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A Brief Journey Through Islamic History

The Age of the Prophet and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs

The history of Islam is inseparable from the history of Islamic society, institutions, and civilization in which the transhistorical realities of Islam have been manifested, although of course those realities are not themselves of purely historical origin. Moreover, Islamic history provides a temporal cadre within which one can situate the history of the religion itself, even if the ebbs and flows and beginnings and ends of various modes and schools of Islamic thought are not always identical with the periods of Islamic history marked by dynastic and political changes.

The period from the migration of the Prophet, which marks the establishment of the first Islamic society in Medina, to his death and the caliphate of the first four caliphs (i.e., from

1/622 to 40/661) constitutes a unique period in Islamic history. It is to some extent similar to the apostolic age in Christianity, and it is an era to which Muslims have looked for guidance throughout their later history. The earthly career of the Prophet, already discussed, was followed by the caliphate of Abū Bakr from 11/632 to 13/634. He was the first of the four caliphs accepted by Sunni Muslims as the rightly guided caliphs *(al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn)* and considered to be men of great sanctity and piety, whose political rule was marked by profound religious considerations even if they might have committed occasional errors of political judgment. Abū Bakr, who ruled for only two years, was faced almost immediately with the centrifugal forces of Arab tribalism, which threatened to break up the political unity of Arabia created by the Prophet. Abū Bakr's greatest contribution was to put down tribal uprisings and to preserve the unity of the newly founded political entity with its capital in Medina.

The second caliph, 'Umar, who ruled from 13/634 to 23/644, followed Abū Bakr's lead and insisted on a strong center that could preserve the unity of the Islamic state, which was beginning to expand. It was during his rule that Muslims captured Jerusalem, where 'Umar showed great respect for the houses of worship of Jews and Christians, and Islam spread into Syria, Persia, and North Africa. 'Umar lived a life of remarkable simplicity and austerity and, like Abū Bakr, was a paragon of piety. Most Sunnis consider 'Umar's rule the most successful, from a practical point of view, among all the rightly guided caliphs, a rule that witnessed the establishment of

many administrative practices and institutions that became permanent features of later Islamic society.

'Umar was succeeded by 'Uthmān, who was chosen, like all the *rāshidūn*, by consensus of the elders of the community. His rule, from 23/644 to 35/656, saw the influx of wealth into Medina and the rest of Arabia from conquests in the provinces, although tensions resulted, including tribal uprisings. Many also criticized 'Uthmān for the practice of nepotism, especially in appointing his relative Mu'āwiyah to the governorship of Syria. The opposition to 'Uthmān finally caused an uprising against him led by the son of Abū Bakr, which resulted in 'Uthmān's death, an event of grave consequence for later Islamic history, for it was to avenge the death of his uncle 'Uthmān that Mu'āwiyah moved against 'Uthmān's successor, 'Alī, and precipitated the division in the body politic that has persisted to this day.

'Alī, who ruled from 35/656 to 40/661, was faced almost immediately with civil strife and even war on many fronts. His followers *(shī'ah)* battled some of the Quraysh, on one hand, and the Prophet's companions Ṭalḥah and Zubayr, who were joined by the Prophet's wife 'Ā'ishah, on the other, and were victorious against both. With the majority of his supporters in Iraq, 'Alī moved the capital of Islam to Kufa and from there set out to confront the Syrian garrisons of Mu'āwiyah, who had refused to pay allegiance to 'Alī. The two sides fought the crucial battle of Ṣiffīn in 36/657, in which 'Alī was victorious, but at the moment of victory Mu'āwiyah had his army come to the battlefield with Qurans on their lances, asking that the Quran

arbitrate between the two sides. To avoid desecration of the sacred book, 'Alī accepted arbitration in which his side lost to the much more astute representatives of Mu'āwiyah. 'Alī returned to Kufa, where, in 40/661, a member of a group that opposed arbitration in principle and considered both sides in the battle to have deviated from the earlier norms of Islam killed 'Alī and brought to an end the rule of the *rāshidūn*. One can say that from the time of the battle of Ṣiffīn, the distinction between the Sunnis, the Shī'ites, and a third group called the Khārijites (literally, those who "stand outside,"opposed to both Sunnism and Shī'ism) became marked, only to be accentuated by later events, especially the martyrdom of 'Alī's son Ḥusayn in Karbalā'. Also, 'Alī's transfer of the capital to Kufa moved the political and cultural center of the Islamic world permanently outside Arabia, although the religious center remained and continues to remain in the Hejaz.

The Classical Caliphates: Umayyad and 'Abbāsid

THE UMAYYADS (40/661-132/750)

With 'Alī removed from the scene, Mu'āwiyah became the ruler and caliph of the Islamic world, although for a few months 'Alī's son al-Ḥasan continued to claim the caliphate in Medina. Mu'āwiyah, who was a very competent and calculating ruler, was able to establish a vast empire with Damascus as

its center, but at the cost of converting the caliphate of the *rāshidūn* to a hereditary sultanate. The Umayyads were able to rule from Central Asia to Spain and France, establishing a system of communication, administration, and legal and military institutions, much of which survived over the centuries. They were faced with attempts to restore the power of the aristocracy of Mecca and bedouin rebellion against central authority, as well as Shī'ite dissent. 'Abd al-Malik (65/685-86/705) succeeded in securing the unity of the empire, but, increasingly, the pious saw religious principles sacrificed before worldly ends, although one of the caliphs, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, who sought to reform the existing economic system, was a model of piety and highly revered not only by the Sunni faithful, but even by Shī'ites, whom he treated with kindness.

