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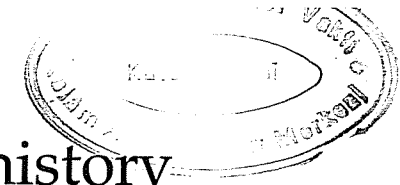
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Rethinking world history

ESSAYS ON EUROPE, ISLAM,
AND WORLD HISTORY

MARSHALL G. S. HODGSON

Edited, with an Introduction and Conclusion by
EDMUND BURKE, III



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popular tales and pious legend, which formed the substratum of much of the best prose, were nourished in part from Islamicate sources. Some of Dante's materials have been shown to bear striking analogies with certain Islamicate materials – notably some points in a description of Muhammad's ascent to Paradise – which were available in Italy at the time on the basis of translations from Spain. But here again, the heart neither of Dante's poem nor of the Occidental esthetic culture generally was seriously touched by the alien details. Probably in this realm also the most important consequence of the Islamicate presence was its challenge to the imagination.

By the end of the Earlier Middle Period, the Occident had become a significant force in the life of Islamdom. The Occidental efforts at conquest in the east Mediterranean has been mostly turned back, and they had been limited in the west Mediterranean to a line somewhat north of the Straits of Gibraltar, efforts to cross the seas having failed. For two centuries the Occident was not to advance again. But Occidental culture had become independent of Islamicate resources and had pulled abreast of the Islamicate in sophistication. The Occidentals of Italy and Spain retained the dominance over the Mediterranean seaways and their commerce which they had gained in the Earlier Middle Period. Thus they blocked in the west Mediterranean that expansion which characterized Islamdom everywhere else, and which elsewhere expressed and probably reinforced the genius of its social order.⁹

⁹ The most accessible study of Islamicate influence on the Occident is *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. Thomas Arnold and Arthur Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931). The "legacy" in question is not that to modern Muslims but that to the Occident, rather prematurely conceived as the heir to a moribund Islamdom. Not all the chapters are relevant to this theme, but many are. The best is by H. A. R. Gibb, "Literature," pp. 180–209, who brilliantly traces what influence can be found in Occidental literature. The chapter on the visual arts, Thomas Arnold, "Islamic Art and Its Influence on Painting in Europe," pp. 151–54, is also useful, but less discriminating as to what "influence" really means. H. G. Farmer has a useful chapter, "Music," pp. 356–75. The studies on the natural sciences, e.g., Max Meyerhof, "Science and Medicine," pp. 311–55, all suffer from the misapprehension that what can be traced into the Latin was substantially the whole of Islamicate science; this means that they leave untouched some serious questions about Occidental selectivity, but they are good as far as they go.

9

The unity of later Islamic history

Islamic civilization as an object of study

In a "history of mankind," Islamic civilization should be studied not only in the several regions where it flourished, but also as a historical whole, as a major element in forming the destiny of all mankind.¹ The vast Islamic society certainly has been this. Not only in the first centuries, but also in the later periods the fate of Islam is of world-wide import. This is true above all because its conscious hopes for a godly world order represent one of the most remarkable undertakings in history and because its less self-conscious general cultural heritage is laden with human values. But later Islamic history is important also for understanding how the current world situation came about. At the moment when the new life in the West was transforming the planet, the circumstances in which Islam as a whole found itself conditioned the affairs of half mankind and hence the possibilities open to them of response to the new West. Hence much of the significance of regional

¹ One of the very few serious analyses of the development of later Islamic civilization as a whole is that of H. A. R. Gibb, in the latter ages of the opening chapter of his *Mohammedanism: A Historical Survey* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962) cf. also his "An Interpretation of Islamic History," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, Vol. I, 30–62 (July, 1953), to which the present article is in effect a highly inadequate annex. I must explain that the approach here suggested has not been fully embodied, as of this writing (1957), in the paragraphs prepared for Volume Four, since they had to conform to a general outline which had unavoidably been drawn up from the perspective of local Western history. R. Brunschvig, pp. 56–59, in *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), gives a recent statement of some of the problems involved here. I believe that if one thinks in terms of a historical complex rather than in terms of some single categorizing principle, as he seems to try to do, the problem of delimiting Islamic civilization becomes less serious. At this point it should also be pointed out that, as English usage of the terms "Islamic" and "Muslim" is increasingly recognizing by assigning different meanings to the two terms, "Islamic" civilization has included both followers of the "Muslim" religion and followers of other faiths.

Islamic societies, such as those in the Near East or in India, lay in the part they played in determining the course of Islam as a whole. Islamic civilization in its later periods is enormously complex and diverse. But our problem is not just to find the common characteristics underlying the diversity, though this is important. It is to trace the ways in which elements either of unity or of diversity have been relevant to the fortunes of the civilization in its role in world history.

In the early centuries of Islam it is not hard to study the civilization as a whole, but this becomes increasingly difficult in the later periods. Even in the more strictly "religious" sphere, that of *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*, the difference in detail is obvious, for instance, between the Indian and the Arab or Turkish centers of Muslim learning. In the sphere of general culture, of institutions and of arts and letters, the diversity is very marked. Yet a common cultural heritage and a common cultivation of the Arabic and (in most areas) Persian languages, as well as a common attitude to the relation between society and religion, assured at least a minimum of interaction and continuity among the various Islamic regions; in all of which, accordingly, developments can be seen which are sometimes alike, sometimes related by their very contrasts. Identification with Islam as a creed, in an ever larger part of the globe, continued to carry with it the more or less full adoption of a vast body of cultural practices, itself varying not only from area to area but from century to century, yet constituting in all its diversity a civilization with in some degree its own single story.

I believe that one of the obstacles to the envisagement of this civilization as a whole has been what can be called in Arabistic bias. This is the most unfortunate of a series of biases which hamper Islamic studies. Islamists have naturally always approached their studies in terms of one or another special perspective, and Islamic history has been conceived in radically different ways according to the vantage point chosen. Each vantage point has had its own limiting effect. Those who have approached it from the point of view of its relations with Western Europe have recalled the two waves of conquest launched in their own direction, and have tended to divide Islamic history into an Arab and a Turkish phase; or rather, as a closer acquaintance with Ottoman culture laid bare something of the internal development, into a sequence of Arab, Persian, and Ottoman phases. Such an approach informs the selection of data in Brockelmann's *Geschichte der islamischen Völker*. A Russian point of view is illustrated in Barthold's little volume on Islamic culture, which traces a sequence from Arabic and Persian to the Turkish not so

much of the Ottomans as of Central Eurasia.² From a third vantage point, that of scholars in India, British or Muslim, the phases are more naturally Arabic, Persian, and Indo-Muslim. The Arabistic bias is analogous to that of these other three viewpoints. Arabs, and also Western scholars who as Semitists or for other reasons concentrate on the original centers of Islam, often stop short with only an Arab phase; they tend to see the whole civilization as suffering eclipse after a first few centuries of Arab glory, at least 'till the revival of Arab independence in modern times. Since one or another such partial viewpoint is implicit in practically every treatment of broad-gauge problems in Islamic studies, there has resulted a certain vicious circle: for want of a satisfactory general perspective, the historical position of Islam has been obscured, and want of a sense of the historical position has reinforced the tendency to narrow perspectives.

These different viewpoints are often so unconsciously taken for granted that they lead to curious misstatements. Thus I have read in an Indian work that after the Mongol conquests in Iran the last refuge of Islamic civilization, the one unconquered court to which the Muslim scholars flocked, was Delhi.³ On the other hand, we often read in the work of Arabists that after the same conquest the only refuge was Egypt.⁴

Some degree of distortion is no doubt scarcely avoidable. But this latter Arabistic twist, which disregards the more easterly Muslims, is, I believe, unusually baneful. Examples of petty factual errors arising from it are unpleasantly numerous.⁵ More important is the fact that it arises from

² V. Barthold, *Musulman Culture* (Tr. S. Suhrawardy, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1934), especially pp. 117 ff.

³ A. B. M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1945), p. 155.

⁴ E.g., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, p. 153-154, "then [after the Mongol catastrophe] all orthodoxy flowed back into Egypt," the political structure of which is then described as representing the Muslim east, in contrast to "the Muslim west" after the Almohads. When study is restricted to these two exceptional cases, centralized Egypt and backward North Africa, it is not surprising that Islamic society after the Mongol invasion receives disappointingly little analysis. Cf. C. Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, tr. Carmichael and Perlmann (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), p. 234, where some Arab countries are also ignored.

⁵ The writer just cited in *Unity and Variety* allows himself to say – at least with a certain consistency – that the Saljuqs joined together "all of Muslim Asia with the exception of the corners of Arabia" – overlooking Ghazna and Sind and Multan (p. 152). Another writer in the same representative volume, typically considering the Arab west on a more detailed scale than the rest of Islam, says curiously that "neither Greek nor Pahlevi, nor Aramaic nor Coptic held out against [Arabic]. Only Berber and Latin [and in one sense Persian] persisted" – making one think immediately of Kurdish, Armenian, and other

certain deeply rooted attitudes and so is not readily self-corrective. As Westerners we have tended to admit Islam into "world history" only at the point where it impinges (with the Arabs in Frankish Gaul, and later in medieval Spain) most deeply upon the development of our own West. This initial preoccupation with the Arabs was joined to a natural interest in the "pure" Islam of the original Muslims, with the result that Islamists have tended to include as really Islamic at most developments of the first three or four glorious centuries, when Arabic was unchallenged as a language of culture. Hence there has arisen a usually unspoken equivalence between the terms "Arabic" and "Islamic," which is as unfair to Christian and Jewish Arabs as to the overwhelming majority of non-Arab Muslims. It is not uncommon for an article in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* on a given institution, festival, or architectural form, or even for a book, say, on Islamic art, to be written as if the subject were practically limited to Arab countries even in the later Islamic centuries.⁶ On the other hand, the millennia of pre-Islamic Arabian history are subsumed, by an accident of philology, under the banner of Islam. The cumulative distortion that results is unintentional but nonetheless effective.⁷

popular or learned tongues from Georgia to Sind, which deserve to rank at least with Berber! (p. 208).

