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BERNARD LEWIS

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The Arabs in History

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Preface to the First Edition

THIS is not so much a history of the Arabs as an essay in interpretation. Rather than compress so vast a subject into a bare outline of dates and events, I have sought to isolate and examine certain basic issues—the place of the Arabs in human history, their identity, their achievement, and the salient characteristics of the several ages of their development.

In a work of this nature it is not possible nor indeed desirable to acknowledge the sources of every point of fact and interpretation. Orientalists will recognize at once my debt to the masters, past and present, of Islamic historical studies. For the rest, I can only express my general indebtedness to my predecessors, teachers, colleagues, and students who have all helped, in different ways, to form the view of Arab history set forth in these pages.

My special thanks are due to Professor Sir Hamilton Gibb, the late Professors U. Heyd and D. S. Rice for reading and criticizing my manuscript, to Miss J. Bridges for preparing the index, and to Professor A. T. Hatto for many useful suggestions.

B.L.
London, 1947

Preface to the New Edition

THIS book was written in 1947 and first published in 1950. Thereafter, it went through five editions and many reprints, both in Britain and in the United States. Translations were published in eleven languages, four of them—Arabic, Turkish, Malay, and Indonesian—in Muslim countries. The Arabic version was made by two distinguished Arab historians and was praised by such eminent Arab scholars as Shafiq Ghorbal in Egypt. This did not save it from being banned in Pakistan, because of a disrespectful reference to the Prophet which I had quoted from Dante as an example of medieval European prejudice and bigotry. More recently, it has been attacked, principally by the exponents of the new school of epistemology.

Despite such strictures, the book was widely used and frequently reprinted in many countries, presumably because of the shortage of alternative works treating Arab history with the same brevity and at the same level of analysis and generalization. It has, however, in several respects become out of date, and when I was asked to prepare yet another new edition, it seemed to me that a more thorough overhaul was necessary. My original intention was to confine this overhaul in the main to the final chapter dealing with more recent events, where extensive revision and additions were obviously required. But in rereading the text which I wrote almost forty-five years earlier, I soon realized that many more changes would be needed before I could publish this as a revised and updated edition.

These changes are of several kinds. Some are primarily verbal, to take account of changes of usage that have occurred during the past half century. For example, the

word 'racial' in Britain in the 1940s was commonly used in contexts where 'ethnic' would be appropriate nowadays. In the induction form of the British Army, when I joined in 1940, a recruit was asked to state his race, the expected answer being English, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish, and the choice entirely his own. To use the word 'racial' in this sense at the present day would be offensive and, more important, misleading. There are other words that have changed or lost their meanings; others again that have become unacceptable. Even in a number of places where I had no desire to change the meaning of the words which I used in 1948, I have nevertheless found it necessary to change the words themselves in order to convey that same meaning accurately to the present-day reader.

Of greater importance are the revisions which affect not merely the wording, but the substance. These changes are of two kinds. The first might be described as corrections—changes the purpose of which is to bring the text into line with the current state of knowledge and climate of opinion among scholars. Since this book was originally published, many scholars in many countries have worked on the subjects discussed in it, and, through the discovery of new evidence and the achievement of new insights, have in significant respects transformed our perception of the Arab past.

The second group of revisions derive not so much from the advancement of scholarship in general as from the evolution of my own views. There are many things in Arab history, as in other topics, which I no longer see as I did when I wrote this book. It would be self-defeating and ultimately pointless to try and rewrite the book as I would write it at the present time. The aim of my revisions has been more modest—to remove statements which I now find unacceptable, to use more cautious language where I am no longer as sure as I was then, and to add new material where this seemed to be necessary to

present a balanced picture. In both respects therefore, I have proceeded by addition, omission, and emendation, while still preserving the original structure of exposition and analysis.

Finally, there are the changes necessitated by events in the Arab world and beyond during the years that have passed since this book was written. These events are of course important in themselves; they may also affect the perception and the presentation of the past. I have not, however, included an outline of recent and current history. In a region and period of rapid and sometimes violent change, some distance is needed for serious evaluation, and any attempt to keep pace with new developments would swiftly be outdated. In the chronological table, I have added more recent events which attracted public attention or seemed to me important. For similar reasons, I have inserted a few earlier events missing from previous editions. Paradoxically, the progress of scholarship has not obliged me to lengthen the bibliography but has rather permitted me to shorten it, thanks to the appearance of several excellent bibliographical guides and other works of reference.

In the original edition, following the pattern of the series, there were no footnotes. I have retained this pattern, and have made no attempt to provide detailed annotation and documentation for the statements made in the book. I have, however, provided an appendix, giving references for direct quotations.

B.L.
Princeton, N.J.
July 1992

Contents

List of Maps x

Introduction 1

1 Arabia Before Islam 15

2 Muḥammad and the Rise of Islam 32

3 The Age of the Conquests 47

4 The Arab Kingdom 65

5 The Islamic Empire 84

6 'The Revolt of Islam' 107

7 The Arabs in Europe 125

8 Islamic Civilization 142

9 The Arabs in Eclipse 157

10 The Impact of the West 180

Chronological Table 209

Notes 216

Guide to Further Reading 220

Index 225

Maps

The Near and Middle East on the eve of the rise of Islam 22

The Islamic Empire—extent and main trade-routes 96

The break-up of political unity in the ninth and tenth centuries 102

The great invasions of the eleventh century 165

The attack of the European Empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 186

The Arab world in 1992 193

Introduction

WHAT is an Arab? Ethnic terms are notoriously difficult to define, and Arab is not among the easiest. One possible definition may be set aside at once. The Arabs may be a nation; they are not a nationality in the legal sense. One who calls himself an Arab may be described in his passport as a national of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, or any other of the group of states that identify themselves as Arab. Some of them—such as Saudi Arabia, the Union of Arab Emirates, the Syrian and Egyptian Arab Republics—have even adopted the word Arab in their official nomenclature. Their citizens are not, however, designated simply as Arabs. There are Arab states, and indeed a league of Arab states; but there is no single Arab state of which all Arabs are nationals.

But if Arabism has no legal content, it is none the less real. The pride of the Arab in his Arabdom, his consciousness of the bonds that bind him to other Arabs past and present, are no less intense. Is the unifying factor then one of language—is an Arab simply one who speaks Arabic as his mother tongue? It is a simple and at first sight a satisfying answer—yet there are difficulties. Is the Arabic-speaking Jew from Iraq or the Yemen or the Arabic-speaking Christian of Egypt or Lebanon an Arab? The enquirer could receive different answers amongst these people themselves and among their Muslim neighbours. Is even the Arabic-speaking Muslim of Egypt an Arab? Many consider themselves such, but not all, and the term Arab is still used colloquially in both Egypt and Iraq to distinguish the Bedouin of the surrounding deserts from the indigenous peasantry of the great river valleys. In some quarters the repellent word Arabophone is used to distinguish those who merely speak Arabic from those who are truly Arabs.

A gathering of Arab leaders many years ago defined an Arab in these words: 'Whoever lives in our country, speaks our language, is brought up in our culture and takes pride in our glory is one of us.' We may compare with this a definition from a well-qualified Western source, Sir Hamilton Gibb: 'All those are Arabs for whom the central fact of history is the mission of Muhammad and the memory of the Arab Empire and who in addition cherish the Arabic tongue and its cultural heritage as their common possession.' Neither definition, it will be noted, is purely linguistic. Both add a cultural, one at least a religious, qualification. Both must be interpreted historically, for it is only through the history of the peoples called Arab that we can hope to understand the meaning of the term from its primitive restricted use in ancient times to its vast but vaguely delimited extent of meaning today. As we shall see, through this long period the significance of the word Arab has been steadily changing, and as the change has been slow, complex and extensive, we shall find that the term may be used in several different senses at one and the same time, and that a standard general definition of its content has rarely been possible.

The origin of the word Arab is still obscure, though philologists have offered explanations of varying plausibility. For some, the word is derived from a Semitic root meaning 'west', and was first applied by the inhabitants of Mesopotamia to the peoples to the west of the Euphrates valley. This etymology is questionable on purely linguistic grounds, and is also open to the objection that the term was used by the Arabs themselves and that a people is not likely to describe itself by a word indicating its position relative to another. More profitable are the attempts to link the word with the concept of nomadism. This has been done in various ways; by connecting it with the Hebrew *''Arābhā'*—dark land, or steppe land; with the Hebrew *''Erebh'*—mixed and hence unorganized, as opposed to the organized and ordered life of the seden-

tary communities, rejected and despised by the nomads; with the root *'Ābhar'*—to move or pass—from which the word Hebrew is probably derived. The association with nomadism is borne out by the fact that the Arabs themselves seem to have used the word at an early date to distinguish the Bedouin from the Arabic-speaking town and village dwellers and indeed continue to do so to some extent at the present day. The traditional Arab etymology deriving the name from a verb meaning 'to express' or 'enunciate' is almost certainly a reversal of the historic process. A parallel case may be found in the connection between German *deuten*—'to make clear to the people', and *deutsch*—originally 'of the people'.

The earliest account that has come down to us of Arabia and the Arabs is that of the tenth chapter of Genesis, where many of the peoples and districts of the peninsula are mentioned by name. The word Arab, however, does not occur in this text, and makes its first appearance in an Assyrian inscription of 853 BC in which King Shalmaneser III records the defeat by the Assyrian forces of a conspiracy of rebellious princelings; one of them was 'Gindibu the Aribi', who contributed 1,000 camels to the forces of the confederacy. From that time until the sixth century BC there are frequent references in Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions to Aribi, Arabu, and Urbi. These inscriptions record the receipt of tribute from Aribi rulers, usually including camels and other items indicative of a desert origin, and occasionally tell of military expeditions into Aribi land. Some of the later inscriptions are accompanied by illustrations of the Aribi and their camels. These campaigns against the Aribi were clearly not wars of conquest but punitive expeditions intended to recall the erring nomads to their duties as Assyrian vassals. They served the general purpose of securing the Assyrian borderlands and lines of communication. The Aribi of the inscriptions are a nomadic people living in the far north of Arabia, probably in the Syro-Arabian desert. The term

does not include the flourishing sedentary civilization of south-western Arabia, which is separately mentioned in Assyrian records. The Aribi may be identified with the Arabs of the later books of the Old Testament. Towards 530 BC the term Arabaya begins to appear in Persian cuneiform documents.

The earliest classical reference is in Aeschylus, who in *Prometheus* mentions Arabia as a remote land whence come warriors with sharp-pointed spears. The *'Magos Arabos'* mentioned in the *Persians* as one of the commanders of Xerxes' army may possibly also be an Arab. It is in Greek writings that we find for the first time the place-name Arabia, formed on the analogy of Italia, etc. Herodotus and after him most other Greek and Latin writers extend the terms Arabia and Arab to the entire peninsula and all its inhabitants including the southern Arabians, and even the eastern desert of Egypt between the Nile and the Red Sea. The term at this time thus seems to cover all the desert areas of the Near and Middle East inhabited by Semitic-speaking peoples. It is in Greek literature, too, that the term 'Saracen' first becomes common. This word first appears in the ancient inscriptions, and seems to be the name of a single desert tribe in the Sinai area. In Greek, Latin, and Talmudic literature it is used of the nomads generally, and in Byzantium and the medieval West was later applied to all Muslim peoples.

The first Arabian use of the word Arab occurs in the ancient southern Arabian inscriptions, those relics of the flourishing civilization set up in the Yemen by the southern branch of the Arab peoples and dating from the late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries. In these, Arab means Bedouin, often raider, and is applied to the nomadic as distinct from the sedentary population. The first occurrence in the north is in the early fourth-century AD Namāra Epitaph, one of the oldest surviving records in the north-Arabian language which later became classical

Arabic. This inscription, written in Arabic but in the Nabatean Aramaic script, records the death and achievements of Imru'l-Qays, 'King of all the Arabs', in terms which suggest that the sovereignty claimed did not extend far beyond the nomads of northern and central Arabia.

It is not until the rise of Islam early in the seventh century that we have any real information as to the use of the word in central and northern Arabia. For Muḥammad and his contemporaries the Arabs were the Bedouin of the desert, and in the Qur'ān the term is used exclusively in this sense and never of the townsfolk of Mecca, Medina, and other cities. On the other hand, the language of these towns and of the Qur'ān itself is described as Arabic. Here we already find the germ of the idea prevalent in later times that the purest form of Arabic is that of the Bedouin, who have preserved more faithfully than any others the original Arab way of life and speech.

The great waves of conquest that followed the death of Muḥammad and the establishment of the Caliphate by his successors in the headship of the new Islamic community wrote the name Arab large across the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and placed it in the heading of a vital chapter in the history of human thought and endeavour. The Arabic-speaking peoples of Arabia, nomad and settled folk alike, founded a vast empire stretching from central Asia across the Middle East and North Africa to the Atlantic. With Islam as their national religion and war-cry, and the new empire as their booty, the Arabs found themselves living among a vast variety of peoples differing in race, language, and religion, among whom they formed a ruling minority of conquerors and masters. The ethnic distinctions between tribe and tribe and the social distinctions between townsfolk and desertfolk became for a while less significant than the difference between the masters of the new empire and the diverse peoples they had conquered. During this first period in Islamic history, when Islam was an Arab religion and the

Caliphate an Arab kingdom, the term Arab came to be applied to those who spoke Arabic, were full members by descent of an Arab tribe, and who, either in person or through their ancestors, had originated in Arabia. It served to mark them off from the mass of Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, and others, whom the great conquests had brought under Arab rule, and was also used in Christian Europe and elsewhere beyond the frontiers of Islam to designate the new imperial people. The early classical Arab dictionaries give us two forms of the word Arab—*'Arab'* and *'Aʿrāb'* in Arabic—and tell us that the latter meant 'Bedouin', while the former was used in the wider sense described above. This distinction, if it is authentic—and there is much in the early dictionaries that has a purely lexicographical existence—must date from this period. There is no sign of it earlier. It does not appear to have survived for long.

From the eighth century, the Caliphate was gradually transformed from an Arab to an Islamic Empire in which membership of the ruling group was determined by faith rather than by origin. As increasing numbers of the conquered peoples were converted to Islam, the religion ceased to be the national or tribal cult of the Arab conquerors and acquired the universal character that it has retained ever since. The development of economic life and the cessation of the wars of conquest produced a new governing class of administrators and traders, heterogeneous in race and language, which ousted the Arab military aristocracy created by the conquests. This change was reflected in the organization and personnel of government.

Arabic remained the sole official language and the main language of administration, commerce, and culture. The rich and diverse civilization of the Caliphate, created by people of many nations and faiths, was Arabic in language and to a large extent also in tone. The use of the adjective Arab to describe the various facets of this civilization has often been challenged on the grounds that the contribu-

tion to 'Arab medicine', 'Arab philosophy', etc. of those who were of Arab descent was relatively small. Even the use of the word Muslim is criticized, since many of the architects of this culture were Christians and Jews, and the term 'Islamic', as possessing a cultural rather than a purely religious or national connotation, has been suggested as preferable. The authentically Arab characteristics of the civilization of the Caliphate are, however, greater than the mere examination of the ethnic origins of its individual creators would suggest, and the use of the term is justified provided a clear distinction is drawn between its cultural and national connotations. Another important point is that in the collective consciousness of the Arabs today it is the Arab civilization of the Caliphate in this wider sense that is their common heritage and the formative influence in their cultural life.

Meanwhile the ethnic content of the word Arab itself was also changing. The spread of Islam among the conquered peoples was accompanied by the spread of Arabic. This process was accelerated by the settlement of numbers of Arabians in the provinces, and from the tenth century onwards by the arrival of a new ruling people, the Turks, in common subjection to whom the distinction between the descendants of the Arab conquerors and the Arabized natives ceased to be significant. In almost all the provinces west of Iran the old native languages died out and Arabic became the chief spoken language. From late 'Abbāsid times onwards the word Arab reverts to its earlier meaning of Bedouin or nomad, becoming in effect a social rather than an ethnic term. In many of the Western chronicles of the Crusades it is used only for Bedouin, while the mass of the Muslim population of the Near East are called Saracens. It is certainly in this sense that in the sixteenth century Tasso speaks of

> altri Arabi poi, che di soggiorno,
> certo non sono stabili abitanti;
> (*Gerusalemme Liberata*, XVII. 21)

The fourteenth-century Arabic historian Ibn Khaldūn, himself a townsman of Arab descent, uses the word commonly in this sense.

The main criterion of classification was religious. The various minority faiths were organized as religio-political communities, each under its own leaders and laws. The majority belonged to the *Ummat al-Islām*, the community or nation of Islam. Its members thought of themselves primarily as Muslims. When further classification was necessary, it might be territorial—Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi —or social—townsman, peasant, nomad. It is to this last that the term Arab belonged. So little had it retained of its ethnic meaning that we even find it applied at times to non-Arab nomads of Kurdish or Turkoman extraction. When the dominant social class within the *Ummat al-Islām* was mainly Turkish—as was the case for many centuries in the Near East—we sometimes find the term 'Sons or Children of the Arabs' (*Abnā' al-'Arab* or *Awlād al-'Arab*) applied to the Arabic-speaking townspeople and peasantry to distinguish them from the Turkish ruling class on the one hand and the nomads or Arabs proper on the other.

In colloquial Arabic this situation has remained substantially unchanged to the present day, though others have replaced the Turks as the dominant class. But among the intellectuals of the Arabic-speaking countries a change of far-reaching significance has taken place. The rapid growth of European activity and influence in these lands brought with it the European idea of the nation as a group of people with a common homeland, language, character, and political aspiration. Since the sixteenth century the Ottoman Empire had ruled most of the Arabic-speaking peoples of the Near and Middle East. The impact of the national idea on a people in the throes of the violent social changes brought about by the entry of Western imperialism produced the first beginnings of an Arab revival and an Arab national movement aiming at the creation of an independent state or states. The move-

ment began in Syria and its first leaders seem to have thought in terms only of that country. Soon it spread to Iraq and in later years developed closer relations with the local nationalist movements in Egypt and even in the Arabic-speaking countries of North Africa.

For the theoreticians of Arab nationalism the Arabs are a nation in the European sense, including all those within certain boundaries who speak Arabic and cherish the memory of bygone Arab glory. There are different views as to where these boundaries lie. For some they include only the Arabic-speaking countries of south-west Asia. Others add Egypt—though here there was a conflict of opinion with the many Egyptians who conceived of their nationalism, or rather patriotism, in Egyptian not Arab terms. Many include the entire Arabic-speaking world from Morocco to the borders of Iran and Turkey. The social barrier between sedentary and nomad has ceased to be significant from this point of view, despite its survival in the colloquial use of 'Arab' for Bedouin. The religious barrier in a society long dominated by a theocratic faith is less easily set aside. Though few of the spokesmen of the movement will admit it, many Arabs still exclude those who, though they speak Arabic, reject the Arabian faith and therefore much of the civilization that it fostered.

To sum up then: the term Arab is first encountered in the ninth century BC, describing the Bedouin of the north Arabian steppe. It remained in use for several centuries in this sense among the settled peoples of the neighbouring countries. In Greek and Roman usage it was extended to cover the whole peninsula, including the settled people of the oases and the relatively advanced civilization of the south-west. In Arabia itself it seems still to have been limited to the nomads, although the common language of sedentary and nomad Arabians was called Arabic. After the Islamic conquests and during the period of the Arab Empire it marked off the conquerors of Arabian origin from the mass of the conquered peoples. As the Arab

kingdom was transformed into a cosmopolitan Islamic Empire it came to denote—in external rather than in internal usage—the variegated culture of that Empire, produced by people of many nations and religions, but expressed in the Arabic language and conditioned by Arab taste and tradition. With the fusion of the Arab conquerors and the Arabized conquered and their common subjection to other ruling elements, it gradually lost its ethnic content and became a social term, applied mainly to the nomads who had preserved more faithfully than any others the original Arabian way of life and language. The Arabic-speaking peoples of the settled countries were usually classed simply as Muslims, sometimes as 'sons of the Arabs', to distinguish them from Muslims using other languages. While all these different usages have survived in certain contexts to the present day, a new one born of the impact of the West has in the course of the twentieth century become increasingly important. It is that which regards the Arabic-speaking peoples as a nation or group of sister nations in the modern sense, linked by a common territory, language, and culture and a common aspiration to political independence and unity.

It is a much easier task to examine the extent of Arabism in space at the present time. The Arabic-speaking countries fall into three groups: south-west Asia, Egypt, and North Africa. The largest Arab land in the first group is the Arabian peninsula itself. Most of it forms part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, still, despite the immense wealth accruing from oil, governed by a patriarchal monarchy and with a population which, outside the major cities and industrial development areas, is largely pastoral and nomadic. A republican coup against the neighbouring monarchy in Yemen in 1962 began a civil war, which continued until 1967. In that year, the Aden colony and protectorate became independent as the People's Republic of South Yemen. After a long period of rivalry, the two

Yemens were finally merged in 1990. The remainder of the peninsula, in the south-east and the east, consists of a number of principalities ruled by old established dynasties. By 1971 the Gulf States too had become independent, most of them joining in the Union of Arab Emirates.

To the north of Arabia lie the lands of the Fertile Crescent, until 1918 provinces of the Ottoman Empire, now the states of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. It is in these countries that the process of Arabization went farthest, and that the sentiment of Arab identity is strongest. Adjoining Arab Asia, in the north-east corner of Africa, lies Egypt, the most populous, most developed, and most homogeneous of the Arabic-speaking states, with the longest tradition of political nationalism and of separate political existence in modern times. In February 1958 Egypt was joined by Syria in a United Arab Republic, from which Syria withdrew in 1961. Egypt for a while retained the name United Arab Republic, but later changed it to Egyptian Arab Republic.

West of Egypt on the African continent, the former Italian colony of Libya became an independent monarchy in December 1951, and a revolutionary republic in 1969. Tunisia and Morocco were both recognized as independent in 1956, and Algeria, after a long and bitter struggle, in 1962. In most of these countries the population is mixed, mainly Arabic-speaking, but with Berber-speaking minorities, especially in Morocco. South of Egypt and the North African states, in the borderland between Arab and black Africa, are a number of states with mixed Arab and black populations—the Sudan, which attained its independence in 1956; Chad, which became independent in 1960; and Mauritania, in the same year. There are also Arab communities living among predominantly black populations further south, and significant Arab minorities in Iran, Israel, and Turkey. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, important Arab minorities have been

created by immigration in Western Europe, notably France, and in North America. The total number of Arabic-speaking people in Asia and Africa is usually estimated at over two hundred million, of whom over fifty-five million live in Egypt and over sixty million in North Africa.

These countries have much in common. All of them are on the border of the desert and the sown, and have confronted from the earliest times until today the ever-present problem of the encroaching nomad. Two of the most important, Egypt and Iraq, are the irrigated valleys of great rivers, highways of commerce, and seats of centralized states from most ancient times. Almost all of them are peasant countries, with basically the same social order and governing classes—though the outer forms and even the social realities are changing as the impact of the modern world affects them separately, at different times, in different ways, at different tempos. All but Arabia itself were won for Arabism and Islam by the great conquests, and all have inherited the same great legacy of language, religion, and civilization. But the spoken language has many local differences, and so too have religion, culture, and social tradition. Long separation and vast distances helped the Arabs, in fusion with different native cultures, to produce vigorous local variants of the common tradition, sometimes, as in Egypt, with an age-old sense of local national identity.

Among the conquered peoples, here and there, were some who refused either the conqueror's language or religion or both, surviving as Muslims, but not Arabs, such as the Kurds or Berbers in Iraq or North Africa; or as Arabic speakers, but not Muslims, such as the Maronites and Copts in Lebanon and Egypt. New sects arose in Islam itself, sometimes through the action of pre-existing cults, leaving Shī'ites and Yazīdīs in Iraq, Druze in Syria and Lebanon, Zaydīs and Ismā'īlīs in the Yemen. The modern age, by subjecting the Arab lands to greatly differing processes, has brought new factors of disunity,

deriving from varying social levels as well as from regional and dynastic interests. But modern developments are also strengthening the factors of unity—the rapid growth of modern communications, bringing the different parts of the Arab world into closer and quicker contact with one another than ever before; the spread of education and literacy, giving greater scope to the unifying power of a common written language and memory; and, most obvious, the new solidarity in opposition to alien domination and influence.

One last problem remains to be discussed in these introductory remarks. The European writer on Islamic history labours under a special disability. Writing in a Western language, he necessarily uses Western terms. But these terms are based on Western categories of thought and analysis, themselves deriving in the main from Western history. Their application to another society formed by different traditions and with different ways of life can at best be only an analogy and may be dangerously misleading. To take an example: such pairs of words as Church and state, spiritual and temporal, ecclesiastical and lay, had no real equivalents in Muslim usage until modern times, when they were created—or borrowed from the Arab Christians—to translate modern ideas; for the dichotomy which they express was unknown to medieval Muslim society and unarticulated in the medieval Muslim mind. The community of Islam was Church and state in one, with the two indistinguishably interwoven; its titular head, the Caliph, was at once a secular and a religious chief. Again, the term 'feudalism', strictly speaking, refers to the form of society which existed in western Europe between the break-up of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the modern order. Its use for other areas and other periods must inevitably, unless it is carefully defined in its new context, create the impression that the type of society thus described is

identical with or at least similar to west European feudalism. But no two societies are exactly the same, and though the social order in Islam at certain periods may show quite a number of important resemblances to west European feudalism, this can never justify the total identification which is implicit in the unrestricted use of the term. Such words as 'religion', 'state', 'sovereignty', 'democracy', mean very different things in the Islamic context and indeed vary in meaning from one part of Europe to another. The use of such words, however, is inevitable in writing in English and for that matter in writing in the modern languages of the Middle East, influenced for well over a century by Western modes of thought and classification. In the following pages they are to be understood at all times in their Islamic context and should not be taken as implying any greater degree of resemblance to corresponding Western institutions than is specifically stated.

