grown:
And when time came for Fate on me to seize
I reaped the harvest from the seed I'd sown.
My soul to its essence again had won:
I was freed from pain, peace had come to me.
Whither I had wandered was known to none,
And where I'd roamed to me is mystery.”

Fariduddin ‘Attar

Fariduddin ‘Attar, the great Persian Sufi and poet, was the elder contemporary of Ibn al-'Arabī, and was born in the year 512 A.H. (1120 C.E.) in a village named Kadkan near Nishapur in North-West Persia. Ghazali had already died eight years prior to ‘Attar's birth. Fariduddin is described by many writers as having been the first to initiate what has popularly been termed as the “classic period of Sufism”;

this period also marked the advent of other great mystical Persian poets such as Jalaluddin Rumi and the Shaykh Sa‘di. ‘Attar, who was a disciple of Shaykh Majd al-Din, the reputed scholar of Baghdad, was slain in the Mongol invasion which took place in 1229 C.E.

The word ‘Attar means a dealer of ‘Ir or perfumes. ‘Attar used to run his father's perfumery shop and, being a druggist also, used occasionally to dispense medicines to the sick. The dramatic story of his conversion to a Sufistic mode of life is related by Dawaiyshah in his Memoirs of the Poet. It is related that Fariduddin was busy one day with some persons in his shop when a dervish came over to him, smelt the lingering fragrance of his perfumes, then heaved a piteous sigh and weepingly asked him for some alms. ‘Attar asked the dervish to leave. The latter replied: “I will leave your shop and also readily bid farewell to this world, for I have no other worldly possession save my cloak. But I am sorry for you, ‘Attar. You are so engrossed in amassing wealth here, how will you ever be prepared to meet death and forswear all that you have amassed here?” Farid replied: “I shall end my days just like you.” “We shall see,” laughed the dervish, and thereupon lay down on the floor, uttered the name of God, closed his eyes and died. ‘Attar was so profoundly moved by this death-at-will act that he gave up his father's shop, renounced the world and entered the monastery of the Shaykh Ruknuddin, a renowned Sufi of that time, to tread the path of the dervishes. Under the guidance of his teacher, Fariduddin reached the heights of contemplative life. Thereafter, he travelled far and wide for about 39 years studying the Sufi systems in various countries, meeting the men of God on the way, assimilating their writings and collecting the anecdotes about past and contemporary Sufis. Finally he returned to Nishapur, where he was assassinated by the Mongol invaders led by Changiz Khan. Passages relating to the account of his resistance to the hordes of Changiz Khan and the circumstances leading to ‘Attar's death are reproduced below from Bankey Behari's Introduction to Tadhkirah al-Auliyya.

“Changiz Khan invaded Nishapur and under his grim orders his soldiers started putting the residents of the place mercilessly to sword. The latter appealed to ‘Attar. He immediately turned his bowl and lo! all the soldiers of Changiz were turned blind, as if by a miracle, and the massacre was stopped. Changiz Khan was irritated and again ordered the massacre to be carried on. It was started the next day when again the people approached ‘Attar, and he again turned his bowl and the soldiers turned blind and the massacre stopped. Changiz Khan then himself appeared on the scene on the third day and under his orders as the massacre started ‘Attar was approached again, and he as usual was about to turn the bowl when the angel Khidr appeared before him and said, 'Refrain from interfering with the mandates of the Lord. You shall be taken to task for what you have already done, whilst terrible will be the consequences to you if you repeat the thing over again.'

“Shortly after appeared a soldier, who-tying ‘Attar took him to the market to sell him as a slave. When the disciples of ‘Attar saw him in that plight they offered 5,000 dirhams for his release. But ‘Attar told the soldier not to accept the offer as he would fetch him a higher price. Whilst the soldier was waiting for a better offer, the Divine Voice told ‘Attar, ‘Your...
arrogance is remarkable. You consider that you are worth much more than what has already been offered for you.'

‘Attar was ashamed. Shortly it became evening and no new customer appeared on the scene. As the soldier was getting disappointed, an old lady came and offered her bundle of hay in exchange for ‘Attar. ‘Attar at once told the soldier, ‘Make haste and sell me to the lady. I am worth no more. This is a genuine offer.’ Exasperated, the soldier cut off the head of ‘Attar with a sword. The Lord could not tolerate the insult offered to his devotee by the soldier, who was crushed to death by an adjoining wall falling on his head.”