⁶ Cf. *E.I.* on *maristan*, *mawlid*, *madrassa*, *masjid*, etc. To be sure, in many cases the writer gladly included any information from outside of Egypt or North Africa which came to his attention. Occasionally one finds evidence of an interesting attitude that might be called neo-Umayyad, implying that the name "Muslim" is merely a latter-day honorific of the Arabs, and that non-Arab Muslims are joining as clients and at the last minute a tradition which reaches unbrokenly back to the Sabaeen kings – hence only Arabs are truly "Muslims," the others are "islamisés"; in the *E.I.* article on Malays, Arab influence is reckoned as Islamic *despite* the fact that it came in a Persian form! It is not surprising that some laymen will take from the shelf a "History of the Arabs" when they want to learn about Islamic history, perhaps in order to understand Pakistan! To be sure, in the reaction against Sufism and the Persian cultural tradition, many modern Muslims abet this attitude.

⁷ A certain defense of ignoring Islam east of the Iranian highlands – though the majority of all Muslims now live in those eastern areas – is offered by Sauvaget, in his *Introduction à l'histoire de l'orient musulman* (Paris: Maisonneuve 1946), pp. 13–14; that the culture of the "outlying" territories (in which he includes India) has not been formed so exclusively by Islam; or that at least they have been merely passive, not actively creative. Such a position raises problems in the definition of a civilization as a proper object of historical study, and it might be suggested that not only few Islamic lands, but few ages (perhaps not even the earliest age of Islam) offer the cultural homogeneity combined with fresh creativity which Sauvaget demands. But in any case, his stated distinction does not make sense. Though the Malaysian countries, or even Bengal, might be excluded by his criteria, it is surely arbitrary to omit the Punjab or even the Gangetic plain, where so much distinctively Islamic thought and action has originated. Sauvaget reveals his actual reason for omitting most of the truly eastern territories of Islam when he makes an east-west division of Islam in which Egypt and Turkey appear as "eastern." Egypt can indeed be ranked among the eastern *Arabs*, though it lies west of Mecca. But only if Islam and the Arabs are identified can Egypt be ranked as "eastern" in *Islam*.

The expansion of Islam as a world-historical phenomenon

This Arabistic emphasis has contributed to one conception which has been peculiarly unfortunate from the standpoint of the problems of later Islamic history. The phrase "expansion of Islam" is commonly identified with the great expansion of the Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, that is, with the establishment of the Arab empire in the seventh and early eighth centuries of our era. Here it designates the quite rapid conquest by the Arabs, under the aegis of incipient Islam, of territories most of which were then or had been previously already linked together under either the Roman or the Persian empire and were in some measure assimilated culturally to the two empires whose decline gave the Arabs their opportunity. From the point of view of the civilization, this is not so much an *expansion* of Islam as the carving out of its *initial domain*. Whatever may have been the case with Islam as a religion, there was certainly no question yet of the expansion of an Islamic civilization in the full sense. In the first years of the Arab empire the prevailing civilizations continued to be Hellenistic-Christian and Sassanian, while the pre-Islamic Arab culture of the ruling class was only gradually Islamized, either in Arabia or elsewhere. When within two or three generations the original frontiers of Islam had been substantially fixed, there followed a period of three centuries of practically no expansion at all, during which the various peoples within the original limits were combining to build up the Muslim religion and the Islamic civilization of history. Islam now ceased to be the code of a ruling class and became the many-sided of whole populations and the core of a new and distinctive civilization.

But there did come a time when one can speak of the "expansion of Islam" as a full-fledged civilization. From about 1000 on, the territory of the Muslim faith and of its associated culture expanded unceasingly in almost every direction (and indeed the faith continues to do so, not only in the Old World but in the New). By the sixteenth century the area of Dar al-Islam had almost tripled. This is the most important single fact about the Islamic society as a whole in its later periods, at least from the point of view of its interaction in world history.⁸

⁸ As can be seen from a map, alongside the main bloc of lands from Transoxania through Syria and Egypt can be set, as areas of roughly the same order in size, that to the northwest in Anatolia and Europe, and again that to the east and south in Turkestan and India; Spain and the Maghrib find their equivalent in eastern Africa and again in Malaysia; Arabia – in the Sahara and the Sudan. (The notion of *dar al-Islam* has been liberally interpreted, as by Muslims themselves, to include areas lately under Muslim rule and

This expansion, especially before 1800, had two major world-historical features. In the first place, from the eleventh until the nineteenth century Islam was par excellence the region to which the less civilized peoples of the Old World were converted as they were brought within the horizon of urban civilization, whether in sub-Saharan Africa, in Malaysia, in Central Eurasia, or even some backward borderlands of China and India. Only in relatively limited areas did Buddhism, Christianity, and in a measure Hinduism rival it. Indeed, so powerful was the Muslim appeal that, unlike the others, it was even able to make large-scale advances in territory where another major religion had prevailed. Its initial territory, of course, had been largely converted from Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. But even later it advanced, for instance, into Europe among the Christians of Anatolia and the Balkans, into several regions in Hindu India, and among Buddhists and Hindus in Indonesia and even Indochina.⁹ Among "primitive" peoples its preeminence was unrivalled 'till the advent of Christianity, especially in the nineteenth century, with unprecedented new cultural advantages; and even then Islam continued to be a formidable competitor for the allegiance of the uncommitted, whether in Siberia or Africa or Malaysia.

The second world-historical feature of the great Islamic expansion is that, despite its unexampled dispersion throughout the Eastern Hemisphere – in Europe, Africa, India, China, Central Eurasia, and the Far South East – Islam maintained not only religious but even some measure of social bonds among its scattered communities. In this way it came closer than any other medieval society to establishing a common world order of social and even cultural standards, such as was in fact accomplished in some respects after the advent of European world hegemony in the nineteenth century. And though it failed to establish such a hegemony in the world as a whole, it succeeded in some measure in a very crucial sector of the world – the whole basin of the Indian Ocean; including the Indian subcontinent, where large Hindu populations accepted Muslim rule and where even the Marathas, when they reestablished Hindu kingdoms, commonly continued to recognize the suzerainty of the Muslim

still carrying an Islamic coloring.) The map, designed to bring out the crucial world position of Islam, is of course on an equal-area projection; the sense of proportion is quite lost if the Mercator's projection is used – a projection practically tailor-made to reinforce Western prejudices and which unhappily still appears not only in many scholars' books but also, all too obviously, in their thinking.

⁹ It has come near obliterating Hinduism outside India; cf. on the fate of the ancient Hindu Cham people of Indochina, P. Rondot, "Notes sur les Chams Bani du Binh Thuan," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 1949, p. 18.

Mongol emperors and the excellence of the Indo-Muslim culture which centered at the Mogul court.¹⁰

It was therefore above all with Islamic powers that the Europeans wrestled when they took over control of the "Indies trade" and eventually of the Old World generally; and the traces of this fact are visible, sometimes directly and sometimes in devious ways, all over the face of modern world politics. The delicate relations between the British and the Indian Muslims, whom they supplanted, account for much of the involved sequence which led to the foundation of Pakistan, for instance.¹¹ The unpredictable role of Islam in the Soviet empire, and the availability to Negro Africa of a longstanding alternative to the West as it seeks orientation in the wider world, are both cases in point. Above all there is the unique role of vague but potent pan-Islamic sentiments in the non-Western non-Communist zone, the African-Asian zone of the "neutralists" – just the area in which Islam once had near hegemony. Even India, the greatest non-Muslim state in the area, cannot but take into account the sentiments of its very considerable and well-placed Muslim minority.

The expansion of Islam was, then, of first-rate importance in the historical development of the whole hemisphere, and so deserves special consideration in any history of mankind. Also from the point of view of Islamic history as such, it was an immense performance and one with far-reaching ideological implications. Hence the study of the problems posed within Islam by the expansion and by the centrifugal tendencies it occasioned is one of the chief concerns which requires us to envisage Islamic history as a whole. As Gibb has pointed out,¹² the expansion had a great deal to do with the role of Sufism as an element of social structure and hence even in the integration of intellectual life. To a lesser degree it likewise affected the outcome of the Persian inspiration which was so prominent in the setting of esthetic and even to a certain point, political standards, but which could not in the end impose itself on all the far-flung centers of Islamic influence.

¹⁰ The Muslim-Hindu symbiosis extended even to Vijayanagar. Cf., e.g. H. K. Sherwani, "Culture and Administrative Set-up Under Ibrahim Qutb-Shah," *Islamic Culture*, XXXI (1957), 127–141. As is suggested by the British use of the Persian language in India and by their designation of the period preceding themselves there as the "Mohammedan period" of its history, not only the lands of Muslim majorities but the whole area between Christian Europe and the Confucian Far East (that is, the greater part of the chief seats of history) tended to strike early Europeans as "Moorish" territory, for Muslims tended to dominate the most significant spots: coasts and capitals. Hinduism and Theravada Buddhism functioned almost as enclaved religions for a time.

¹¹ This is brought out clearly, for instance, in Wilfred Cartwell Smith's *Modern Islam in India* (London: V. Gollancz, 1946).

¹² *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago, 1947), p. 25.

Contrasts between later and earlier periods in historical character

Before we go further into the characteristics of later Islamic civilization, we must venture a periodization which will help us to inventory the field and to recall the most important temporal contrasts in it. Taking as our cue the changes in the conditions faced by Islam in its expansion, we can make a break about 1000, when the expansion began; about 1250, at the Mongol crisis, when the central Islamic lands learned to bear non-Muslim rule; about 1500, when commercial control of the Indian Ocean passed from Muslim to Western hands; and about 1800, when Western world hegemony was established. Such a periodization, needless to say, is not meant to be exact; the breaks must all be read as plus or minus a generation or so. Nor has it any metaphysical status. Every analysis must in principle periodize for itself, taking into account not only shifts in relevant social and cultural patterns but also the character of the sources for study, such as the languages used or the type of document available. Nevertheless, the fact that all these breaks have world-historical implications make them peculiarly appropriate for purposes of general orientation.

In this sequence of periods, those after 1000 differ markedly from the earliest period as to the way in which Islam could be said to form a single civilization during the period and hence as to the sort of treatment the period requires for our purposes. This contrast must be clear if we are to conceive the historical unity of the later periods adequately.

It is of course futile to try to mark a particular moment when any new civilization appears – when, in this case, the new pattern of culture formed around the Muslim faith can first be set in unmistakable contrast to the major civilizations among which the Muslim religion was cradled; but in this case the time limits of that appearance are closely drawn. In nucleo, the new cultural pattern certainly existed no earlier than the day when Muhammad won his first convert, who entered into a novel form of relationship with him; or rather, perhaps, when a full-fledged political body, with its distinctive forms of behavior, was set up at the *hijra*. Even this date is too early. Within every civilization there are innumerable such local sub-cultures; to proclaim a new independent civilization, one prefers to wait till the recasting in Islamic terms of the leading aspects of Middle Eastern culture has clearly made a beginning. But this is already the case by the end of Umayyad times, and perhaps already in the

generation of Abd al-Malik.¹³ We can take, then, 700 CE as a round number (as always, plus or minus a generation!) for the start of the first major period of Islamic civilization.