1 *Arabia Before Islam*

> The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; *so* it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.
>
> (*Isaiah* 21: 1)

THE Arabian peninsula forms a vast rectangle of some one and a quarter million square miles area. It is bordered in the north by the chain of territories commonly known as the Fertile Crescent—in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine—and their desert borderlands; in the east and south by the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean; in the west by the Red Sea. The south-western districts of the Yemen consist of well-watered mountain country which from an early date permitted the rise of agriculture and the development of flourishing and relatively advanced sedentary civilizations. The remainder of the country consists of waterless steppes and deserts broken only by an occasional oasis and crossed by a few caravan and trade-routes. The population was mainly pastoral and nomadic, living by its flocks and by raiding the peoples of the oases and of the cultivated neighbouring provinces.

The deserts of Arabia are of various kinds: the most important according to the Arab classification are the Nufūd, a sea of enormous shifting sand-dunes forming a landscape of constantly changing aspect; the Ḥamād, rather more solid ground in the areas nearer to Syria and Iraq; the steppe country, where the ground is more compact and where occasional rainfall produces a sudden and transient vegetation; and finally the vast and impenetrable sand desert of the south-east. Between these zones communications were limited and difficult, depending mainly on wadis, so that the inhabitants of the different parts of Arabia had little contact with one another.

The centre and north of the peninsula are traditionally divided by the Arabs into three zones. The first of these is the Tihāma, a Semitic word meaning 'lowland', and applied to the undulating plains and slopes of the Red Sea coast. The second, moving eastwards, is the Ḥijāz, or 'barrier'. This term was originally applied only to the mountain range separating the coastal plain from the plateau of Najd, but was later extended to include much of the coastal plain itself. To the east of the Ḥijāz lies the great inland plateau of Najd, most of it consisting of Nufūd desert.

From very early times Arabia has formed a transit area between the Mediterranean countries and the further East, and its history has to a large extent been determined by the vicissitudes of east–west traffic. Communications both within Arabia and through Arabia have been directed by the geographical configuration of the peninsula into certain well-defined lines. The first of these is the Ḥijāz route, running from the Red Sea ports and inland border posts of Palestine and Transjordan along the inner flank of the Red Sea coastal range and onwards to the Yemen. This was at various times a route for caravan traffic between the Empire of Alexander and its successors in the Near East and the countries of further Asia. It was also the route of the Ḥijāz railway, completed in the early years of the twentieth century. A second route runs through the Wādī'l-Dawāsir, extending from the extreme north-east of the Yemen to central Arabia, where it links up with another route, the Wādī'l-Rumma, to southern Mesopotamia. This was the main medium of contact in ancient times between the Yemen and the civilizations of Assyria and Babylon. Finally, the Wādī'l-Sirḥān links central Arabia with south-eastern Syria via the Jawf oases.

Until we can dig for history in Arabia, as we have dug in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia, the early centuries of Arabia will remain obscure, and the searcher in the

field will have to pick his way warily among the debris of half-erected and half-demolished hypotheses which the historian, with the scanty equipment of fact that he now possesses, can neither complete nor raze to the ground. Perhaps the best-known of these is the Winckler–Caetani theory, so named after its two most distinguished exponents. According to this, Arabia was originally a land of great fertility and the first home of the Semitic peoples. Through the millennia it has been undergoing a process of steady desiccation, a drying up of wealth and waterways and a spread of the desert at the expense of the cultivable land. The declining productivity of the peninsula, together with the increase in the number of the inhabitants, led to a series of crises of overpopulation and consequently to a recurring cycle of invasions of the neighbouring countries by the Semitic peoples of the peninsula. It was these crises that carried the Assyrians, Aramaeans, Canaanites (including the Phoenicians and Hebrews), and finally the Arabs themselves into the Fertile Crescent. The Arabs of history would thus be the undifferentiated residue after the great invasions of ancient history had taken place.

Although no thorough geological survey of Arabia has yet been made, some evidence has already come to light in support of this theory in the form of dried-up waterways and other indications of past fertility. There is, however, no evidence that this process of desiccation took place after the beginning of human life in the peninsula, nor indeed that it took place at a pace great enough to influence directly the course of human affairs. There is also some philological evidence in support of the theory in that the Arabic language, though the most recent of the Semitic languages in its emergence as a literary and cultural instrument, is nevertheless in many ways the oldest of them in its grammatical structure and consequently the nearest to the presumed original proto-Semitic tongue. An alternative hypothesis is that advanced

by the Italian scholar Ignazio Guidi, who preferred southern Mesopotamia as the homeland of the Semites and pointed out that while the Semitic languages have common words for 'river' and 'sea' they have none for 'mountain' or 'hill'. Other scholars have suggested Africa and Armenia.

The national tradition of the Arabs divides the Arabian people into two main stems, the northern and the southern. This distinction is echoed in the tenth chapter of Genesis, where two distinct lines of descent from Shem are given for the peoples of south-western and of central and northern Arabia, the latter of which is closer to the Hebrews. The ethnological significance of this distinction is and will probably remain unknown. It first appears in history in linguistic and cultural terms. The southern-Arabian language is different from that of northern Arabia, which ultimately developed into classical Arabic. It is written in a different alphabet, known to us from inscriptions, and is related to Ethiopic, a language and script developed by colonists from southern Arabia who established the first centres of Ethiopian civilization. Another important distinction is that the southern Arabians were a sedentary people.

The chronology of early southern Arabian history is obscure. One of the earliest kingdoms named in records is Saba, perhaps identical with the Biblical Sheba, whose queen entered into relations with King Solomon. Saba may have been in existence as far back as the tenth century BC. There are occasional references from the eighth century and evidence of full development by the sixth. Round about the year 750 BC one of the Sabean kings built the famous Ma'rib dam, which for long regulated the agricultural life of the kingdom. Commercial links were maintained with the African coastlands opposite and probably with countries further afield. The Sabeans appear to have colonized extensively in Africa and to have founded the kingdom of Abyssinia, the name of which

comes from Habashat, a south-west Arabian people. The Arabic name for Ethiopia is still Ḥabash.

From the time when the conquests of Alexander brought the Mediterranean world into contact with the further East, increased information in Greek sources testifies to a growing interest in southern Arabia. The Ptolemies of Egypt sent ships through the Red Sea, exploring the Arabian coasts and the trade-routes to India. Their successors in the Near East retained that interest. By the end of the fifth century AD the kingdom of Saba was in an advanced state of decline. Muslim and Christian sources suggest that it had fallen under the dominance of the Himyarites, another southern Arabian people. The last of the Himyarite kings, Dhū Nuwās, was converted to Judaism. As a reprisal for Byzantine persecution of the Jews, he adopted repressive measures against the Christian settlers in southern Arabia. This in turn produced repercussions in Byzantium and in Ethiopia, by now a Christian state, and provided the latter with the inducement and the opportunity at once to avenge the persecuted Christians and to seize the key to the Indian trade. The Sabean kingdom was ended by a successful Ethiopian invasion with local Christian support. Ethiopian rule in the Yemen did not last long. In AD 575 an expedition from Persia invaded the country and reduced it to a satrapy without great difficulty. Persian rule too was ephemeral, and by the time of the Muslim conquest little sign of it remained.

The basis of society in southern Arabia was agriculture, and the inscriptions, with their frequent references to dams, canals, boundary problems, and landed property, suggest a high degree of development. Besides cereals the southern Arabians produced myrrh, incense, and other spices and aromatics. These last were their main export, and in the Mediterranean lands the spices of southern Arabia, often confused with those arriving via southern Arabia from more distant lands, led to its almost legendary

reputation as a land of wealth and prosperity—the Arabia Eudaemon or Arabia Felix of the classical world. The spices of Arabia have many echoes in the literature of the West, from the 'thesauris arabicis' of Horace to the 'perfumes of Arabia' of Shakespeare and Milton's 'spicy shores of Araby the blest'.

The political organization of southern Arabia was monarchic and appears to have been solidly founded with regular succession from father to son. The kings were not divine, as elsewhere in the East, and their authority, at certain periods at least, was limited by councils of notables and at a later date by a kind of feudalism with local lords ruling from castles over their vassals and peasants.

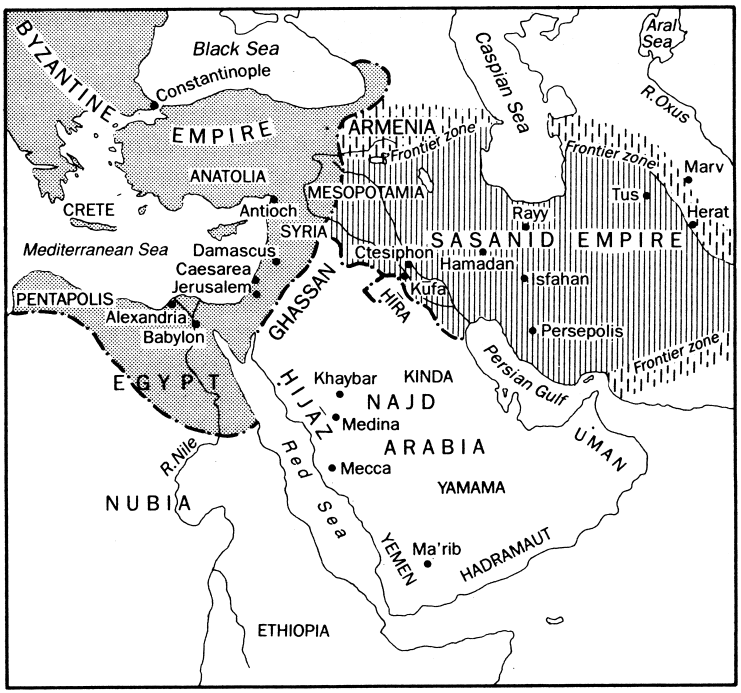
The religion of southern Arabia was polytheistic and bears a general, though not detailed, resemblance to those of the other ancient Semitic peoples. Temples were important centres of public life and possessed great wealth, administered by the chief priests. The spice crop itself was regarded as sacred and one-third was reserved for the gods, i.e. for the priests. Though writing was known and many inscriptions have survived, there is no sign of any books or literature.

When we turn from southern to central and northern Arabia we find a very different story, based on very much scantier information. We have seen that Assyrian, Biblical, and Persian sources give us occasional references to nomadic peoples in the centre and north. The southern Arabians, too, appear to have colonized to a limited extent in the north, probably for trade. Our first detailed information dates from the classical period, when the penetration of Hellenistic influences from Syria and the periodic exploitation of the west Arabian trade-route produced a series of semi-sedentarized border states in the Syrian and northern Arabian desert marches.

These states, though Arab in origin, were strongly under the influence of hellenized Aramaic culture, and generally used the Aramaic language for their inscriptions. Their

Arab character is revealed only in their proper names. The first, and perhaps the most important of them, was that of the Nabateans, which ruled at the period of its greatest power over an area stretching from the Gulf of Aqaba northwards to the Dead Sea and including much of the northern Ḥijāz. The first king known from inscriptions is Aretas (in Arabic, Ḥāritha) who is mentioned in 169 BC. Its capital was at Petra, in the present kingdom of Jordan. The Nabatean kingdom made its first contacts with Rome in the year 65 BC, when Pompey visited Petra. The Romans established friendly relations with the Arab kingdom, which served as a kind of buffer state between the settled areas of the Roman east and the untamable desert. In 25–24 BC the Nabatean kingdom served as a base for the expedition of Aelius Gallus. This expedition, sent by Augustus to conquer the Yemen, was the one and only Roman attempt to penetrate into Arabia. Its motive was the control of the southern outlet of the trade-route to India. Embarking from a Nabatean Red Sea port, Aelius Gallus succeeded in landing in western Arabia and penetrating deep into the interior. The expedition, however, was a complete failure and ended in an ignominious Roman withdrawal.

During the first century AD Roman–Nabatean relations deteriorated, and in AD 105 the Emperor Trajan made northern Nabatea a Roman province. We may note in passing that the Arabs of the Roman border provinces provided the Roman Empire with at least one Emperor, Philip, who ruled from AD 244 to 249. The period immediately after his death saw the rise of the second of the aramaized Arab border states of south-east Syria. This was the famous kingdom of Palmyra, established in the Syro-Arabian Desert, again at the starting point of the western trade-route. Its first ruler was Odenathus (in Arabic, Udhayna), who was granted recognition as king by the Emperor Gallienus in AD 265 as a reward for his assistance in the war against the Persians. After his death he was succeeded by his widow, the famous



The Near and Middle East on the eve of the rise of Islam

Zenobia (in Arabic, Zaynab), who for a time claimed to be queen of the greater part of the Near East and proclaimed her son, known to the classical sources as Athenodorus, probably a Greek translation of the Arabic Wahballāt, as Caesar Augustus. The Emperor Aurelian was at last moved to action, and in AD 273 conquered Palmyra, suppressed the kingdom, and sent Zenobia to Rome in golden chains to figure in a Roman triumph.

These two states, despite their brief blaze of glory in Roman annals, were transitory affairs, lacking the solidity and compactness of the southern Arabian kingdoms and based in the main on shifting nomadic and semi-nomadic

peoples. They derived their importance from their position on the trade-routes running from Rome through western Arabia to the further East and from their function as buffer states or tributary border principalities which saved the Romans from the difficult and costly task of maintaining military defences on the desert borders.

Less is known of two Arab states that flourished in the Hellenistic period in the interior. These are the states of Liḥyān and Thamūd. Both are known mainly from inscriptions in their own language and, in the case of the latter, from a few references in the Qur'ān. Both appear to have been for a while under Nabatean suzerainty and to have later become independent.

In the year AD 384 a major event occurred—a peace agreement which ended the long series of wars waged between the Roman and Persian Empires during the third and fourth centuries. During the long peace between the two empires, which lasted until AD 502, regional and international trade returned to the direct routes—through Egypt and the Red Sea, and through the Euphrates Valley and the Persian Gulf. In a time of peace, these were shorter, safer, and cheaper, and neither the Persians nor the Byzantines had any incentive to seek and develop alternative routes in remoter places beyond the reach of their enemies. The west Arabian trade-route—always difficult and hazardous—was no longer needed, and seems to have been abandoned.

The period between the fourth and sixth centuries—when Arabia no longer mattered to the Byzantine and Persian Empires—was one of decline and deterioration. In the south-west, as we have seen, the civilizations of the Yemen decayed and fell under foreign rule. The loss of prosperity and the migrations of the southern tribes to the north are telescoped by the Arab national tradition into the single, striking episode of the breaking of the Ma'rib dam and the resulting desolation. In the north the once flourishing border states came under direct imperial rule

or reverted to nomadic anarchy. Over the greater part of the peninsula such towns as existed dwindled or disappeared, and nomadism spread everywhere at the expense of trade and cultivation.

The dominant feature of the population of central and northern Arabia in this crucial period immediately preceding the rise of Islam is Bedouin tribalism. In Bedouin society the social unit is the group, not the individual. The latter has rights and duties only as a member of his group. The group is held together externally by the need for self-defence against the hardships and dangers of desert life, internally by the blood-tie of descent in the male line which is the basic social bond. The livelihood of the tribe depends on their flocks and herds and on raiding the neighbouring settled countries and such caravans as still venture to cross Arabia. It is by a kind of chain of mutual raiding that commodities from the settled lands penetrate via the tribes nearest to the borders to those of

landed property, but exercises collective rights over pastures, water sources, etc. There is some evidence that even the flocks were at times the collective property of the tribe and that only movable objects were subject to personal ownership.

The political organization of the tribe was rudimentary. Its head was the Sayyid or Sheikh, an elected leader who

the house'. He was advised by a council of elders called the *Majlis*, consisting of the heads of the families and representatives of clans within the tribe. The *Majlis* was the mouthpiece of public opinion. A distinction seems to have been recognized between certain clans regarded as noble and the rest.

The life of the tribe was regulated by custom, the *Sunna* or practice of the ancestors, which owed such authority as it had to the general veneration for precedent and found its only sanction in public opinion. The tribal Majlis was its outward symbol and its sole instrument. The chief social limitation of the prevailing anarchy was the custom of blood-vengeance, imposing on the kin of a murdered man the duty of exacting vengeance from the murderer or one of his fellow tribesmen.

The religion of the nomads was a form of polydaemonism related to the paganism of the ancient Semites. The beings it adored were in origin the inhabitants and patrons of single places, living in trees, fountains, and especially in sacred stones. There were some gods in the conventional sense, transcending in their authority the boundaries of purely tribal cults. The three most important were Manāt, 'Uzza, and Allāt, the last of whom was mentioned by Herodotus. These three were themselves subordinate to a higher deity, whose name was Allah. The religion of the tribes had no real priesthood; the migratory nomads carried their gods with them in a red tent forming a kind of ark of the covenant, which accompanied them to battle. Their religion was not personal but communal. The tribal faith centred around the tribal god, symbolized usually by a stone, sometimes by some other object. It was guarded by the Sheikhly house, which thus gained some religious prestige. God and cult were the badge of tribal identity and the sole ideological expression of the sense of unity and cohesion of the tribe. Conformity to the tribal cult expressed political loyalty; apostasy was the equivalent of treason.

The only exception to this nomadic way of life was the oasis. Here small sedentary communities formed a rudimentary political organization and the outstanding family of the oasis would usually establish a kind of petty kingship over its inhabitants. Sometimes the ruler of the oasis would claim a vague measure of suzerainty over the neighbouring tribes. Sometimes, too, an oasis might obtain control over a neighbouring oasis and thus establish an ephemeral desert empire. Only one such, that of Kinda, need be mentioned, since its rise and expansion in many ways foreshadow the later expansion of Islam. The kingdom of Kinda flourished in the late fifth and early sixth century in northern Arabia. At first powerful, even extending into the area of the border states, it collapsed because of its lack of inner cohesion and because of its failure to penetrate the barriers erected by the Byzantine and Persian Empires, then relatively far more powerful than a few decades later when they faced the onslaught of Islam. The realm of Kinda left a more permanent memorial in Arabic poetry. By the sixth century the Arab tribes of the peninsula possessed a standard and common poetic language and technique, independent of tribal dialects, and uniting the Arab tribes in a single tradition and a single orally transmitted culture. This common language and literature owed much of their impetus and development to the achievements and memories of Kinda, the first great joint adventure of the central and northern tribes. During the sixth century it reached its full classical maturity.

Here and there settled nomads established towns with a rather more advanced stage of society. The most important of these was Mecca, in the Ḥijāz. In the town each clan still had its Majlis and its own stone, but the union of the clans forming the town was outwardly expressed by a collection of stones in one central shrine with a common symbol. The cube-shaped building known as the Ka'ba was such a symbol of unity in Mecca, where a council

known as the *Mala'*, drawn from the Majlises of the clans, replaced the simple tribal Majlis. Here the conditional and consensual character of sheikhly authority was weakened and to some extent supplanted by a kind of oligarchy of ruling families.

Despite the regression of this period Arabia was still not wholly isolated from the civilized world but lay rather on its fringes. Persian and Byzantine culture, both material and moral, permeated through several channels, most of them connected with the trans-Arabian trade-routes. Of some importance was the settlement of foreign colonies in the peninsula itself. Jewish and Christian settlements were established in different parts of Arabia, both spreading Aramaic and Hellenistic culture. The chief southern Arabian Christian centre was in Najrān, where a relatively advanced political life was developed. Jews or Judaized Arabs were in several places, notably in Yathrib, later renamed Medina. They were mainly agriculturists and artisans. Their origin is uncertain and many different theories have been advanced.

Another channel of penetration was through the border states. The same need that had led the Romans to encourage the rise of the Nabatean and Palmyrene kingdoms induced the Byzantine and Persian Empires to allow the development of Arab border states on the Arabian frontiers of Syria and Iraq. The two states of Ghassān and Ḥīra were both Christian, the former Monophysite, the latter Nestorian. Both had a tincture of Aramaic and Hellenistic culture, some of which percolated to the interior. The early history of Ghassān is obscure and is known only from Arab tradition. Certain history begins in AD 529 when the phylarch al-Ḥārith ibn Jabala (Aretas in Greek) was given new titles by Justinian after his defeat of the Arab vassals of Persia. The Ghassānids resided in the neighbourhood of the Yarmūk river and were recognized rather than appointed by Byzantium. On the eve of the rise of Islam the subsidies hitherto paid by Byzantium to

the Ghassānids were stopped by Heraclius as a measure of economy after the exhausting Persian War, and the Muslim invaders consequently found Ghassān in a state of resentment and disloyalty to Byzantium.

On the borders of the Persian-dominated province of Iraq lay the Arab principality of Ḥīra, a vassal state of the Sasanid Emperors of Persia, dependent when they were strong, self-assertive when they were weak. Its function in the Sasanid Empire was the same as that of the Ghassānids in the Byzantine Empire. In the Persian Wars against Byzantium the Arabs of Ḥīra usually served as auxiliaries. Their period of greatest independence was under al-Mundhir III, the contemporary and enemy of the Ghassānid al-Ḥārith. Ḥīra was always regarded by Arab tradition as an essential part of the Arab community, in direct contact with the rest of Arabia. Though a vassal of the Persians, it drew its culture mainly from the west, from the Christian and Hellenistic civilization of Syria. At first pagan, it was converted to Nestorian Christianity, brought by captives. The ruling Lakhm dynasty was exterminated after a rebellion by the Persian Emperor Chosroes II, who in 602 sent a Persian governor to rule the mainly Arab population. Ḥīra remained a Persian outpost until 633, when it was conquered by the advancing Muslim forces.

Another source of limited foreign influence was direct foreign rule. The short-lived Ethiopian and Persian dominations in the Yemen and the Persian and Byzantine border provinces of northern Arabia were channels through which some knowledge of the more advanced military techniques of the time became known to the Arabs, and some other material and cultural influences percolated.

The Arabian response to these external stimuli can be seen in a number of ways; materially, the Arabs acquired arms and learned their use and the principles of military organization and strategy. In the border provinces of the

North, Arab auxiliaries were subsidized and trained on a large scale. Textiles, food, wine, and probably also the art of writing reached the Arabs in the same way. Intellectually, the religions of the Middle East with their monotheistic principles and moral ideas brought a tincture of culture and letters to the Arabs and provided the essential background for the later success of Muḥammad's mission. This response was in the main limited to certain areas, particularly to the sedentary populations of southern Arabia and the Ḥijāz.

Despite the extent and numerical importance of the nomads it was the settled elements and more especially those living and working on the trans-Arabian trade-routes who really shaped the history of Arabia. The successive displacements of these routes determined the changes and revolutions in Arabian history. In AD 502 the long peace between the Persian and Byzantine Empires came to an end, and a new series of wars began which continued until the final Perso-Byzantine conflict of 603–28. Like the peace, the resumption of warfare brought changes of far-reaching significance. The short and direct routes between the two Empires became unusable, as each sought to bar or at least impede the commerce of the other. The routes beyond both imperial frontiers—through the northern steppes and the southern seas and deserts—acquired a new commercial and strategic importance. The Euphrates–Persian Gulf route, hitherto favoured by the commerce between the Mediterranean and the further East, was rendered difficult by political, military, and economic barriers, and the general disorganization due to constant conflict. Egypt, too, was in a state of disorder and no longer offered an alternative route through the Nile Valley and the Red Sea. The traders consequently reverted once again to the difficult, but more tranquil, route from Syria through western Arabia to the Yemen, where Indian vessels came to the Yemenite ports. Despite attempts by the Persians and

by the Byzantines and their Ethiopian allies to control this route, it remained convenient and accessible. The Palmyrene and Nabatean kingdoms of the north, whose earlier prosperity had been due to a similar combination of causes, had long since disappeared. The opportunity created was taken by the city of Mecca.

The early history of Mecca is obscure. If, as has been suggested, it is to be identified with the Macoraba of the Greek geographer Ptolemy, it was probably founded as a halt on the southern Arabian spice road to the North. It is well placed at the crossing of the lines of communication southwards to the Yemen, northwards to the Mediterranean, eastwards to the Persian Gulf, westwards to the Red Sea port of Jedda and the sea lane to Africa. Some time before the rise of Islam Mecca was occupied by the north Arabian tribe of Quraysh, which rapidly developed into an important trading community. The merchants of Quraysh had trading agreements with the Byzantine, Ethiopian, and Persian border authorities and conducted an extensive trade. Twice a year they despatched great caravans to the north and the south. These were co-operative undertakings organized by groups of associated traders in Mecca. Smaller caravans were also sent at other times of the year, and there is some evidence of sea trade with Africa. In the neighbourhood of Mecca there were a number of fairs, the most important of which was that of 'Ukāẓ. These were incorporated in the economic life of Mecca and helped to extend the influence and prestige of the town among the surrounding nomads. The population of Mecca was diverse. The central and ruling element, known as 'Quraysh of the Inside', consisted of a kind of merchant aristocracy of caravaneers and business men, the entrepreneurs and real masters of the transit trade. After them came the so-called 'Quraysh of the Outside', a population of smaller traders of more recent settlement and humbler status, and finally a 'proletariat' of foreigners and Bedouins. Outside Mecca

were the 'Arabs of Quraysh', the dependent Bedouin tribes.