‘Attar was a very voluminous writer and his works are reported to have run into 114 books, balancing the number of the chapters of the Qur’an. However, only 30 of his books are now extant, the rest having been either lost or destroyed.

Of all his works, the best-known and the only one written in prose is Tadhkirah al-Awliyaa (Memoirs of Saints). Among his poetical works, the Panditama (Book of Counsels) and Mantiq al-Tayr (Discourses of the Birds) enjoy good circulation, particularly in the Orient. ‘Attar increased the “Path” of the Sufi “Path” of three to seven. These are described in the Mantiq al-Tayr, which is an allegorical treatise in verse, consisting of 4,600 couplets describing the adventures of a variety of birds (i.e. the Sufis), who traverse through seven dangerous valleys (i.e. the seven stages) under the leadership of the Solomon of the Birds, the Hoopoe, in search of their king, the Simurgh or Phoenix (i.e. the Truth). Many of the birds, unable to bear the perils and privations of the way (which obviously corresponds to the tribulations undergone by the seekers after truth) decide to give up their search, but thirty of them, after overcoming the hardships of the journey of the seven valleys, succeed in entering the abode of the Simurgh, where they perceive their own reflection in the mirror of Truth, and much to their surprise find that the Simurgh is in reality themselves (“Si” in Persian means thirty and “Murgh” means bird, hence “Simurgh” means thirty birds). This allegory describes the ascending stages of the mystic’s progress towards perfection and his ultimate union with God.

‘Umar Ibn al-Farid (1181-1235 C.E.)

We now make our acquaintance of this greatest of mystical poets who was born in Cairo and made his contribution to the literature of the world exclusively in Arabic. A contemporary of Ibn al-‘Arabi with whom he was friendly — his writings displayed the same traits of ‘Arabi’s works, namely, his attachment to the Logos doctrine, his subtlety and complexity of thoughts and his liberal use of an imagery bordering on the erotic.

Ibn al-Farid was venerated during his lifetime as a saint. It is reported that for the best part of the day he was lost in silent meditation, gazing vacantly into space. “It may be difficult to believe,” says Professor R. A. Nicholson, “what is related on the testimony of his most intimate friends, that he used to dictate his poems at the moment when he came out of a deep ecstatic trance, during which he would now stand, now sit, now repose on his side, now lie on his back, wrapped like a dead man; and thus he would pass ten consecutive days, more or less, neither eating nor drinking nor speaking nor stirring.”

Ibn al-Farid visited Mecca on the advice of a patron saint and returned to Cairo after travelling extensively for fifteen years. He again returned to Mecca in 1231 C.E., where he met the renowned mystic al-Suhrawardi. Four years after this last pilgrimage, al-Farid died, and was buried in Cairo at the foot of Mount Mughattam.

Though not numerous in number, his odes possess a unique subtleness of expression. The Hymn of Divine Love is the longest ode in his Divan, but the Hymn of Wine is undoubtedly the more renowned of the two. Writing about his poetical works, Professor Arberry says: “Ibn al-Farid’s masterwork is his great Ta‘liya (ode rhyming the letter ‘t’), a poem of 760 couplets. Judged as an example of rhymer’s virtuosity alone, it is an astonishing achievement; when, to skill in versifying and amazing dexterity in rhetorical embellishment is added a profundity of thought and a beauty of expression rarely equalled in Arabic literature, it is small wonder that this poem is regarded by Sufis as possessing magical qualities.”

As we have said above, Ibn al-Farid subscribed to the Logos idea — a theory which we shall have occasion to discuss at some length at a more appropriate place. For the present, however, we shall content ourselves to look through a passage or two from his odes, in the first of which the poet, like St. John of the Cross, uses the tenderest and most rapturous language when addressing God.