One could, to be sure, construct a period of genesis, reaching far back, in retrospect, into both the Arabian and the general Middle Eastern pre-Islamic past; a period very important for some purposes. But it is the three centuries from about 700 to about 1000 which form the first period of full-fledged Islamic civilization, and which are to be contrasted to the later periods. It can be called the period of classical Abbasid civilization (though at its beginning and at its end, after 945, the Abbasids, were not ruling), since it is with the Abbasid capital that we associate its characteristic cultural life. This differed in two ways from that of all the later periods. In the first place, it was the culture of very nearly a single state, the Caliphate, with a single language of culture, Arabic, and was limited rather sharply geographically; that is, more or less to the Middle East, with certain extensions. It had a preeminent center of cultural formation, in Iraq, which was already at least as creative as Syria in Umayyad times, and which continued to be not only the cultural but the political center of gravity until well into the tenth century. In part because of this fact, the civilization was relatively homogeneous over all its area, and in particular possessed the sort of unity that makes for a straightforward narrative; the want of which is felt keenly in tracing the developments of later periods.

A second contrast is equally important in the opposite sense. The background of the classical Abbasid period is anything but single, and the most prominent cultural activity is that of weaving into a new whole diverse heritages: the Hellenistic and the Christian, the Jewish, the Iranian, and the Jahiliyya Arabian. It is a time of active integration and the study of each of the various strands in the cultural complex presupposes, as background, its own separate antecedents. In the later periods the main body of the heritage is already given as a whole, and cultural activity is a matter of multiplication and differentiation rather than of integration. The student must begin his studies with an acquaintance with a common background dating from classical Abbasid times and be prepared to work out its varying implications in different situations.

Perhaps a third, related contrast should be added, which is not a

¹³ Cf. R. Blachère, "Regards sur l'acculturation des Arabo-Musulmans jusque vers 40/661," *Arabica*, III (1956), 247–265. Cf. Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, I, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 20 ff.

matter of the historical texture of the periods so much as of their human significance, but which influences study. That is, the classical Abbasid period is rich in fresh thinking and cultural experimentation, whereas the great work of succeeding periods more often takes the form of a deepening of established traditions. It is as yet too soon to know how much the sense we have of decadence in these later periods is a product of our current tastes. But in any case we readily find brilliant times the most congenial to study, and neglect less brilliant times which may be equally significant in our destiny.

The period from the fall of Abbasid power in the tenth century to the establishment of Mongol power in the thirteenth corresponds roughly to what in Europe is called the High Middle Ages, and fully deserves the same name in Islam, as the age of Firdawsi, Ghazali, Saladin, Ibn al-Arabi, and Sadi. Its historical characteristics already contrast fully with those cited for the classical Abbasid period. During it the expansion of Islam is well launched – both into Byzantine territory and into northern India, as well as in less prominent areas such as across the Sahara. At the same time, creative cultural centers become numerous, including, notably, Spain and Khurasan. A second language of culture, the Persian, matured. It is already impossible to trace the story of Islam in terms of any one political or geographical center; even the Saljuq empire during its brief span of prominence, significant as was its role in the development of the pattern of relations between the military and the *ulama*, had limited significance for the farther east, for Egypt, and for the farther west. After 1100, the story in every aspect of culture is unmitigatedly many-centered. Moreover, the most important cultural developments presuppose a common matrix of living tradition. The rise of the Sufi *tariqas* for instance, revolutionary as it is for the whole spiritual outlook of the culture, presupposes the social cohesion guaranteed by the *sharia*. Likewise the development of Persian poetry builds on an esthetic basis common to all Islam. The sort of historical unity to be found – one of common heritage and of interrelated problems, rather than one of common activity based on diverse heritages – is already the reverse of that of Abbasid times.

This continues to be the case throughout the later Islamic periods. If 1000–1250 can be called the High Middle Ages, then 1250–1500 is properly the Late Middle Ages, as continuing in a less brilliant way most of the cultural trends developed in the preceding period. Then follows an age remarkably dissimilar, that of the three great empires, Ottoman, Safavid, and Mogul, roughly 1500–1800. It is these latter two periods

which fall into the scope of Volume Four.⁴⁴ In both of these later periods, as in the case of the High Middle Ages, the Islamic developments presuppose an established cultural foundation upon which many centers are building in various ways, but interrelatedly and hence without a full break in the unity of the Islamic society. The later Islamic periods cannot be studied as one does the fresh emergence of a civilization, nor can they be reduced to a neat unilinear story. Yet, like other fields of large-scale history, they have aspects that can and must be appropriately studied in broad terms. (That is, of course, merely to say that Islamic history, in the greater part of its course, is typical of civilized history. Some should like to study only “integrated” societies. But the creation of a new civilization is a rare thing, and even more rare is the establishment of a relatively self-sufficient, self-perpetuating cultural pattern, such as that of ancient Egypt or that of post-classical China, as a fairly stable institution whole over a long period. The Islamic cultures were not isolated enough to achieve this, being in the midst of world history, as it were, which would not let them alone.)

The apolitical character of the Late Middle Ages

There are in particular two tendencies that can be traced from the point of view of the role of Islam in the world at large. On the one hand, a pattern was being built up which was leading to an international Islamic order over perhaps the greater part of the civilized world; a most important aspect of this process was the expansion of Islam. This tendency was clearly developing in the high medieval period and was predominant in the late medieval period, till at least 1500; and it continued to be effective after that date. On the other hand, many aspects of the Islamic cultures were becoming increasingly inconsistent, or so it would seem, with such a single international Islamic order; and this second tendency became the stronger of the two in the period of the three empires, after 1500.

⁴⁴ The periodization here ventured, it will be seen, is as follows:

- before 700: period of genesis
- 700–1000: classical Abbasid period
- 1000–1250: high Middle Ages
- 1250–1500: late Middle Ages
- 1500–1800: period of the three empires
- since 1800: modern period.

It is clear that such a periodization has rather different ends in view from a division say, into Medina period, Umayyad period, Abbasid period, Mongol period.

The Late Middle Ages opened with vital parts of the Dar al-Islam under pagan rule. This fact symbolized the character the Dal al-Islam was to bear throughout the period. With the end even of the claim of the Baghdad Caliphate to general sovereignty, Islam was now frankly decentralized even in theory as it had long been in practice: what is more, the decentralized society could not depend on even local governments for its survival, but must make its own way.

In the High Middle Ages political powers – the reforming Almoravids and Almohads in the far west, the Sunna-supporting Saljuqs and Ayyubids, the early Delhi Sultanate whose Turkish and Islamic dignity is portrayed by Barani,¹⁵ even the quixotic Muhammad Khwarazm-shah – commonly expressed some sort of Islamic political idea. The split between civil and military life had begun, indeed, but politics was not dead. Particularly in the older Islamic lands, this seems to be rarely the case in the Late Middle Ages except in some frontier states. Although the Mongols were soon converted, the prestige of their states continued to rest on a pagan past. Other dynasties could boast even less a political idea. The Marinids and Hafsids with whom Ibn-Khaldun had to do are politically soulless. The Mamluks of Egypt maintained a centralized state solely, it would appear, because the form of Egypt almost forced them to. The Turkomans of the Black Sheep and the Turkomans of the White Sheep offer the classic cases of nomads turned military rulers, and are served by no Nizam-al-Mulk.¹⁶ Timur is the classical case of an irresponsible Muslim conqueror. Even India, after Tughluq and Bahmani times, is a congeries of independent provincial powers, few of which distinguish themselves. To be sure, the structure of many of these states (for instance, the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria) is of considerable interest. But as regards positive historical policy, the popular state of the Sarbadars of Sabzawar in Iran appears to be almost a unique exception. Characteristically, it was dominated by Shi'ite Sufi *shaykhs*. Almost everywhere political boundaries, never fundamental within the Dar al-Islam, were of even less importance in this period than ever before or after. Unless future research discloses unsuspected highlights, we must feel that precisely in the Late Middle Ages politics became as irrelevant as they ever have been in any civilized society. Such a state of affairs is reflected by the political thought of the period,

¹⁵ Diya-al-Din Barani, *Tarikh-e Firuz shahi* (Lahore: Sind Sagor Academy, 1974), pp. 36–38, 43–45.

¹⁶ Contrast the unpolitical role of Dawwani, author of the *Akhlaq-e Jalali*, in Walter Hinz, *Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat* (Berlin, 1936), p. 115.

which apparently abandoned all hope of forming political life according to its norms.¹⁷

Yet as a social order, Islam continued to gain territory, as well as a more complete adherence within territory already gained. The faith, with its culture, was able to use the most diverse means. Sometimes the advance was by conversion of rulers: thus the Mongols of Iran and of Transoxania adopted the religion of the majority of their subjects, while the Mongols of the Golden Horde were converted although at best only a fraction of their subjects were Muslims. Sometimes it was by the expansion of strong frontier powers. From early in the fourteenth century, when most of India south of the Ganges was conquered by the Delhi Sultanate, the Deccan continued under Muslim rulers; at the same time the Balkans were conquered and held by the Ottomans: in each area converts were attracted by the prestige and privilege of the new faith. Sometimes the expansion was more through individual penetration of populations by merchants and mystics, or through the rise to power of Muslim adventurers, as in Kashmir, where the dynasty became Muslim before most of the people. In one way or another, Islam continued to advance in the Sudan, and spread both on the East African coast and in Malaysia, so that most of the Indian Ocean trade with the Middle East (and hence Europe) came to be in Muslim hands. It was evidently at this time that Islam gained its strong foothold in Yunnan and other parts of China. During the period, Muslim rule receded seriously only in the far south of India and at the western end of the Mediterranean; otherwise, Islamic power kept increasing till the end of the fifteenth century, when Islam was far the most widespread of the great religions. Moreover despite its wide extension it did not lose its social cohesion; a Muslim was accepted as fellow-citizen everywhere from Morocco to China, as Ibn Battuta's travels are always brought forward to show.