The government of Mecca was described by Henri Lammens as a merchant republic governed by a syndicate of wealthy business men. But this phrase should not mislead one into thinking of organized republican institutions on the Western model. Quraysh had only recently emerged from nomadism and its ideal was still nomadic —a maximum of freedom of action and a minimum of public authority. Such authority as existed was exercised by the Mala', a kind of urban equivalent of the tribal Majlis, consisting of chiefs and notables from the leading merchant families. The functioning of the Meccan leadership was well exemplified in the struggle against Muḥammad and again in the conflicts under his successors. The commercial experience of the Meccan traders gave them powers of co-operation, organization, and discipline which were rare among the Arabs and of unique importance in administering the vast empire soon to fall under their rule.

It was in this milieu that Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born.

2 *Muḥammad and the Rise of Islam*

> And thus we have revealed to thee an Arabic Qur'ān, that thou mayest warn *Mecca*, the Mother of Cities, and those who are about her; that thou mayest give warning of the Day of Jugment....
>
> (*Qur'ān* 42:5)

In an essay on Muḥammad and the origins of Islam Ernest Renan remarks that, unlike other religions, which were cradled in mystery, Islam was born in the full light of history. 'Its roots are at surface level, the life of its founder is as well known to us as those of the Reformers of the sixteenth century.' In making this remark, Renan was referring to the copious biographical material provided by the *Sīra*, the traditional Muslim life of the Prophet. When the problems of governing a vast empire brought the Arabs face to face with all kinds of difficulties which had never arisen during the lifetime of the Prophet, the principle was established that not only the Qur'ān itself, the word of God, was authoritative as a guide to conduct, but also the entire practice and utterances of the Prophet throughout his lifetime. The records of these practices and utterances are preserved in the form of Traditions (Arabic: *Ḥadīth*), each individual Ḥadīth being attested by a chain of authorities in the form 'I heard from... who heard from... who heard from... who heard the Prophet say'. Within a few generations of the Prophet's death a vast corpus of Ḥadīth grew up, covering every aspect of his life and thought.

At first sight, the Ḥadīth, with its careful enumeration of its authorities, going back in every case to an eyewitness, would seem to be as reliable a source as one could hope for. But there are difficulties. The collection and scrutiny of Ḥadīth did not take place until several genera-

tions after the death of the Prophet. During that period the opportunities and motives for falsification were almost unlimited. In the first place, the mere passage of time and the fallibility of human memory are alone sufficient to throw doubt on evidence orally transmitted for over a hundred years. But there were also motives for deliberate distortion. The period following the death of the Prophet was one of intensive development in the Islamic community. A series of new social, political, legal, and religious problems and concepts came into Islam from the conquered peoples, and many of the ideas and solutions that resulted were projected backwards into the mouth of the Prophet by fabricated Ḥadīth. The period was one also of violent internal conflict between individuals, families, factions, and sects within the Islamic fold. Each of them could find no better way of supporting its case than by producing Ḥadīths attributed to the Prophet and expressing a suitable point of view. To take but one example: the relative positions and importance of the families of Mecca during the lifetime of the Prophet are distorted almost beyond recognition in the Ḥadīth literature by the rivalries of their descendants at the time when that literature was recorded.

The Muslims themselves realized at an early date that many of their Ḥadīths were spurious, and they developed a whole science of criticism to distinguish those Ḥadīths which were genuine from those which were forged by pious or impious fraud. Traditional criticism operated exclusively by examining the chain of authorities—rejecting some relaters because of alleged prejudice in their point of view or because they could never have had the opportunity to receive the information which they claimed to pass on. Modern critics have pointed out important defects in this approach. In the first place, it is as easy to forge a chain of authorities as a tradition. In the second place, the rejection of relaters by the touchstone of opinion merely represents the victory of one particular opinion and its

adoption as a standard for judging others. Modern criticism has operated rather by subjecting the text of the traditions themselves to historical and psychological analysis. The careful scholarship of Ignaz Goldziher and the minute and sometimes captious criticism of Leone Caetani and Henri Lammens have shown that the entire Ḥadīth literature, of which the biography of the Prophet forms a part, must be treated with caution and reserve, and each individual Ḥadīth weighed and tested before it can be accepted as authentic. More recently, the researches of Joseph Schacht and Robert Brunschvig have shown that many traditions of apparently historical content in fact serve a legal or doctrinal purpose, and are therefore historically suspect.

Apart from the Sīra, the major source for the life of the Prophet is the Qur'ān, in Muslim belief the word of God as revealed to Muḥammad and promulgated by him to the people of Mecca and Medina during his lifetime. From the Qur'ān and the limited evidence available from other sources, an historical portrait emerges which, though neither as detailed as that of the tradition and of the earlier modern writers who followed it, nor as shadowy as what is left by radical recent critics, may nevertheless convey some idea of his mission as perceived by his followers, and of the significance of his career as seen by historians.

Little is known of the ancestry and early life of Muḥammad, and even that little has dwindled steadily as the progress of modern scholarship has called one after another of the data of Muslim tradition into question. The Prophet seems to have been born in Mecca between AD 570 and 580 in the family of the Banū Hāshim, a reputable family of Quraysh, though not one of the dominant oligarchy. Muḥammad himself is said to have been brought up as an orphan in poor circumstances, probably by his grandfather. He acquired wealth and position by marrying

Khadīja, the widow of a rich merchant, several years older than himself. These events are echoed in the verse of the Qur'ān: 'Did he not find thee an orphan and give thee a home and find thee erring and guide thee and find thee needy and enrich thee?' (93: 6–8). That he engaged in trade himself is probable, though not certain. Mecca was a trading city and the frequent use of commercial metaphors and turns of phrase in the Qur'ān suggests some trading experience. The traditions which tell of trading journeys to neighbouring countries call for reserve. Certainly there is little evidence in Muḥammad's teaching of acquaintance with them.

The crucial problem of his spiritual background again raises many queries. According to the Sīra, he was acquainted with both Jews and Christians, and the Qur'ān is clearly linked to the preceding Jewish and Christian scriptures. The very ideas of monotheism and revelation, as well as many specific incidents and figures, attest to this connection. For Muslims, the similarities between the Qur'ān and the previous revelations are due to their common divine source, the differences to the corruption of the earlier revelations by their unworthy custodians. Modern scholars have inferred, from Muslim versions of Bible stories, that the early Muslims' biblical knowledge was indirectly acquired, probably from Jewish and Christian traders and travellers whose information was affected by midrashic and apocryphal influences. The tradition speaks of certain people called Ḥanīfs, pagan Meccans who were dissatisfied with the prevailing idolatry of their people and sought a purer form of religion, but yet were unwilling to accept either Judaism or Christianity. It might well be among them that Muḥammad's spiritual origins are to be sought.

According to tradition, the call first came to Muḥammad when he was approaching his fortieth year. His early preaching was apparently regarded as harmless by the Meccans, who offered no opposition. The Meccan chapters

of the Qur'ān deal chiefly with the unity of God, the wickedness of idolatry, and the imminence of divine judgement. Their stated purpose is to bring an Arabic revelation to the Arabs such as had previously been vouchsafed to other peoples in their own languages.

At first he won little support, and that mainly among the humbler elements. Among the first converts were his wife Khadīja and his cousin ʿAlī, later to become the fourth Caliph. As Muḥammad became more assertive and openly attacked the existing religion of Mecca, opposition to him and to his followers among the ruling elements hardened. A nineteenth-century European scholar endeavoured to present the struggle between the infant Muslim community and the Meccan oligarchy as a class conflict in which Muḥammad represented the underprivileged and their resentments against the ruling bourgeois oligarchy. Though this view exaggerates one particular aspect of Muḥammad's preaching to the detriment of the rest, it is to some extent supported by the early narratives, which indicate that much of his following was drawn from the poorer classes, and that the opposition of the Meccan hierarchy had economic and social motives. In descriptions of this opposition, two themes recur. One was the fear that the abrogation of the old religion and of the status of the Meccan sanctuary would deprive Mecca of its unique and profitable position as a centre both of pilgrimage and of affairs. Another was the objection to the pretensions of one who did not himself belong to one of the dominant families.

If it was economic in its causes, the opposition expressed itself politically rather than religiously, and ultimately drove Muḥammad himself to political action. The last period of his stay in Mecca was marked by a persecution of the Muslims which, though perhaps exaggerated by the Tradition, was nevertheless important enough to cause the flight of a group of converts to Ethiopia. Despite persecution, however, Islam, as the

acceptance of Muḥammad's faith was called, continued to gain new adherents. Among the most notable were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, a member of the minor family of Banū 'Adī, whose swiftness in decision and action were of immense value to the struggling community, and 'Uthmān, a member of the house of Umayya, one of the dominant families of Mecca and Muḥammad's sole convert of importance among the ruling oligarchy.

The failure to make any important progress against the opposition of the Meccans caused Muḥammad to seek success elsewhere. After an abortive attempt in the town of Ṭā'īf, he accepted an invitation from the people of Medina to transfer himself there.

The oasis of Medina, in pre-Islamic times known as Yathrib, is situated some 280 miles north of Mecca. It was inhabited from a very early date, and the name is mentioned both in Greek geographical writings and in ancient Arabian inscriptions. At some stage, it came to be predominantly inhabited by Jews, consisting no doubt both of refugees from Judaea and Arabs converted to Judaism. There were three main Jewish tribes, the Banū Qurayẓa, the Banū Naḍīr, and the Banū Qaynuqā'. The first two are said to have practised agriculture, the third to have been armourers and goldsmiths. At an unknown date, two pagan Arab tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, settled in the oasis. They came first as clients or protégés of the Jews, but eventually came to predominate in the town and oasis.

The migration of Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina—the Hegira, or more correctly *Hijra*, as it is called in Arabic—was a turning point. Quraysh made no serious attempt to prevent it, and Muḥammad left at his leisure. He invited, rather than ordered, his followers to go and himself stayed until last in Mecca, partly no doubt in order to arrive in Medina not as a lonely and persecuted outlaw, but as the head of a definite group with a certain status. There are different stories of the origins and pur-

poses of the Medinese invitation to Muḥammad. An important element was certainly his ability to serve them as an arbitrator, and to settle their internal disputes. As well as a new religion, he brought them security and a measure of social discipline. Unlike the Meccans, they had no vested interest in paganism and could accept the religious aspect of Islam on approval, provided it satisfied their political and social needs. The full religious conversion of the Medinese did not take place until much later. There were from the first differences of opinion among the Medinese as to whether this 'foreign' arbitrator should be called in or not. Those who supported Muḥammad are known to the Tradition as the *Anṣār*, helpers, those who opposed him are given the uncomplimentary title of *Munāfiqūn*, hypocrites. The religious quality of this difference of opinion is no doubt a projection backwards by later historians.

The Hijra was preceded by long negotiations and finally took place in the year AD 622—the first generally attested date in Islamic history. It marks the turning point in the career of Muḥammad and a revolution in Islam. In Mecca Muḥammad is portrayed as a private citizen, in Medina as the chief magistrate of a community. In Mecca he had to limit himself to more or less passive opposition to the existing order; in Medina he governed. In Mecca he had preached Islam; in Medina he was able to practise. This change is reflected both in the narrative biography, which becomes less mythic, more historical in character, and in the Qur'ān, which moves from theology to legislation. The epoch-making quality of the Hijra was early recognized by the Muslims, who dated their new era from the beginning of the year in which it occurred.

Muḥammad's rule at Medina began with serious difficulties. His really devoted supporters were few in number, consisting of the *Muhājirūn*, those Meccans who had accompanied him, and the Medinese Anṣār. These had to face the active opposition of the Medinese

'hypocrites' which, though mainly political, was nevertheless redoubtable, until they were reconciled to the new faith by the tangible advantages which it later brought them. Muḥammad had, it would seem, hoped to find a friendly welcome among the Jews, whose faith and scriptures would, so he thought, cause them to receive his claims with greater sympathy and understanding. In order to attract them, he adopted a number of Jewish practices, including the fast of Kippur and the prayer towards Jerusalem. The Jews, however, rejected the pretensions of the gentile Prophet and opposed him on precisely the religious level where he was most sensitive. They failed in their opposition because of their inner disunity and their unpopularity among the Medinese generally. Muḥammad, realizing that no support was to be received from this quarter, later dropped the Jewish practices that he had adopted, substituted Mecca for Jerusalem as the direction of prayer, and generally gave a more strictly Arabian character to his faith.

He had from his arrival in Medina sufficient political power to protect himself and his followers from violent opposition like that of Quraysh. Realizing that the religious doctrines which were his real purpose needed the support of a political body, he acted politically and by skilful diplomacy converted his political power into a religious authority. An Arab historian has preserved for us a series of documents, giving the embryo constitution of the early Medinese community. In the words of the chronicler, 'Muḥammad wrote and issued a writing among the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, in which he made an agreement with the Jews and concluded with them a treaty confirming them in the free exercise of their religion and the possession of their goods, imposing on them and conceding to them certain conditions.' The document is not a treaty in the modern sense, but rather a unilateral proclamation. Its purpose was purely practical and administrative and reveals the cautious, careful character

of the Prophet's diplomacy. It regulated the relations between the Meccan immigrants and the Medinese tribes, and between both of these and the Jews. The community which it established, the *Umma*, was a development of the pre-Islamic town with a few vital changes, and marked the first step towards the later Islamic autocracy. It confirmed tribal organization and customs, each tribe retaining its own obligations and privileges as regards outsiders. But within the Umma all these rights were to be waived and all disputes brought before Muḥammad for settlement. Only Quraysh was specifically excepted. No section might make a separate peace with any outside body, and transgressors against the Umma were outlawed.

The Umma supplemented rather than supplanted the social usage of pre-Islamic Arabia, and all its ideas were within the structure of tribalism. It retained pre-Islamic practices in matters of property, marriage, and relations between members of the same tribe. It is interesting to note that this first constitution of the Arabian Prophet dealt almost exclusively with the relations of the members among themselves and with the outside.

Nevertheless there were important changes, the first of which was that faith replaced blood as the social bond. Already in the pre-Islamic tribe god and cult were the badge of nationality, and apostasy the outward expression of treason. The change in effect meant the suppression within the Umma of the blood feud and the achievement of greater inner unity, by arbitration. Of equal importance was the new conception of authority. The Sheikh of the Umma, that is, Muḥammad himself, functioned for those who were truly converted, not by a conditional and consensual authority, grudgingly granted by the tribe and always revocable, but by an absolute religious prerogative. The source of authority was transferred from public opinion to God, who conferred it on Muḥammad as His chosen Apostle. This transfer shaped the whole future

history of Muslim government and Muslim political thought.

The Umma thus had a dual character. On the one hand it was a political organism, a kind of new tribe with Muḥammad as its Sheikh, and with Muslims and others as its members. Yet at the same time it had a basically religious meaning. It was a religious community, some would say a theocracy. Political and religious objectives were never really distinct in Muḥammad's mind or in the minds of his, or for that matter our, contemporaries. This dualism is inherent in Islamic society, of which the Umma of Muḥammad is the germ. In that time and place it was inevitable. In the primitive Arabian community religion had to be expressed and organized politically, for no other form was possible. Conversely, religion alone could provide the cohesive power for a state among Arabs to whom the whole concept of political authority was foreign and repugnant.

The immigrants, economically uprooted and not wishing to be wholly dependent on the Medinese, turned to the sole remaining profession, that of arms. The state of war between Medina and Mecca provided the occasion for its exercise. Raids on merchant caravans were seen as a natural and legitimate act of war. The expeditions against Meccan commerce served a double purpose; on the one hand they helped to maintain a blockade on the city which alone could ultimately reduce it to submission to the new faith. In the second place, they increased the power, wealth, and prestige of the Umma in Medina. In March 624, 300 Muslims under the leadership of Muḥammad surprised a Meccan caravan at Badr. The raiders won much booty and their achievements are celebrated in the Qur'ān as an expression of divine good will. The battle of Badr helped to stabilize the community and marked the beginning of a new type of revelation. Increasingly, the Medinese revelations became very different from those of Mecca, dealing with the practical

problems of government and the distribution of booty, including the persons of the conquered and their families. The victory made possible a reaction against the Jews and ultimately also the Christians, who were now accused of having falsified their own scriptures in order to conceal the prophecies of Muḥammad's advent. Islam itself began to change. Muḥammad was now quite clearly preaching a new religious dispensation, with himself as the 'Seal of the Prophets'. The new message was more explicitly Arab, and with the adoption of the Ka'ba in Mecca as a place of pilgrimage the conquest of the city became a religious duty.

In March 625 Quraysh, reacting against the growing danger of Medinese raiding, sent an expedition against Muḥammad and defeated the Muslims on the slopes of Uḥud. They did not feel strong enough to continue to Medina and returned to Mecca. The Muslim community had suffered no real setback and, as after the battle of Badr, Muḥammad attacked and drove out another of the Jewish tribes. Quraysh, however, had not yet given up the struggle. In the spring of 627 a Meccan army of some 10,000 men advanced to Medina and laid siege to the city. The simple expedient of digging a ditch around it—suggested according to the Tradition by a Persian convert—was sufficient to defeat their siege-craft, and after forty days the army of Quraysh withdrew. This victory was followed by the destruction of the last remaining Jewish tribe, the Banū Qurayẓa, accused of intelligence with the Meccans. The men, according to the Sīra, were put to death; the women and children sold into slavery.

In the early spring of 628 Muḥammad felt strong enough to attempt an attack on Mecca. On the way, however, it became clear that the attempt was premature and the expedition was converted into a peaceful pilgrimage. The Muslim leaders met Meccan negotiators at a place called Ḥudaybiyya, on the borders of the sacred territory around Mecca, in which, according to pre-Islamic usage,

no fighting could take place during certain periods of the year. The negotiations ended in a ten-year truce and the Muslims were given the right to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca in the following year and to stay there for three days. In later times, the agreement at Ḥudaybiyya served as the prophetic precedent, to determine the Sharīʿa rules governing the interruption of the *jihād* for negotiation and truce.

There was some opposition among the more enthusiastic Muslims to this apparently inconclusive result. It was deflected by an attack on the Jewish oasis of Khaybar. The Muslim victory in Khaybar marked the first contact between the Muslim state and a conquered non-Muslim people and formed the basis for later dealings of the same type. The Jews retained their land, but paid a 50 per cent tribute. In the following year Muḥammad and two hundred of his followers went on pilgrimage to Mecca, where the growing prestige and power of the new faith brought him fresh converts. Among them were ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Khālid ibn al-Walīd, both of whom were to play an important role in the later Islamic victories. Finally, in January 630, the murder of a Muslim by a Meccan for what appears to have been a private difference of opinion served as *casus belli* for the final attack and the conquest of Mecca.

With the capture of Mecca and the submission of Quraysh to the Umma of Islam the mission of the Prophet during his lifetime was virtually completed, and in the year of life that remained to him he does not appear to have engaged in any military activity. The most significant feature of the final year is the reaction of the nomadic tribes to the new community of Medina. In dealing with the tribes Muḥammad found conditions that were wholly unfavourable to him. The system he offered was alien to them, demanding a renunciation of their intense love of personal independence and of an important part of their established code of virtue and ancestral traditions. It is a

tribute to the statesmanship of the Prophet that he understood and to a large extent overcame these difficulties. His real and final aim of conversion was perhaps never really achieved and even to the present day the Islam of the Bedouin is regarded with some suspicion by those qualified to judge.

The immediate and external aim of his diplomacy after the Hijra was the expansion of his own influence to the detriment of that of Quraysh. He achieved this by avoiding friction with tribal prejudices, concentrating on military and political affairs in his collective dealings with the tribes, and leaving religion to individual conversion. The terms of Muḥammad's agreements with the tribes were always the same—the tribe agreed to acknowledge the suzerainty of Medina, to refrain from attack on the Muslims and their allies, and to pay the *Zakāt*, the Muslim religious levy. Some tribes also accepted Medinese envoys. With the remoter tribes Muḥammad treated on a basis of equality, the tribes maintaining a benevolent and expectant neutrality.

After the conquest of Mecca a pro-Muslim movement of a partial and mainly political nature began among the more distant tribes. It was a testimony to the strength and prestige of the Umma and took the form of a series of unsolicited embassies to Medina, known to Muslim history as the *Wufūd*. These embassies offered political submission, which was understood as such by Muḥammad, though he did accept the opportunity they offered for religious propaganda. The contract that they formed was a political and personal one with the ruler of Medina, which, according to Arabian usage, lapsed automatically on his death. Among the still remoter tribes affected by the civilizing influences of Syria and Persia and too distant to feel and resent the force of Muslim arms there were religiously affected minorities. Here it was from these minorities rather than from the tribes as such that the Wufūd came.

On 8 June 632, according to the traditional biography, the Prophet died after a short illness. He had achieved a great deal. To the pagan peoples of western Arabia he had brought a new religion which, with its monotheism and its ethical doctrines, stood on an incomparably higher level than the paganism it replaced. He had provided that religion with a revelation which was to become in the centuries to follow the guide to thought and conduct of countless millions of Believers. But he had done more than that; he had established a community and a well organized and armed state, the power and prestige of which made it a dominant factor in Arabia.

What then is the final significance of the career of the Arabian Prophet? For the traditional Muslim the question scarcely arises. Muḥammad was the last and greatest of the Apostles of God, sent as the Seal of Prophecy to bring the final revelation of God's word to mankind. His career and success were fore-ordained and inevitable and need no further explanation. Only the pious fantasy of later generations of believers clothed the dim figure of the Prophet with a rich and multi-coloured fabric of fable, legend, and miracle, not realizing that by diminishing his essential historic humanity they were robbing him of one of his most attractive qualities.

The West, too, had its legend of Muḥammad, from the preposterous errors and scurrilities of medieval polemic and lampoon to the lay figure of Voltaire's 'Mahomet'. Beginning as a kind of demon or false god worshipped with Apollyon and Termagant in an unholy trinity, the medieval Mahound developed in the West into an arch-heretic whom Dante consigned to a not undistinguished place in Hell as a 'Seminator di scandalo e di scisma', and finally, after the Reformation, into a cunning and self-seeking imposter. One legend, widespread in the medieval West, even described Muḥammad as an ambitious and frustrated Roman cardinal, who, having failed to obtain election as pope, sought an alternative career as a false

prophet. The last traces of Western theological prejudice may still be discerned in the work of some modern scholars, lurking behind the serrated footnotes of the academic apparatus.

The modern historian will not readily believe that so great and significant a movement was started by a self-seeking impostor. Nor will he be satisfied with a purely supernatural explanation, whether it postulates aid of divine or diabolical origin; rather, like Gibbon, will he seek 'with becoming submission, to ask not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth' of the new faith. From what is known of the circumstances of the time, it is clear that the deeds performed by Muḥammad or ascribed to him served to revive and redirect currents that already existed among the Arabs of his time. The fact that his death was followed by a new burst of activity instead of by collapse shows that his career was the answer to a great political, social, and moral need. The drive for unity and expansion had already found a preliminary and unsuccessful expression in the shortlived Empire of Kinda. The need for a higher form of religion had led to the spread of Judaism, Christianity, and the still more significant movement of the Arabian Ḥanīfs. Even during the lifetime of the Prophet his career was paralleled by a series of false prophets among other Arabian tribes in other parts of the peninsula whose activities were in part an imitation, but in part a parallel development.

Muḥammad had aroused and redirected the latent forces of an Arab national revival and expansion. Its full accomplishment was left to others.

3 *The Age of the Conquests*

> You have seen . . . how their greatness dawned by the Call, their Call spread by religion, their religion became mighty by prophecy, their prophecy conquered by Holy Law, their Holy Law was buttressed by the Caliphate, their Caliphate prospered by religious and worldly policy. . . .
>
> (Abū Ḥayyān at-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa'l-Muʾānasa*)

At the beginning of the seventh century, the Near and Middle East was divided between the two great rival Empires of Byzantium and Persia. The history of the region since the beginning of the sixth century was largely a record of their struggles. The Byzantine Empire with its great capital of Constantinople, was Greek and Christian in culture and religion and to a large extent still Roman in its administration. The main basis of its power was the plateau of Anatolia, at that time inhabited by a mixed population—predominantly Greek and overwhelmingly Christian. To the south lay the provinces of Syria and Egypt. In these, Byzantine authority was threatened in a number of ways. The population—Aramaic in the one, Coptic in the other—was alien by language and to a lesser extent by culture to the Greeks, and were resentful of Byzantine rule both because of the crushing burden of taxation which it imposed and because of official persecution of the Monophysite and other deviant churches at odds with the Orthodox creed of the Empire. In Palestine, the Jews, who had supported the Persians in the recent war, had suffered even more grievously than the non-orthodox Christians from Byzantine repression, and had little love for their masters.

The Persian Empire of the Sasanids presents a certain general resemblance to Byzantium. Here, too, the core of the Empire was a plateau—Iran—inhabited by a people speaking an Indo-European language, and ruling as a dependency the Semitic and religiously disaffected province of Iraq. But the culture of Sasanid Persia was different. It was indeed an expression of a strong reaction against the Hellenistic traditions that had dominated that country since the conquest of Alexander. The state religion was Zoroastrianism. The internal structure of the Sasanid Empire was far less stable than that of the Byzantines. Whereas in Anatolia the Byzantine Empire possessed a solid economic and military basis, the Persian Empire at the end of the sixth century had just emerged from a revolutionary convulsion, in the course of which the old quasi-feudal structure was broken up and replaced by a military despotism with a mercenary army. But the new order was far from secure, and the many discontents of the population produced a series of dangerous religious heresies that threatened the religious and consequently the political unity of the Empire.