The Umayyads strengthened the administrative and military foundations of the empire and Arabized coinage and the chancelleries. They completed the early conquests and permitted Islamic culture to establish itself from the Oxus to the Pyrenees. And yet they began to lose the support of many Muslims and therefore their "legitimacy." Many considered them to be Arab rather than Islamic rulers, and resentment grew against them, especially among *mawālī*, that is, non-Arabs, who had embraced Islam in ever greater numbers, chief among whom were the Persians. Much of this protest took place under the banner of Shī'ism and centered in Iraq, especially after the death of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī during the caliphate of Yazīd. The opposition, however, was kept at bay by strong governors, but it gradually spread farther east until in Khurasan,

under the leadership of the charismatic Persian general Abū Muslim, an uprising began with the purpose of returning the caliphate to its religious origin and the family of the Prophet. The movement succeeded, and the Banū 'Abbās, descendants of the uncle of the Prophet, defeated the Umayyads and captured Damascus with the help of their Persian supporters, bringing the rule of the Umayyads to an end. The only exception was Muslim Spain, where one of the Umayyads who had been able to flee from Damascus established himself as ruler and inaugurated the golden age of Muslim rule in that land.

THE 'ABBĀSIDS (132/750-656/1258)

'Abbāsid rule marks the period in which what is usually called "classical Islamic civilization" reached its apogee. The early 'Abbāsids continued the work of the Umayyads in strengthening the Islamic empire, preserving its unity, Islamizing various institutions, and spreading further the use of Arabic as the lingua franca of the empire. It was also during their rule that Persian developed and became the second lingua franca of the Islamic world. While reasserting the sacred character of the caliphate, the 'Abbāsids began to emulate Persian models of rule and administration to an ever greater degree. The capital was moved eastward toward Persia when al-Manṣūr built Baghdad in 145/762 near the ancient Sassanid capital of Ctesiphon, near the heartland of the Persian world. Persians also became much more active in affairs of state, and many of them served as chief ministers to the caliphs.

Baghdad soon became the greatest cultural center of the Islamic world, perhaps of the whole of the world, in the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. Famous 'Abbāsid caliphs such as Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn were great patrons of the arts and sciences, and it was at this time that both Islamic philosophy and science began to flourish. But the early 'Abbāsid period was also the era when the codification of *Sharī'ite* Law, begun during the Umayyad period, was finalized and the traditional schools of Law as they subsist to this day were established. Almost certainly the most important religious achievement of this period was the establishment of the definitive and canonical collections of *Ḥadīth* by Bukhārī and others, an achievement that was, again, the culmination of the process begun during the time of the *rāshidūn* and continued in the Umayyad period. Likewise, the early 'Abbāsid period coincides with the rise of the classical schools of Sufism in both Baghdad and Khurasan.

Gradually, however, the power of the 'Abbāsid caliphate began to wane. Caught amid rivalries between Arabs and Persians, the caliphs sought to surround themselves with Turkic guards, thus opening the center of the Islamic world to a third major ethnic group, after the Arabs and Persians, which was to play an ever greater role in the sociopolitical life of the central regions of the caliphate. Soon the caliphs became pawns in the hands of their own Turkic generals. Caught in the tension

between the agrarian population and city dwellers and between the military and civil administrations and battling problems of land and taxation and ethnic rivalries, the center finally ceased to be able to hold the vast Islamic empire together. Regional rulers gained power to the extent that the Persian Būyids captured Iraq itself in 334/945, and made the caliph their instrument of rule to legitimize the power that was in reality in their hands. Henceforth, local dynasties wielded actual political power, while the caliphate became the symbol of the unity of the Islamic world and the rule of the *Sharīʿah* as well as the source of legitimacy for various kings or sultans who governed not only in Persia, but also in many Arab lands.

Local Dynasties up to the Mongol Invasion

PERSIA, CENTRAL ASIA, AND TRANSOXIANA

As early as the third/ninth century, local governors in the eastern provinces of Persia were beginning to assert their independence from the central authority of the caliphate in Baghdad, and they soon established the first independent Persian dynasties, such as the Ṣaffārids and Sāmānids. The latter, who ruled in Khurasan and Central Asia into the fourth/tenth century, are especially important from a cultural point of view, because they were the great patrons of the Persian language, which soon became a basic factor in the cultural and political

independence that the Persians were asserting vis-à-vis Arab domination. Semi-independent dynasties also began to appear in northern and western areas of Persia; one, the Būyids, conquered not only Persia, but Iraq as well during the fourth/tenth century, and ruled as Shīʿites supported by strong Persian national sentiments.

The advance of tribes of Turkic stock changed the political and even ethnic landscape of the territory governed by the Sāmānids, especially Central Asia. The Ghaznavids, who were of Turkic origin, defeated the Sāmānids and established a powerful kingdom in eastern Persia, extending their realm to Sindh and the Punjab. Their rule set the background for the appearance of a number of dynasties of Turkic stock who began to dominate the political scene not only in Central Asia and Persia, but in certain Arab lands, parts of India, and Anatolia as well.

THE SELJŪQS

The most important of the Turkic dynasties was the Seljūqs, who ruled for more than two centuries, from about 426/1035 to 656/1258. The Seljūqs conquered most of western Asia, including Baghdad itself, which fell into the hands of Tughrïl Beg in 447/1055. They reunified western Asia once again, preserving the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, but only as a symbol of Sunni rule, which they avidly supported. They opposed the power of

local Shī'ite rulers and, in fact, suppressed Shī'ism to a large extent. They also began the Turkish conquest of Anatolia, which was to result in the establishment of Osmanli and later Ottoman rule. The Seljūqs also supported Ash'arite theology *(kalām)* against the attacks of the philosophers and sought to strengthen Sunni orthodoxy through the establishment of the traditional university *(madrasah)* system associated so much with the name of their most famous prime minister, Khwājah Niẓām al-Mulk. Although of Turkic stock, they were great patrons of Persian culture. During their rule, Persian prose literature reached its early peak of perfection, and Persian poetry produced some of its greatest masters.