“By the uprising of those lights that shine
Upon thy countenance, before whose gleam
Resplendent every man is lost to sight;
By that thine attribute of absolute
Perfection, whence the loveliest, shapliest form
In all creation manifest, derives;
As by the quality of majesty
That doth my torment unto pleasure turn
And make my very slaying seem most sweet;
As by the secret of a loveliness
Thy emanation, the sole origin
And perfecting of every elegance
In all the world of every visible;
As by a beauty every intellect
Leadeth into captivity my guide
Unto a passion wherein grace most fair
My humbling was, for thy exalting’s sake;
As last by an idea in thee (the which
Transcended beauty) through itself I viewed,
Too subtle to be seen by vision’s eye —
Thou truly art my heart’s desire, the goal
Of my long quest, the far and final end
Of my soul’s search, my choice and chosen one.”

The following is another interesting passage from his odes:

“... that dispenser of
The mystic union, when he greeted me
At ‘Yea or nearer’, pointed me a bond
Of spiritual kinship. From his light
The lantern of my essence shone on me,
My eye in me was radiant as my morn.
And I was made to see myself, myself
Yet here; and I was he: and I beheld
That he was I, that light my radiance,
In me the holy vale was sanctified,
Where I bestowed my putting off of shoes
On my companions, an unsainted gift.
... And in the world
Of recollection still the soul doth own
Its ancient knowledge my disciples pray
That I bestow on them. Haste then to my
Eternal union.”

(To be continued)

12 Also translated as “Colloquy of the Birds”, “The Conference of the Birds”, “Speech of the Birds” or “Parlament of the Birds”.
14 A. J. Arberry’s Sufism, p. 96.
16 Ibid, p. 74.
ARAB PAGANISM AND ISLAM

Two equally one-sided views of pre-Islamic Arabia

By Professor A. H. I. Vora

About the life of the pre-Islamic Arabs and their social relationships one cannot say much with certainty. The accounts given by historians and the interpretations of some of the passages of the Qur'án fluctuate according to the author's knowledge and intentions. The Muslims try to paint the age in black colours probably to prove that Muhammad uplifted his people from savagery to civilization.

Others ascribe more to the Arabs before Islam than what they could have been to show that, in his zeal against the unwilling Arabs, Muhammad was a fanatic. In this controversy, after taking a glance at the social life of the Arabs at the advent of Islam, our attempt will be to see what type of change Muhammad brought about in the social life of the Arabs.

I

How true is the description of Arabia by those who hold that pre-Islamic Arabia was living in a state of nature?

The account given by Ilyas Ahmad in his book, The Social Contract and the Islamic State, is a typical one of the former type.

To prove that pre-Islamic Arabia was in a state of nature, as described by Hobbes in his Leviathan, Ilyas Ahmad tries to show that "politically Arabia was in a state of complete anarchy...in religion also there was a state of pluralism...the social and moral life was also corrupt beyond imagination." After quoting authorities to strengthen his contention, he finally states, "The whole account of Hobbes' state of nature is wholly, and in fact literally, warranted by the early history of ancient Arabia." The authorities quoted by him are:

E. Gibbon: "Of the time of ignorance which preceded Muhammad, seventeen hundred battles are recorded by tradition: hostility was embittered with the rancour of civil fashions; and the recital in prose or verse of an obsolete feud was sufficient to rekindle the same passion among the descendants of the hostile tribes. In private life, every man, at least every family, was the judge and the avenger of its own cause...In such a community the jurisdiction of the magistrate was mute and impotent."

Dr. J. Hell: "Since time immemorial the struggle for existence in Arabia had centered round water and pasture. These struggles destroyed the sense of national unity and developed an incurable particularism, each tribe deeming itself self-sufficient, and regarding the rest as its legitimate victims for murder, robbery and plunder...The Arab, further, lacked a sense of subordination...No chief had the right to command, and no one the duty to obey."

T. Noelleke: "A murder, or even a grievous injury, may provoke long years of feuds...Excessively conservative by nature, the people observed the customs of their forefathers without troubling their minds about their original significance."

Sir William Muir: "The distinctive feature has ever been the independence of the tribe, the family and the individuals...but no bond of permanent union holds them together."

Dr. G. Weil: "In matters religious and political Arabia in the sixth century was the theatre of the wildest confusion."

Von Kremer: "Of real religious feeling there was none?...wine, women and war were the only three objectives which claimed the love and devotion of the Arabs."

Ibn Khaldun: "Gambling was common, vice was virtue. Drink of every kind was highly cherished."