Between 602 and 628 the last of the series of Perso-Byzantine wars was fought. It ended in a Byzantine victory, but left both parties exhausted and weak in the face of the unsuspected danger that was about to burst on them from the Arabian Desert.

The death of Muḥammad confronted the infant Muslim community with something in the nature of a constitutional crisis. The Prophet had left no provision for the succession, nor had he even created a council on the lines of the tribal Majlis which might have exercised authority during the crucial transition period. The unique and exclusive character of the authority which he claimed as sole exponent of God's will would not have allowed him to nominate a colleague or even a successor-designate

during his lifetime. The later tradition of the nomination by the Prophet of his cousin 'Alī, who married his daughter Fāṭima, is accepted only by the Shī'a.

The concept of legitimate succession was foreign to the Arabs at the time, and it is probable that even if Muḥammad had left a son the sequence of events would not have been different. The fate of Moses supports this view. The Arab tradition that the Sheikh should be chosen from a single family seems to have had little effect, and in any case the claims of fathers-in-law like Abū Bakr, or sons-in-law like 'Alī, can have had little force as such in a polygamous society. The Arabs had only one precedent to guide them—the election of a new tribal chief. The Medinese proceeded to choose one from among the tribe of Khazraj, thus incidentally revealing the limitations of their conversion.

The crisis was met by three men: Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and Abū 'Ubayda, who by swift and resolute action installed Abū Bakr as ruler in place of the Prophet. The Meccans and the Anṣār were confronted the next day with a *fait accompli* which they seem to have rather reluctantly accepted. Abū Bakr was given the title of *Khalīfa* or 'Deputy' (of the Prophet), usually rendered 'Caliph' in European writings, and his election marks the inauguration of the great historic institution of the Caliphate. His electors can have had no idea of the later functions and development of the office. At the time they made no attempt to delimit his duties or powers. The sole condition of his appointment was the maintenance intact of the heritage of the Prophet.

From the start, authority exercised by Abū Bakr differed in several important respects from that of the Arabian tribal Sheikh. He was the head not merely of a community, but of a region. He possessed executive powers and an army and, since the situation that followed his accession demanded political and military action, he assumed a political and military authority which in

the course of time became an essential part of the office of the Caliph. Two years later, on the death of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar succeeded without serious opposition.

The first task of the new regime was to counter by military action a movement among the tribes known to tradition as the *Ridda*. This word, which means apostasy, probably represents a reinterpretation of events in terms of the theologically coloured outlook of later historians. The refusal of the tribes or recognize the succession of Abū Bakr was in effect not so much a relapse by converted Muslims to their previous paganism, but rather the simple and automatic termination of a political contract by the death of one of the parties. The tribes nearest to Medina had no doubt been converted and their interests were so closely identified with those of the Umma that their separate history has not been recorded. For the rest, the death of Muḥammad automatically severed their bonds with Medina, and the parties, in accordance with ancient custom, resumed their liberty of action. Having taken no part in the election of Abū Bakr, they apparently felt no obligation to him, and at once suspended both tribute and treaty relations. To restore the hegemony of Medina Abū Bakr had to make new treaties. While some of the nearer tribes accepted these, the more distant ones refused, and Abū Bakr was compelled to undertake the military subjugation of these tribes as a prelude to their conversion.

The wars of the Ridda, begun as a war of reconversion, developed into a war of conquest which ultimately led far beyond the boundaries of Arabia. The two conquests, on the one hand of Arabia itself, on the other of the neighbouring provinces of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, were simultaneous and interlinked, not successive. The Arabian tribes might never have been conquered had not the conquests in the north provided an attractive solution to the internal economic problems of the peninsula. The first northern expeditions were merely raiding parties aiming at plunder, not conquest. The latter only followed when

the weakness of the enemy was revealed. From the first, Medinese control was weak and confined to the general direction of policy. With the difficult communications of the time all detail and much of the initiative must have remained with the commanders and governors on the spot.

Narratives of the conquests are fragmentary and often contradictory. The story of the conquests is cited so frequently to establish rules of law, that some scholars have seen it as no more than a collection of real or invented legal precedents, rather than as an authentic narrative of historical events. The main outline, however, is reasonably clear. One of the key figures of the Arab conquests as depicted in traditional accounts is Khālid ibn al-Walīd, the chief general of Abū Bakr. After fulfilling orders by restoring the status quo at the death of the Prophet, he decided for himself the problem of what to do next by embarking on a programme of military expansion. The real beginning of the Arab conquests, according to these accounts, was the Battle of 'Aqrabā' in 633 in eastern Najd. The victory proved to the Arabs the capacity of the Medinese government and the advisability of submitting to it. Thereafter a series of expeditions radiated in all directions.

Between Medina and Syria lay a number of semi-Christianized Arab tribes, providing a definite barrier to an advance from the desert. These are not mentioned by the sources, though they must have played some part, and one can only assume that the cutting off by the Emperor Heraclius of the subsidy formerly paid to them by the Byzantine government led them to throw in their lot with the invaders. In 633 Abū Bakr appealed for volunteers for a Syrian expedition and sent several independent forces to Palestine and Syria. The Arabs defeated a small Byzantine force in the following year and made a number of minor raids in southern Palestine but withdrew to the desert to await aid from Medina, while Heraclius

mobilized an army. At this point Khālid suddenly arrived from Iraq having come up the Euphrates via Palmyra, and appeared before Damascus in April 634. After looting the town he withdrew and joined the others in the south. The Byzantines meanwhile approached Jerusalem but were defeated by a united Arab force in the battle of Ajnādayn. After a series of further Byzantine setbacks and a six months' blockade the Arabs captured Damascus. They at once disbanded and scattered over Palestine while Khālid moved northward. Meanwhile, Heraclius prepared a powerful army, consisting mainly of Armenians with auxiliary cavalry recruited from the tributary Arabs. Surprised by vastly superior forces, the Arabs withdrew from Damascus and concentrated on the Yarmūk river, where in July 636 they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Byzantines which placed the whole of Syria and Palestine at their mercy with the exception of the two fortified Byzantine strongholds of Caesarea and Jerusalem. Once Syria was conquered Khālid was withdrawn and replaced by Abū 'Ubayda—the administrator replacing the general. In 637 'Umar visited Syria and drew up the broad lines of government.

The proposal to raid Iraq came originally from the chiefs of the Arab tribes of the border area, who, finding themselves sandwiched between the Muslims in the south and the Persians in the north, decided to embrace Islam and join the Muslims in an attack on the Persian territories. In 633 Khālid raided Ḥīra with a small and mainly locally recruited force. The unexpected success of the raid led to further attempts and ended with a crushing defeat of the Arabs in 634 at the 'Battle of the Bridge' by the Persian forces under the Emperor Yazdajird. The Arabs soon organized a new attack and, in the summer of 637, a Persian army put at 20,000 was decisively defeated by a far smaller Arab force at Qādisiyya. The Arabs followed up their victory by capturing the Persian capital of Ctesiphon, also known as Al-Madā'in, and occupied the whole of

Iraq. A hastily assembled Persian force was easily defeated at Jālūla and the Arab armies pushed northwards through Syria and Iraq to meet in Mesopotamia and complete the conquest of the Fertile Crescent.

According to Arab tradition the invasion of Egypt was begun against the will of the Caliph as an expression of resentment by ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ at being passed over in Syria. In Egypt, as in Syria and Iraq, the state of the country was favourable. The Copts were intensely dissatisfied with Greek rule and ready to help the invaders. On 12 December 639 ʿAmr reached the Egyptian frontier town of Al-ʿArīsh with a force of Yemenite cavalry. He captured it with ease and was encouraged to turn from raid to conquest. After capturing Pelusium (now Faramā), he marched on the Byzantine fortress of Babylon, near the present site of Cairo, and with reinforcements from Medina easily defeated the Byzantines in July 640. In the following year the town itself surrendered and only Alexandria remained to the Byzantines in Egypt. After a one-year siege a treaty was concluded between ʿAmr and the Coptic Patriarch whereby the city surrendered and the Byzantine garrison withdrew. A Greek attempt at a reconquest from the sea in 645 achieved a temporary success, but was foiled in the following year.

A story common in many books tells that after the Arab occupation of Alexandria the Caliph ordered the destruction of the great library of that city on the grounds that if the books contained what was in the Qur'ān they were unnecessary, whereas if they did not they were impious. Critical scholarship has shown the story to be completely unfounded. None of the early chronicles, not even the Christian ones, make any reference to this tale, which is first mentioned in the thirteenth century, and in any case the great library of the Serapeum had already been destroyed in internal dissensions before the coming of the Arabs.

The advance of the Arabs into the non-Semitic-speaking

mountain territories to the north and to the east of the Fertile Crescent was far slower and far more difficult. On the Iranian plateau resistance continued for many years and the whole of Khurāsān in eastern Iran was not finally occupied until the reign of Mu'āwiya. In Anatolia the difficulties proved insuperable, and to the present day the foothills of Taurus mark the northernmost limit of Arabic speech.

The strategy employed by the Arabs in the great campaigns of conquest was determined by the use of desert-power, on lines strikingly similar to the use of sea-power by modern empires. The desert was familiar and accessible to the Arabs and not to their enemies. They could use it both as a means of communication for supplies and reinforcements, and as a safe retreat in times of emergency. It is no accident that in each of the conquered provinces the Arabs established their main bases in towns on the edge of the desert and the sown, using existing cities like Damascus when they were suitably placed, creating new ones like Kūfa and Baṣra in Iraq, Fusṭāṭ in Egypt, Qayrawān in Tunisia, when necessary. These garrison towns were the Gibraltars and Singapores of the early Arab Empire. In them the Arabs built their cantonments and garrison cities and throughout the Umayyad period they remained the main centres of Arab government. These cities—the *Amṣār*, as they are known in Arab history—played a vital role in the establishment and consolidation of Arab influence in the conquered lands. A minority in the provinces as a whole, the Arabs formed the dominant element in the Amṣār, where Arabic became the chief language. They served as markets for the agricultural produce of the neighbouring districts and through them Arabic spread to the surrounding countryside. Soon each of the Arab garrison cities developed an outer town of artisans, shopkeepers, clerks, and workmen drawn from the subject populations, supplying the needs of the Arab rulers and their armies. The movement of the population

from the countryside to these towns was helped by the discriminatory taxation against non-Muslim agriculturists and by the fall in prices of agricultural produce which must have resulted from the large-scale free distribution of revenues in kind among the Arab conquerors.

Initially the great conquests were an expansion not of Islam but of the Arab nation, driven by the pressure of over-population in its native peninsula to seek an outlet in the neighbouring countries. It is one of the series of migrations which carried the Semites time and again into the Fertile Crescent and beyond. The expansion of the Arabs is not as sudden as might at first appear. In periods when the dam holding the Arabs in their peninsula was too strong to allow a direct breakthrough, the pressure of over-population found partial relief in a steady infiltration of Arab elements into the border lands. While most of the population of both arms of the Fertile Crescent spoke different forms of Aramaic, a Semitic language related to but distinct from Arabic, there is much evidence of Arab infiltration during the sixth and seventh centuries, in particular into the Euphrates basin, Palestine, and south-east Syria. The Byzantine towns of Bosra and Gaza, to name but two, had important Arab populations even before the conquests, and there can be little doubt that the conquerors found many of their kinsmen already settled in the nearest of the countries they conquered.

The element of religion in the conquests is given central importance by earlier writers, both Muslim and Christian, and has perhaps been underestimated by some modern scholars. Caetani argued that its importance lay in the temporary psychological change which it brought to a people unaccustomed to any sort of discipline, willing to be persuaded, but never to be commanded. It made them for a time more self-confident and more amenable to control. In the wars of conquest it was the symbol of Arab unity and victory. The importance of the worldly element in the conquests is shown by their outstanding

figures—men of the type of Khālid and ʿAmr, men whose interest in religion, as depicted in the chronicles, was perfunctory and utilitarian. With few exceptions the pietists are assigned a minor role in the creation of the Arab Empire.

The Arab historians of later centuries have given us a great deal of detail about the administration created by ʿUmar for the new Empire. In the main, however, their story has been revealed by modern criticism and, more especially, by the many contemporary administrative documents that have come down to us from the first century of Islam in the Egyptian papyri, as a projection backwards of the conditions of a later age. The first caliphs were moved in this respect by practical considerations; they themselves felt no need to define terms and functions or to formulate principles, and the study of their measures must be based on simple facts. Their policy was basically determined by the interests of the Arab Muslim aristocracy created by the conquests, and shaped in large measure by the behaviour of commanders and rulers. At first, the Arabs retained the Persian and Byzantine apparatus and personnel of administration, and even the old coinage. Shortly after the year 640, according to the Arab historiographic tradition, ʿUmar, realizing the need for new measures, installed a system whereby, in a manner of speaking, the whole empire was put into trust for the Muslim community, with the Caliph as trustee. The different conquered provinces had different laws and customs. As the Arabs took over, and for some time retained, the old procedures, there was no unified law of the Islamic empire. The Muslim Tradition, incorporated in the treatises of the Holy Law, makes an important distinction between those provinces that had surrendered at discretion, and those that had surrendered on terms. In Syria and Egypt, the surrender had been on terms, and ʿUmar was obliged to respect local usage. In Iraq, which had surrendered at discretion, he had greater freedom of action.

The Arabs took over only state lands and the lands of enemies of the regime. Other landowners who recognized the new government retained effective freehold rights on payment of certain taxes. The confiscated lands were registered and administered by the state. Muslims were allowed to buy land outside Arabia and many were granted state lands in a form of lease known as *Qaṭī'a* (pl. *Qaṭā'i'*). These concessions might be of cultivated lands or of dead lands, and in the latter case were usually accompanied by state aid in the form of tax remissions. While few such grants were made by 'Umar, many were made by his successors. Muslim landowners outside Arabia did not pay the full land tax, but, after some dispute, paid a much smaller due known as the *'Ushr*, or tithe. Apart from a small religious levy on Muslims all other taxes were paid by the subject non-Muslim peoples. These included the *Jizya* and the *Kharāj*. The *Jizya*, but not the *Kharāj*, is mentioned in the Qur'ān. In later times these terms were differentiated to mean the poll-tax payable by non-Muslims and the land tax. Under the early Caliphate, however, while *Jizya* apparently had already acquired the technical meaning of poll-tax, *Kharāj* was still a generic term for any kind of tax, and was used loosely for the collective tribute levied by the Arabs as a lump sum from each region. The Byzantine and other officials were left to assess and raise the money in the old way.

The conquerors did not interfere with the internal civil and religious administration of the conquered peoples, who received the status of *Dhimmīs*, that is, members of the tolerated religions permitted by the law. Such evidence as we have seems to indicate that the change from Byzantine to Arab rule was welcomed by many among the subject peoples, who found the new yoke far lighter than the old, both in taxation and in other matters. Some even among the Christian populations of Syria and Egypt preferred the rule of Islam to that of the Byzantines. A Jewish apocalyptic writing of the early Islamic period makes an angel say to a rabbinic seer: 'Do not fear, Ben

Yōhāy; the Creator, blessed be He, has only brought the Kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wickedness [i.e. Byzantium]... the Holy One, blessed be He, will raise up for them a Prophet according to His will, and conquer the land for them, and they will come and restore it....' We may compare with this the words of a later Syriac Christian historian: 'Therefore the God of vengeance delivered us out of the hand of the Romans by means of the Arabs.... It profited us not a little to be saved from the cruelty of the Romans and their bitter hatred towards us.' The peoples of the conquered provinces did not confine themselves simply to accepting the new regime, but in some cases actively assisted in its establishment. In Palestine the Samaritans, according to tradition, gave such effective aid to the Arab invaders that they were for some time exempted from certain taxes, and there are many other reports in the early chronicles of local Jewish and Christian assistance.

The identification of Islam with Arabism by the Arabs themselves is clear from their attitude to the new converts who began to throng to Islam from among the conquered peoples. So unexpected was the idea of non-Arab Muslims that the newcomers could only enter the faith by becoming *Mawālī* or clients of one or another of the Arab tribes. Although the Mawālī were in theory the equals of the Arabs and exempt from most taxes, the Arabs regarded them as social inferiors and for long tried to exclude them from an equal share of the material benefits of Islam. The most important of these was the receipt of pay and pensions from the *Dīwān*, the office set up by 'Umar for the distribution of the revenues of conquest among the Arab warriors.

The assumptions of this system were the identity of Arab and Muslim and the maintenance of the religious prestige by which the Caliph exercised his authority. Its breakdown became inevitable when these assumptions ceased to be valid.

On 4 November 644 the Caliph ʿUmar was murdered by a Persian slave. Realizing the danger of civil war that confronted Islam, he appointed on his deathbed a *Shūrā*, or committee, consisting of the most likely candidates for the succession, with the injunction to select one of themselves as the new Caliph. There are conflicting reports as to the proceedings of the Shūrā, but the issue was the surprising choice of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. ʿUthmān was known to be weak and was even suspected of cowardice. His appointment represents a victory of the old Meccan patriciate which, though it had accepted the profits of the new religion far more readily than it had ever accepted its Prophet, still despised the former social outcasts who had hitherto dominated in Medina. Despite the efforts of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar to associate the Meccans with the cause by appointing them to high offices—as, for example, the choice of Muʿāwiya by ʿUmar as Governor of Syria—the patricians were still dissatisfied and sought to recover the pre-eminence which they regarded as theirs by right. ʿUthmān, like Muʿāwiya, was a member of the leading Meccan family of Umayya and was indeed the sole representative of the Meccan patricians among the early companions of the Prophet with sufficient prestige to rank as a candidate. His election was at once their victory and their opportunity. That opportunity was not neglected. ʿUthmān soon fell under the influence of the dominant Meccan families and one after another of the high posts of the Empire went to members of those families.

The weakness and nepotism of ʿUthmān brought to a head the resentments which had for some time been stirring obscurely among the Arab warriors. The Muslim tradition attributes the breakdown which occurred during his reign to the personal defects of ʿUthmān. But the causes lie far deeper and the guilt of ʿUthmān lay in his failure to recognize, control, or remedy them. The wars of conquest which were the dominant theme of Arab history until the death of ʿUmar suffered a halt after his death.

The migration of the Arab people was mainly completed. Masses of Arabs had established themselves in the conquered provinces, and the driving force of over-population was for the time spent. In addition, the Arabs had come against new and more difficult barriers—the high plateaux and unfriendly populations of Iran and Anatolia in the east and in the north, the sea in the west, and the war of conquest became a harder and a slower business. The halt gave leisure to the tribesmen to reflect on hitherto quiescent issues, and soon the forces of nomad centrifugalism produced a collapse of administration and a general explosion. The elements of opposition are already discernible under ʿUmar and may have caused his death. Under the weaker rule of ʿUthmān they came into the open. The revolt against him was neither religious nor personal. It was the revolt of the nomads against any system of centralized control, not against ʿUthmān's state, but against any state. They had retained a nomadic, that is a concrete and personal, conception of authority which regarded obedience as a voluntary offering to an individual. Since ʿUthmān failed to inspire it, they felt themselves free to withhold it.

Although the armed attack on ʿUthmān came from Egypt, the real centre of opposition was in Medina itself. Here Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, two disgruntled Meccans, ʿAmr, resentful at his replacement in Egypt by a nominee of ʿUthmān, and ʿĀ'isha, the widow of the Prophet, formed centres of intrigue and conspiracy against the Caliph and may have been concerned in the events leading to his murder. ʿAmr and ʿĀ'isha, perhaps realizing where events were leading, left Medina at the crucial moment, the one for Beersheba, the other for Mecca. ʿAlī's role is not clear. Though himself an obvious candidate for succession, who had already been three times passed over, he does not appear to bear any direct responsibility for the murder, though his inactivity and his failure to use his prestige and standing to prevent it gave an effective weapon to his enemies at a later date.

On 17 June 656 a party of mutineers from the Arab army in Egypt, who had come to Medina to present their grievances, entered the Caliph's quarters and wounded him mortally. The murder marks a turning point in the history of Islam. The slaying of a Caliph by rebellious Muslims established an ominous precedent and gravely weakened the religious and moral prestige of the office as a bond of unity in Islam. Henceforth the only nexus between the government and the tribes was political and financial. Both were irksome.

ʿAlī was almost immediately hailed as successor in Medina, but even some who had been enemies of ʿUthmān had their scruples about recognizing as Caliph one who, though not himself guilty, owed his accession in a large measure to the regicides. Others who had had no love for ʿUthmān were still unwilling to recognize the new Caliph, and a pro-ʿUthmān party rapidly developed, demanding the punishment of the guilty. ʿAlī was unable to comply and proceeded to raise up for himself a whole series of new enemies by revoking many of the appointments made by the murdered Caliph. The opposition to him began with ʿĀʾisha, Ṭalḥa, and Zubayr, who withdrew to Mecca to cry war and vengeance. The triumvirate gathered forces for action against ʿAlī and transferred themselves to Baṣra, where they hoped for local support.

In October 656 ʿAlī marched out of Medina at the head of his forces. The event was doubly significant. In the first place, it marked the end of Medina as capital of the Islamic Empire, for never again was a ruling Caliph to reside there. In the second place, for the first time a Caliph was leading a Muslim army to civil war against brother Muslims.

ʿAlī and his army went to Kūfa, where, after negotiating with the 'neutral' Governor Abū Mūsā, they entered the city amid the acclamations of the populace. From thence he marched against Baṣra and defeated the forces of the triumvirate in an engagement known as the 'Battle of the Camel', since the main encounter took place around

the camel on which ʿĀ'isha, 'the Mother of the Faithful', was riding. The battle ended in a victory for ʿAlī. Ṭalḥa and Zubayr were killed and ʿĀ'isha sent back to Mecca.

After a brief occupation of Baṣra, where he failed to win over the population, ʿAlī returned to Kūfa, which became his capital. He was now master of the whole Islamic Empire, except for Syria, but despite his apparent strength his position was weakened by the tribal disunity and insubordination of his supporters and by the conflicting councils of the pietists who constituted a large part of his following and constantly challenged and questioned his authority. In Syria Muʿāwiya was in a strong position. He was at the head of a centralized authority—the only one in Islam at the time—ruling over a united and orderly province, with a good army, trained and disciplined in the frontier wars with the Byzantines. Morally, too, his position was strong. His title to authority was impeccable, for he had been appointed by ʿUmar and confirmed by ʿUthmān, the last universally recognized Caliph. In demanding vengeance for the death of his uncle ʿUthmān he was acting in accordance with an old Arab custom sanctioned by the Qur'ān itself. In the earlier struggle between ʿAlī and his opponents he had wisely remained neutral. Even now he advanced no pretensions to the Caliphate, but simply put forward his demand for justice, and by a subtle corollary called ʿAlī's title to the Caliphate into question by accusing him of the moral guilt of condoning the regicide. He was supported by the resourceful and cynical ʿAmr and by the united forces of the army of Syria.

His first overt act against ʿAlī was a forcible refusal to stand down for the Governor whom ʿAlī sent to replace him. Forced to act, ʿAlī eventually set out with an army and met the Syrian forces near the ruined Roman town of Ṣiffīn by the Euphrates in May 657. The engagement was preceded, as so often happened, by inconclusive negotiations, in the course of which Muʿāwiya demanded the

extradition and punishment of the murderers of ʿUthmān and possibly also the abdication of ʿAlī and the appointment of a new Shūrā to choose a Caliph for Islam. Eventually battle was joined, and on 26 July the forces of ʿAlī gained the upper hand. Muʿāwiya's forces, faced with defeat, adopted the expedient of raising Qur'āns on the points of their lances and crying out 'Let God decide'. This appeal to arbitration could only refer to the question of the regicides, since they could hardly have hoped to find guidance on the problem of the Caliphate in the Qur'ān. ʿAlī saw through the trick, but was forced by the pious party in his own camp to accept a truce. It was agreed that each party should name an arbitrator and that the contending leaders should bind themselves to abide by the verdict. Muʿāwiya nominated as his representative ʿAmr—an able negotiator loyal to his cause. ʿAlī's followers, interpreting the functions of the arbitrators in a different light, forced him to accept the services of the neutral Abū Mūsā. By this device Muʿāwiya had already won a moral victory, reducing ʿAlī in effect from the status of ruling Caliph to that of a pretender. The arbitration rapidly brought further difficulties for ʿAlī. An important group of his followers, dissatisfied with this step, revolted against him and had to be forcibly repressed in a bloody engagement. They were known as the Khārijites (*Khawārij*), 'those who go out', and were to reappear many times in the later history of Islam.

In January 659 the arbitrators met at Adhruḥ. Arab accounts of their proceedings are hopelessly tendentious, but it is clear that their findings were unsatisfactory to ʿAlī and probably involved his abdication. He rejected the verdict and the position was once again much as it had been before Ṣiffīn, except that ʿAlī was further weakened by the affair of the Kharijites and by the declining morale of his followers. In the months that followed he suffered still further losses. Muʿāwiya was able to seize the

province of Egypt, thus depriving ʿAlī of a great source of wealth and supplies, and, while avoiding an engagement, raided and skirmished with impunity in Iraq.

The events of the last year of ʿAlī's life are obscure. He may have concluded a truce with Muʿāwiya or may have been preparing a new campaign, but in January 661 he was murdered by a Khārijite called Ibn Muljam. His son Ḥasan gave up the struggle and transferred his rights to Muʿāwiya, who was now hailed in Syria as Caliph and soon generally accepted all over the Empire.