EGYPT AND SYRIA

The destinies of Egypt and Syria, along with the lands in between, such as Palestine, were often intertwined in the Islamic period. As early as the third/ninth century, the 'Abbāsid governor of Egypt, Ibn Ṭūlūn, who built the magnificent mosque in Cairo that still bears his name, began to assert his independence and extended his authority to Syria. In the fourth/tenth century, the Ismā'īlī Fāṭimids began their conquest of nearly the whole of North Africa, from al-Ifīqiyyah (present-day Tunisia), and in 358/969 conquered Egypt, claiming the caliphate in the name of their imām. They were the founders of Cairo, which they made their capital. They

further extended their rule, over Jerusalem, Mecca, Medina, and Damascus, where they defeated the Ḥamdhānids, and even threatened Baghdad. The Fāṭimid caliphate rivaled the 'Abbāsids and ushered in a period during which the arts and sciences flourished greatly, especially in Cairo. Threatened by the Seljūqs and later the Crusaders, the Fāṭimids were weakened and finally defeated by Saladin, who also defeated the Crusaders and expelled them from Jerusalem in 583/1187.

Saladin, or Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, as he is known to Muslims, was a Kurdish general from Aleppo who established the Ayyūbid dynasty, which united Egypt, Palestine, and Syria under Sunni rule, revived the economic life of the region after the long struggle of the Crusades, and set the background for the Mamlūks, originally their slaves, who gained ascendancy and finally established their own powerful dynasty. It was the Mamlūks who finally stopped the onslaught of the Mongols and defeated the Mongol armies in southern Palestine in 658/1260.

NORTH AFRICA AND SPAIN

The 'Abbāsids did not control the western provinces of the Islamic world, which pursued a separate political history. In Morocco, a descendant of Ḥasan, the grandson of the Prophet, established his own rule among the Berbers with his capital in Fez, which has remained ever since the heart of North African Islam. In Algeria, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Rustam established

another Berber kingdom, called the Rustamid, based on the 'Ibādiyyah school, which inherited the perspectives of the Khārijites. As for Tunis, it was ruled by the Aghlābids, who accepted the authority of the caliphate in principle, but who were, for all practical purposes, independent.

In southern Spain and Portugal, or al-Andalus, as the Muslims have known it, the Umayyad prince 'Abd al-Raḥmān I established the Spanish Umayyad dynasty in 138/756 with its capital in Cordova, which soon became the largest and most cosmopolitan city in Europe. Thus began a rule of two and a half centuries, during which Spain witnessed incredible cultural achievements in nearly every field and the creation of a social climate in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived in peace and harmony to a degree rarely seen in human history. Muslim Spain was the locus of not only a flowering of Islamic culture, but also of one of the major flowerings of Jewish culture; the close relationship between the two cultures at the time can be seen in the number of works written by Jewish thinkers, one of the most famous of whom was Maimonides, in Arabic. Spain also became the most important center from which Islamic learning in the sciences, philosophy, and the arts was transmitted to the Christian West and had such a profound effect on later European history. The city of Toledo played a particularly prominent role in this transmission.

In the fifth/eleventh century, Umayyad power waned. Spain became divided into small principalities ruled by local princes (called *mulūk al-ṭawā'if* in Arabic), making it an easy target for

the Berbers of North Africa, especially the religiously fervent and puritanical Almoravids and Almohads, who conquered much of Spain in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries. But these victories were short-lived. With the power of Muslims considerably weakened, the reconquest by Christians began, marked by the fatal defeat of Muslims in the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 608/1212. Henceforth, Muslims survived only in the mountainous regions of the south, where the Naṣrids ruled and built one of the greatest masterpieces of Islamic art, the Alhambra, in Granada in the seventh/thirteenth century. Formal Muslim rule over the Iberian Peninsula came to an end in 897/1492 with the conquest of Granada by the Christian rulers Isabelle and Ferdinand. After that event, the Muslims who remained were persecuted as Moriscos until they disappeared outwardly from the scene in the eleventh/seventeenth century, although the influence of Islam and its culture persists in Spain to this day.

In North Africa itself, after the assertion of Fāṭimid rule, tribal battles continued between those who paid allegiance to the Fāṭimid caliphate and those who remained faithful to the 'Abbāsids. In the fifth/eleventh century the Sanhaja Berbers, who had spread Islam from Mauritania to the mouth of the Senegal River, united to form the al-Murābiṭūn (which has come to be known as Almoravids in the West), with their capital in Marrakesh, and united much of North Africa and Spain. They were succeeded by al-Muwaḥḥidūn (the Almohads), a dynasty founded by a disciple of the famous Persian theologian and Sufi al-Ghazzālī. This puritanical movement spread as far

east as Tripolitania and survived into the seventh/thirteenth century.

With the weakening of the Almohads, local dynasties asserted themselves once again, the Marīnids in Morocco and the Ḥafṣids in Algeria and Tunisia. In the tenth/sixteenth century, North Africa fell into the hands of the Ottomans, except for Morocco, which has been ruled since the tenth/sixteenth century by the *sharīfs*, or descendants of the Prophet, who founded the 'Alawid dynasty. All of the Maghrib, or the western lands of the Arab world, fell into the hands of the French (and to some extent the Spaniards) in the thirteenth/nineteenth century and did not regain independence until the latter part of the twentieth century.

The Mongol Invasion

Although the western lands of Islam were unaffected by the onslaught of the Mongols, the eastern lands were devastated by the descendants of Chingīz Khān, who captured first Central Asia, then Persia, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine, and were only stopped by the Mamlūks in the Sinai Peninsula. The Mongols also put an end to the 'Abbāsid caliphate, thereby bringing about a major change in the political landscape of the Islamic world. With their conquest of Baghdad and killing of the last 'Abbāsid caliph in 656/1258, the Islamic world entered a new phase of its history. After a period of turbulence, several new

empires appeared on the scene and dominated much of the Islamic world until the expansion of Western colonialism and the subjugation of most Islamic countries.