Robertson Smith: "In old Arabia the husband was so indifferent to his wife's fidelity that he might send her to co-habit with another man to get himself a goodly seed or might lend her to a guest."

The Qur'an: "And remember the favour of God on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts. So by His favour you became brethren, and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, then He saved you from it (3:102), and when a daughter is announced to one of them his face becomes black and he is full of wrath" (3:103).

On the basis of all these authorities Ilyas Ahmad says that "in Ancient Arabia, everyone being equal, people knew no subordination; they used their powers at their own discretion, there being unlimited freedom or license. They were without arts and laws and language; everyone was at war with everyone else."

Again, "There was not only the individualism of the tribe and the clan run mad, the individualism of the individual himself had no bounds and the individual of the age of ignorance could not be easily tamed or made a social animal."

In short, he says that in pre-Islamic Arabia we find all the traits of the state of nature mentioned by Hobbes in his Leviathan.

This correspondence between the history of Arabia and the Hobbesian account he further strengthens by pointing out that the Prophet of Islam established a kind of social contract among warring primitives of Arabia.

An examination of the claims that the pre-Islamic Arabia was living in a state of nature

The entire account of pre-Islamic Arabia given by him suffers from one-sidedness. His sole aim was not finding facts regarding Arabia and then comparing them with Hobbes or with any other social philosopher's account. On the contrary, he wanted to prove that the Hobbesian state of nature is a historical fact, and for this purpose ancient Arabia proved a useful state of affairs.

1 The Social Contract and the Islamic State, pp. 24, 27, 30.
2 Ibid, p. 35.
3 The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. VI, p. 323.
4 Arabian Civilization, pp. 10 and 13.
5 Historians' History of the World, vol. VIII, pp. 6, 7 and 9.
6 Life of Mahomet, ch. 1, p. 4.
7 History of Islamic Peoples, p. 1.
8 Contributions to the History of Islamic Civilization, p. 166.
9 Ibid, p. 156.
11 Kinship and Marriage, p. 3940.
12 The Social Contact and the Islamic State, p. 32.
13 Ibid, pp. 34-35.
Far from being a Hobbesian state of nature, the Arabians at the time of the Prophet enjoyed social relationships not only amongst themselves but also with the people of other nationalities.

To start with the authorities quoted by Ilyas Ahmad, it follows from the statement of Gibbon that there were tribes and tribal prejudices, families and family causes, both of which, being social institutions, cannot be established without social contract according to Hobbes. Thus, if any kind of social contract was made, it was made long before Muhammad and not by him. Moreover, when people observed the religious customs of their fore-fathers, as observed by Noth, it shows that they respected their traditions.

The respect for the tradition would increase, if they follow the customs without knowing their significance, and Sir William Muir rightly says: “The faith and worship of Mecca held the Arab mind in a thralldom, rigorous and undisputed”.

Allowing one’s wife to co-habit with a physically and mentally superior person for good offspring was practised in Rome and in some Greek cities, but, till now, no one has called these states societyless. The killing of daughters, because the society looks down upon the fathers of eves, again shows the supremacy of social taboos, over personal affection. Social traditions and customs weighed much upon the life of the Arabs. For their religious traditions the Holy Qur’an bears testimony in these words: “And when it is said to them, Come to what God has revealed and to the Messenger (Muhammad) they say: That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us.”

The meaning of the term Jahiliyyah

The account of the ancient Arabs given by ancient historians does not prove that the Arabs were people without society. It establishes only this much, that the society was bad and of an inferior type. But society there was. The people who conducted business between East and West and who came in contact with the caravans of different nations cannot but establish social relationships. “The term Jahiliyyah, usually rendered as ‘time of ignorance’ or ‘barbarism’, in reality means the period in which Arabia had no dispensation, no inspired Prophet, no revealed book: for ignorance and barbarism can hardly be applied to such a cultured and bettered society as that developed by the South Arabians.”

II

The pre-Islamic Arabia held a distinctive position in the history of the old Near East

Modern research shows Arabia as holding a distinctive position in the history of the old Near East. “The Muslim conquests of the seventh century A.D. form the last of a series of great Semitic outspreads, of which the earliest recorded in history resulted in the formation of the empire of Babylon, some 2,225 years before the Christian era.”

“The innumerable inscriptions on the Arabian rocks testify to a civilization and a settled government there in pre-Christian times.”