Whether conquered or conquering, and even in areas remote from the original Abbasid territories, Islam consistently improved its position during this apparently apolitical period. In northern Africa, in the Middle East, in south and southeast Eurasia, Islam showed itself the most dynamic social order even where non-Muslims were in the majority. We do not know why this was. It has been suggested, as by Professor Muham-

¹⁷ It is precisely in this period that the most despairing doctrines of the *imamate* were formed. That these are to be thought of as a particular phase, rather than as an end-product even in the Arabic zone, is pointed out by H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), Vol. I, Part 1, p. 34.

mad Habib,¹⁸ that at least in India this reflected the relative social mobility encouraged by Muslim principles. Certainly it reflects considerable social and cultural flexibility, appropriate to Medieval mercantile and political conditions. Almost without exception, the Islamization of new areas begins with the cities, among the more cosmopolitanly minded. Only gradually does it spread into the countryside.¹⁹

The Tariqa as the pivotal late medieval institution

In any case, religiously oriented orders independent of the official politics and culture – that is, above all Sufi *tariqas* or brotherhoods – played a major role in articulating the society. The *tariqas* had been forming before the Mongol assaults, but it is probably only in the Late Middle Ages that, as a normally adopted institutional form of religion, they came to the point of really dominating the religious scene. There is a long distance between Ghazali, pioneering for Sufi respectability before Sufi's had yet formed into the historic *tariqas* and Ibn-Taymiyya, whose anti-Sufi doctrine two centuries later was like a voice crying in the wilderness. To be sure, the *tariqas* were not everywhere triumphant. In Delhi in parts of the fourteenth century, for instance, even the main orders dared not raise their heads.²⁰ But even then they retained their power in the provinces. The vitality of such organizations is indicated by their role in the most effective political structure of the period, the Ottoman state being built in Byzantine Europe. The *ghazi* or *akhi* organizations which apparently provided much of the social base of the early Ottoman state, if they were not regular *tariqas*, had similar characteristics, as popular religious groups independent of state or *ulama* and with widespread affiliations of their own; in time they seem to have merged into the *tariqas*, as the more usual organizational form of the period. The Safawiyya *tariqa* in Azerbaijan seems to have had similar *ghazi* characteristics, which also, later, issued in a state.

Outwardly, to be sure, the vast Islamic society was held together by the common recognition of the sacred law, the *sharia*, on the basis of the

¹⁸ Introduction to the new edition of Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vol. II (Aligarh: Cosmopolitan Publishers, 1952).

¹⁹ In the Sudan, for instance, a considerable degree of civilization – as in the pagan empire of Ghana – seems ordinarily to precede Islamization; and within an Islamized area, it is the rules and urban centers that first accept Islam. Cf. Likewise, on the role of the mixed city populations in the Islamization of Anatolia, C. Cahen, "Le problème ethnique en Anatolie," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1954), especially p. 355.

²⁰ This development has been studied by Sayyid Nurul-Hasan, unpublished thesis, "Chishtī and Suhrawardī Movements in Medieval India," 1948.

provisions of which every Muslim had his assured status, and knew what to expect of others, both in point of law in the narrower sense, and in that wider range of social relations which includes etiquette. This system of law and ethics had been established in detail by the close of the classical Abbasid period and was regarded as universally binding on Muslims. It was self-perpetuating, its experts (the *ulama*) requiring no official appointment. The variations in its application by persistence of extra-*sharia* law and custom almost everywhere limited its effectiveness, yet it secured sufficient uniformity to allow a large degree of mobility and intercourse throughout the Dar al-Islam.

But bereft of the context of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, the *sharia* does not seem to have provided an adequate spiritual vision in itself for most men. It was Sufi as it was embodied in the *tariqas* that provided a common framework of personal piety. The mystically inclined, of course, found strength and guidance in the common discipline of the *khanaqah*, where followers of a given *tariqa* gathered under the leadership of a *shaykh* for spiritual exercises, or even lived as full-time devotees. Ascetics could find support in some *tariqas*, and those inclined to cosmological speculation found the name of a *tariqa* to be an almost sure defense against bigoted hostility. Those who sought God through powerful personalities revered a pious living *shaykh*, or adored the tomb of a famous dead one; for the *khanaqahs* were commonly associated with such tombs. Finally, the simple villager with only an occasional interest in religion found the way open to transfer his ancestral superstitious or devotional usages to a Muslim *shaykh* alive or dead.

The *tariqas* were adapted to every situation. In the cities they informed the social life of the artisans, and eventually guilds came to be associated with *tariqas* as naturally as with patron saints. For townsmen and peasants alike their tombs, as shrines, became centers for pilgrimage and marketing. Above all, it seems to have been the Sufis who were the most effective missionaries in areas newly opened up to Muslim influence.²¹ In the late Middle Ages the *tariqa* form of Sufism offered a richly varied and broadly tolerant spiritual atmosphere which was as flexible in its organization as was the *sharia* itself, and an effective complement to it in holding together the far-flung Islamic society.

Accordingly, the great issues of the time are far removed from those of the classical Abbasid period. General acceptance of the end of *ijihad* –

²¹ Largely devoted to this thesis is the book that has done most to analyze the expansion of Islam, but in a piecemeal fashion, Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Constable, 1913).

which implied that further schools of *sharia* law were not to be developed, and that the recognized schools were no longer subject to basic changes – hallowed the amicable truce that was by and large maintained among the different schools of the *ulama*. It became common to teach the several schools of law under a single roof, a practice only partially established in the High Middle Ages. This was the great age of the *madrasas*, whose standardized character reflects the relatively uncontroversial character of their teaching.

The distinction between Shi'ites and Sunnites was more important. The Shi'ites formed a minority almost everywhere, a majority only in a few limited localities. Yet Shi'ite ideas had entered widely into Sufi lore; several *tariqas*, for instance, significantly traced their origin to Ali. Moreover, explicitly Shi'ite groups found it expedient to appear in the form of *tariqas*, even though at least the Twelve Shi'ite *ulama* did not generally accept the validity of Sufism as did most Sunnite *ulama*. The Bektashi order, prominent in the Ottoman domains, is one case. The remains of the Ismaili Shi'ite movement, after the downfall of the Ismaili state as a result of the Mongol conquest, took the outward form of a Sufi *tariqa* to avoid persecution, with the *imam* in the guise of a *shaykh*; this was not merely an outward adaptation, but corresponded to an inner sympathy with late medieval Sufism.

The issues, then, became largely controversies within and among the *tariqas*. The *tariqas* were numerous and varied. The most important had already been established by the end of the thirteenth century; during all late medieval times the number of orders steadily increased, most often by the setting off of new branches rather than by the establishment of new independent *tariqas*. The orders differed greatly among themselves, often standing for quite diverse approaches to the problems of the time. There were not only differences between the "urban" and "rustic" orders, the former being more sophisticated and conforming more to the *sharia*, but among the "urban" orders themselves. Thus of the two great *tariqas* of India during this period, the Suhrawardiyya tended to stand for greater orthodoxy in handling the *sharia*, and for readier acceptance of government office than did the more ascetic Chishtiyya.²² Some orders, notably the Bektashiyya, seem to have catered in their cult to the non-Islamic customs of peoples newly won to Islam; some catered to the popular desire for wonders, such as the Sadiyya in Egypt. They differed also in their hospitality to mystical speculation; and in their attitude to

²² Yusuf Husain, *L'Inde mystique au moyen âge* (Paris, 1929), p. 147 ff., tries to show that the Chishtis worked especially for Hindu-Muslim rapprochement.

the way of life of the members, whether celibacy was recommended or not, whether the full-time devotees should be chiefly wandering or gathered into convents. Thus the Khalwatiyya of Turkey demanded of each member a long retreat by himself once a year. Some orthodox orders asserted their freedom from the whole *sharia* law. The Qalandars, who were recognized as a *tariqa*, were antinomian devotees who seem to have rejected for the most part the institutionalization even of Sufism. Most of the *tariqa* life was limited to men, but in this period there were some convents founded for women also.²³

These *tariqas* must have offered a great deal of social flexibility to the expanding Islam. Most *tariqas* tended to be associated with one or another region – the Shadhiliyya belonged to western Africa and Egypt, the Rifaiyya was centered in Iraq and the east-Arab lands, and the Kubrawiyya in Iran. An order like the Ahmadiyya was still more localized, being restricted almost to Egypt, where it was, however, very important. But *khanqaqs* of any *tariqa* might be found far from home, and individuals tended to travel widely. A *tariqa* like the Naqshbandiyya was very widespread in Iranian and Turkish lands, and the Qadiriyya was most widespread of all, though remaining centered in Baghdad at its founder's tomb. Among them the *tariqas*, which by the end of the High Middle Ages had come to form a network covering all the Dar al-Islam, offered fellowship and hospitality to an enormous number of specialists in Islamic culture. Moreover, the notorious tolerance of other faiths by many Sufis cannot but have eased the acceptance of Muslim rule among all groups.

It can be suggested that they offered more even than this toward the cohesion of the Islamic society. Islam is par excellence the social, even the political religion. Since the time of the Madina Caliphate it has been unable to fulfill its goal of a social order in which the religious and the political aspects shall be one. But the aspiration could not be laid aside by seriously pious Muslims. It might, however, be transformed. The *ulama* never ceased to think of the ideal unity of Islam in terms of a *khalifa*, a Caliph ruling a human empire. The Sufis made much of a very different sort of *khalifa*, the human being who as perfected microcosm is the final end of, and holds limitless sway over, the world of nature and men together. He is a Muslim, and exercises his power largely upon and through Muslims (the Abdal); but there is a recognized place under his care for the believers in every faith however crude, not only peoples of the Book as in the historical Caliphate, but outright pagans. The kings

²³ L. Massignon, article *tariqa* in *E.I.*

who come and go are but the servants of such a saint, as many beloved anecdotes make clear; no Caliph had such power over his governors as the Sufi *shaykhs*, and especially the supreme *shaykh*, the Qutb of any given time, had over the earth's rulers. (That no-one really knew who was the Qutb in his own days only served to make his power the more awesome.)

The notion of the Qutb who, with all the *shaykhs* his assistants, continuously kept order in the world, is more than a piece of popular superstition; it is also more than a deduction from a subtle cosmology. It has serious social implications. The stories told of Abd-al-Qadir – whose foot was on the neck of every other saint – are no doubt in part the result of the ardent loyalty to their *tariqa* of the Qadiriyya *shaykhs*. That the leader of the Suhrawardiyya in India should be called Makhdum-e Jahaniyan – “he whom all worldlings serve” – no doubt in part reflects the imperious personality of the man. When the mild and saintly Nizam-al-Din Awliya told the story of the saint who, flying over a greater saint's *khanaqah*, failed to show respect and so was thrown to the ground by that saint's power, he wanted in part to teach his listeners humility.²⁴ But the notion which all these stories embody, of the invisible hierarchy of the *shaykhs* of the *tariqas* and their invisible government of the world, is an inescapably political one. It is as if the Sufi *tariqas*, in an age when it was no longer feasible for a single conventional government to give unity to the whole of Islam, were able to offer not only a flexible element of social order, but also a correspondingly elastic sense of all-Islamic political unity.