The Aftermath of the Mongol Invasion

Turmoil followed in both the economic and political domains in the wake of the Mongol invasion of the eastern lands of Islam. The descendants of Hülagü, who had captured these lands, began to rule, promulgating at the beginning their own Mongolian laws and customs. But soon these rulers, known as the Īl-khānids, embraced Islam, especially when their king, Öljeitü, accepted Islam and became Sultan Muḥammad Khudābandah. It is interesting to note that he embraced Islam in its Twelve-Imām Shī'ite form, and the period from the seventh/thirteenth to the eighth/fourteenth century saw the spread of Shī'ism in Persia, setting the stage for the establishment of Twelve-Imām Shī'ite rule in the Ṣafavid period.

The Īl-khānid period, marked by local powers vying with one another, was terminated toward the end of the eighth/fourteenth century by Tīmūr (Tamerlane), who conquered all of Persia, Iraq, Syria, Anatolia, southern Russia, and Central Asia; his capital was Samarqand, which became a great center of Persian art. Although his vast empire perished with him in 807/1405 when he died on his way to China, his descendants, the Tīmūrids,

reigned in Persia and Central Asia into the tenth/sixteenth century, making such cities as Shiraz, Tabriz, and Herat great centers of culture and art, especially the art of the Persian miniature and calligraphy. Moreover, it was one of Tīmūr's descendants, Bābar, who came to India from Afghanistan to establish the Mogul dynasty in the Subcontinent.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, which had repelled the Mongol invasion, the old order continued, and the Mamlūks were able to establish a powerful, stable state, which usually included Palestine and Syria. The state lasted for well over two centuries, from 648/1250 to 923/1517, when it was integrated into the Ottoman Empire. The Mamlūks were Sunni Muslims who emphasized their Sunni affiliation. They were great patrons of the arts, producing some of the finest examples of Islamic architecture, which adorn Cairo to this day, as well as some of the greatest masterpieces of Quranic calligraphy that the Islamic world has ever known. They left their indelible mark on Egypt, and their influence in the arts can still be felt in Cairo.

THE OTTOMANS

The most powerful Islamic state of recent centuries was established in Anatolia by Turkic tribes who had migrated westward from Central Asia through Persia. Although the earlier Turkic dynasty of the Seljūqs was defeated by the Mongols, after a short period Turkish power rose again, around Konya in southern Anatolia and farther west, where various tribes ruled over small municipalities. Soon the "sons of 'Uthmān," or Osmanlis, gained the upper hand, and by 726/1326 they had conquered much of Anatolia, making Bursa their capital. Now known as the Ottomans, they began their conquest of the Balkans in 758/1357, and in 792/1390-91 Bāyezīd Yildirim defeated the other small municipalities and claimed rule over all of Anatolia.

Although defeated by Tamerlane, the Ottomans soon regained their strength and in 857/1453 under Mehmet II conquered Constantinople, which was thereafter known as Istanbul, putting an end to the Byzantine Empire. In 923/1517, Sultan Selīm annexed Syria and Egypt, and the famous Ottoman ruler Sulaymān the Magnificent invaded Hungary in 932/1526 and made the whole of the Balkans part of the Ottoman Empire. The vast empire that spread from Algeria through the rest of North Africa, the Arab Near East, and Anatolia to the Balkans lasted for several centuries, and, despite attack by European powers in the thirteenth/nineteenth century, survived until the end of World War I, when its Arab provinces were divided between the British and the French, its Balkan territories gained independence, and the Turkish heartland became modern Turkey.

The Ottomans claimed to be caliphs who succeeded the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids, although they were not technically caliphs, but sultans. Nevertheless, they created a political order that functioned in many ways like the other caliphates.

They were staunch defenders of Sunni Islam, while their culture was highly influenced by Persian elements, as seen in both Turkish poetry and painting. They also supported Sufism, which flourished under their rule; some of the orders, such as the Mawlawiyyah and Baktāshiyyah, played an important political as well as spiritual role in the Ottoman world, particularly in Turkey itself. The Ottomans were great builders and created major architectural edifices that can still be seen in Istanbul and elsewhere. They created the last powerful Islamic empire that stood up to the West until the twentieth century and prevented European expansion from following the overland route in its attempt to conquer India and the Far East. The Arab Near East as well as Turkey are heirs to over six centuries of Ottoman rule, as are areas of Muslims in the Balkans including Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Macedonia.

THE ṢAFAVIDS AND THE LATER PERSIAN DYNASTIES

From the segmentation of political rule in Persia following the Mongol invasion, a powerful religiopolitical movement grew in western Persia under the banner of the Ṣafawī Sufi Order and Twelve-Imām Shīʿism. Supported by Turkic-speaking tribes, the Ṣafavids conquered Tabriz in 905/1499 and soon established their rule over the whole of Persia, which

included not only present-day Iran, but also much of Caucasia, the whole of Baluchistan, Afghanistan, and much of Central Asia. They thus established a powerful empire on the eastern flank of the Ottomans and sought to protect themselves from Ottoman domination by appealing to Shīʿism as the state religion (the Ottomans emphasized their support of Sunnism). In a sense the Ṣafavids reestablished the Persian national state after some nine centuries and laid the basis for the modern state of Iran.

They made Isfahan their capital and turned it into one of the most beautiful cities in the Islamic world. Their artistic creations, whether in architecture, tile work, rugs, or miniatures, mark some of the major peaks of Islamic art. Also, despite the migration of many Persian Sunni scholars and thinkers to India, the Ṣafavid period witnessed a major revival of Islamic sciences, especially philosophy. The dynasty, however, which had been originally a Sufi order, turned against Sufism, and conflict arose between Shīʿite *ʿulamāʾ* and the Sufis. Weakened by both internal rivalries and frictions and external pressures, the Ṣafavids were finally defeated by the Afghan invasion of 1135/1722, which put an end to the Ṣafavid dynasty.