The two kingdoms in South-West Arabia, those of Ma’in and Sab‘ah succeeding one another, are recorded. “World renowned was the wealth of Saba: its felicitous position on the Red Sea marked it as a commercial centre.”

After that, Abyssinians, Jews and Persians ruled this kingdom in succession, the last one came in 1570 C.E. North Arabia also had its state formations. They are Mysure, Mijan and Meluch. “The kingdom of Palmyra was only destroyed in 271 A.D.”

Philip K. Hitti in his book History of the Arabs has devoted two chapters, fifth and sixth, to give a detailed account of states and kingdoms in ancient Arabia. The whole of chapter four of that book deals with international relations in those early times.

Thus the Arabs, when we meet them in history, are by no means wild, savage people.

Prior to the conception of a king as the feudal overlord, the royal power was allied with priestly functions. In the kingdoms coins were being issued. Ruins of castles and citadels are found in these regions. As Hamadani says, “the facades of temples and castles were ornamented with figures of all kinds, sketched on them.”

From the above account it would be clear that anyone who says that Muhammad established “social relationship among the primitives is wrong: if anyone says that Muhammad made the Arabs businessmen, he is wrong, and similarly wrong are those who say that Muhammad made the Arabs religious, or that he established for the first time a kingdom of Arabia. Muhammad grew to maturity in a world in which high finance and international politics were inextricably mixed up . . . while rival solidarity continued to govern the action of best people, yet a certain individualism began to make its appearance. The tendency to individualism away from tribal solidarity was fostered in Mecca by the circumstances of commercial life. . . . At the same time, there was an interesting new phenomenon in Mecca—the appearance of a sense of unity based on common material interests. In the rise of Mecca to wealth in power we have a movement from a nomadic economy to a mercantile and capitalist economy. By the time of Muhammad, however, there was no readjustment of the social, moral, intellectual and religious attitudes of the communities.”

III

The efforts of non-Muslim writers at belittling the reforms introduced in Arabia by the Prophet Muhammad

Some non-Muslim writers try to show that Islam was nothing but a kind of reform in the pre-Islamic Arabian religion and culture. They try to prove this on the basis of the traditions, customs and religious vocabulary of the pre-Islamic Arabs — namely Allah, Kabbah, Hajj, Umrah, etc. The highest deity of Arabs was called Allah. When the first treaty between the Meccans and Muhammad was being drafted Muhammad began it with the words, Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim (I begin with the name of God who is Beneficent and Merciful). The Meccans opposed it and asked him to write only Bismillah — I begin with the name of God, Muhammad had consented to it. The Kabbah was worshipped with a very high reverence by all Arabs. There was a kind of awe behind that name. They said that the Black Stone in it fell from the heavens. Observers now say that the stone was a small spark fallen from a passing meteor. The Kabbah enjoys the same dignity as well. It is the Qiblah for all prayers. The Hajj and Umrah are also the names of religious functions of Islam which came down from Ancient Arabia. The word ‘Umrah has retained its connotations also, namely encircling round the Kabbah. The connotation of the term Hajj is changed from a simple ceremony to a series of ceremonies which include 'Umrah as well.

“Pre-Islamic Arabia had no religion sufficiently organized to provide for any sort of ritual fasting. It knew only the abstinences from the food and wine that were imposed
by religious taboos, or adopted in consequence of individual vows."

Fasting and prayers, as has been said in the Qur'án, were commended to all the people in the past. The Sabaeans, Jews, and Christians observed them. Considering all such things, people like Robert Levy say, "Except for a few striking reforms affecting sexual relationships and the position of women, Muhammad had himself interfered little with the principles of the social system of his environment."

The same thing is being said on the religious ethical side. Pringle Kennedy says, "As to religion, Christianity and Judaism had by the Prophet's time permeated the country. The old beliefs were gradually wearing out. The Arab did indeed worship more gods than one . . . but Christianity, and more particularly Judaism, had got a great hold of the best and noblest of the people and the worship of the old Arabian God was waning. It was not polytheism so much as the pride and interest which caused the opposition of the Meccans to Muhammad. The Arab is not by nature a persecutor and, in Muhammad's earlier years after his entering upon the prophetic career, of persecution he had none; "Go your way and let us go our way" is what they practically said to him."