The Arabic and Persian zones: Late medieval intellectual life

The social expansiveness of the Late Middle Ages was accompanied by a tendency to codification and conventionalization in most spheres of cultural life. Again we do not know why (It cannot be entirely blamed on the existence of *madradas*, which after all could and often did provide a wide range of training.) But it does seem likely that this fact made it easier for the *tariqas* to perform such functions as they did perform in integrating the Islamic society. On the one hand, as Gibb has pointed out, a rigid maintenance of orthodoxy was required in the religious sphere to counterbalance the laxity of the Sufis and the animism of many of the new converts.²⁵ For after all the *tariqas* presupposed, and were

²⁴ *Fawa'id al-Fu'ad*, lith. 1302 H., Lucknow, p. 3.

²⁵ Gibb, *Mohammedanism, a Historical Survey* p. 145.

supplementary to, the orthodox *sharia*. (It is scarcely possible to imagine even the antinomian Qalandars without a widespread common social context, and indeed without a literalistic *sharia* to rebel against.) Moreover, the relative drying up of some other channels of creativity meant that the Sufi orders could draw on the most effective and creative minds of the society.

In the High Middle Ages Islamic cultural life had come to be divided more or less sharply into two geographical zones, and this division became more marked after the Mongol conquests. In Arabia, the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, North Africa, and the Sudanese lands, Arabic continued to predominate as literary tongue even where it was not the spoken language. Cairo was the intellectual capital of this zone, though there were lesser centers, as in south Arabia or in Spain. From the Balkans east to Turkestan and China and south to southern India and into Malaysia, Persian became the standard literary language among Muslims, and with Persian came a whole tradition of literary and artistic taste. The seats of cultural life in this zone were legion, especially in Iran. This is the phenomenon that makes Toynbee distinguish, in the late medieval period, two Islamic “civilizations,” an Iranian and an Arabic.²⁶ The division, however, was never very complete. In an area like Malaysia, for instance, there were both Arabic and Persian influences. Arabic was used for certain religious purposes throughout the Dar al-Islam, and in these matters the authors of one zone were read in the other. At the same time, the Persian zone undoubtedly contained the larger number of Muslims, and the tendency of Persian ways to affect Iraq, Egypt, and the rest of the Arabic zone was very old, and continued in the Late Middle Ages. The Islamic world presented by the *Thousand and One Nights* is one world.

The Persian zone was not only the more populous but also by and large the more culturally creative. But many lines of activity took the same turn in both. This period produced definitive compendia and textbooks of orthodox religious and legal scholarship; for instance, it was a Persian of the fourteenth century who composed the nearly definitive Arabic dictionary, the *Qamus*. Various secondary problems were traced out in the same fields – problems which had escaped the attention of earlier scholars – either in the form of little monographs or of commentaries on earlier writings. Natural science was even less significantly developed than orthodox religious scholarship. It continued especially in the Persian zone in the Arabized Hellenistic tradition as an intellectual

²⁶ *A Study of History*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 70.

luxury. It still attracted creative minds in the generation of about 1300, the time of Qutb-al-Din al-Shirazi, who considered the possibility of the earth's rotation. But by this time Islamic science had already ceased to be an active fertilizing element abroad, either in China or the West, and likewise did not seek light itself from abroad. A scientific culture was maintained within the Islamic lands, but little was done to advance it. Thus the state of Islamic intellectual life at this time set the stage for the fateful isolatedness of the coming Western scientific outburst.

A marked feature of the period, consistent with the muting of intellectual creativity, was the tendency for literary prose, especially in the zone of Persian influence, to become increasingly afflicted with the cultivation of a resplendent but often inappropriate ornateness – a characteristic not readily cast aside later. In the field of history the masterfully fair-minded Rashid-al-Din Tabib, who set high standards of scholarly care and of direct composition at the start of the fourteenth century in a vast world history drawing on materials from Europe to China, was less imitated than the elegance of his contemporary, Wassaf, who gave much pertinent information smothered in skillfully florid verbiage. But history and biography were sedulously cultivated; as was also systematic ethics, in which the Aristotelian tradition (as interpreted by the Muslim Avicenna) received its definitive Islamic form in Iran by the end of the fifteenth century. Especially in Egypt relatively fresh work was done in systematizing the information and insight of the past on an encyclopedic level which could be in its own way seriously creative, in the hands of such men as Suyuti and Maqrizi; and head and shoulders above these stands the Tunisian Ibn-Khaldun at the end of the fourteenth century. In a long work which served as introduction to his valuable historical studies he made use of the encyclopedic approach – mobilizing the resources both of philosophy and of religious learning – to develop a trenchant analysis of the dynamics of history in general and in particular of Islamic history in his own times, which he saw as a time of decline. His new departure was not followed up.²⁷ Probably the most vital line of intellectual endeavor, as might be expected, was the development and the critique of Sufi theosophy. At the start of the period, the Syrian school of Ibn-Taymiyya was noted for its all-out opposition; most of the positive work was done in Iran, developing both the Ishraqi metaphysics of light and the cosmic monism associated with Ibn al-Arabi.

²⁷ The contrast between Ibn-Khaldun's approach and that of some of his predecessors is analyzed in Muhsin Mahdi's *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1957).

The preeminence of the Persian tradition: The arts

The most prominent presentation of mystical monism was the work of poets such as Jami in the fifteenth century, who wrote prose commentaries on mystical texts as well as embodying such ideas in his verse. Even Ibn al-Kari al-Jilili, the most systematic expositor of the school, thought of himself as a poet. For the indubitably greatest cultural medium of the age, if one excludes the visual arts, was poetry. Here the Arabic zone falls completely behind; Arabic poetry, though abundant, failed to achieve much novelty or distinction at least after the fourteenth century. But Persian poetry, which had seen a period of unsurpassed greatness in the High Middle Ages, continued to flourish in the Late Middle Ages, but its tradition was now internationalized in many parts of far-flung Islam. The fourteenth century in Iran is that of Hafiz of Shiraz, greatest of all Persian lyric poets; contemporary with him was a splendid constellation of satirists, lyricists, panegyrists, and mystics. At the same time Amir Khusraw of Delhi at the start of the fourteenth century was the fountainhead of a notable Indian school. The fifteenth century is that of Jami in Iran; and is marked by the rise to mastery of Turkish poetry, essentially modeled on the Persian. This was in three forms; most importantly the Chaghatai Turkish of Turkestan, with Nawai, but also the Turkish of Azerbaijan and that of the Ottomans.

Appropriately enough, this internationalization of the Persian poetic tradition was carried out under the aegis of Sufism. Almost universally a degree of mysticism pervaded every kind of poetry. Awhadi inculcated a mystical morality, while Ibn-i-Yamin produced ethico-philosophical didactic verse also mystically tinged. Credited with the cultivation of a finer nuancing in the poetic tradition is Khwaju, author of romantic-mystical epics. Katibi the panegyrist eventually retired as a Sufi; Maghribi wrote pure praises of unity in the Divine. Niamatullah, a Sufi *shaykh* himself, was famous for the apocalyptic prophecies which alternated with his more conventional mystical verse. A parodist adapted his mystical symbolism to the praise of foods. Above all, the *ghazals* of Hafiz, half ecstatic and half mundane, represent the saturation of the most worldly images with mystical overtones. One cannot look for a straight-forward poet like Firdawsi in an age which saw different levels of meaning in every gesture.

It is in the development of the visual arts that we are most impressively reminded that there are other highly creative elements in the late medieval culture than those associated with the expansion of Islam and the *tariqa-sharia* pattern of institutional and social flexibility. These arts, even more than poetry, were dependent on courts, such as there were;

for the visual arts required not only time for their practice, but costly materials. In any case, their development in the Late Middle Ages presages for us, in a way, the following period of the three empires. Though the art is still stamped with common Islamic veneer, and though there is still a wide circulation of artists through the Islamic lands, there is a wider variety of local styles than before.

The Arabic zone held its own architecture. There this period was the great age for building *madrasas*, theological schools, common in a cruciform pattern and associated with the mausoleum of the founder; a pattern broken up toward the end of the period as social needs changed.²⁸ This is the time of the delicately silhouetted Mamluk minarets of Cairo. Further west building in some degree was simpler, and the tradition of the solidly square minaret was maintained; but it is the time of the rich strength of the fourteenth-century palace, the Alhambra. But architecture was at least as effectively cultivated in the Persian zone, and with more variations. In Iran and Turkestan the Mongol rulers took readily to building in the old Islamic manner, with even increased magnificence; especially the tombs of rulers were built with a massive majesty, culminating usually in a high dome, as in the early fourteenth century tomb of Uljaytu at Sultaniyya, or the blue and gold mausoleum of Timur at Samarqand a century later. The domed tombs were popular in India also, but there the architecture both of Delhi and the provinces witnesses to a number of experiments in the adaptation of Hindu elements and technique which lend a special charm, for instance, to the ruins around the Qutb Minar. In Azerbaijan and in Ottoman Turkey a form of mosque was introduced, perhaps from Byzantine models, in which the main prayer room is under the dome, as in the Blue Mosque of Tabriz, instead of forming, as usually, and open court. (I mention, of course, only a few of the many sorts of great architectural achievements of the time.)

But in some ways the most interesting development was in the decorative arts and here the initiative and the highest development was limited to the Persian zone, though motifs spread into the Arabic zone. With the Mongols there came to Iran a strong Chinese influence, which was felt above all in the various decorative arts; and which led to its greatest results in mural and miniature painting. Painting had been in the High Middle Ages cultivated in both Arabic and Persian-speaking areas, but its late medieval transformation was largely a Persian achievement. In

²⁸ G. Marçais, *L'Art de l'Islam* (Paris: Larousse, 1946), p. 126; a work which is extremely useful yet, I maintain, misnamed; it concerns chiefly Arab art, illustrating perfectly the Arabistic bias.

the fourteenth century direct imitation of certain aspects and types of Chinese art was common; by the fifteenth century, in such centers of royal patronage as Samarqand and Herat, the Chinese impulse was being absorbed, and a series of distinctive styles emerged; till at the end of the fifteenth century the miniaturist Bihzad crowned the emergence of a fully independent art.