For a while Persia was threatened by both the Ottomans and the Russians, who were expanding southward. But in 1142/1729 Nādir, who had been a Ṣafavid general, rose to power and expelled the Afghans and Ottomans from Persia, regaining Georgia, Shirwan, and Armenia in the process. He established himself as king, founded the Afshār dynasty, and

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became the last Oriental conqueror, capturing Delhi in 1150/1738 and gaining possession of northern India. But his rule terminated when he was murdered by his entourage. After him, the Zands established themselves in southern Persia, while Aḥmad Shah Durrānī declared autonomy in Afghanistan, which finally led to the formal separation of Afghanistan from Persia in the middle of the thirteenth/nineteenth century.

In 1193/1779 the Turkman leader Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār seized Tehran and from there the rest of Persia, establishing the Qājār dynasty, which lasted until 1343/1924. Threatened by both the Russians in the north and the British in the south, the Qājārs sought to tread a fine line to preserve Persia's autonomy at least nominally. Much of the territory of Persia was lost, however, at this time to Russia and Britain, but at least the formal and nominal independence of Persia was preserved. However, because of the weakness of the central government, foreign interference and machinations were rampant. Several attempts at reform failed, but the Constitutional Revolution of 1323/1906, which created a constitutional monarchy and the first elected parliament in the Islamic world, did succeed, at least formally, although the struggle for power between the shahs and the religious authorities continued in one way or another until the coming of Reza Shah and the founding of the Pahlavi dynasty. Persia now began a new phase of its life, a period of national assertion combined with modernization. The old struggles, however, between the state and the Shīʿite

ʿulamāʾ had obviously not disappeared; they took new shape and led finally to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

THE MOGULS

Islam had begun to spread into the heartland of India in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, mostly through Sufi orders such as the Chishtiyyah. Gradually, local Muslim rule became established, especially during the period known as the Delhi Sultanate, which at times ruled much of northern India. There were also notable small Muslim municipalities in Kashmir and Bengal as well as in the south, especially in the Deccan. In the tenth/sixteenth century, Bābar and his army established their rule over northern India and founded the Mogul (also known as Mughal) Empire, which ruled most of that land from 932/1526 to 1274/1858. The great early emperors, such as Akbar, Humāyūn, Jahāngīr, and Shah Jahān, created one of the most culturally vibrant and wealthy empires in the world.

Dominated to a large extent by the Persian administrative system and the Persian language and art, the Moguls allowed nevertheless a creative interaction between Islam and the local culture of India to take place, which resulted in the creation of some of the finest works of architecture ever built, such as the Taj Mahal in Agra, as well as the flowering of Sufi

poetry and music, poetry that was not only in Persian, but also in the local languages. This was also the period that gave birth to Urdu, a language that came into its own in the twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries as a major vehicle for the expression of Islamic thought and sensibility in northern India and is now one of the major Islamic languages.

After the death of the Mogul emperor Aurangzeb in 1118/1707, the power of the Moguls began to wane as they were confronted with not only external invasions by Nādir Shah Afshār and Aḥmad Shah Durrānī, but also the rise of local Hindu rulers and, most of all, the British, who extended their colonial rule over India and soon annexed the whole of it as part of the British Empire. After the Muslim uprising of 1273/1857, even the nominal rule of the Moguls came to an end, and Muslim as well as Hindu India became a full-fledged colony until the independence and partition of India in 1948.

Islam in Other Areas

BLACK AFRICA

The history of Islam in Black Africa begins at the time of the Prophet, when a number of his companions took refuge in Abyssinia. The eastern coast of Africa became integrated into the Islamic world very rapidly, but Islam remained bound to

the coastal areas until the thirteenth/nineteenth century, when communication within the jungle areas, which come close to the sea in that region, made the penetration of Islam into the inner regions of Africa from the east possible. It was from the western region of Africa that Islam spread into the hinterlands, mostly in the savannah that separates the Sahara, inhabited by Berbers and Arabs, from the jungles, which, like the savannah, were inhabited by Black Africans. As early as the fifth/eleventh century, Muslim historians described the Muslim quarters of the capital of Ghana, which was later conquered by the Almoravids, who were then succeeded by local dynasties. By the sixth/twelfth century, most of Ghana had embraced Islam.

There are also records of Muslims in Mali, whose king converted to Islam. Referred to by Arabs as Takrūr, which was in reality only part of Mali, the Muslims of Mali established a major kingdom with a thriving Islamic culture that was in close contact with Muslim centers of North Africa. A city such as Timbuktu became a center of Islamic learning, and to this day the libraries of Mali contain rich collections of Arabic manuscripts. The greatest ruler of Mali was Mansa Mūsā, who lived in the eighth/fourteenth century and who captured Timbuktu as well as the Songhay in the middle of the Niger, which by the ninth/fifteenth century came to eclipse Mali as a Muslim kingdom. The pilgrimage of Mansa Mūsā, accompanied by a vast entourage, to Mecca left a deep impression on the heart of the Islamic world of his day. This kingdom had such famous rulers as Askiya Muḥammad, who, like many eminent Islamic leaders of West Africa, made the pilgrimage

to Mecca, where he met the Berber scholar Muḥammad al-Maghīlī, who exercised great influence in that region. Al-Maghīlī preached a form of puritanical Islam, opposed any mixing with local African religious practices, and emphasized the concept of *mujaddid* (which means the renewer of Islam at the beginning of each century)—a concept that has had an important role in Islam in Black Africa to this day, being closely associated with the messianic ideas known as Mahdism.

In the eighth/fourteenth century, the Hausa, who had lived in relative isolation in West Africa until then, gradually became converted to Islam, at first through immigrants from Mandingo who converted the kings of Kano and Katsina to the faith. Later, Fulani *'ulamā'* brought Islamic education to the region and spread the influence of Islam considerably. By the tenth/sixteenth century, Islam was beginning to spread to Bagirmi and Waday, where again the Fulani *'ulamā'* played an important role. At this time also the Moroccan kingdom began to show greater interest in the Saharan salt mines and after several battles established its hegemony over much of this area, especially the land of the Songhay. But it soon lost interest and withdrew, leaving various pashas to rule over local municipalities. For a while the Bambara, who were not influenced to any appreciable degree by Islam, gained power, but at the same time other members of the Mande group who were Muslims began to disperse west and south to the Atlantic, spreading Islam to Upper Guinea and the Ivory Coast.