(To be continued)

21 M. G. Demombynes, Muslim Institutions, p. 102.
22 Sociology of Islam, p. 143.
23 Arabian Society, p. 5.
24 Mohomedanism, pp. 36 and 43.

What our Readers say...

ISLAM IN AFRICA
P.O. Box 5294,
Karachi-2, Pakistan.
10 February 1966.

Dear Sir,

I have read the letter of Mr. G. Neville-Bagot published under the caption of "West African Muslims" in The Islamic Review for July/August 1965, in which he has invited me "to clear up" the matter of the Muslim population in African countries.

1. Mr. Bagot has pointed out that the Premier of Gambia, Mr. D. K. Jawara, is a Christian, while some time ago I had read in the newspapers that he had accepted Islam. I would, however, like to get this confirmed by some reliable quarter. Another point connected with Gambia is the present correct estimate of its Muslim population. As has been mentioned in Islam in Africa by the reviewer of my book in The Islamic Review for July/August 1965, my estimated figures for 1962 were 71%: however, my later enquiries and researches have proved that the 1965 estimate of the Muslim population of Gambia is about 95%, which I am going to incorporate in my next book, Islamic Ideology and its Impact on Our Times (1966).

2. As regards the Muslim population of Sierra Leone, my revised estimate for 1965 is no less than over 45%: thus, it is evident that the figures quoted by me in Islam in Africa as 41% for 1962 were a serious under-estimate. I visited West Africa in 1956, where a pious Christian missionary friend of mine succeeded in misleading me and making me convinced of entering that under-estimate in my book. I have since, however, corrected myself.

3. The same is the case in Liberia, whose Muslim population given by me in Islam in Africa for 1962 as 10% was also a gross under-estimate. My latest research reveals that its 1965 estimate is about 33%.

4. Again, in the matter of the Ivory Coast, my serious under-estimate of only 15% for its Muslim population should be revised and corrected to be over 40% in 1965.

5. The latest estimated figures for the Muslim population in Ghana for 1965 are no less than 48%.

6. I agree entirely with the opinion of Mr. Neville-Bagot that the racial and religious troubles between the south and north of the Republic of the Sudan are due to the nefarious intrigues and machinations of Christian missionaries in the Southern Sudan, whose close reserve that part of the Sudan had been during the British administration.

7. As regards Somalia, I fully agree that no solid Muslim African support has been, unfortunately, available to her against the aggression of religiously bigoted and anti-Muslim Ethiopia, since opportunism and expediency, and not justice and fair play, are the order of the day in the Muslim countries of Africa now.

8. The same sad story is true in respect of Eritrea, whose overwhelmingly Muslim population is groaning under the autocratic rule of the Emperor Haile Selassie. The important African Muslim countries like the United Arab Republic, the Sudan, Guinea, Nigeria, Mali, Morocco, Algeria and others, have not yet raised their little finger to help their brethren either in Somalia or Eritrea — both of them are suffering from the aggression of Ethiopia.

9. Besides Ethiopia and Ghana, where the Muslims are oppressed, it is a matter of shame for so many independent African States that, even today, in their midst, African populations are victims of racialism, imperialism and colonialism in French Somaliland, Spanish possessions (Ifni, Rio de Oro and Rio Muni, etc.), Portuguese possessions (Guinea, Angola and Mozambique), South-West Africa (Republic of South Africa itself), and Southern Rhodesia. President Nkrumah of Ghana and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia are, among others, the two great enemies of Islam and oppressors of Muslims. In passing, I do not agree with Mr. Muhammad Sami'ullah's figures of "over 12 million Muslims" in Ethiopia, as mentioned by him in his letter published under the caption of "Muslims in Ethiopia" in The Islamic Review for July/August 1965. The total population of Ethiopia (1965 estimate) is not more than 16-18 million, and its Muslim population is not more than 46%.

The aforesaid figures are being quoted in my new book (under print), Islamic Ideology and its Impact on Our Times, 1966. I thank Mr. Neville Bagot again for having directed my attention to the matter that is of vital interest to the Muslim world, which needed clarification, and which is now under my active revision.

Yours sincerely,
(Professor Dd. MAHMUD BRELVI.)
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