4 *The Arab Kingdom*

> 'Umar said to Salmān: 'Am I a king or a Caliph?' and Salmān answered: 'If you have levied from the lands of the Muslims one dirham, or more, or less, and applied it unlawfully, you are a king, not a Caliph.' And 'Umar wept.
>
> (Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk*)

THE situation on the accession of Mu'āwiya presented many difficulties. The administration of the Empire was decentralized and in disorder and the resurgence of nomad anarchism and indiscipline, no longer restrained by a religious or moral tie, led to general instability and lack of unity. The sense of a common religious mission which had held together the early Caliphate had been gravely weakened by the murder of 'Uthmān, the civil war that followed it, and the removal of the capital from Medina. The oligarchy in Mecca was defeated and discredited. Mu'āwiya's problem was to find a new basis for the cohesion of the Empire. His answer was to start the transformation from the theoretical Islamic theocracy to an Arab monarchy, based on the dominant Arab tribes.

The Arab historians of later days, writing under the dynasties that succeeded the Umayyads and interested in discrediting the deposed house, refused the title of Caliphate to the reigns of Mu'āwiya and his successors. After the Caliphate of 'Alī they speak of the Kingship (*Mulk*) of Mu'āwiya and the rest of the Umayyads, with the sole exception of the pious 'Umar II (717–20), who alone is granted the title of Caliph. For the rest the Caliphate does not resume until the accession of the house of 'Abbās in AD 750. While there is more than a germ of truth in this charge of de-Islamization, it should not be exaggerated. Mu'āwiya and his successors did indeed lay

increasing stress on the political and economic aspects of government, but the religious factor, though relegated to the second place, still counted for a great deal. And Muʿāwiya exploited it adroitly by his constant campaigns against the Byzantines, which enabled him to appear as the champion of Islam and leader in the Holy War and to claim and receive the religious loyalty of most of the Arabs.

The process of centralization which was now necessary if the Arab Empire was to survive involved a number of steps. The first of these was the transfer of the capital to Syria, which remained the metropolitan province of the Empire throughout the Umayyad century. The actual capital shifted frequently. The Umayyads, the chiefs of an invading people whose regime rested on desert-power, built their castles on the verges of the desert and safety. The many buildings that they erected and abandoned are still an invaluable guide to their policies and culture. Muʿāwiya established himself in Damascus, where the central position and old cultural and administrative traditions of the city made it possible to set up a government able to control the remoter provinces.

The new moral bond which was to replace the lost religious bond was fashioned from the loyalty of the Arab nation to its accepted head. The sovereignty exercised by Muʿāwiya was essentially Arab. No longer religious, but not yet monarchic, it was a resumption and extension of the authority of the pre-Islamic Sayyid. The ninth-century Byzantine chronicler Theophanes describes Muʿāwiya not as a King or Emperor, but as *Protosymboulos*, 'first counsellor of the Saracens'. This is not an inept description of the nature of the authority which he exercised. The chief instrument of his government of the Arabs was the Shūrā, a council of Sheikhs, summoned by the Caliph or by a provincial governor, with both consultative and executive functions. Associated with these tribal councils were the Wufūd, delegations of tribes, together

forming a loose structure based largely on the freely given consent and loyalty of the Arabs. Mu'āwiya rarely commanded, but was skilful in operating through the more acceptable processes of persuasion and through his personal ability and prestige. In the provinces his authority was exercised through nominated governors, the most important of whom was the bastard Ziyād, known as 'Ziyād, the Son of his Father', the governor of Iraq, the most turbulent and difficult of the provinces, and of the East.

In its administration the Umayyad Caliphate was not so much an Arab state as a Persian and Byzantine successor state. The old administrative machinery with its staffs and procedure remained intact and Mu'āwiya himself employed a Syrian Christian chief secretary. A vital problem for the stabilization of the Empire was the regulation of succession. The only precedents available to Mu'āwiya from Islamic history were election and civil war. The former was unworkable; the latter presented obvious drawbacks. The method of hereditary succession was still too alien to Arab ideas to be readily accepted. Mu'āwiya, with characteristic diplomacy, found a compromise by nominating his son Yazīd. The process is a good example of the way in which his tribal diplomacy functioned. The decision was taken by the Caliph and the Shūrā of Damascus. It was confirmed by consultation with the tribes through the Wufūd, and only then promulgated. The opposition was overcome less by force than by persuasion and inducement.

During the reign of Mu'āwiya the Empire grew steadily. In Central Asia the Arabs took Herat, Kabul, and Bokhara. In North Africa they moved steadily westward towards the Atlantic. The war against Byzantium continued without remission and the rapid development of an Arab fleet made possible the first great naval victory over the Byzantines at the 'Battle of the Masts' in 655, while Mu'āwiya was still only Governor of Syria. The great military event of his reign was the attack on Constantinople in 670.

Although the Arabs succeeded in holding a point south of the city for several years the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful and was given up on the death of Muʿāwiya. The wars with Byzantium served the double purpose of bolstering the religious prestige of Muʿāwiya and of endowing the Arab army of Syria with superior training, discipline, and experience.

In 680 Yazīd succeeded to the Caliphate without serious disturbance. He was a skilled and capable ruler with much of the ability of his father, and he too has been harshly treated by later Arab historians. His great misfortune arose from the development of events in Iraq. The harsh rule of Ziyād and still more of his son ʿUbaydallah had aggravated the discontents of the Arabs of Iraq with Syrian rule and led to a movement in favour of Ḥusayn, the son of ʿAlī. In the year 680 Ḥusayn and a small group of his relatives and followers were massacred by the Umayyad forces in the battle of Karbalāʾ. The event had no great immediate political significance; its further consequences were tremendous. The dramatic martyrdom of the ʿAlid claimant helped to produce a rapid development of the opposition party to Umayyad rule, centred upon the claims of the line of ʿAlī.

In 683 Yazīd died, leaving his infant son Muʿāwiya II as successor. A period of crisis and uncertainty followed, which witnessed the first ominous appearance of large-scale tribal strife among the Arabs themselves. The death of Muʿāwiya II after a rule of only six months was followed by an interregnum and the outbreak of the second civil war in Islam. In Arabia Ibn al-Zubayr, the son of the Zubayr who fought against ʿAlī, put forward a claim to the Caliphate, but forfeited whatever chance he might have had by his obstinate refusal to leave Mecca and establish himself in Syria. In Syria itself open conflict broke out between the warring Arab tribes which ended in a victory for the pro-Umayyad tribes over their opponents at the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ in 684. Marwān (684–5),

a member of another branch of the Umayyad House, was now proclaimed Caliph with effective control of Syria and Egypt. He succeeded before his death in arranging the succession of his son ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705), to whom fell the task of restoring the unity of the Empire and the authority of the government and of creating a new state organism to replace the crumbling order of Muʿāwiya I.

The second civil war was more complicated and more dangerous than the first. The disintegrating tendencies were operating on a larger scale and with greater intensity, while a number of new factors had developed which brought with them new problems and new difficulties.

Not a great deal is known of the economic life of the Umayyad period. The Arab sources are late, and in the main confuse the issue by reading into the past the developments of a later period and by their almost unanimous prejudice against the Umayyad House and all its works. The presentation of an ordered account of Umayyad economic life is rendered doubly difficult by the conduct of the Umayyads themselves, who operated in an arbitrary and often erratic manner with little care for precedent or system.

Umayyad society was based on the domination of the Arabs, who formed not so much a nation as a hereditary social caste which one could enter only by birth. They did not pay taxes on their lands, but only a personal religious tithe. They alone were recruited for the Amṣār—they formed the majority of the warriors inscribed on the registers of the Dīwān who received both monthly and annual pensions and allowances in money and in kind from the booty of the conquests and the revenues of the conquered provinces.

Even before the rise of the Umayyads, Arabs began to acquire land outside Arabia. From the time of Muʿāwiya onwards the numbers of such Arab landowners increased steadily. Estates were acquired in two ways—by purchase from non-Arab owners and by grant from the Arab

government. The new Arab regime inherited the extensive domain lands of the Byzantine and Persian governments. To these were added estates abandoned by great Byzantine landowners who fled with the defeated Imperial armies. These, together with waste and uncultivated lands, formed the so-called *Mawāt*, or 'dead lands', of the Muslim jurists. In order to ensure the cultivation of these lands and the collection of taxes from them, the Caliphs developed the practice of granting leases, known as *Qaṭā'i'*, to members of their families or other prominent and wealthy Arabs. These leases were similar to the Byzantine *Emphyteusis*, on which indeed they were based. They involved the obligation to cultivate the land within a stipulated period and to collect and remit taxes to the government. Unlike non-Arab landowners and peasants, who were liable for the full rate of taxation inherited from the old regime, these Arab-Muslim landowners paid only the *'Ushr* or tithe. The *Qaṭā'i'* increased rapidly in numbers and came to cover vast areas of the best lands. They could be bought and sold and became in effect complete private property. The holders of *Qaṭā'i'* did not normally reside on their estates but in the Amṣār or in the capital and cultivated their estates with native tenant or semi-servile labour.

The numbers of Arabs who settled in the conquered provinces are not precisely known, but they must have formed a small minority among the native populations. Estimates given for Syria and Palestine vary in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a million towards the end of the first century of Islam. The overwhelming majority of these were soldiers, officials, and other townsmen or Bedouins, and only where there had been pre-Islamic infiltration of Arab settlers does one find any number of Arabs settled on the land. An Egyptian source gives the number of Arab peasants in Egypt towards the end of the Umayyad period as three thousand. Many of the Umayyad princes were themselves great landowners and some of them devoted

great care and attention to the development of their estates. Ibn ʿĀmir, a well-known and successful landowner, attributes to the Prophet the Ḥadīth 'whoever is killed defending his property is a martyr'. The authenticity of such a Ḥadīth is extremely doubtful, but it well exemplifies the outlook that had developed among some of the Arabs.

The great fortunes acquired by some of the Arab conquerors do not appear to have been created by investment or trade, and even the merchants of Mecca with some exceptions seem to have abandoned their former vocation for the role of a warrior aristocracy. But the Umayyad Caliphs themselves and many other wealthy men lived in great luxury in the cities and even in the desert, and spent vast sums on building, furnishing, and textiles. The economy of the time was, in part at least, monetary. Soldiers and officials were paid in money as well as in kind. Taxes were collected in the same way. The survival of numbers of coins from the early Caliphate confirms the evidence of the historians that the mints taken over from the Persian and Byzantine administrations continued to produce gold and silver currency in sufficient quantities to make this possible.

The disposal by the Arab masters of the Empire of vast sums of money helped the growth of a new social element —the *Mawālī* (singular *Mawlā*). A Mawlā was any Muslim who was not a full member by descent of an Arab tribe. They thus included Persian, Aramaean, Egyptian, Berber, and other non-Arab converts to Islam, as well as some of Arabic speech and Arabian provenance who for one reason or another had lost or failed to obtain full membership of the dominant caste. The term did not include non-Muslims, who were known as *Dhimmīs*, that is, followers of the protected religions enjoying the tolerance of the Muslim state in return for the acceptance of a higher rate of taxation and of certain social disabilities.

The Mawālī flocked in large numbers to the Arab Amṣār,

in each of which they rapidly built up a large outer town of workmen, artisans, shopkeepers, merchants, and others serving the needs of the Arab aristocracy. As Muslims they were theoretically the equals of the Arabs, and claimed economic and social equality with them. This equality was never fully conceded by the Arab aristocracy during the Umayyad period. While some Mawālī landowners did succeed in obtaining a Muslim rate of tax assessment by their services to the new regime, the majority failed, and by the time of 'Abd al-Malik the Muslim government actually resorted to discouraging conversion and driving the Mawālī from the towns back to their fields in order to restore the falling revenues of the state. The Mawālī did indeed fight alongside the Arabs in the armies of Islam, more especially in the border provinces of Khurāsān and the far west. They fought, however, as infantry, with a lower rate of pay and a smaller share of booty than the Arab cavalry. The social inferiority of the Mawālī emerges very clearly from the Arabic literature of the time. A marriage, for example, between a full-blooded Arab woman and a Mawlā was regarded as an appalling mesalliance, and one Arab writer wonders whether such unions would be tolerated even among the Blessed in Paradise.

The Mawālī increased rapidly in numbers and soon outnumbered the Arabs themselves. Their mass settlement in the garrison towns formed a discontented and dangerous urban population, increasingly conscious of its political significance, its cultural superiority, and its growing share even in military operations. The main grievance was economic. The whole structure of the Arab state was based on the assumption that a minority of Arabs would rule a majority of tax-paying non-Muslims. The economic equalization of the Mawālī would have meant a simultaneous decrease of revenue and increase in expenditure. That could only have resulted in complete breakdown.

The division between the conquerors and the Mawālī, though it coincided in some measure with the ethnic distinction between Arab and non-Arab, was also, to a significant degree, economic and social. The poorer Arabs of Iraq and Bahrain, not inscribed on the Dīwān, were counted among the Mawālī, and shared their grievances. Many of the old Persian squirearchy, more accustomed to dynastic and imperial government, seem to have adapted themselves to the new order.

The discontents of the Mawālī found a religious expression in the movement known as the Shīʿa (from *Shīʿatu ʿAlī*, the party of ʿAlī). Shīʿism began as a purely Arab and purely political faction grouped around the claims of ʿAlī and of his descendants to the Caliphate. The transfer of the capital by ʿAlī to Kūfa and its subsequent transfer by the Umayyads to Syria brought Shīʿism support from Iraqi local loyalty. The real development of the movement began after the martyrdom of Karbalāʾ, when, having failed as an Arab party, it sought victory as an Islamic sect. The Shīʿite propagandists appealed with great success to the discontented and especially to the Mawālī, to whom the idea of a legitimate succession in the line of the Prophet had a far greater appeal than to the Arabs themselves. Shīʿism became essentially the expression in religious terms of opposition to the state and the established order, acceptance of which meant conformity to the Sunnī, or mainstream, Islamic doctrine.

This opposition was by no means confined to non-Arabs. In the turbulent garrison cities, and especially in Kūfa, the birthplace of revolutionary Shīʿism, Arabs played an important and at first a predominant part. It was Arabs who brought Shīʿism into Iran, where the Arab garrison city of Qumm, a colony from Kūfa, was one of the main Shīʿite strongholds. The opposition expressed by Shīʿism was by some interpreted as a national revolt of the Persians against the Arabs, by others as a social revolt

of the lower classes against the Arab aristocracy created by conquest, along with its creed, its state, and its establishment.

Both interpretations overlook a rapidly developing new social element which was at once Arab and non-Arab, privileged and penalized. This consisted of the half-Arabs, the sons of an Arab father and a non-Arab, usually a slave mother. They were drawn from every level of Arab society, including—perhaps especially—the more wealthy and powerful families, and even the ruling house itself. Excluded by Arab tribal custom from the succession to the Caliphate and from most other privileges, they formed one of the most dangerous of all the groups opposing the existing order.

Nor were the supporters of the new regime exclusively Arab. In the ex-Persian, as well as the ex-Byzantine provinces, the bureaucracy carried on its work, serving the new masters as it had served the old. Important elements of the country gentry and aristocracy appear to have retained many of their functions and privileges. On conversion, the Persian establishment exchanged a Zoroastrian for a Muslim conformity. The opponents of the existing order, after conquest and conversion, exchanged their Zoroastrian for Islamic dissent.

As might be expected, the Mawālī—Persians and others—were attracted more especially by the more extreme and uncompromising forms of Shīʿism, to which they brought many new religious ideas derived from their previous Christian, Jewish, and Persian backgrounds. Perhaps the most important of these is the concept of the *Mahdī*, the 'rightly guided one'. The Mahdī began as a political leader, but rapidly developed into a Messianic religious pretender. The first characteristic appearance of the doctrine was in the revolt of Mukhtār, who in 685–7 led a rising in Kūfa in the name of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, a son of ʿAlī by a wife other than Fāṭima. Mukhtār appealed primarily to the Mawālī,

and it is interesting to note that according to an Arab chronicler the Arabs reproached Mukhtār for raising up 'our Mawālī, who are booty which God has granted to us along with all these lands'. After the death of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, his followers preached that he was not really dead, but had gone into concealment in the mountains near Mecca and would in his own good time return to the world and establish a reign of justice on earth. The revolt of Mukhtār foundered in blood, but the Messianic idea that he had launched took a firm hold, and during the remaining years of the Umayyad Caliphate many ʿAlid and pseudo-ʿAlid pretenders, both of the line of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya and of the line of Fāṭima, claimed the allegiance of the Muslims as the sole righteous sovereign of Islam. One after another of these Messianic rebels followed his predecessors into eschatological concealment, and each by his career and failure enriched the Mahdī legend with some new detail. Broadly speaking, the pretenders of the line of Fāṭima represented the moderate wing within the Shīʿa, with considerable support among discontented elements of the Arabs themselves. The line of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya was associated with extremism both of belief and action and represented more closely the urgent resentments of the Mawālī.

While the Umayyads had to face the mounting discontents of their subjects, they could by no means rely on the undivided support of the Arabs themselves. The general tribal sense of independence, still strong among the nomad Arabs, and not so much anti-Umayyad as anti-state, found political and religious expression in a series of movements. In Mecca and Medina the pietists, who had never really accepted Muʿāwiya's compromise of Arabism and centralization, formed a theocratic opposition stressing the voluntary and religious aspects of the patriarchal Caliphate which they held forth as an ideal. Their anti-Umayyad bias colours the whole of early Islamic

religious and historical writing, of which they were at that time laying the foundations. Their opposition to the Umayyads rarely took the form of an armed revolt, but their continuous propaganda helped to undermine the authority of the central government.

An even more dangerous expression of the desire to reject the centralized state and return to a pre-Islamic order with Islamic trappings was the movement of the Khārijites. These were a group of supporters of ʿAlī who had rebelled against the arbitration agreement at Ṣiffīn and had demanded a solution by God, that is to say, by arms. Twelve thousand men, according to the chroniclers, withdrew from ʿAlī's forces. He persuaded them to rejoin him for a while, but some 4,000 seceded again and ʿAlī was forced to attack them and kill large numbers of them in the battle of Nahrawān in 658. The Khārijite movement was at first purely religious, but it gradually developed into an aggressive and anarchic opposition acknowledging no authority but that of a Caliph whom they themselves selected and whom they could, and frequently did, at any time reject. In the twenty years that followed the death of ʿAlī a number of minor Khārijite outbreaks took place in Iraq, culminating in a revolt in force on the death of Yazīd. The Khārijites were weakened by their internal disputes and their recurring tendency to split into small, conflicting factions. Under ʿAbd al-Malik they were crushed in Iraq and gradually driven into Iran. They were pretty well eliminated by the beginning of the eighth century. They represent the pre-Islamic Arab doctrine of government by consent and the supremacy of private judgement in an extreme form.

The main internal weakness of the Umayyad order, and that through which it ultimately fell, was the recurrent feuding of the Arab tribes themselves. The Arab national tradition divides the tribes into two main groups, the northern and the southern, each with an elaborate genealogical tree showing the interrelation of the different

tribes within the group and their descent from a common ancestor. There had been inter-tribal feuds in pre-Islamic Arabia, but they were between neighbouring tribes, often related to one another. The development of feuds between great leagues of tribes was the result of the conquests. In the Amṣār the Arabs were settled in quarters according to their tribes. These segments formed themselves into leagues of rival factions, not on a geographical basis but rather like a mosaic. The tribal trees of Arab tradition are probably fictitious, but are historically significant in that they dominated the Arab life of Umayyad times. The first vague appearance of a feud between the northern and southern 'leagues' dates from the time of Muʿāwiya and thereafter grew rapidly, breaking out into open violence whenever the authority of the central government was weakened. This occurred on the death of Yazīd, when Qays, one of the chief northern tribes, refused to recognize his successor, opting for Ibn al-Zubayr. The Umayyads, with the support of the southern tribe of Kalb, were able to defeat them in the victory of Marj Rāhiṭ, but the Umayyad House had lost its neutrality and descended into the *mêlée*. After ʿAbd al-Malik the Caliphs usually relied on one side or the other, and the Caliphate itself degenerated into a party appointment in the tribal conflict. The suggestion has been made that so deep-rooted and persistent a struggle must have had more serious causes than the imaginary genealogies of Arab tradition. These causes have been found in the conflict of interests between those Arabs who had infiltrated into the conquered territories before the conquests—most of them of southern origin—and the predominantly northern Arabs who came with the armies of Islam. This diagnosis is supported by the fact that the southern tribes were generally more open to Shīʿa propaganda, suggesting some community of interests with the Mawālī.

The main field of conflict in the second civil war was Iraq, where all the factors were present and active. Kūfa,

a growing and important town, was the chief centre and saw a series of convulsions. The early years of 'Abd al-Malik's reign were occupied mainly with restoring order among the Arabs, settling the affairs of the dynasty and establishing peace on the northern border by agreement with the Byzantine Emperor. By the year 690 he was ready for action against the rebels, and within three years succeeded in winning general acknowledgement.

His problem now was to devise a new organization. The answer he found was a greater degree of centralization, concentrating authority in the ruler and basing it on the military power of the army of Syria. The Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik was not an autocracy of the old oriental type, but rather a centralized monarchy, modified by Arab tradition and by the remnants of the theocratic idea. During the reign of 'Abd al-Malik a process known to the Arab historians as 'organization and adjustment' was begun. The old Byzantine and Persian systems of administration, hitherto retained in the various provinces, were gradually replaced by a new Arab imperial system, with Arabic as the official language of administration and accountancy. In 696 an Arabic coinage was instituted in place of the imitations of Byzantine and Persian coins hitherto in use. 'Abd al-Malik and his advisers were also responsible for beginning a process of fiscal rationalization, which under his successors crystallized into a new and specifically Islamic system of taxation. He bequeathed to his successor a peaceful and powerful empire enriched by great efforts expended in public works and reconstruction. But the main problems had been shelved, not solved.

The reign of Walīd (705–15) was in many ways the supreme point of Umayyad power. The main interest of the period lies in a resumption of conquest and expansion, now extended to three new areas. In central Asia Qutayba ibn Muslim, a nominee of al-Ḥajjāj, 'Abd al-Malik's governor of Iraq, was the first to establish Arab power firmly in the lands beyond the Oxus, occupying Bokhara

and Samarqand, and achieving resounding victories. Further to the south, an Arab force occupied the Indian province of Sind. This action was not followed up and the Muslim conquest of India was not to come until a much later date. More important was the landing in Spain in the year 710, rapidly followed by the occupation of the greater part of the Iberian peninsula.

During the reign of Sulaymān (715–17) a great but unsuccessful expedition was launched against Constantinople, the last assault by the Arabs in the grand style. Its failure brought a grave moment for Umayyad power. The financial strain of equipping and maintaining the expedition caused an aggravation of the fiscal and financial oppression which had already aroused such dangerous opposition. The destruction of the fleet and army of Syria at the sea walls of Constantinople deprived the regime of the chief material basis of its power. At this critical moment Sulaymān on his deathbed nominated as his successor the pious ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, who more than any other of the Umayyad princes was fitted for the task of reconciliation which alone could save the Umayyad state.

ʿUmar's aim was to maintain the unity of the Arabs and the Arab empire by conciliating the Mawālī. He attempted to do this by a series of fiscal measures which, though they ultimately collapsed, did succeed in tiding over the crisis. The main problem before him arose from the fact that the mass conversion of the Dhimmīs to Islam and the steady rise in the number of Arab landowners combined to produce an increasing number of people refusing to pay any but the lower rate Muslim taxes. Al-Ḥajjāj's remedy, driving the Mawālī back to their lands and demanding the full rate of taxation from all Muslim landowners, had produced resentment and exasperation and was clearly unworkable. ʿUmar II tried to meet these difficulties by a series of measures variously described in the legal and historical sources. The broad result was that Muslim landowners paid only ʿUshr and not Kharāj, the

higher rate of taxation, but that no transfers of tribute-paying land to Muslims after the year 100 AH (AD 719) would be recognized. Thereafter by a legal fiction Muslims could only rent such land and would have to pay the Kharāj on it. In order to pacify the Mawālī he allowed them to settle in the garrison cities without impediment and freed them from Kharāj and also from the Jizya, the meaning of which was now becoming specialized to the poll-tax payable by non-Muslims. Except in the border province of Khurāsān, however, they still received a lower rate of pay than the Arab warriors. For the Arabs themselves he granted the equalization of rates of pay at the Syrian level, hitherto higher than elsewhere, and pensions to the wives and children of fighting men. These measures were accompanied by a severer policy towards the Dhimmīs, who were now to be excluded from the administration in which they had hitherto served in large numbers and subjected more rigorously to the social and financial disabilities imposed upon them by law.

The reforms ascribed to 'Umar II at once increased expenditure and decreased revenue. His refusal to employ Dhimmīs in the administration led to confusion and disorder, and under the reigns of his successors, Yazīd II (720–4) and Hishām (724–43), a new system was worked out which remained in force with but few changes for long after the fall of the Umayyads. The Arab historiographic tradition is unanimous in describing Hishām as a miserly and grasping ruler, interested above all else in the collection of taxes. The evidence available does not allow a general statement on the fiscal policy of the Caliphate as a whole. We have, however, some information about the policies of Hishām's three chief provincial administrators, 'Ubaydullah ibn al-Ḥabḥāb in Egypt, Khālid al-Qasrī in Iraq, and Naṣr ibn Sayyār in Khurāsān, and from these it is possible to reconstruct a general picture of the policy of the later Umayyad period. The main basis of the new order was the legal fiction that the land and not the land-

owner paid Kharāj. From this time on, all land assessed as Kharāj land paid the full rate irrespective of the religion or nationality of its owner. The 'Ushr land formed under the early Caliphate continued to pay the lower rate, but could no longer be added to. The Dhimmīs in addition paid the Jizya, or poll-tax. The working of this new system, which was to become the canonical system of Islamic jurisprudence, was made more effective by the appointment of separate financial superintendents alongside the provincial governors with the task of carrying out a survey and a census as the basis of the new assessments.