In the twelfth/eighteenth century, just preceding the European colonization of Africa, a number of major religious movements swept over West Africa, establishing Islamic states based on the appeal of charismatic leaders, some of whom claimed to be the Mahdī. The most famous of these figures was 'Uthmān dan Fadio, born in Gobir in 1167/1754, who soon conquered much of West Africa as both religious leader and ruler. He united many of the fractious tribes and established an order whose religious and political effect persists to this day.

Another of these charismatic figures was al-Ḥājj 'Umar, who lived at the beginning of the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Originally from Futu Toro, he traveled as a young man to Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem and joined the Tijāniyyah Sufi Order. He returned to Futa Jallon, where his religious and military followers began to increase; he then went to Dinguiray, where in 1268/1852 he declared *jihād.* He fought many battles against both the Bambara and the French and encouraged the emigration of Muslims to avoid living under European colonial rule. He made long spiritual retreats even amid a most active life and was said by his followers to possess extraordinary powers. Killed in battle in 1281/1864, he also left a religious and political heritage that has not been forgotten to this day.

In Arabic the lands lying below the Berber and Arabic regions of North Africa are called *Bilād al-sūdān,* the "land of the Sudan," of which present-day Sudan occupies the eastern

region. This latter area, known more technically as Nilotic Sudan, was penetrated by Islam later than western and central Africa. Nubia, which lies north of this region and south of present-day Egypt, was the site of a very ancient civilization that later embraced Christianity and resisted Islamic penetration from Egypt for several centuries. Gradually, however, Arab tribes began to move south, and Nubia became more and more Muslimized until the eighth/fourteenth century, when it became completely Islamic and henceforth was closely historically related to Egypt. The rest of Sudan, except for its southern province, became ever more Arabized, especially from the tenth/sixteenth century onward, when nomadic Arabs pushed into the grasslands of Nilotic Sudan. At the same time a non-Arab tribe, the Funj, pushed north, embracing Islam and completing the Islamization of Nubia and northern Sudan. The Funj were very devoted to Sufism, and during their hegemony Sufi orders exercised great power, a power that continues in many areas to this day.

From the tenth/sixteenth century on the Ottomans also exercised some influence over certain areas of the country now known as the Sudan. The Funj power finally declined in the twelfth/eighteenth century, and in the thirteenth/nineteenth century Egypt sent a mission to subjugate the country that is now known as the Sudan. The Turco-Egyptian domination of the Sudan was to last until the rise of British power in the region in the late thirteenth/nineteenth century. But the situation in the Sudan was such that British colonization was to meet major obstacles in its path. Islamic religious

revival was observable everywhere, and in 1298/1881 a charismatic religious figure named Muḥammad Aḥmad proclaimed himself the Mahdī, seeking to unite not only the Sudan, but also the Islamic world in a new religious polity and opposing the Westernization that was beginning to appear among certain classes. He united the tribes and fought against the Egyptian garrisons, which were helped by the British. In 1302/1885 he defeated General Gordon and captured Khartoum, establishing a new Islamic state and a religious organization that is still of great significance in the Sudan.

As for the Horn of Africa, there are records of Muslim establishments along the east coast of Africa by the third/ninth century. Gradually, Muslim kingdoms were created that often paid tribute to the Christian Ethiopian emperors, but such towns as Zaylā' and Mogadishu were already deeply Arabized centuries ago. Although the culture and language were Swahili, there was close contact with the Arab and Persian worlds, and the Somalis, who accepted Islam and spread it in that region, claimed Arab ancestry. In the tenth/sixteenth century both the Ottomans and the Portuguese gained power in the region, the latter burning the city of Zaylā'. Under these circumstances Aḥmad Grāñ, the first of many religious reformers in the area, arose and sought to assert Islamic rule in the region. But Grāñ was finally killed in battle, and Muslim power in the interior began to wane. Along the coast, Islamic Swahili culture thrived as both the Ottomans and 'Umānīs from the Arabian Sea area were gaining greater power. By the thirteenth/nineteenth century, European colonial presence, at

first German and British and later Italian, destroyed Islamic rule over the region until the political independence of the area after World War II. But the religious authority of the Muslims on the coast remained strong inland and though their political power had diminished under colonial rule, Islam as a religion began to penetrate to an ever greater degree westward into the heart of Africa, commencing a process that continues to this day. More and more African people became drawn into the Islamic setting represented by the Swahili culture of the coast, in contrast to western and central Africa, where Islam came as a result of the migration of foreign elements, namely, Berbers and Arabs.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Islam spread into the Malay world beginning as early as the seventh/thirteenth century, but especially from the eighth/fourteenth century through Sufi teachers, pious merchants, and a number of men from the family of the Prophet and ruling classes of the Hadramaut and the Persian Gulf who married members of Malay royal families and brought about conversion to Islam from above. Chinese Muslims also played a role in the Islamization of the Malay world. The role of Sufis, who came from both the Indian Subcontinent and Arabia, was, however, paramount. It was the Sufis who translated classics of Sufi literature from Arabic and Persian into Malay

and transformed the Malay language into a major Islamic language. They also began to write original Islamic works in Malay, as can be seen in the writings of such figures as the eleventh/seventeenth-century Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī.