Renewed political orientation after 1500: The three empires

By now we are inevitably moving over into the period of the three empires. After 1500 the forces making for a single, decentralized, and essentially apolitical Islamic society – spread across the eastern hemisphere and held together by the *sharia* and the *tariqas* – were overbalanced by various contrary forces. To be sure, Islam continued, by and large, to expand, though not without significant setbacks. Moreover, to a degree it continued to form a single vast society. The common heritage was continuously reinforced by traveling Sufi's and merchants, and by the social and political interrelations of which an example is given in the various actions of Nadir Shah, ruler of Iran, who brought ruin to Delhi on the one hand and tried to reach a religious settlement with the Ottomans on the other. (Indeed, something of the historical unity of the Islamic peoples has survived or even been fostered by the European hegemony of the nineteenth century; thus one can find circulating in Oman a publication list of a Bombay publisher, covering a variety of religious and non-religious subjects, which is very like what we would find in Delhi except that there are listed fewer Lucknow reprints and more works by modern Egyptian lawyers.) Nevertheless, a number of forces combined to work against the sort of unity which was being developed in the Late Middle Ages. One such force was the advent of the West; but probably considerably more important were forces emerging from within the Islamic civilization: new cultural interests, illustrated in the development of art, which were not tied up with the international social order; and, above all, the relative cultural self-sufficiency of the new *political* units that now arose.

In the early sixteenth century there occurred a series of important political changes which restored the integral role of government in society, though in a form different from what Islam had known in the past. In most areas of Islam the ruling power now came to represent significant political ideas. In particular, the central lands of Islam were dominated by three great and relatively stable empires, each of which built up its own distinctive social life and each of which affirmed its cultural individuality

to a degree and with a frankness never before known in Islam. At best these several societies maintained important fraternal relations with each other; at worst there was, as in the case of the Ottoman and Safavid societies, a sworn hostility which (as Nadir Shah was to discover) was a matter of the feelings of peoples and not mere dynastic quarrel. The larger Islamic society, instead of being a decentralized network of ever-varied but seamlessly interwoven Sufi fraternities and Muslim groupings under a common apolitical *sharia*, seemed tending to become a sort of federation of great, internally integrated blocs.

In the first place, the political changes seriously affected Islam's religious evolution. At least since the Mongol invasion, Islam as a religion had been the chief binding force for the many Muslim peoples, and the local military states that came and went might well be looked on as a necessary nuisance. The pious were urged to have as little to do with them as possible and the governments in turn interfered only sporadically and on a personal basis in the development of religion. In the period of the three empires, religions came to be again institutionally and even intellectually associated with the state and its fate. By the middle of the sixteenth century in the central lands the Muslim faith was moving on separate paths traced out by the great empires, while in the remoter areas it threatened to become culturally isolated.

Ismail, the head of the Shi'ite Safawiyya *tariqas* – which had the roots of its power in the decentralized ways of the late Middle Ages and which depended for its military strength on tribal Turks as was so characteristically the case at that time – seems to have precipitated many of the events. He set about conquering, at the start of the sixteenth century, as much of the Dar al-Islam as possible and forcing the Sunni populations to adopt Shi'ism. He failed to convert all Islam to the Shi'a, but he did carve out a lasting empire in Iran, the Safavid empire. There he insisted that everyone should publicly curse such heroes of early Islam as Umar and Abu-Bakr and follow the Shi'ite form of the *sharia*. The Sunni *tariqas* were suppressed and much blood spilled; Shi'ite books and teachers were brought in hastily from whatever corners of Islam – chiefly Arab – the Shi'a had been strong in,²⁹ and the autonomous body of Shi'ite *mujtahids* – authorized leading interpreters of the

²⁹ Such facts were pointed out already by E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, Vol. IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929) p. 360; one must stress the revolutionary implications for social life of the religious change in Iran, which would themselves, perhaps, be almost enough to account for the want of a great poetry in Safavid times which puzzled Browne, as Browne's correspondent points out (p. 24 ff.). Cf. also V. Minorsky, in G. von Grunebaum ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, p. 196.

sharia gained an undisputed ascendancy. Though the original Shi'ism of the movement had been the rather esoteric faith of a Turkish *tariqa*, gradually the *mujtahids* were able to impose a Twelve Shi'ite orthodoxy, with an intense emotional life centered on the community mourning for the martyred *imams* rather than on Sufi rites, and sharply separated by the imperial boundaries from an unfriendly world beyond. Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, in the seventeenth century, was especially effective in putting the doctrine into definitive form with the aid of the political authorities. The areas incorporated in the Safavid empire, Persian, Turkish, or Arabic-speaking, have been insistently Shi'ite since; and the peoples incorporated in the modern Iranian monarchy (and with them most Iraqi's) were till recent times divided from their Sunni neighbors in the west, north, and east by an implacable wall of distrust – each side regarding the other as infidel.

The fortunes of the Shi'a everywhere were henceforth insistently related to the fact of the Shi'ite Safavid monarchy. In Ottoman territories the Shi'a paid for its Iranian triumph in great massacres which forced Shi'ite groups underground and left the official life overwhelmingly and self-consciously Sunnite. In India a number of Shi'ite monarchies, in the south and later even in the north, could draw inspiration and even help from Iran, which was after all the hearth of so much of the culture of the Persian zone, to which India belonged. The tension between Sunnism and Shi'ism became a plague of international politics.

From being a dynamic frontier state in the Balkans and Anatolia, the Ottomans, in the course of the wars launched by Ismail the Safavid, became a great Sunnite empire consciously opposed to the Shi'ite one, when they extended their rule to include most of the Arab lands. One of the most remarkable features of the Ottoman constitution was the manner of incorporating the *sharia* and its guardians the *ulama* into the political organism. The *sharia*, though as always supplemented or overreached by secular legislation, was given an effective place of honor in the state; and to assure the interdependence of the two, the *ulama* were to some degree hierarchically organized. *Muftis* became state officials of great importance, and the head of the *ulama* the *shaykh al-Islam*, came during the sixteenth century to have a constitutional position almost on a level with the Sultan by whom, however, he was appointed. The Sultan himself emphasized his character as head of the whole body of orthodox Muslims and their representative against the infidels; and the expansion of the Ottoman empire, and at the end of our period its reverses, were regarded as those of Islam itself.

In northern India arose a third great empire, the Mogul, which rivalled

in splendor the Ottoman and the Safavid.³⁰ Building on the traditions of the Delhi sultanate to some extent, but developing an effective and enduring central administration, the Mogul empire fostered a society in which, under a Muslim lead, Muslims and Hindus shared in a common political and cultural life which in important sectors they carried out in common.³¹ The emperor Akbar, the first to have an effectively long reign, tried to establish for the Islam of his empire a recognized independence, with himself at its head.³² This attempt failed, in fact; but Indian Islam remained nonetheless a world to itself, in which – in contrast to the practice in the Ottoman empire, which also possessed large non-Muslim populations but rigorously excluded them (as such) from political privileges – non-Muslims did not even pay the legal poll-tax. Indian Islam was distinguished not only by its special relations to Hinduism (at all levels) but by its own emotional tone – especially illustrated in the Shi'ite-like festivals the Sunnites hold in honor of Hasan and Husayn. The attempt of the emperor Awrangzeb to change the character of Indo-Muslim society for one more orthodoxly Muslim contributed to the breakup of the Mogul empire.

All three empires, naturally, modified the social patterns of their areas, which then went through complex changes as the character of the empires changed. I shall note only two points, illustrating the pervasive effect of the empires' structures. In India the very presence of the Muslims as a bloc fluidly differentiated by class in direct contrast to the castes had its effect not only on the Hindus but on the Muslims. While many of the lower Hindu castes seem to have turned Muslim outright, and caste came to be found in Muslim villages, the upper ranges of the caste system became adjusted to the role of the Muslims as tolerant rulers and arbiters and to co-operation with them, as the almost Islamic character of the Kayastha Brahmins witnesses. The Muslim upper classes, needing to set themselves off from the flourishing indigenous tradition, came to claim rank according to alleged sacred or foreign extraction – as Shaykhs or Sayyids, as Moguls, Afghans, or Turks. As to the Ottoman empire, considering that its structure was able to last for six centuries, it is no surprise to find that it was unique in a number of ways socially and

³⁰ Though Babur's adventures are closely linked to those of Ismail the Safavid, the Mogul empire proper was not permanently launched till half a century later; but the Afghan interlude which followed the exile of Humayun was developing the same administrative tendencies and for our purposes can be reckoned a part of the same development.

³¹ Cf. K. M. Panikkar, *Survey of Indian History* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1954), in the chapters on medieval and Mogul times.

³² This is clearly the sense of the so-called "Infallibility Decree," which is the most significant of his religious acts for the Islam of his empire.

politically. The whole society was divided into functionally differentiated socio-religious bodies, such as the guilds, whose activities were effectively controlled by the government. On the basis of carefully compiled statistics, population moves were systematically carried out from one part of the empire to another for economic or for political reasons,³³ and the control of the economy at the height of the empire was very efficient. Within such a pattern, the *devshirme* was merely the most curious feature – the elaborate system by which the best of the non-Muslim youth was drafted into military and administrative service (after semi-voluntary Islamization and a rigid training) to the exclusion of born Muslims. Eventually the Muslim upper classes learned to bypass this restriction, making their way into the civil service to the great detriment of the state.

Breakdown of the system of international unity

It is not clear why these great and relatively stable empires came to be established at this time, in such striking contrast to the immediately preceding period, but it is likely that the invention of gunpowder and its use in cannon, which had lately developed in China and was having important effects in Europe at this time, helped to produce them by giving a strong advantage to a central power with large resources as compared with lesser authorities. In any case, their existence had its repercussions in the rest of the Dar al-Islam. For one thing, all of these empires faced away from the Indian Ocean; independent Egypt, and subsequently, independent Gujarat, Muslim powers with a direct interest in the Indian Ocean trade, were absorbed by the Ottoman and Mogul empires not long after the Christians from the West, above all Portuguese, had arrived in the area. Whatever may have made possible the initial Portuguese triumph, it is likely that the dominance of what remained above all land empires helped assure their relatively easy persistence in control of the seas. The Ottoman government did make some efforts to retrieve the Muslim position, but nothing to match its successful efforts to control the Mediterranean, and it eventually withdrew. The Moguls did almost nothing.