After the death of Hishām the Arab Kingdom declined rapidly to its fall. A violent intensification of tribal strife and the reappearance of active Shī'ite and Khārijite opposition developed so far that by 744 the right of the central government was challenged even in Syria and disregarded elsewhere. The last of the Umayyads, Marwān II (744–50), was a clever and capable ruler, but he had come too late to save the dynasty.

The end came from the party which called itself the Hāshimiyya. Abū Hāshim, a son of the Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya for whom Mukhtār had fought, had been at the head of an extremist Shī'ite sect with Mawlā support. On his death in 716 without male issue his succession was claimed by Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-'Abbās, the descendant of an uncle of the Prophet. Muḥammad was accepted by the sect and thus obtained control of its network of emissaries. After his death in 743 he was succeeded by his son Ibrahim. The main 'Abbāsid centre of activity was in Khurāsān, in which Arab colonists, chiefly from Baṣra, had settled round about the year 670. They brought with them their tribal conflicts which developed and expanded in the new surroundings. The Arabs were a small minority among a Persian population warlike in temperament and discontented with its social and economic inferiority.

Hāshimite propaganda was launched from Kūfa, in

about 718, with a strong appeal to those who believed that the family of the Prophet were the rightful leaders of Islam, and would inaugurate a new era of justice. At first addressed by Arabs to Arabs, the Hāshimite mission soon attracted many Mawālī, and seems to have had a special appeal for half-Arabs. A missionary called Khidāsh taught extremist doctrines and won some initial success, but he was captured and executed in 736. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-ʿAbbās disavowed him and his teachings, and entrusted the control of the mission in Khurāsān to a southern Arab called Sulaymān ibn Kathīr, aided by a council of twelve. A period of inactivity followed, during which Muḥammad died and was succeeded by his son Ibrāhīm, whose claims were accepted by the following in the east. In 745, Ibrāhīm sent Abū Muslim, a Mawlā of Iraq, as his confidential agent and propagandist in Khurāsān. Abū Muslim achieved considerable success among the Arab and Persian population, including even the rural gentry. Despite some suspicion and dissatisfaction on the part of the moderate Shīʿa, the leadership of Abū Muslim was generally accepted. In 747 the Hāshimite putsch began, and the black flags of the ʿAbbāsids were raised in Khurāsān. Black has often been represented as the particular colour of the House of ʿAbbās. In point of fact, the use of black banners was an attempt to meet one of the requirements of the messianic and eschatological prophecies, many of which were circulating among the discontented populations of the Arab Kingdom. Other rebels before the ʿAbbāsids had raised the black banners. It was only the ʿAbbāsid victory that made them the emblem of the new ruling house. Within a few years the ʿAbbāsids came to be known both in Byzantium and in faraway China as the 'black-robed ones'.

The rest of the story is soon told. The conflict between the Arab tribes themselves in Khurāsān prevented them from offering any effective resistance to the new movement until it was too late. Once established in the east,

the armies of Abū Muslim swept rapidly westwards and the last forces of the Umayyads were defeated in the battle of the Great Zāb. The Umayyad House and the Arab Kingdom had gone. In their place the ʿAbbāsid Abu'l-ʿAbbās, who had succeeded his brother Ibrāhīm as leader, was proclaimed as Caliph, with the title al-Saffāḥ.

5 *The Islamic Empire*

A goodly place, a goodly time.
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

(Tennyson, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*)

THE replacement of the Umayyads by the 'Abbāsids in the headship of the Islamic community was more than a mere change of dynasty. It was a revolution in the history of Islam, as important a turning point as the French and Russian revolutions in the history of the West. It came about not as the result of a palace conspiracy or *coup d'état*, but by the action of an extensive and successful revolutionary propaganda and organization, representing and expressing the dissatisfactions of important elements of the populations with the previous regime, and built up over a long period of time. Like most revolutionary movements it was a coalition of different interests, held together by a common desire to overthrow the existing order, but doomed to break up into conflicting groups once victory was obtained. One of the first tasks of the victorious 'Abbāsids was to crush the disappointed extremist wing of the movement which had brought them to power. Abū Muslim, the chief architect of the revolution, and several of his companions were executed and an *émeute* by their followers suppressed.

But what was the nature of this revolution—who were the revolutionaries, and what did they seek to win? Nineteenth-century European orientalists, influenced by the racial theories of Gobineau and by the European nationality problems of their own times, explained the conflict between the Umayyads and the 'Abbāsids, and indeed the whole religious schism in early Islam, as a national conflict between Persians and Arabs. Some of

them even saw it as a racial conflict between the semitism of Arabia and the aryanism of Iran. They regarded the victory of the ʿAbbāsids as a victory of Persians over Arabs, establishing under the cloak of a Persianized Islam a new Iranian Empire in place of the fallen Arab Kingdom. For this view there is some support in the Arabic sources—'The Empire of the sons of ʿAbbās was Persian and Khurāsānian, that of the sons of Marwān Umayyad and Arab', says the ninth-century Arabic essayist al-Jāḥiẓ. But subsequent research has shown that although ethnic antagonisms played their part in the agitation that led to the overthrow of the Umayyads, they were not the only, probably not the principal factor. The victors, though including many Persians, did not achieve their victory as Persians nor defeat their enemies as Arabs, and the forces opposed to the Umayyads included many Arabs, especially from those growing and important elements that did not form an accepted part of the aristocracy of the conquerors. The same was true of the by now numerous half-Arabs. Nor were the Mawālī exclusively Persian. They included Iraqis, Syrians, Egyptians, and even Arabs who were not full members of the tribal aristocracy. The Persian squirearchy of *Dihqāns*, like the ex-Byzantine official classes in the western provinces, had adapted themselves to the Umayyad regime and played an important part in its working. It was they who assessed and collected the block tributes demanded by the Arabs from each province, no doubt exempting themselves in the process.

Recognition of these elements has led many twentieth-century historians, like their predecessors influenced by the dominant issues of their time, to see in the ʿAbbāsid accession a social and economic revolution arising from the discontents of the underprivileged town population and especially the Mawālī merchants and artisans in the cities that arose around the garrison centres established by the Arab conquerors.

Social and national, as well as other discontents, all had their part in the ʿAbbāsid revolution, the nature of which can been seen most clearly in the changes that followed its triumph. The most immediate and visible change was the abandonment of the aristocratic principle of descent. The patriarchal and Umayyad Caliphs had been the sons of free Arab mothers as well as fathers. The sons of slavewomen, however able, were excluded from succession to the Caliphate, and a similar stigma of social inferiority applied at all levels of society. The change was swift, but not sudden. The last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān II, was the son of a Kurdish slavewoman. The first ʿAbbāsid Caliph, al-Saffāḥ (750–4), was the son of a free Arab mother, and, it would seem, was for that reason preferred to his brother, the son of a Berber slavewoman. But on his death, it was that brother who, despite some opposition, succeeded as Caliph with the title al-Manṣūr (754–75). The third Caliph, al-Mahdī (775–85), was the son of a free south Arabian woman said to be a descendant of the ancient kings of Ḥimyar. But his successors, al-Hādī (785–6) and the famous Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809), were the sons of a slavewoman of unknown origin. When Hārūn died, his two sons fought for the succession. Al-Amīn (809–13), the loser, was born to an ʿAbbāsid princess; al-Maʾmūn (813–17), the winner, to a Persian concubine. Thereafter, most of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs and succeeding Muslim rulers were the sons of slavewomen, almost always foreign, and such parentage ceased to be either an obstacle or a stigma.

As noble birth and tribal prestige lost their value, the Arab tribes that had dominated the Umayyad political scene withdrew into insignificance. Under the new order, success and power depended on the Caliph's favour, and more and more, the Caliphs favoured men of humble and even foreign origin. The Mawālī at last acquired the equality that they had long sought. The very name and status of Mawlā lost their significance, as did the dif-

ference between Arabs, half-Arabs, and non-Arabs. This change was not immediate, and for some time the Arabs retained important privileges—as for example in the fiscal status of Arab land, the rates of pay in the armed forces, and most enduring, the social prestige of noble birth and descent in the male line. But by the end of the first half-century of ʿAbbāsid rule, all but the last of these had gone. In place of Arabism, Islam had become the badge of identity of a new ruling élite of government officials, soldiers, landowners, merchants, and an increasingly professional class of men of religion.

The second immediate and visible change was the transfer of the capital from Syria to Iraq, the traditional centre of the great cosmopolitan Empires of the Near and Middle East. Al-Saffāḥ set up his seat of government in the small town of Hāshimiyya, which he built on the east bank of the Euphrates near Kūfa to house his family and his guards. Later he transferred it to Anbār. It was al-Manṣūr, in many ways the founder of the new regime, who established the permanent seat of the ʿAbbāsid capital in a new city on the west bank of the Tigris near the ruins of the old Sasanid capital of Ctesiphon, the stones of which were used in building the new city. Its official name was *Madīnat as-Salām*, the city of peace, but it is more frequently known by the name of the Persian village that previously occupied the site—Baghdad.

Al-Manṣūr chose the site for good practical reasons. He established the city near a navigable canal linking the Tigris and the Euphrates and occupying a key position on intersecting routes in all directions and on the road to India. In a revealing passage on the foundation of the city the ninth-century historian and geographer al-Yaʿqūbī tells how al-Manṣūr halted by the village of Baghdad in the course of a journey and said:

This island between the Tigris in the East and the Euphrates in the West is a market place for the world. All the ships that come

up the Tigris from Wāsiṭ, Baṣra, Ubulla, Ahwāz, Fars, 'Umān, Yamāma, Baḥrayn and beyond will go up and anchor here; wares brought on ships down the Tigris from Mosul, Diyār-Rabī'a, Adharbayjān and Armenia, and along the Euphrates from Diyār-Muḍar, Raqqa, Syria and the border marshes, Egypt and North Africa will be brought and unloaded here. It will be the highway for the people of the Jabal, Iṣfāhān and the districts of Khurāsān. Praise be to God who preserved it for me and caused all those who came before me to neglect it. By God, I shall build it. Then I shall dwell in it as long as I live and my descendants shall dwell in it after me. It will surely be the most flourishing city in the world.

The centre of Baghdad was the round city of some two miles diameter, forming a kind of citadel in which were the Caliph's residence and the quarters of the officials and of the Khurāsānī guards whom the Caliphs had brought with them from the East. Beyond the round city, a great commercial metropolis rapidly developed.

The effects of the transfer were considerable. The centre of gravity had moved from the Mediterranean province of Syria to Mesopotamia, a rich, irrigated river valley and the intersection of many trade-routes. It symbolized the change from a Byzantine succession state to a Middle Eastern Empire of the traditional pattern in which old oriental influences, and notably those of Persia, came to play an ever-increasing part.

The change of dynasty completed a process of development in the organization of the state which had already begun under the Umayyads. From a tribal Sheikh governing by the revocable consent of the Arab ruling groups, the Caliph now became an autocrat claiming a divine origin for his authority, resting it on his regular armed forces, and exercising it through a salaried bureaucracy. At the 'Abbāsid court, the Arab tribal chiefs were replaced by a hierarchy of courtiers, officials and later also military commanders. The new dignity of the Caliph was expressed in new titles, and in a much more elaborate

ceremonial, influenced by the ancient Iranian practices that were becoming known through Islamized Persian scribes. Whereas the early Caliphs had been Arabs like the rest whom any man could approach and address by name, the ʿAbbāsids surrounded themselves with the pomp and ritual of an elaborate and hierarchic court and could only be approached through a series of chamberlains. In principle the Caliph was still subject to the rule of the *Sharīʿa*, the holy law of Islam. In practice, this check on his authority had limited effect since there was no machinery other than revolt for its enforcement. The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate was thus an autocracy based on military force and claiming almost divine right. The ʿAbbāsids were stronger than the Umayyads in that they did not depend on the support of the Arabs and could therefore command rather than persuade. On the other hand, they were weaker than the old oriental despotisms in that they lacked the support of an established feudal caste and of an entrenched priesthood.

ʿAbbāsid administration was a development of that of the late Umayyads, and al-Manṣūr openly admitted his great debt to the Umayyad Caliph Hishām in the organization of the state. But the influence of the old Persian order of the Sasanids became increasingly strong and much ʿAbbāsid practice was a deliberate imitation of Sasanid usage which was now becoming known from Persian officials and from surviving Sasanid literature. The ʿAbbāsid administration was no longer based on national privilege and exclusiveness. Its extensive scribal class was recruited to an increased extent from the Mawālī and enjoyed a high social standing. It was organized in a series of Dīwāns or Ministries, including Dīwāns of Chancery, the Army, the Seal, Finance, Posts and Intelligence, etc. The armies of officials employed in these Dīwāns were under the supreme control of the Wazīr. This office was an ʿAbbāsid innovation, possibly of Persian origin. The Wazīr was the head of the whole administra-

tive machine, and as chief executive under the Caliph exercised immense power. One of the first Wazīrs was a recently Islamized Central Asian called Khālid al-Barmakī, and the office was held by several of the Barmecide family until their overthrow by Hārūn al-Rashīd in 803.

In the provinces authority was exercised jointly by the Amīr or governor, and the ʿĀmil or financial superintendent, with their own staffs and forces and with some measure of autonomy under the general surveillance of the postmaster, whose duty it was to report on events directly to the Dīwān of Posts and Intelligence in Baghdad. In this way, the central government maintained a kind of separation of powers in provincial administration, and was able—as long as the system survived—to forestall movements towards regional autonomy or secession.

In the Army, the Arab militia was no longer important and the pensions paid to the Arabs were gradually discontinued except for regular serving soldiers. The Army now consisted of paid troops, either full-time regulars or volunteers for a single campaign. The core was the devoted Khurāsānī guards, the mainstay of the new regime. An Arab force known as the *ʿArab ad-Dawla*, the Arabs of the Dynasty, was maintained for a while from Arabs loyal to the new regime. It soon lost its importance, however, and in later times the Army came to consist to an increasing extent of specially trained slaves, most of them of Central Asian Turkish origin. They were known as *Mamlūk*, literally, 'owned', i.e. slave. In time, this word was specialized to denote the military slaves employed by many Muslim monarchs, while another word, *ʿabd*, was used to denote menial and labouring slaves. Increasingly, the former came to be of Turkish, the latter of African origin.

The ʿAbbāsids had come to power on the crest of a religious movement and sought to retain popular support by stressing the religious aspect of their authority. One notices among the early ʿAbbāsid Caliphs a persistent

courting of the religious leaders and jurisconsults and an insistence, in public at least, on the observance of religious good taste. In the words of a later Arabic historian: 'This dynasty ruled the world with a policy of mingled religion and kingship. The best and most religious of men obeyed them out of religion and the remainder obeyed them out of fear.' The religious organization filled the gap left by the break-up of Arab national unity and served as the cement binding together the diverse ethnic and social elements of the population. The stress on the religious character of society and sovereignty led to frequent accusations of hypocrisy and to the remark of one poet: 'Would that the tyranny of the sons of Marwān would return to us, would that the equity of the sons of 'Abbās were in hell!'

There is evidence of significant economic changes after the accession of the 'Abbāsids to power. The Empire disposed of rich resources. Wheat, barley, and rice, in that order, were the main crops of the great irrigated river valleys, while dates and olives provided important secondary foods. Sugar and cotton, both introduced from further east, were widely cultivated in the Middle East and were brought by the Arabs to North Africa and to their European possessions. The Empire was well supplied with metals, too. Silver came from the eastern provinces, and especially from the Hindu Kush, where, according to a tenth-century source, ten thousand miners were employed by private enterprise. Gold was brought from the west, and especially from Nubia and the Sudan, copper from the neighbourhood of Isfāhān, where in the ninth century the copper mines paid a tax of five thousand dirhams; iron from Iran, Central Asia, and Sicily. Precious stones were found in many parts of the Empire, and pearls were obtained from the rich fisheries of the Persian Gulf. Timber was lacking in the western provinces, but available in some quantity in the east, and an extensive import trade brought supplies from India and beyond.

The 'Abbāsids undertook important irrigation works,

extending the area of cultivated land and draining swamps, and the historians report a high yield. There is some evidence that the transfer of power improved the position of the peasantry, giving them better title and a more equitable system of tax assessment, based on a percentage of the crop, instead of a fixed rate, as previously. But the technological level of both agriculture and industry showed remarkably little improvement during the period of Islamic rule. The status of the peasants was still bad, and in course of time was aggravated by the speculations of wealthy merchants and landowners and by the introduction of slave labour on large estates, which degraded the economic and social standing of free labour. Muslim law and custom, while retaining the institution of slavery, prohibited the enslavement of free persons within the Islamic lands, whether Muslim or Dhimmi. The slave population could therefore be recruited only by birth—since the children of slaves, of whatever religion, were born slaves—or by the importation of slaves from beyond the frontiers of Islam. During the early period, the rapid advance of Muslim conquest provided slaves in great numbers; when the frontiers were more or less stabilized, the supply from internal sources was inadequate to meet the society's needs. Slaves were therefore imported from abroad, sometimes by tribute, more frequently by purchase, and this in turn led to a great expansion of slave raiding and slave trading on the frontiers of Islam, in Europe, in Asia, and above all in Africa.

A medieval Muslim encyclopedia divides industry and crafts into two groups—primary, i.e. those supplying the basic needs of mankind; and ancillary, or luxury. The former were divided into food, shelter, and clothing. It was the last-named that were by far the most developed in the Islamic Empire. The most important industry, both for the numbers employed and the volume of output, was that of textiles, which began under the Umayyads and was now rapidly expanded. All kinds of goods were

produced, both for local consumption and for export—piece-goods, clothes, carpets, tapestries, upholstery, cushions, etc. Linen was made mainly in Egypt, where Copts played an important part in the three main centres—Damietta, Tinnīs, and Alexandria. Cotton was originally imported from India, but was soon cultivated in eastern Iran and spread westwards as far as Spain. The manufacture of silk was inherited from the Byzantine and Sasanid Empires and centred in the Iranian provinces of Jurjān and Sīstān. Carpets were made almost everywhere, those of Ṭabaristān and Armenia being regarded as the best. The industry was organized partly under state control, partly under private initiative. From late Umayyad times the government had maintained workshops and manufacturing centres for the production of *Ṭirāz*, materials used for the clothing of rulers and for the ceremonial costumes granted as marks of honour to high officials and Army commanders. The usual production system was domestic. The artisans could sell only to state agents or to a private entrepreneur who financed them. In some cases the artisans were paid a salary, and in ninth-century Egypt we hear of a rate of half a dirham a day.

Paper was first made in China, according to tradition, in the year 105 BC. In AD 751 the Arabs won a victory over contingents of a Chinese force east of the Jaxartes. Among their prisoners were some Chinese paper-makers who brought their craft into the world of Islam. Under Hārūn al-Rashīd paper was introduced to Iraq. Although the use of paper spread rapidly across the Islamic world, reaching Egypt by 800 and Spain by 900, manufacture was for some time limited to the eastern provinces where it was first introduced. But from the tenth century onwards there is clear evidence of paper-making in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and even in Arabia, and soon we hear of paper-mills in North Africa and Spain. Known centres include Samarqand, Baghdad, Damascus, Tiberias, Hama, Syrian Tripoli, Cairo, Fez in Morocco, and Valencia in Spain. The

introduction of paper, and the rapid spread of its use and then its manufacture, affected Middle Eastern society in a number of ways. By making possible the cheap and rapid production of books, it brought an intellectual and cultural impact comparable, albeit on a smaller scale, with that of the later introduction of printing in the West. By facilitating and indeed encouraging correspondence and record-keeping, it brought a new sophistication and complexity on the one hand to commerce and banking, on the other to bureaucratic administration. The Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, it is related, gave orders that paper be used in government offices, because when something was written on paper, it could be neither erased nor altered without detection.

Other industries included pottery, metalwork, soap, and perfumes.

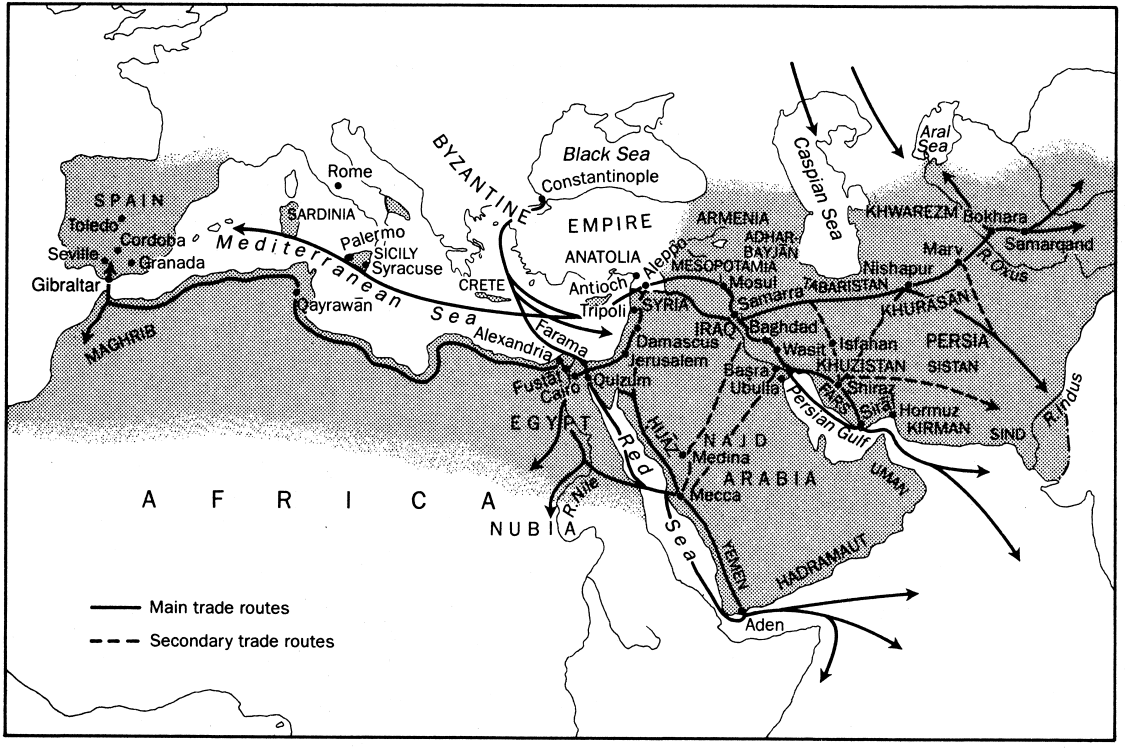
The resources of the Empire, and also the vitally important transit trade between Europe and the further East, made possible an extensive commercial development, assisted by the establishment of internal order and security and of peaceful relations with neighbouring countries in place of the incessant wars of conquest of the Umayyads.

The trade of the Islamic Empire was of vast extent. From the Persian Gulf ports of Sīrāf, Baṣra, and Ubulla and, to a lesser extent, from Aden and the Red Sea ports, Muslim merchants travelled to India, Ceylon, the East Indies, and China, bringing silks, spices, aromatics, woods, tin, and other commodities, both for home consumption and for re-export. Alternative routes to India and China ran overland through Central Asia. One source lists the goods brought from China as aromatics, silk goods, crockery, paper, ink, peacocks, swift horses, saddles, felt, cinnamon, pure Greek rhubarb; from the Byzantine Empire as gold and silver utensils, gold coins, drugs, brocades, slave girls, trinkets, locks, hydraulic

engineers, agronomes, marble workers, and eunuchs; and from India as tigers, panthers, elephants, panther skins, rubies, white sandalwood, ebony, and coconuts. From Muslim manuals of navigation that have come down to us it is clear that Muslim navigators were quite at home in eastern seas, and Arab traders were established in China as early as the eighth century.

In Scandinavia, and especially in Sweden, scores of thousands of Muslim coins have been found bearing inscriptions dating from the late seventh to the early eleventh centuries. Many finds of coins along the course of the Volga confirm the evidence of literary sources as to an extensive trade between the Islamic Empire and the Baltic via the Caspian, the Black Sea, and Russia. From these countries the Arabs obtained principally furs, skins, and amber. The late tenth-century geographer al-Muqaddasī lists the wares imported through the Volga and Khwārizm as 'sable, grey squirrel, ermine, mink, fox, beaver-skins, spotted hare, goat-skins, wax, arrows, birch-bark, fur-caps, fish-glue, fish-teeth, castoreum, amber, shagreen, honey, hazel-nuts, falcons, swords, armour, *khalanj* wood, Slavonic slaves, sheep and cattle'. It is unlikely that the Arabs themselves penetrated as far as Scandinavia. More probably they met the northern peoples in Russia, with the Khazars and the Bulgars of the Volga serving as intermediaries. The importance of Arab trade with the north is further shown by the fact that the earliest known Swedish coinage is based on the dirham weight, and by the presence of several Arabic words in old Icelandic literature.