Marco Polo had already detected an Islamic kingdom in Sumatra in Perlak on returning from China to Persia in 691/1292, and Chinese records speak of an Islamic embassy being sent from Samudra to the Chinese emperor in 681/1282. Samudra soon grew into a powerful Muslim kingdom known as Pasai, which lasted until 927/1521, when it was conquered by the Portuguese. Islam gradually spread from northern Sumatra to Malacca, whose ruler, Muḥammad Iskandar Shah, became famous, although earlier Hindu and Buddhist practices continued to prevail for some time elsewhere in the Malay world. By the time of Sultan Muẓaffar Shah, around 855/1450, Malacca's conversion to Islam had become complete. From there, the religion spread throughout the Malay Peninsula from Trengganu to Kedah and Pahang and into eastern Sumatra itself. In 917/1511 Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese, who thus put an end to its Islamic political power, but the spread of the religion continued unabated.

Soon Acheh rose to become the preeminent center of Muslim power. In 930/1524 'Alī Mughayat Shah captured Pasai from the Portuguese and laid the groundwork for the political rise of Acheh. The kingdom of Acheh survived into the eleventh/seventeenth century, reaching its peak with Sultan Iskandar Mūdā, who ruled from 1015/1606 to 1046/1637. After him the kingdom declined and gradually fell apart by the

end of the century, but Islam itself became ever more entrenched in Sumatra.

During the tenth/sixteenth century, Arab traders and pious men journeying from Malacca to the Philippines brought Islam to Brunei, the Sulu Archipelago, and Mindanao, where there were Muslim sultanates when the Portuguese and the Spaniards arrived. The Islamic communities that are found in these areas today are remnants of these thriving Islamic kingdoms whose populations have survived despite great persecution and even mass killing of those who refused to accept Christianity by the Spaniards in the Philippines, where the Muslims came to be known as the Moros.

In Java there are records of the presence of Muslims in the ninth/fifteenth century, although many of these Muslims were not indigenous but Chinese Muslims, who left a profound effect on eastern Java. There is also a tomb in Java of a Muslim preacher, probably a Persian merchant and pious man by the name of Malik Ibrāhīm, dated to 822/1419, bearing witness to the presence of Islam at that time. Gradually, the power of the Mahapahit Hindu kingdom waned, and more people began to embrace Islam. This process was accelerated by the arrival of a number of Islamic Sufi preachers from India who played a major role in the spread of Islam into much of Java. As the Muslims gained greater power, they sought to drive the Portuguese from Malacca, but were defeated. They then turned their attention to western Java, which had not yet embraced Islam, and many local battles ensued. Islam penetrated peacefully into the south of central Java through the effort of figures

such as Kigede Pandan-Arang, whose lives are interwoven with accounts of miracles and supernatural events and whose tombs are sites of pilgrimage to this day.

The process of Islamization continued in the ninth/fifteenth century eastward to the Moluccas, whose first real Muslim ruler was Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (891/1486-905/1500). When the Portuguese arrived, they tried hard to replace Islam with Christianity (even Francis Xavier visited the islands), but they were not successful in weakening the hold of Islam in favor of Christianity in that land. Likewise, Islam spread into southern Borneo and the Celebes Islands, where by the eleventh/seventeenth century Makasar had become a center of Islam, resisting for some time the encroaching power of the Dutch.

The eleventh/seventeenth century witnessed the gradual domination by the Dutch of much of what is now known as Indonesia. Even in Java, where the Mataram Empire had succeeded in conquering all the local kingdoms and establishing an empire over nearly the whole of Java, the power of the Dutch and the British grew steadily; battles also continued among various Muslim groups offering different interpretations of Islam. By the thirteenth/nineteenth century the whole of the Malay-speaking world was administratively ruled by the Dutch, the British, and the Spaniards, and small groups of Malay Muslims located in Cambodia and Thailand were being governed by the rulers of those lands.

Islam among the Malay people, who occupy the present-day countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the southern

Philippines with minorities in other adjacent lands, replaced both the Hindu and Buddhist religions (which began to weaken from the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries onward) and local mystical and magical religious practices. Malay became the dominant Islamic language, nourished profusely by Arabic and Persian sources but also drawing from the earlier literary and religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Although Malay Muslims remained deeply attached to Islam and the center of Islam in Mecca and made pilgrimage (the *ḥajj*) very central to their religious lives, they integrated many aspects of their religious past into their Islamic culture. The shadow play, using themes of the Hindu epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, which has even reached the popular art of Turkey, is an example of this synthesis. In the process of Islamization, which still goes on in the faraway islands, Sufism played a major role from the beginning, and it is to Sufism that one must turn to understand the process whereby Malay was transformed into one of the major languages of the Islamic world.

CHINA

The history of Islam in China is almost as old as Islam itself, for during the Umayyad period Muslims had reached the coast of China by sea as Arabs had done even before the rise of Islam. Gradually, Muslim communities were founded along

the coast, while, overland, Persian merchants who traveled over the Silk Route brought not only goods, but also religious ideas with them. There were Islamic communities in many areas of China even during the T'ang period, which ended in the early fourth/tenth century. The Mongol invasion of both Persia and China increased contact between the two worlds, bringing even Islamic astronomy and mathematics to China. Kublai Khān, the conqueror of China, also brought Persians into his military and civil service. Some of these men settled later in Yunnan and formed an Islamic community. Many important figures of state, including ministers, were Muslims.

Gradually Islam spread throughout China, and an indigenous form of Islamic culture with its own distinct artistic and literary forms developed. Many of its features are unique, because it adopted numerous characteristics of the dominant Chinese culture. The degree of participation of Muslims in Chinese life can be seen in the career of the famous admiral of the Ming dynasty Chang Ho, who carried out ambassadorial duties for the Chinese emperor and who compiled a major survey of the Indian Ocean. For the most part, the Ming were lenient toward Muslims, and two of the emperors were even sympathetic to Islam. It was only with the advent of the Ch'ing in the eleventh/seventeenth century that strong opposition to Muslims became state policy and Chinese armies sought to overrun Muslim lands in Central Asia. It is interesting to note that the first Chinese work on Islam by a Chinese Muslim was not written until the eleventh/seventeenth century, when Wang Tai-yü wrote an explanatory work on Islam using Confucian

language. His most famous successor, the twelfth/eighteenth-century Wang Liu Chih, continued the approach of seeking to create harmony between Islam and Confucianism; in the same century the Naqshbandi Sufi Ma Minghsin strongly opposed Confucianism as well as the Ch'ing dynasty.