Eventually, the south Arabians of Oman and Hadramawt were able to accomplish a great deal on their own account against the Portuguese,

³³ Omer Lutfi Barkan, "Les Déportations comme méthode de peuplement et décolonisation dans l'empire ottoman," *Revue de la Faculté des Sciences Économiques de l'Université d'Istanbul*, 11th year, 1953.

but they could never reverse the cardinal fact that the long-haul oceanic trade had passed into Western control. In Arabia, in East Africa, in Malaysia, the Muslims were placed essentially on the defensive, even though in the Indonesian areas, apart from Portuguese seaports, they were increasing their power. At the same time, they had occasion to become spiritually more independent of the more central areas. Among both the eastern Arabs and the Persians, as well as in south India and Malaysia, the Shafi'ite school of *sharia* law had tended to be predominant. With the incorporation of the *sharia* tradition into the state organization in the Ottoman empire, the Hanafite school was given the supremacy throughout the empire over the historically preeminent Shafi'ites; while at the same time the Shafi'ites were suppressed in Shi'ite Iran. Though Cairo remained an important center, the center of gravity of the Shafi'ite tradition tended to shift to the Indian Ocean coasts.

The Muslims of the north suffered at the same time serious setbacks, and also became relatively isolated. Those of the Volga came under Russian rule (and eventually those of the Crimea also, though allied with Turkey); while Turkestan was divided between the long-pagan Kazaks and the culturally not much more stimulating Uzbek rulers, bitterly at war with Shi'ite Iran. The Muslims of the Central Eurasian highlands were eventually conquered by the Manchu empire and, like the Muslims of China itself, had little opportunity for contact with vital Muslim centers.

In the west the Ottoman power reached as far as Algeria; but Morocco, under a Sharifian dynasty claiming descent from Mohammed, which now replaced the insignificant Berber dynasties of the Late Middle Ages, maintained not only its political but its religious independence. The Sharif was honored as a holy personage, and adherence to him was almost the touchstone of the faith; by the end of the sixteenth century much of Muslim western Africa had accepted this allegiance, and parts of it have tended to look to Morocco as a religious model ever since, though in the western and central Sudan sultanates eventually rose which tried to emulate the Moroccan religious position of leadership. The earlier inclination to regard the rest of Islam as fallen away was only confirmed; the far west was almost self-sufficient. Culturally, Morocco stagnated. And though adherents for Islam continued to be won in the Sudan, the level which Timbuctu had already achieved before the Moroccan conquest seems to have been exceeded there.

In this dislocated society the *tariqas* continued to be found almost everywhere (though in the Safavid domain only in impoverished circumstances), and they played even an increasing part in local life; but they could not play the same international role. In Ottoman territories the

tariqas favored by the Turks received something of an official position – even the Bektashiyya received this dubious privilege³⁴ – and enjoyed great pomp. The heads of the North African orders played at least as great a role, though on a somewhat different basis; their heads – like the Sharif – received an almost anthropolatrous devotion from the people. Foreign orders, such as the Qadiriyya, were introduced freely into India to supplement, and perhaps dilute, the traditional ones. Most of the great orders steadily increased their territorial range and one or another order was introduced into every corner of Islam – thus with the saint Abd-al-Rauf in the seventeenth century, the Shattariyya gave self-confidence to a strong mysticism in newly converted Malaysia.

But the orders came to show less originality; they were many of them wealthy and shot through with popular superstition. The most interesting of the new branches of *tariqas* now set up were those devoted to reform. Reform was sometimes carried out by orthodox *ulama* working within a Sufi framework, such as Ahmad Sirhindi at the beginning of the seventeenth century in India, whose main object was to correct in an orthodox sense the tolerance of free speculation which had been common in the *tariqas* of the late Middle Ages; but who accomplished this by claiming for himself more intensive mystical experiences than his rivals could boast.³⁵ Sometimes reform was the work of simple and pious mystics. But there also arose in Arabia in the eighteenth century a reform movement which was radically and frankly anti-Sufi, that of the Wahhabis, which was to have far-reaching effects in the following century.

Interrelated development of separate regional cultures

In the three great empires the visual arts were on a high level and magnificently productive, and they continued to be unmistakably Islamic in character. But their cultivation did not serve to maintain the international Islamic order as it had been developing. For that, art was a very secondary matter; a village mosque in Kerala has its own solemnity, but with its pitched roof it bears almost no resemblance to the mosques of the great tradition as represented in the Deccan or North India or

³⁴ The Bektashiyya retained an independent spirit, nevertheless, as J. K. Birge has shown, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Press, 1937), p. 159.

³⁵ Cf. Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, 1943), p. 18 f., 64 ff.; this modern study is one example of the influence of these thinkers on the promoters of Pakistan.

Turkey. Rather the arts served to set off and glorify the several great regional societies.

In the Safavid empire architecture was represented most perfectly in the magnificence of the imperial city of Isfahan with its garden boulevards and open, landscaped palaces and impressive use of columns. The floral type of decoration was enriched with every sort of form, including motifs borrowed ad hoc from Europe and China. A high level of elegance was maintained till the end of the seventeenth century, after which political catastrophes put an end to the great age of building, which was linked to the fate of the dynasty and the capital. In the Ottoman empire Iranian elements, such as the use of blue tiles, continued important; but in the sixteenth century in the cardinal field of mosque architecture the Turks perfected a fully new type. Already the domed prayer hall had been developed in west-Turkish lands; it was now perfected practically under the shadow of the Hagia Sophia (but with a totally different effect from the Byzantine – the sense of space is one of ordered extension rather than of monumental bulk). This development was led by the military engineer Sinan, who turned his hand to baths, palaces, fountains, tombs, and every sort of building as well as mosques, each time creating a masterpiece. The new type of mosque was built throughout the empire, in the Arab as well as in the Turkish-European areas, and the peculiar pointed minarets that usually went with it are like an emblem of the empire. Finally, in the Mogul empire of northern India the Indo-Muslim style of architecture was brought to fulfillment in the mighty works of Fatehpur-Sikri and the gleaming Taj Mahal, together with a host of other gems large and small.

Architecture has for Islam always been the supreme form of visual art, and it continued so everywhere in this period also. But painting, both mural and miniature, was cultivated in all three empires and very highly developed in the Safavi and Mogul empires. The important school of Tabriz, the first Safavi capital, followed the lead of Bihzad. Early in the seventeenth century the school of Isfahan, the later capital, found its most outstanding master in Riza Abbasi, who excelled in portraits and in genre scenes, in which he shows a subtle sense of humor. He was not without Western influence. In the Ottoman empire the miniaturists, though they attempted with much success to follow the Persian example, did not achieve quite such high distinction, perhaps because painting was frowned on by the *ulama* who played so important a role in the structure of the empire. In the Mogul empire, on the contrary, the art, at first imported from Iran, took on a vigorous independent form. Portraiture was very highly developed as well as the depiction of every sort of

legendary and Indian theme. The art was cultivated not only by the Muslims but among the Hindus, particularly among the Rajputs.

It must be added that almost every fine art and craft was practiced with great skill in all the empires. Calligraphy was regarded – as before – as one of the highest arts, and its masters much esteemed. In northern India the Islamic tradition of vocal and instrumental music (and, of course, of dancing) was crossed with Hindu taste to give birth to the subtle northern school of all-Indian music, prized by Muslims and Hindus alike.

As Arnold has pointed out, the visual arts, and especially painting, were not only extremely sophisticated at this time, but had gradually come to be accorded unprecedented respect by such representatives of the public as historians and biographers.³⁶ The artist, or among the Ottomans, at least, the architect,³⁷ sometimes had, if not the standing of one of the *ulama*, at least something like that accorded to the poet and the singer. But these arts were courtly, or at least associated with great established houses. Outside the three empires, whether in the Arabic or in the Persian sphere of influence, they were far less cultivated.

Poetry also came to be an expression of the regional cultures at least as much as of an international Sufism. In Iran itself, though poets stately and sweet continued to produce profusely, nothing could match the giants of the past; some of the greatest of Persian poets were more appreciated in India and Turkey than at home (and indeed many of them went to live at the Mogul court). In northern India the main vehicle of Islamic verse long continued to be Persian; but in the Deccan there flourished, by the sixteenth century, a Sufi poetry in Urdu, the common language of Muslims in northern and central India; this poetry developed not only traditional Persian themes but also themes taken from the Hindu background. By the eighteenth century Urdu had come to be used in the north as well, and produced classical masters who were greatly appreciated by certain groups of Hindus as well as by Muslims. In the Ottoman empire it was Turkish that was most cultivated. For Arabic, though dialects of it were spoken in much of the empire, played a distinctly secondary role in cultivated life, being treated almost as a dead classical tongue. With the advent of the Uzbeks in Turkestan, the Chaghatai Turkish that had led the field in the time of Nevai tended to languish, though it was still used throughout the north. But Fuzuli of Baghdad in the sixteenth century, who also composed in Persian and

³⁶ Thomas Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928), 32–37, speaks especially of the recognition given from the times of Magrizi and Khwandamir on.

³⁷ Leo A. Mayer, *Islamic Architects and Their Works* (Geneva: A. Kundig, 1956), p. 28, notes the high status of at least some architects in the Ottoman empire after 1500.

Arabic, did his best work in the Turkish of Azerbaijan, and has been called the greatest Turkish poet of all times.³⁸ Finally, modeling itself on the master poet Baqi of the sixteenth century, the western or Ottoman literature became the most important of the three forms of Turkish. Each *tariqa* had its own poetic tradition, and the Turkish work is generally regarded as more valuable than the contemporary Persian poetry.

Outside the great empires new Islamic literary languages also sprang up. On the east African coast Swahili, which had been developed as the language of the Muslim Bantu, came to possess a sophisticated poetic tradition which could rival Arabic within the region. At the other end of the Indian Ocean a Malay literature grew up under the influence of Persian, and consisting in large part of renderings from Persian and from Urdu. It also took over much from the earlier Malaysian heritage, particularly in poetic forms, only partly Persianized. All of these regional literatures – Arabic, Persian, Turkish (in three forms), Urdu, Swahili, Malay – as well as some lesser Muslim languages which began to be cultivated in this period, used the Arabic alphabet, were infiltrated with Arabic and (in most cases) Persian words, and treated traditional Arabic and Persian themes in their poetry. But of the literature then being produced, it was Persian alone that had an audience among most of the other peoples; and even it was little read in the Arabic zone except so far as Turkish rule imported it.

The intellectual life of the three empires likewise built on a common heritage, but served to meet the special problems which arose in each empire. Throughout the Dar al-Islam history was written, usually of the local or regional Muslim community, its learned men and its rulers. The Turkish historians of Ottoman times are especially noteworthy, the most celebrated being Ali Chelebi of the late sixteenth century who, like many other scholars, could write prose without overaffectation despite the heritage of floridity from the Late Middle Ages. Travel literature and other sorts of descriptive prose were of course also at a high level.