With Africa, too, the Arabs carried on an extensive overland trade, the chief commodities which they imported being gold and slaves. Trade with western Europe was at first broken off by the Arab conquests, but was, according to some sources, resumed by Jews who served as a link between the two hostile worlds. In a frequently



The Islamic Empire—extent and main trade-routes

quoted passage, the early ninth-century geographer, Ibn Khurradādhbeh, tells of Jewish merchants from the south of France:

> who speak Arabic, Persian, Greek, Frankish, Spanish and Slavonic. They travel from west to east and from east to west, by land and by sea. From the west they bring eunuchs, slave-girls and boys, brocade, beaver-skins, sable and other furs, and swords. They take ship from Frank-land in the western Mediterranean sea and land at Faramā, whence they take their merchandise on camel-back to Qulzum, a distance of twenty-five parasangs. Then they sail on the eastern [Red] Sea from Qulzum to Al-Jār and Jedda, and onward to Sind, India and China. From China they bring back musk, aloes, camphor, cinnamon, and other products of those parts, and return to Qulzum. Then they transport them to Faramā and sail again on the western sea. Some sail with their goods to Constantinople, and sell them to the Greeks, and some take them to the king of the Franks and sell them there.
>
> Sometimes they bring their goods from Frank-land across the western sea and unload at Antioch. Then they travel three days' march overland to Al-Jābiya, whence they sail down the Euphrates to Baghdad, then down the Tigris to Ubulla, and from Ubulla to 'Umān, Sind, India and China....

If industry received some encouragement from the state, mainly for fiscal reasons, trade was not so helped, and even in such matters as the maintenance of roads the state seems to have done very little to promote commerce. The merchants were compelled to wage a constant struggle against the ever-encroaching bureaucracy. The economic action of the state was at first limited to a general ban on speculation in vital foodstuffs—not very effectively enforced—and to the work of the *Muḥtasib*, a religious official whose task it was to superintend the markets and to ensure good quality material and workmanship and the use of just weights. At a later date the state began to intervene more directly in commerce, even attempting to trade in and monopolize certain commodities for itself.

The growth of large-scale trading and enterprise gave rise during the ninth century to a development of banking. The economy of the Islamic Empire had been from the first bimetallist, with the Persian silver dirham circulating in the eastern provinces and the Byzantine gold denarius (Arabic, *Dīnār*) in the west. These issues were maintained by the Caliphate with the standard weight of 2.97 grammes for the dirham and of 4.25 grammes for the dīnār. Despite many attempts to stabilize the relative value of these two coins they inevitably fluctuated with the prices of the metals of which they were made, and the *Ṣarrāf*, or money-changer, came to be an essential feature of every Muslim market. In the ninth century he developed into a banker on a large scale, no doubt supported by wealthy traders with money to invest. We hear of banks with a head office in Baghdad and branches in the other cities of the Empire and of an elaborate system of cheques, letters of credit, etc., so developed that it was possible to draw a cheque in Baghdad and cash it in Morocco. In Baṣra, the main centre of the flourishing eastern trade, we are told that every merchant had his bank account and that payments in the bazaar were effected only by cheque and never in cash. In the tenth century we find government banks in the capital with the title of 'Bankers of the Presence', who advanced to the government the large sums of ready money required for administrative expenses against a mortgage on uncollected taxes. Owing to the Muslim ban on usury most of the bankers were Jews and Christians. Muslim bankers were, however, not unknown, and some schools of thought held that a moderate rate of interest did not count as usury.

The flourishing commercial life of the time was reflected in its thought and literature, where we find the upright merchant held up as an ideal ethical type. Traditions attributed to the Prophet include such statements as 'In the day of Judgement the honest truthful Muslim merchant will take rank with the martyrs of the faith',

'The truthful merchant will sit under the shadow of the throne of God on the Day of Judgement', 'Merchants are the couriers of the world and the trusted servants of God upon earth'. One Ḥadīth even expresses a rather modern economic theory: 'Only God can fix prices'. The Caliph 'Umar I is most improbably quoted as saying, 'There is no place where I would be more gladly overtaken by death than in the market place, buying and selling for my family.' The essayist al-Jāḥiẓ in an essay entitled 'In praise of merchants and in condemnation of officials' remarks that the approval of God for trading as a way of life is proved by His choice of the trading community of Quraysh for His Prophet. The literature of the time includes portraits of the ideal upright merchant and much advice on the investment of money in trade, including such maxims as not to put one's capital into things for which there is a limited demand, such as jewels, which are required only by the wealthy, or learned books, which are required only by scholars, who in any case are few and poor. This particular maxim must have emanated from a writer of theoretical rather than practical experience, since the evidence in general shows that it was precisely the dealers in expensive luxury commodities such as jewels and fine cambric who were the wealthiest and most respected.

All these economic changes brought corresponding social changes and a new set of relationships between the ethnic and social components of the population. The Arab warrior caste was now deposed. It had lost its grants from the treasury and its privileges. From this time onwards the Arab chroniclers speak only rarely of the tribal feuds of the Arabs. This does not mean that they had abated in violence, for as late as the nineteenth century one still finds the descendants of Qays and Kalb at one another's throats in Syria. It does mean that the Arab tribal aristocracy had lost its power to intervene in and influence public affairs and that its feuds and squabbles were no

longer of great significance. From this time on the Arab tribesmen began to abandon the Amṣār, some reverting to the nomadism which they had never completely abandoned, others settling on the land. The Islamic town changed in character from the garrison city of an occupying army in a conquered province to a market and exchange, where the merchants and artisans began to organize themselves in guilds for joint aid and defence.

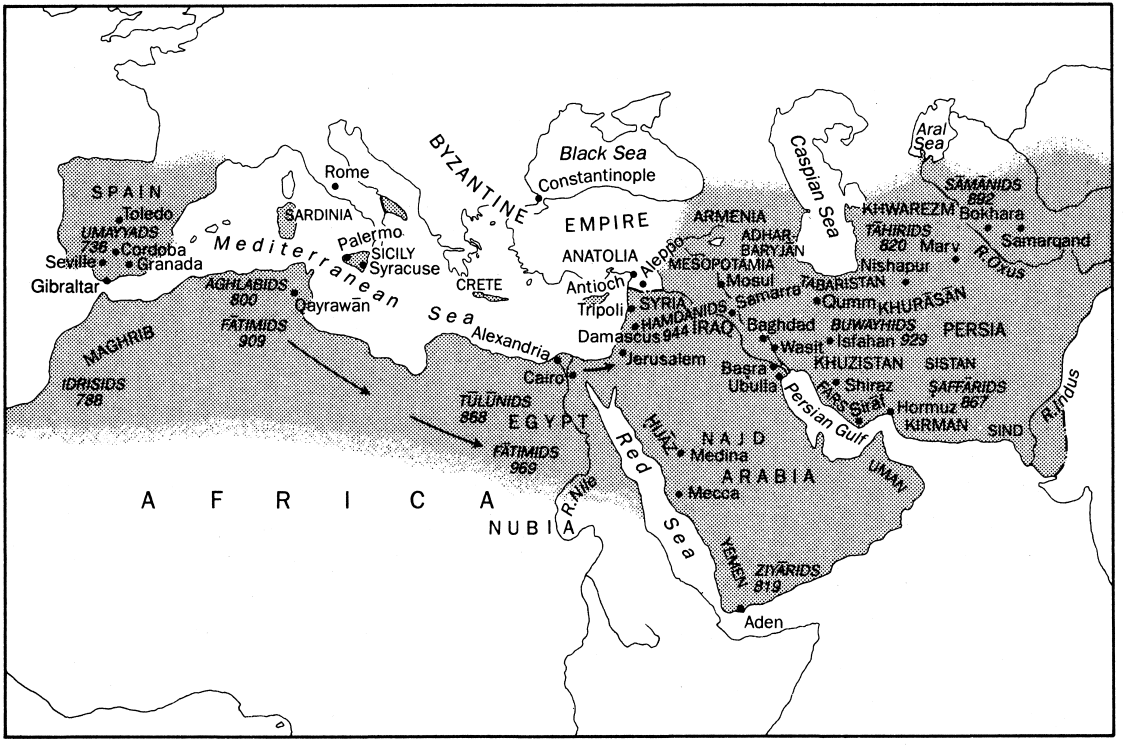
If the Arabs had lost their supremacy, they still retained a certain primacy. The Qur'ān was after all in Arabic, and the religion founded by an Arab prophet in Arabia. The dynasty, if no longer the government, was still Arab, if only in the male line, and prided itself on its Arabdom. Arabic long remained the sole language of government and culture, and when, at a later date, Persian, Turkish, and other Islamic languages challenged it in these areas, it still remained the language of theology and law. The theoretical superiority of the Arabs was maintained and led to the emergence of the Shu'ūbīya movement in literary and intellectual circles, advancing the claims of the non-Arabs to equal standing.

But an important change was taking place in the meaning of the word Arab itself. From this time onwards the Arabs ceased to be a closed hereditary caste and became a people, ready to accept, by a sort of naturalization, any Muslim speaking Arabic as one of themselves. The social emancipation of the Mawālī took the form of their full acceptance as Arabs, and even the Khurāsānī Pretorians of the Caliphs became thoroughly Arabized. The process of Arabization in the provinces west of Iran was assisted by the settlement of the demobilized Arabs, by the predominance of the Arabic language in the towns and from them in the surrounding countryside. Its development is attested by the first joint Arab–Copt revolt in Egypt in 831. Eventually even the Christians and Jews of Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa began to use Arabic, and

the term Arab itself in Arabic usage came to be restricted to the nomads.

In place of the Arab aristocracy the Empire had a new upper class, the rich and the learned, with the former possessing often enormous fortunes in currency and property. These fortunes were built up by holding government jobs, which were not only highly paid, but offered unlimited opportunities for additional earnings; by trade and banking, by speculation, and by the exploitation of the land through ownership or the farming of taxes. An example in one source tells how a young man of an official family invested a fortune of 40,000 dīnārs, which he had inherited: 1,000 went on rebuilding his father's fallen house; 7,000 on furniture, clothes, slave-girls, and other amenities; 2,000 he gave to a reliable merchant to trade on his behalf; 10,000 he buried in the ground for emergencies; and with the remaining 20,000 he bought an estate, on the revenues of which he lived.

A word may be said here about the position of the Dhimmīs, the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. The status accorded to them has sometimes been idealized by apologetic writers, who have magnified the undoubted tolerance of Muslim governments into the granting of complete equality. This is of course a modern claim, meaningless in relation to earlier times, when equal rights for believers and unbelievers would have been regarded, not as a merit, but as dereliction of duty. The Dhimmīs were well content with less. They were indeed second-class citizens, subject to both fiscal and social disabilities, and on a few rare occasions to open persecution. But by and large their position was infinitely superior to that of those communities who differed from the established church in western Europe in the same period. They enjoyed the free exercise of their religion, normal property rights, and were very frequently employed in the service of the state, though rarely in the highest offices.



The break-up of political unity in the ninth and tenth centuries

They were admitted to the craft guilds, in some of which they actually predominated. They were seldom called upon to suffer martyrdom or exile for their beliefs.

The first signs of decay in this imposing civilization were in the structure of political unity. The Empire built by al-Manṣūr seemed solid enough, despite some rumblings of rebellion, until the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809), which in many ways marks the apogee of ʿAbbāsid power. The early ʿAbbāsids had maintained the alliance with the Iranian aristocratic wing of the movement that had brought them to power, and the noble Iranian house of Barmak, through a dynasty of Wazīrs, had played a central role in the government of the Empire. During the lifetime of Hārūn al-Rashīd there was a convulsion of obscure origins and circumstances that culminated in the degradation of the house of Barmak and their loss of power, wealth, and life itself in what has come to be known in other contexts, too, as a Barmecide feast.

After Hārūn's death, smouldering conflicts burst into open civil war between his sons al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn. Al-Amīn's strength lay mainly in the capital and in Iraq, al-Ma'mūn's in Iran, and the civil war has been interpreted, on doubtful evidence, as a national conflict between Arabs and Persians, ending in a victory for the latter. It was more probably a continuation of the social struggles of the immediately preceding period, combined with a regional rather than national conflict between Iran and Iraq. Al-Ma'mūn, whose support came mainly from the eastern provinces, for a while projected the transfer of the capital from Baghdad to Marv in Khurāsān. This threat to the arterial position of their city and their very livelihood rallied the people of Baghdad in a frenzied defence of al-Amīn against the invaders. Al-Ma'mūn won the victory, but wisely retained Baghdad as capital and nodal point of the great trade-routes.

Thereafter Iranian aristocratic and regional aspira-

tions found an outlet in local dynasties. In 820 a Persian general in the service of al-Ma'mūn, called Ṭāhir, succeeded in making himself independent in eastern Iran and established a hereditary governorship in his own family. Other Iranian dynasties, that of the Ṣaffārids in 867, and the Sāmānids in *c.*892, soon established themselves in other parts of Iran. These local regimes were of different characters. The Ṭāhirid kingdom was the work of an ambitious general who carved out a principality for himself, but remained broadly within the framework of Arabo-Islamic civilization. The Ṣaffārids represented the upsurge of an Iranian popular movement, while with the Sāmānids the old Iranian aristocracy returned to political power and the full enjoyment of its former privileges.

In the west the political break-up began even earlier. The removal of the capital eastwards had caused a loss of interest and eventually control in the western provinces. Spain in 756, Morocco in 788, and Tunisia in 800 became virtually independent under local dynasties. Egypt fell away in 868 when the governor Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, a Turkish slave sent from Baghdad, succeeded in making himself independent and rapidly extended his dominion to Syria. The fall of the Ṭūlūnids was followed by the accession of another Turkish dynasty in Egypt of similar origin.

The rise of an independent centre in Egypt, often ruling Syria too, created a new no man's land between Syria and Iraq, and permitted the Arab tribes of the Syrian desert and its fringes to recover the independence they had lost after the fall of the Umayyads. At times they were able to extend their power to the settled lands of Syria and Mesopotamia, seizing and holding cities during intervals of military weakness or disunity and establishing short-lived but brilliant Bedouin dynasties like that of the Ḥamdānids of Mosul and Aleppo in the tenth century. Soon the Caliph retained direct control only of Iraq, and for the rest of the Empire had to be content with occa-

sional tribute and nominal recognition by local hereditary dynasties in the form of a mention in the Friday bidding prayer in the mosque and in inscriptions on the coinage.

As long as Baghdad retained control of the vital trade-routes leading through it, the political break-up did not impede, but seems in some ways actually to have helped the expansion of economic and cultural life. But soon more dangerous developments appeared and the authority of the Caliph dwindled even in the capital itself. The luxury of the Court and the overweight of the bureaucracy produced financial disorder and a shortage of money, later aggravated by the drying up or loss to invaders of sources of precious metal.

The Caliphs found a remedy in the farming out of state revenues, eventually with local governors as tax farmers. Their duties were to remit an agreed sum to the central government and to maintain local forces and officials. These farmer-governors soon became the real rulers of the Empire the more so when they were Army commanders. From the time of al-Mu'taṣim (833–42) and al-Wāthiq (842–7), the Caliphs gradually lost control to their own army commanders and guards, who were often able to appoint and depose them at will. These commanders and guards consisted to an increasing extent of Turkish Mamlūks. In the year 935 the office of *Amīr al-Umarā'*, or commander of commanders, was created in order to indicate the primacy of the commander in the capital over the rest. Finally, in 945, the Iranian house of Buwayh, which had already established itself as a virtually independent dynasty in western Iran, invaded the capital and destroyed the last shreds of the Caliph's independence. From this time onwards, with rare intervals, the Caliph was at the mercy of a series of mayors of the palace, most of them Iranian or Turkish, ruling through the armed forces under their own command. He retained the status and dignity of the office of supreme sovereign of

Islam, with the proud traditional title Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Commander of the Faithful, symbolizing his headship of both the state and the faith. But the Caliph's real power was gone, and his investiture of some new holder of effective authority as a military commander or provincial governor was no more than a formal, *post facto* recognition of an existing reality.

6 *'The Revolt of Islam'*

> Et une heure, je suis descendu dans le mouvement d'un boulevard de Bagdad où des compagnies ont chanté la joie du travail nouveau. . . .
>
> (Rimbaud, *Les Illuminations*)

THE rapid economic development of the Near and Middle East in the medieval centuries subjected the social fabric of the Empire to a series of dangerous stresses and strains, generating numerous movements of discontent and open rebellion against the established order. Diverse in their causes and circumstances and in the composition of their following, they have this much in common, that they were almost all expressed religiously. Whenever a grievance or a conflict of interests created a faction in Islam, its doctrines were a theology, its instrument a sect, its agent a missionary, its leader usually a messianic claimant or his representative. But to describe these socially motivated religious heresies as 'cloaks' or 'masks', behind which scheming men hid their real and material purposes in order to deceive the pious, is to distort history. The Islamic state, born of Muḥammad's community in Medina and fostered by the ancient divine monarchies of the Orient, was in theory and in the popular conception a theocracy, in which God was the sole source of both power and law, and the sovereign His vicegerent on earth. The faith was the official credo of the established order, the cult the external and visible symbol of its identity and cohesion, conformity to them, however perfunctory, was the token and pledge of loyalty. Orthodoxy meant the acceptance of the existing order, heresy or apostasy its criticism or rejection.

In a society so constituted, where both in the structure of government and in the minds and feelings of the people

church and state were indistinguishably fused, religion and religious controversy played the part that politics play in the modern world. Almost every movement, whatever its motivation, sought in religion not a mask, but the necessary and organic expression in public and social terms of the ambitions and discontents that drove it. There were, of course, exceptions—palace *coups d'état* and military *émeutes* in times of political weakness, peasant revolts and city riots in times of economic strain. But these movements were sporadic and for the most part unorganized, restricted to the time, place, and circumstances of their immediate origin, and often of purely personal significance. Whenever a group of men sought to offer an organized and sustained challenge to the existing order they found expression in a religious sect as naturally and inevitably as their modern counterparts in a political party.

The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate itself had come to power by means of such a movement; almost from its inception it had to face threats of this kind. In 752 a rising in Syria took place in support of the claims of the deposed Umayyad dynasty to which that province for long retained its loyalty. Soon even this movement fell in with the general trend of development, and the prō-Umayyad party began to speak of a messianic figure of the Umayyad House who would in the course of time return to this world and establish a reign of justice. The Shīʿa, too, soon showed their disappointment with the new regime which they themselves had helped to establish. A pretender of the line of ʿAlī, known as 'Muḥammad of the Pure Soul', organized a conspiracy and attempted to proclaim himself as Mahdī in Jerusalem. Failing in Palestine, he repeated his attempt in Medina, but was defeated and killed in 762.

Far more important was a series of movements in Iran connected in their origins with the sect from which the ʿAbbāsids themselves had emerged. The ʿAbbāsid

revolution was brought about by an alliance of elements opposed to the Umayyads, including Muslim dissidents, both Iranian and Arab, and Iranians of both aristocratic and humble status. After the success of the revolution, the alliance broke up, and its component elements reverted to their former state of conflict, aggravated by frustration and disappointment. Abū Muslim, the popular leader who more than any other single individual was the architect of 'Abbāsid victory, was put to death by the second 'Abbāsid Caliph, al-Manṣūr. Other leaders of the sect received similar treatment. The Caliphs continued to rely on Iranian and especially Khurāsānian, that is to say, mixed Arab and Iranian support, but in place of Abū Muslim and his like came the aristocratic house of the Barmecides, who for several reigns played a dominant role in the life of the capital and assured to the government the support of the old Persian ruling élites.

The resentments of the subject population found expression in a series of religious movements in different parts of Iran, with predominantly peasant support. These movements were to some extent national in that the regime which they opposed was still in name and in form Arab, and in that the religious background of their ideology was Iranian. But their doctrines were not Zoroastrian. The orthodox followers of the old state religion of Iran, the members of the old establishment—landowners, bureaucrats, and even priests—do not appear to have played any great part in these opposition movements, and it was not until the reign of al-Ma'mūn that the princes of Iran created their own movements towards independence by establishing autonomous principalities in the eastern provinces. The religious inspiration of these rebels came rather from the old Iranian heresies, which in pre-Islamic times were linked with the revolt of the depressed classes against the Sasanid monarchy. The most important of these was Mazdak, a communist revolutionary who in the sixth century had almost overthrown the Sasanid

Empire. Although the movement of Mazdak had been crushed in blood by the Sasanid Emperor Chosroes Anushirvan, its memory lingered on among the peasant population and its doctrines played a part in the formation of religious movements which began in late Umayyad times and continued under the early ʿAbbāsids. The memory of Abū Muslim himself was also frequently invoked by Iranian rebels who claimed to be his heirs and avengers against the Caliphs who had betrayed him. At first these movements were Iranian in their beliefs; later they became syncretist, preaching a mingling of Mazdakite and extremist Shīʿite ideas. The orthodox Zoroastrians appear to have remained inactive.

The first whose name is recorded was Bihāfarīd, a former Zoroastrian, who appeared in Nīshāpūr around the year 749, claiming to be a Prophet. Little is known of his earlier life, except that he had spent some years in China, possibly for trade. The main opposition to him came not from the Muslims, who regarded his movement with indifference, but from the orthodox Zoroastrians, and especially the priesthood, who appealed to the ʿAbbāsids for support against him and were largely responsible for his defeat within two years.

The death of Abū Muslim brought a change. The more extreme among his followers staged a series of peasant revolts, sometimes claiming that he was not really dead, but in hiding, and would return to his people. In 755 Sonpādh, a former associate of Abū Muslim and probably a Mazdakī, rose in revolt. He seems to have come from a village near Nīshāpūr. He rapidly won considerable support among the peasantry of western Persia, including both Zoroastrian and Muslim heretics. His movement spread rapidly and his followers captured several towns. The Arabic sources put their numbers at between 90,000 and 100,000. They were soon defeated by an army sent by al-Manṣūr. Two years later a parallel revolt was led by another former agent of Abū Muslim, known as Isḥāq the

Turk, because he had been sent to preach the faith among the Central Asian Turks. He, too, was crushed. In 767, Ustādhsīs led a revolt in Khurāsān, which for a while gravely threatened the security of the Empire.

Far more dangerous than any other of these was the revolt of al-Muqanna' (the Veiled One), who, incidentally, forms the subject of an episode in Moore's *Lalla Rukh*. He was so called because of his habit of wearing a veil over his face in order to conceal, according to his followers, its radiance, according to his opponents, its deformities. Al-Muqanna' was an Iranian heretic and a laundryman by profession. He began his preaching in Marv and his movement rapidly spread all over Khurāsān and into Central Asia, where Bokhara was for a while its stronghold. Here, too, one sees signs of a connection both with Mazdak and with Abū Muslim, and the orthodox sources do not fail to accuse him of preaching and practising communism of both property and women. His movement lasted longer than those of his predecessors and was able to survive from 776 to 789.

By far the most serious of these movements was that of Bābak (816–37), which was distinguished at once by its extent, its duration, its leadership, and its cohesion. Bābak was a man of remarkable military and political gifts. His sect, the Khurramiyya, are said to have been mainly villagers; his contemporary Māzyār, another Khurramī rebel, 'ordered the peasants . . . to attack the landowners and plunder their possessions'. There is some evidence of support also from the Dihqāns, the Persian squirearchy, many of whom had degenerated by this time into little more than ordinary peasants, with a proud recollection of nobility. The centre of the movement was in Adharbayjān, of which the geographer Yāqūt remarks, somewhat acidly, that it had always been a centre of sedition and strife. From Adharbayjān it spread to south-west Persia, where Kurdish as well as Persian elements rallied to it, to the Caspian provinces of the north, and

westwards into Armenia. At one stage Bābak seems to have had a working alliance with the Byzantine Emperor against the common foe. His position astride the northern trade-routes made him a really dangerous enemy. For seven years his arms were completely successful, defeating four of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn's generals, but after the accession of al-Mu'taṣim in 833 the general improvement in the security of the Empire permitted a more determined military effort which restricted the Bābakīs to Adharbayjān and eventually crushed them.

Of quite a different character was the revolt of the black slaves known as Zanj, between 869 and 883. There had been earlier slave revolts, and Abū Muslim had even recruited slaves to the 'Abbāsid cause with a promise of freedom. Islam was, and until modern times remained, a slave-holding society. But slaves were not, as in the Roman Empire, the main basis of production, which depended rather on free or semi-free peasants and artisans. The slaves were mainly employed for domestic or military use, the latter known as Mamlūks, and forming in effect a privileged military caste which in time came to dominate the affairs of the state. There were, however, exceptions. Slaves were employed for manual labour on a number of large-scale enterprises: in mines, in the fleets, in the drainage of marshes, etc. The growth of a class of merchants and entrepreneurs with considerable liquid capital at their disposal led to the purchase and employment of slaves in large numbers for agricultural use. They were herded together in settlements, often thousands belonging to a single landowner. Slaves of this kind were mainly black, obtained more especially from East Africa by capture, purchase, or in the form of tribute from vassal states.

Such were the slaves of the salt flats east of Baṣra, where unprecedented numbers were employed by the wealthy men of that city in draining the salt marshes in order to prepare the ground for agriculture and to

extract the salt for sale. They worked in gangs of from five hundred to five thousand; one gang of fifteen thousand is mentioned. Their conditions were extremely bad. Their labour was hard and exacting, and they received only a bare and inadequate keep consisting, according to the Arabic sources, of flour, semolina, and dates. Many of them were Africans of recent arrival with little or no Arabic, and we are told that their leader had to employ interpreters in order to address them. He was an Iranian known as ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, who claimed ʿAlid ancestry and may perhaps have been of Arab descent. After a number of unsuccessful attempts at sedition in various places, including Baṣra, where he narrowly escaped capture and imprisonment, he went to the saltpetre area in September 869, and began to work on the slaves. He reminded them, says the Arabic historian al-Ṭabarī, of the evil state in which they lived and claimed that 'God would save them from it through him and that he desired to raise their status and make them masters of slaves and wealth and dwellings'. Not surprisingly, this was not a movement for the abolition of slavery, an idea that would have been almost inconceivable at the time, but rather a revolt of specific slaves against intolerable conditions, seeking to better their own position. ʿAlī fulfilled his promise when the victories that he won enabled him to give captured Muslims as slaves to his followers.