During the thirteenth/nineteenth century, several Muslim uprisings took place throughout China, leading to the death of many Muslims and the complete destruction of a number of Islamic communities in such places as Kansu, Tsinghai, and Yunnan. Later during that century, in 1294/1877, China completed its invasion of Eastern Turkestan, renaming it Sinkiang. Today the Muslim population of this area, mostly of Uighur and Turkoman origin, constitutes the largest concentration of Muslims in China. Also it is in this province that some of the sites of early Islamic civilization, such as Kashghar, continue as thriving communities, despite the persecution of religion during the Communist period.

The Islamic World in Contemporary History

If we were to look at the map of the Islamic world in the thirteenth/nineteenth century, we would see that aside from an ailing Ottoman world, a weak Persia, an unruly Afghanistan, and the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, the rest of the vast Islamic world was colonized in one form or another by various European powers and, in the case of Eastern

European colonialism

Turkestan, the Chinese. The French ruled North Africa, some of western and central Africa, and, after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Syria and Lebanon. The British controlled most of Muslim Africa, Egypt, Muslim India, some of the Malay-speaking world, and, after World War I, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Aden, Oman, and the Persian Gulf Emirates. The Dutch ruled Java, Sumatra, and most of the other parts of present-day Indonesia with an iron hand. The Russians gradually extended their dominion over Muslim areas such as Daghestan and Chechnya within what is considered Russia today as well as lower Caucasia and Central Asia. The Spaniards held on to parts of North Africa while they subdued the Muslims of the Philippines and forced many to convert to Catholicism. The Portuguese lost their earlier vast holdings in the Indian Ocean and controlled colonies with only small Muslim populations. It was in this context that late in that century movements for the independence of Islamic countries began, incited both by the religious ethos of Islam and by nationalism, which had begun to penetrate the Islamic world from the West to an ever greater degree, and would become even more powerful during the twentieth century.

Islam & Nationalism

With the breakup of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, present-day Turkey became an independent nation and the first and only state in the Islamic world to claim secularism as the basis of its state ideology. Its former European territories, many of which had sought independence earlier, became independent nations, while its Arab provinces to the south, as already mentioned, fell under direct French and

British colonial rule. In the Arabian Peninsula the Saudi family, allied to the aggressive and sometime violent Wahhābī religious movement of Najd since the twelfth/eighteenth century, unified Najd and Hejaz in 1926 and founded the Saudi Kingdom as it is known today. Only the rim of the peninsula from the Arabian Sea to the southern shores of the Persian Gulf remained under the power of the British, who ruled with the help of local shaykhs and princes, or *amīrs*. Egypt retained nominal sovereignty, although in reality it was under the influence of the British.

At the end of World War II, with the wave of anticolonialism sweeping the world, independence movements began throughout the Islamic world. Soon after the war, India was partitioned into Muslim Pakistan, then the biggest Muslim nation, and the predominantly Hindu India, where a sizable Muslim minority continues to live. Pakistan itself was partitioned in 1971 into Pakistan and Bangladesh. Also soon after the War, after bloody battles, Indonesia gained its independence from the Dutch, followed by Malaysia. In Africa, the North African Islamic nations fought against French colonialism, gaining their independence in the 1950s, except for Algeria, where the fiercest battle for independence, resulting in the death of a million Algerians, took place. Algeria finally became fully independent in 1962. Likewise, the Islamic countries of Black Africa gained their independence one after another from the British and the French, although the strong economic influence of the former colonial powers persists to this day.

By the 1970s nearly the whole of the Islamic world was at least nominally free except for the lands that were still contained within the Soviet empire and Eastern Turkestan. With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989, however, most Muslim lands of both Caucasia and Central Asia have now become independent. Only Muslim areas captured by the Russians in the thirteenth/nineteenth century and considered part of present-day Russia remain under external political domination, as do the Muslim areas within China and the Philippines along with Kashmir and the Palestinian territories.

The independence of Islamic countries in modern times has not meant, however, their veritable cultural, economic, and social independence. If anything, after political independence many parts of the Islamic world became culturally even more subjugated than before. Moreover, the very form of the nation-state imposed on the Islamic world from the West is alien to the nature of Islamic society and is the cause of great internal tension in many areas. There is, on the one hand, the desire on the part of Muslims for Islamic unity opposed to the segmentation of the *ummah* and the division of the Islamic world not only into ancient and well-defined units and zones, but often ill-conceived and artificial new ones. There is, on the other hand, the strong desire to preserve the identity and character of the Islamic world before the onslaught of modern Western civilization, the invasion of whose values continues unabated. The contemporary history of the Islamic world is characterized by these and other tensions, such as that between tradition and modernism, a tension whose very presence

proves that not only Islam but also Islamic civilization is still alive. These tensions, often resulting in upheavals and unrest, indicate that, despite the weakening of this civilization due to both external and internal causes during the past two centuries, the Islamic world is a living reality with its own religious and cultural values, which remain very much alive for the more than 1.2 billion followers of Islam living in lands stretching from the East to.the West.

7

Schools of Islamic Thought and Their History

Besides legal thought related to the *Sharīʿah*, already discussed, and the field of the principles of jurisprudence *(uṣūl al-fiqh)*, which is closely related to the Sacred Law, Islamic religious thought has developed in three main channels or disciplines: *kalām*, usually translated "theology"; metaphysics and gnosis *(maʿrifah* or *ʿirfān)*; and philosophy and theosophy *(falsafah, ḥikmah)*. These three disciplines have confronted and interacted with each other in numerous ways during the various epochs of Islamic history.

The Schools of Kalām

The term *kalām* literally means "word," and its use as the name for Islamic scholastic theology is said to have come from the Quran itself, which is the "Word of God" *(kalām Allāh)*.