Iran was an influential center of philosophical thought, which, however, developed themes broached before, particularly in Sufi circles. In the seventeenth century arose a school of mystical theologians, teachers and students of Mulla Sabra, in whose system monism was pushed to a subtle extreme in exploring the relation of personal consciousness to cosmic structure. The philosophical thought was often tied up with special Shi'ite problems – notably at last in the case of the Shaykhi – as was suitable in Shi'ite Iran. In fact, with the Shi'a a majority, the whole basis

³⁸ Cf. Mehmed Fuad Koprula-Zade in *E.I.*, "Turkish Literature."

of religious life had to be rethought in Shi'i terms. Gradually there emerged a corps of *mujtahids* which maintained a vigorous intellectual independence within the new orthodox limits.

Mogul India produced a series of thinkers who devoted themselves to the problems of coexistence with Hinduism, sometimes under a favorable impression of Hinduism, as in the case of prince Dara Shikoh; more often in an attempt to reassert, in historical or in psychological terms, the superior social value of a dominant Islam, as in the tradition leading up to Shah Wali-Allah. Among them they helped to forge the cultural and intellectual tradition which bound Muslims together as an Islamic community in the Indic subcontinent; a tradition without which the geographical monstrosity of Pakistan would be incomprehensible, and the passionate advocacy by many Pakistani leaders of Urdu as a preeminently Muslim language would seem absurd.³⁹

It must be added that natural science was for the most part a mere tradition, the effective standards of which probably declined everywhere. It is a rare example of escape from this tradition when Ottoman geographers, who in the fifteenth century had made use of Arab empirical studies of the Indian Ocean to improve their scholarly learning, in the sixteenth century made similar use of the Western explorations.

In all three empires scholarly life was many-sided and often very sound, if not usually highly creative. Outside of them Islamic intellectual life was sometimes rather rudimentary. In the Turkish north the excellent memoirs of Babur, who himself came south to found the Mogul empire, seem to have marked a high point in the prose tradition, though an orthodox Muslim learning was maintained. Within the Ottoman empire some Arab talent was drawn into the general Ottoman life: but neither within the Ottoman empire nor in the several Arab lands outside it was there more than routine achievement in the Arabic tradition. A figure like Sharani, a mystical thinker of the sixteenth century who brought a warm personal touch to the older patterns, was exceptional. In the countries of the Sudan the sacred law was taught, and history composed, in Arabic; no local language being able, during this period, to

³⁹ Since Urdu is, properly speaking, a mother-tongue chiefly in just those areas which remained in India, its use in Pakistan might seem to be an anomaly forced by the *U.P.-wallas* contrary to the trends of the time. Particularly in Bengal it is quite alien. But it was Urdu which was the final vehicle of that all-India Islamic culture to which the founders of Pakistan were looking back, more than to simply a vague all-Islamic sentiment. The chief flourishing centers of that all-India culture (except Lahore) were in Urdu-speaking territory in the north or the south of what is now India. To accept the vernaculars of the actual territory of Pakistan would be tantamount to admission that Pakistan as constituted cannot, after all, revive the old and glorious all-India Islamic society.

replace it. In Malaysia there were controversies, largely secondhand but applied to situations arising from local habits of mind, over the nature of Sufi monism. Though there were intellectual problems in the several regions common to all the participants in the Islamic tradition, there seem to have been no all-Islamic intellectual movements.

The decline after 1700

The two centuries from 1500 to 1700 were by and large a time of relatively strong institutions, of a confident intellectual life, and above all of imposing esthetic creation. By 1700 the social and institutional structure of each of the three empires was weakened, and soon after 1700 all were giving clear evidence of decline. The Ottoman empire came to be dependent for its territorial integrity on the disunity of its European enemies. The Safavi empire was destroyed in a rising of Afghan tribes, and only inadequately restored under less polished rulers. The Mogul empire was broken up entirely, and not only Muslim but Hindu powers fought for its fragments, even while recognizing the suzerainty of its titular head. It seems likely that the increasing activities of Western Europe in the eighteenth century, by upsetting the established patterns of interregional trade, helped to undermine the economy in some areas.⁴⁰ But the internal dialectic of Islam itself cannot be held blameless.

In this century of disaster, the trend to independent regional evolution became still more marked, while by and large the cultural vigor of all the Islamic peoples declined. It is at this time that Urdu effectively replaced Persian in India, and it is at this time that Ottoman Turkish broke away most effectively from the Persian tradition, in the Tulip Age; yet by the end of the century (or the early part of the next) both Turkish and Urdu poetry are conceded to have been at a low point. In Iran itself the whole century represented a literary trough. The Iranian art of the miniature also declined in the eighteenth century, and imitations of Western art as well as of Indo-Muslim art failed to revive it. Iranian architecture was not renewed after the taking of Isfahan by the Afghans; while in European and Anatolian Turkey an Italianate style, modeled without too much inspiration on the Western Renaissance architecture, came into favor for palaces

⁴⁰ Cf. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part 1, pp. 296, 307 ff. To a certain degree the unhealthy influence of the new West probably went back to the sixteenth century. Cf. also W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar, an Economic Study* (London: Macmillan, 1920), who suggests that already under the cosmopolitan Mogul court at that time, with its delight in Japanese, Chinese, Persians, Arabs, and Europeans, and in their goods, native industry was suffering.

and homes. Despite some fine poetry, it was perhaps the least creative century in the history of Islam. It was then that the tendency to purist religious reform that had been apparent throughout the period took radical form among the Wahhabis in the center of Arabia.

Later Islamic society and the rise of the West

Islamic history in the period of the three empires was very nearly the same as world history; at least, it represents the more normal part of world history. In the northwest were the lands of Christian Europe, relatively restricted in area, to which we shall return; in the northeast were the relatively isolated Confucian empires; most of the highly populated or highly cultured lands between were at least within the orbit of Islam. Beyond, in southern Africa, in Australasia, in the Americas, in Arctic Siberia, were thinly populated lands as yet of little apparent importance. Islam, having absorbed so much territory, and seeming to be on the way to absorbing the rest (for this was its conscious program), might seem to be articulating itself in regional societies after a pattern which could be applied to the whole world, in which Muslim solidarity and a common heritage would make for mutual intelligibility without requiring closer association. In fact, whatever the Islamic societies might have in common, there was a tendency for their historical interrelations to be only to a degree closer with each other than with any other regions of the eastern hemisphere. Each empire used the Chinese invention of cannon, together with European or Turkish improvements thereon. The wealthy of Mogul India imported not only Persian luxuries, but European and Chinese specialties. A lagging Persian art turned both to India and to Europe for a like sort of shallow stimulus. The world of Islam – and with it the various lands of the Far East (and together these made up most of the human world) – was living at a historical tempo approximately as rapid as had prevailed in civilized history for five thousand years; and at this tempo civilization continued gradually adding to its cultural resources while building up sophisticated societies in loose interconnection with each other.

These interconnections were somewhat intensified at this time by the world-wide activities of European traders. In this period, however, the role of Europe was for the most part limited to ocean trade, though by the eighteenth century Europeans came to have more and more noticeable influence. The Western Europeans were long weak on land – till the eighteenth century – not only in the Indian Ocean area, where even the islands whose interior they controlled were few, but also in Europe,

where the Ottomans continued on the offensive till the end of the seventeenth century. They played a minor and rather indirect role in the changes which make us contrast the world position of Islam in the Late Middle Ages on the one hand and on the other its dominant trends in the period of the three empires. These Islamic developments, on the contrary, did not play a major role in preparing the way for the Western expansion. The wide activity of Muslim merchants had played a major part, for instance, in opening up the trade-routes which the Europeans then took over ready made, and in weakening the traditional Hindu and Buddhist powers in such places as Sumatra and Java. Above all, it was the internal weakness of Islam which left a cultural and economic vacuum into which the West could pour.

For behind the seemingly unimportant activities of the Westerners lay all-important transformations going on within Europe itself, which immensely speeded up the pace of historic events there, and were preparing a momentous superiority in social and economic organization on the part of the West, which must reveal itself explosively sooner or later. In the generation about 1800 occurred the French Revolution and critical phases of the Industrial Revolution in England. In the same one generation the British seized hegemony in India (where late in the eighteenth century they still controlled only a province or so); the French landed in Egypt and awoke the Arabs; the British and Dutch reorganized Indonesia; the Turks learned to put through Westernizing reforms; and almost all Muslim peoples found they must adjust themselves to an economic, if not a political domination by a West which was no longer merely an unusually strong trading people, but was a carrier of unexplored but dynamic new ways of living.

In an essay ranging over the history of half humanity in periods at least as complex historically as most periods in history, I have been forced to leave out whole aspects of culture and do ridiculously scant justice to others. My excuse has been my attempt to place the later Islam in a world-historical setting. I have tried to suggest some lines along which to analyze the unfolding of Islamic civilization in its later periods as a dynamic cultural heritage, notably inquiring in what consists the unity of its history. At the same time I have tried to underline the important place the course of that civilization must hold in any history of mankind as a whole.

10

Modernity and the Islamic heritage

What can historical processes mean for the moral individual?¹ In particular, what are the moral implications of the acceleration of the pace of historical change in modern times? Here I shall tackle only a few aspects of such questions; I shall deal with the acceleration of history as it confronts concerned Muslims in particular. But I refer to Muslims and not just as believers in a given creed, but rather as participants in a great cultural heritage prevalent in a wide part of the modern world. What I have to say about the case of the Muslims, will, I think, have some relevance for all moral individuals in our times.

I am discussing the concerned individual – the person who consciously attempts to bring to bear high cultural ideas, not only in the private life but in the society he is a part of. History sometimes seems to proceed almost independently of the hopes and the anguish of such people. Yet they are, after all, the only ones worth discussing history seriously with; for they at least are paying attention to it in a morally responsible way. For that reason alone, their plight would be important to the historian. But in fact such people supply much of the flexibility of imagination and the richness of spirit which make possible such positive development as does come at points of challenge or of crisis, where otherwise there is too often mere blind floundering. Accordingly, their place in the historical process can be, on occasion, determinative. Their spiritual and cultural problems, their concern with the need for roots in a coherent heritage, their attempts to give ideal form to the diverse demands of their age, have palpable, sometimes tragic and sometimes magnificent effects on the actual course of events.

¹ This paper was delivered on 20th April, 1960, to a seminar of the Committee on Social Thought at The University of Chicago in a series devoted to "the meaning of the historical process for the moral individual." It has been somewhat revised for publication.