Even this movement of alien slaves was sufficiently affected by the prevailing tone of Islamic society to seek religious expression. Though the leader of the Zanj claimed ʿAlid descent he did not join the Shīʿa, but rather the sect of the Khārijites, the egalitarian anarchists who had proclaimed in earlier times that the best man should be Caliph whatever his origins. In accordance with Khārijite doctrines the Zanj regarded all other Muslims as infidels, subject to slavery or the sword when captured.

The movement spread very rapidly and was joined by one gang after another and later probably also by run-

away slaves from the towns and villages. The black troops of the caliphal armies sent against them deserted to them, enriching them with arms and trained manpower, while the prospect of booty brought them the support of the neighbouring Bedouin tribes and of the marsh Arabs. Some free peasants of the area are said to have rallied to the Zanj leader and helped him with supplies. There is little sign of support from discontented free elements in the towns, though the sources tell us that two of 'Alī's lieutenants were a miller and a lemonade seller.

The military record of the Zanj was brilliant. One caliphal army after another suffered defeat, enriching them with slaves, booty, and especially arms. In October 869 they attacked Baṣra, but failed to capture the city. A counter-offensive by the Baṣrans was defeated, however, and shortly after the Zanj built themselves a new capital city known as Al-Mukhtāra, 'The Chosen', on a dry spot on the salt flats. We have, unfortunately, no information as to their system of government. On 19 June 870 the Zanj captured and sacked the flourishing commercial seaport of Ubulla, greatly strengthening their forces with liberated slaves. Shortly after they expanded into south-west Iran, capturing the city of Ahwāz.

The rebellion was by now a major threat to the Empire. The rebels dominated important areas of southern Iraq and south-west Iran, had captured several cities, were pressing hard on Baṣra, the second city of the central provinces, and threatened the south-eastern lines of communication of the capital itself. On 7 September 871 they captured and sacked Baṣra, but wisely evacuated it immediately after. Meanwhile they had defeated several more caliphal forces, and in 878 captured the old garrison city of Wāsiṭ. By the following year they were raiding within seventeen miles of Baghdad. This marked the peak point of their achievement. The active and energetic regent al-Muwaffaq, brother of the reigning Caliph, now began to organize at tremendous cost a major expedition-

ary force. By February 881 he had expelled the Zanj from all their conquests and confined them to their capital of Al-Mukhtāra. The leader refused the tempting offer of a free pardon and a state pension, and after a long siege the city succumbed to assault on 11 August 883. The head of ʿAlī was brought to Baghdad on a pole in November.

These movements of peasant revolt in Iran and the slave revolt of southern Iraq seem to have left no permanent mark on the course of Islamic history and wrought no radical change in the structure of Islamic society. They left behind them only an undercurrent of discontent and dissension which found periodic expression in a series of abortive movements. But the growing discontent of the common people of the Empire was to find expression in another movement, far more significant and far more lasting in its effects. This was the Ismāʿīlī movement, an offshoot of the Shīʿa. Shīʿism had developed in its early days from an Arab party to a Muslim sect, and achieved a first resounding success in the accession of the ʿAbbāsids. This victory ended the importance of the line of Shīʿite pretenders descended from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Until that time, ʿAlid claims were based on descent from ʿAlī, the Prophet's kinsman, rather than from Fāṭima, his daughter, since, according to the notions of the time, kinship with the Prophet in the male line was more important than descent from him in the female line. But after the usurpation of ʿAlid claims by their ʿAbbāsid cousins, the Shīʿite claimants based their claims on direct descent from the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima. The *Imāms*, as these Shīʿite pretenders were known to their followers, were in their eyes the sole rightful Caliphs. But the powers they claimed were far greater than those of the ʿAbbāsids. The Shīʿite Imām was a divinely inspired religious pontiff, claiming infallibility and demanding unquestioning obedience.

On the death of the Imām Jaʿfar in 765, his followers split into two groups, supporting the claims to succession

of his sons Mūsā and Ismāʿīl. The followers of the former recognized the descendants of Mūsā until the 12th Imām after ʿAlī. He disappeared in obscure circumstances and his return is awaited by the so-called Twelver Shīʿa to this day. The Twelver Shīʿa were generally moderate in their doctrines, which differed to no great extent from those of Sunnī Islam. A French scholar, Louis Massignon, has described them, with more felicity than accuracy, as 'His Majesty's Opposition' to the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs.

Far different was the evolution of the Ismāʿīlī group, which inherited the radical and violent politics of the earlier movement. The eighth and early ninth centuries may be described as a period of incubation, during which Ismāʿīl, his son Muḥammad, and a number of devoted followers organized the structure and propaganda of the sect. Its doctrines differed markedly from those of orthodox Islam, including many neo-Platonic and Indian ideas. These were introduced by the doctrine of esoteric interpretation according to which every verse in the Qur'ān had two meanings, the one exoteric and literal, the other esoteric and known only to the initiate. The secret doctrines of the sect according to some sources were disseminated through a kind of masonic hierarchy of grades of initiation, in the highest of which the complete system was revealed to the convert. This secret organization helped the sect to survive and flourish despite the vigilance of the ʿAbbāsid police. The titular head of the sect was the Imām, an infallible religious leader of the line of ʿAlī through Ismāʿīl. In certain circumstances the Imām might delegate his powers to another person by a kind of spiritual affiliation. The latter then became a trustee or delegate Imām with many, though not all, of the powers of his master.

At the beginning of the tenth century the social crisis of the Empire was reaching breaking point. The defeated peasants and slaves still nourished their resentments, while the growing concentration of capital and labour

had created a large, discontented town proletariat. In 920–1, the financial operations of the Wazīr led to bread riots in the capital and to stirrings all over the Empire. The attitude of some malcontents to orthodox religion is well expressed in some verses of a poet of the period:

> By God, I shall not pray to God while I am bankrupt,
> Let the Shaikh al-Jalīl and Fā'iq pray to Him . . .
> Why should I pray—where are my wealth, my mansion,
> And where my horses, trappings, golden belts?
> Were I to pray, when I do not own
> An inch of earth, then I would be a hypocrite.

For all these elements the doctrines of the Ismā'īlī propagandists had a ready appeal. The Ismā'īlīs themselves do not throw much light in their writings on the social doctrines of the sect, but from the refutations of the orthodox theologians it is clear that the threat which they offered to the existing order was regarded as primarily social rather than religious. The theologian al-Baghdādī (translated by A. S. Halkin) quotes an alleged Ismā'īlī document as saying:

> The true aspect of this is simply that their master [Muḥammad] forbade to them the enjoyment of the good and inspired their hearts with fear of a hidden Being who cannot be apprehended. This is the God in whose existence they believe. He related traditions to them about the existence of what they will never witness, such as resurrection from the graves, retribution, paradise and hell. Thus he soon subjugated them and reduced them to slavery to himself during his lifetime and to his offspring after his death. In this way he arrogated to himself the right to enjoy their wealth, for he says: 'I ask you no reward for it except friendliness to my relatives' (Qur'ān, lxiii, 23). His dealings with them were on a cash basis, but their dealings with him were on credit. He required of them an immediate exchange of their lives and property for a future promise which would never be realised.

Although the document is probably not genuine, it is still valuable as showing how the threat was understood. Al-

Ghazālī, one of the major theologians of Islam, observes repeatedly in his refutation of the 'abominations of the Ismā'īlīs' that the main danger of the sect was its appeal to the common people.

At first these sects seem to have been active mainly in rural and tribal areas. Soon, however, they acquired a considerable following among the town populations. A charge frequently brought against the Ismā'īlīs and similar sects by their orthodox opponents was that they practised communism of property and women. An Arabic source preserves an interesting account of the activities of a missionary in the neighbourhood of Kūfa about the middle of the ninth century. Having converted the inhabitants of some villages to his doctrine, we are told, he imposed on them an ever-increasing series of taxes and levies and finally

> the duty of *Ulfa* (union). This duty consisted of assembling all their goods in one place and enjoying them in common without any one retaining any personal property which might give him an advantage over the others.... He assured them that they did not need to keep any property because all the land belonged to them and to no one else. 'That,' he told them, 'is the test by which you are proved so that we may know how you will behave.' He urged them to buy and prepare arms.... The missionaries appointed in each village a trustworthy man to assemble all that the people of the village owned by way of cattle, sheep, jewellery, provisions, etc. He clothed the naked and met all their needs, leaving no poor man among them, nor any needy and infirm. Every man worked with diligence and emulation at his task in order to deserve high rank by the benefit he brought. The woman brought what she earned by weaving, the child brought his wages for scaring away birds. Nobody among them owned anything beyond his sword and his arms. When he had established all this and when every one had agreed to conform to it, he ordered the missionaries to assemble all the women on a certain night so that they might mix indiscriminately with all the men. This, he said, was true mutual friendship and brotherhood.

There is no evidence in the Ismā'īlī sources to support any such charges, which are not uncommon in hostile descriptions of unpopular and secretive sects in the Islamic world and elsewhere.

The movement came into the open in the early years of the tenth century. Between 901 and 906 armed bands of a related group known as the Carmathians ravaged Syria, Palestine, and northern Mesopotamia. The sources preserve the text of a sermon preached in Ḥims during its occupation by them: 'O God, guide us with the Caliph, the heir, the Awaited One, the Mahdī, the Master of the Time, the Commander of the Faithful, the Mahdī. O God, fill the earth with justice and equity and destroy his enemies. O God, destroy his enemies.'

Far more important was the Carmathian movement in the province of Baḥrayn (now called Al-Ḥasā), on the Gulf coast of Arabia. The soil was fertile for subversive movements. The province was isolated and difficult of access, with a mixed population and many survivors of the Zanj revolt. Some time at the beginning of the tenth century Carmathian missionaries became the dominant power in the province, expelling the representatives of the central government. Unfortunately, very little information has come down to us on the regime which they established. Our knowledge comes primarily from the writings of two travellers, both pro-Ismā'īlī, who visited the area. The first, who went there in the latter half of the tenth century, describes the Carmathian state as a sort of oligarchic republic. The ruler was a first among equals, governing with the aid of a committee of his close associates. This account is confirmed by the narrative of an Iranian Ismā'īlī who visited Baḥrayn some time in the eleventh century. He found the Carmathian 'republic' still flourishing. There were, he says, more than 20,000 inhabitants capable of bearing arms in the capital, Laḥsā. They were governed by a council of six, who ruled with equity and justice and who, when they gave audience, spoke in tones

of softness and modesty. They observed neither fasts nor prayers, and the only mosque was one built at private cost for orthodox pilgrims. There were no taxes or tithes (the earlier traveller speaks of many). The council owned 30,000 black slaves who did agricultural labour. If any one were impoverished or indebted, he was re-established with the aid of others. Any foreign artisan coming to Laḥsā was given on arrival sufficient money to establish himself. Repairs for poor house-owners were executed at public cost and corn was ground free of charge in state mills. Commercial transactions were carried on with token money which was not exportable. The two travellers' description of the regime is confirmed on one point by Carmathian coins which have been found, struck in the name of the Committee.

Another area of Ismā'īlī success was the Yemen, where in 901 a missionary established himself and rapidly won power. From the Yemen he sent envoys to India and to North Africa and probably to other areas also. The North African mission achieved brilliant success in Tunisia, and in 908 was able to enthrone the Imām 'Ubaydallāh as the first Fātimid Caliph. The Fāṭimids had thus in several respects followed the tactics of the 'Abbāsids themselves in their accession to power. They had made use of the secretly organized propaganda of a heterodox sect, and had made their decisive attempt to win power in one of the remoter provinces of the Empire. They diverged from the 'Abbāsids in two important respects, probably related to one another. Unlike the 'Abbāsids, they failed to assume universal control of the world of Islam. Unlike them, too, they remained the heads of the sect which had brought them to power.

The first three Fāṭimid Caliphs reigned only in North Africa, where they encountered a number of difficulties. The establishment of a state and a dynasty involved different requirements from those of a revolutionary opposition sect. At the very beginning intransigents were not

wanting who accused the new Caliphs of watering down and betraying the tenets of Ismā'īlism. At a later date the Fāṭimids were to come into conflict with the Carmathians of Baḥrayn for much the same reasons. The expansion of the new dynasty eastwards was accomplished after three unsuccessful attempts by al-Mu'izz, the fourth Caliph, who conquered Egypt in 969. The conquest had been long prepared by secret emissaries and propagandists, who had undermined the resistance of the Egyptians. The conquest of Egypt was followed almost immediately by a clash with the Carmathians, who, for the moment, constituted a real danger to the new regime. Later they seemed to have returned to their Fāṭimid allegiance.

Al-Mu'izz was well served by two remarkable men. One was his general Jawhar, a Mamlūk of European origin—he is variously described as Slavic, Greek, and Sicilian—who was the real conqueror of Egypt. It was he who built the new city of Cairo as Fāṭimid capital, and the great mosque of Al-Azhar as the centre of their faith. Converted to Sunnism centuries later, the Azhar Mosque has remained to the present day one of the main centres of Islamic thought and religious life. The other great servant of al-Mu'izz was Ya'qūb ibn Killis, an Islamized Jew of Baghdadi origin who had joined al-Mu'izz in Tunisia and helped him before, during, and after the conquest. Ya'qūb ibn Killis was a financial genius, who organized the taxation and civil service system which lasted almost throughout the period of Fāṭimid rule.

The Fāṭimids rapidly extended their sway into Palestine, Syria, and Arabia, and for a while greatly surpassed the power and influence of the Sunnī Caliphs in Baghdad. The peak of the Fāṭimid period in Egypt was the reign of the Caliph al-Mustanṣir (1036–94), under whom the Fāṭimid Empire included the whole of North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, Syria, and western Arabia. In 1056–7 a pro-Fāṭimid general succeeded in seizing even Baghdad itself and in proclaiming the sovereignty of the Fāṭimid

Caliph from the pulpits of the ʿAbbāsid capital. He was driven out in the following year, however, and thereafter the power of the Fāṭimids declined. The breakdown was first noticeable in the civil administration, and led to the rise of a series of military autocrats who exercised their authority in Cairo just as their counterparts in Baghdad had been doing for some time. Deprived of their immense powers, and reduced to the status of helpless puppets of the often Sunni princes and military commanders who were the real rulers of the Empire, the Fatimid Caliphs gradually lost the support of the Ismāʿīlī sectaries and their regime was finally abolished by Saladin, who restored Egypt to orthodoxy.

The regime of the Fāṭimids in Egypt at its height differs in a number of respects from those that had preceded it. At the top was the infallible Imām, an absolute monarch, ruling by hereditary right transmitted by the divine will through a divinely ordained family. His government was centralized and hierarchic and was divided into three branches: religious, military, and bureaucratic. The last two were in charge of the Wazīr, a civilian, under the Caliph. The religious branch consisted of a hierarchy of missionaries in several grades under a missionary-in-chief, who was an extremely influential political personage. This department was responsible for the higher schools of learning and for the propagandist organization of the Ismāʿīlī sect. The propagandist branch directed a network of emissaries throughout the eastern provinces still under the nominal control of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph in Baghdad.

The effectiveness of this propaganda can be seen in a number of ways. From Iraq to the borders of India repeated outbreaks attested the activity of the Ismāʿīlī agents, while the intellectual life of medieval Islam reflects the seductive appeal of the Ismāʿīlī allegiance for the intelligentsia. The poets al-Mutanabbī (d. 965) and Abu'l-ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī (d. 1057), two of the greatest in Arabic literature, were both strongly influenced by

Ismā'īlī ideas. In Iraq an encyclopaedist movement was organized by a group known as 'The Sincere Brethren of Baṣra'. These published a series of fifty-one epistles covering all branches of knowledge recognized at that time, and with a strong Ismā'īlī bias. The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren were read from India to Spain and exercised some influence on later writers. Their spread was helped by the organization of semi-secret study groups under the direction of members of the Brotherhood.

The Fāṭimid period was also an epoch of great commercial and industrial efflorescence. Except for a few periods of famine due to the misbehaviour of the Nile or of military cliques, the era was one of great prosperity. From the first, Fāṭimid governments realized the importance of trade both for the prosperity of their Empire and for the extension of its influence. Ya'qūb ibn Killis initiated a commercial drive which later rulers followed. The pre-Fāṭimid external trade of Egypt had been meagre and limited. The Fāṭimids developed plantations and industries in Egypt and began an important export trade of Egyptian products. In addition they developed a wide net of commercial relations, especially with Europe and with India. In the West they established close relations, dating back to their early Tunisian days, with the Italian city republics, more particularly with Amalfi, Pisa, and Venice. A great volume of seaborne trade passed between Egypt and the West, and Egyptian ships and merchants sailed as far as Spain. The two main harbours under Fāṭimid rule were Alexandria and Syrian Tripoli, both markets of world-wide importance. Fāṭimid fleets controlled the eastern Mediterranean.

In the East the Fāṭimids developed important contacts with India, gradually extending their sovereignty southward over both shores of the Red Sea. They succeeded in shifting the Indian trade of the Middle East from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea and especially to the great Fāṭimid port of 'Aydhāb on the Sudanese coast. They

traded too with Byzantium and with the Sunnī Muslim states. Wherever the Egyptian merchant went, the Ismā'īlī missionary was not far behind, and soon we find the same ferment of ideas among the Muslims both of Spain and of India.

With the decline of the Fāṭimid Caliphate at home, the links between the dynasty and the sect grew weaker and were eventually broken. The Fāṭimid Caliphate lingered on for a while as a puppet dynasty in Egypt and was eventually abolished, but in the eastern lands of the Caliphate, now under the rule of the Turkish Seljuqs, the radical Ismā'īlī preaching took on a new life.

7 *The Arabs in Europe*

> Que Castillos son aquellos? Altos son y reluzian!
> —El Alhambra era, señor, y la otra la mezquita.
>
> (*Romance de Abenamar*)

THE Arabs in pre-Islamic times were not entirely unacquainted with the sea. For centuries before the rise of Islam the peoples of southern Arabia built ships and carried on important maritime traffic in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. But the northern Arabs, and particularly those of the Ḥijāz and of the Syrian and Iraqi borderlands, were primarily a continental people, with little knowledge of the sea or of navigation. It is one of the most striking features of the great Islamic conquests that they should have adapted themselves so readily to this new form of activity. Within a few years of their occupation of the Syrian and Egyptian coastlines the people of the landlocked deserts of Arabia, with the help of local shipwrights and sailors, had built and manned great war fleets which were able to meet and defeat the powerful and experienced Byzantine navies and to give to the Caliphate that vital prerequisite of its safety and expansion—the naval control of the Mediterranean.

The conquest of Syria and Egypt brought a long stretch of Mediterranean coastline under Arab control, with many ports and a seafaring population. The Arabs, who had hitherto met only Byzantine armies, now met Byzantine navies too, and the brief Byzantine reoccupation of Alexandria from the sea in 645 offered them an early warning of the significance of sea-power. They were quick to react. The credit for the creation of the Muslim navies belongs primarily to two men, the Caliph Muʿāwiya and the Governor of Egypt, ʿAbdallah ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Sarḥ. Both in Alexandria and in the ports of the Syrian littoral

the Muslims equipped and manned war fleets which soon won victories as striking as those of the Muslim armies. The first great naval battle occurred in 655, when a Muslim fleet said to have consisted of two hundred ships inflicted a crushing defeat on a larger Byzantine fleet off the Anatolian coast.

When the 'Abbāsids transferred the seat of the Caliphate from Syria to Baghdad the interest of the central government in the Mediterranean decreased, but the independent Muslim rulers of Egypt and North Africa long maintained fleets that dominated the Middle Sea from end to end. The Fāṭimid Caliphs of Egypt, we are told, had at one time no fewer than five thousand sea captains sailing under their orders. During the ninth century an increasing volume of Muslim merchant shipping linked the ports of the Muslim coasts of the Mediterranean with one another and with the Christian ports of the north.

The first warlike activities of the newly formed Muslim fleets were directed against the Byzantine islands of Cyprus, Crete, and Rhodes, which were among the main bases of the Byzantine navies in the eastern Mediterranean. The Arab historians tell us that the first Caliphs were unwilling to authorize expeditions across the sea, and 'Umar is quoted as forbidding his generals to advance to any place 'which I cannot reach on my camel'. In 649, the Caliph 'Uthmān, somewhat unwillingly, permitted Mu'āwiya to carry out a first raid on Cyprus. This was followed by brief occupations of both Rhodes and Crete, and during the Umayyad period the Arabs were able to hold for a while the peninsula of Cyzicus in the Sea of Marmara itself, and to use it as the naval base for a combined sea and land attack on the imperial city of Constantinople.

The occupation of the eastern islands was for the most part brief and transitory. Far more significant was the Arab attack on Sicily. The first raids on this island resulted from the initiative of Mu'āwiya and came from the Near

East and Libya. Later raids came from Tunisia rather than from the Orient and were helped by the occupation of the island of Pantellaria, *c.*700. The first definite attempts at conquest did not come till 740, when Ḥabīb ibn Abī ʿUbayda besieged Syracuse and extracted tribute, but was forced to abandon the attempt and return home to meet a Berber revolt in Africa. After another raid in 752–3 a period of uneasy peace followed, during which a number of truces were signed between the Byzantine authorities on the island and the now independent Muslim rulers in Tunisia.

The real conquest began in 825. Euphemius, the Byzantine admiral, finding himself threatened with imperial punishment for some offence, the nature of which is not quite clear, rebelled against the Emperor and seized the island. Later, when defeated by the Imperial forces, he fled to Tunisia with his ships and sought the aid of Ziyādatallāh, the Aghlabid ruler of Tunisia, urging him to advance and conquer the island. Despite some hesitations the Tunisian ruler despatched a fleet of between seventy and one hundred vessels which effected a landing at Mazara in 827. After a rapid initial advance the invaders suffered some setbacks and were rescued from their difficulties only by the unexpected arrival of a band of adventurers from Spain. Thereafter the advance continued. In 831 the Muslims occupied Palermo, which became and remained the capital of the island throughout the period of Muslim rule and served as the base for further expansion. The war between the Byzantine and Muslim forces continued by land and sea on the island and on the Italian mainland until 895–6, when the Byzantines signed a peace by which they effectively renounced Sicily. The Muslims had captured Messina in *c.*843, Castrogiovanni in 859, and Syracuse in 878. Meanwhile they had landed on the mainland too, and established garrisons at Bari and Taranto for a time. Muslim raiders threatened Naples, Rome, and even

northern Italy, and compelled one of the Popes to pay tribute for two years. Between 882 and 915 the Muslim military colony on the Garigliano raided Campagna and southern Latium. It may have been sent and maintained from Sicily.

Sicily under Muslim rule was at first a dependency of Tunisia, politically and administratively tied to that province. With the fall of the Aghlabids and their supersession by the Fāṭimids, the sovereignty of the island passed to the new Caliphs. At first the governors of the island were directly appointed by the suzerain government or, in times of emergency, elected by the notables of Palermo. With the transfer of the Fāṭimids to Egypt in 972 the control of the central government weakened and the governorship became tacitly hereditary in the line of al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Kalbī. The hereditary governorship of the Kalbids, which lasted until 1040, marked the peak of Muslim power and influence on the island. The tenth-century traveller Ibn Ḥawqal found three hundred mosques in Palermo alone—an eloquent testimony to the extent of Muslim penetration. Later writers tell us of a rich efflorescence of Arabic culture and letters, of which unfortunately very little has survived.

The fall of the Kalbids was brought about by a civil war between Sicilian and North African Muslims which ended the unity of the island. After a brief interval during which Palermo itself was ruled by a council of notables and the rest of the island by local princes, the Normans, who had meanwhile occupied southern Italy, invaded and captured the greater part of the island. In 1061 Roger I took Messina and by 1091 held all Sicily except for small outposts where the Muslims still held out. Under Norman rule, which lasted until 1194, an important part of the cultured town population migrated to North Africa and Egypt.

The Arabs in Sicily applied much the same principles of government as in the conquered lands of the East, and

effected an important social change in the tenure and distribution of land. The survival of many Arab place-names shows the intensity of Arab colonization—the many Arabic words in the Sicilian dialect testify to their interest in agriculture. The Arabs brought to Sicily oranges, mulberries, sugar-cane, date-palms, and cotton. They extended cultivation by careful irrigation, and to this day many fountains in Sicily, and especially in Palermo, still have easily recognizably Arab names. Some monuments of Arab rule still remain, but with few exceptions the books that the Arabs wrote in Sicily have survived, if at all, only in fragments. The greatest of the Sicilian Arab poets, Ibn Ḥamdīs (d. 1132), has come down to us only in Spanish and Syrian copies of his writings. The causes of this disappearance are to be sought partly in the perishable materials used, partly in the emigration that followed the Norman conquest, and above all in the destructive activities of the conquerors themselves.

But the Normans soon adapted themselves to the culture that they found in the island. Arab and Muslim elements in the court and culture of Norman Sicily are very numerous. Roger II (1130–54), known as 'The Pagan' because of his favouring of Muslims, used Arab troops and siege engineers in his campaigns in southern Italy and Arab architects for his buildings, who created the new and distinctive Saracenic-Norman style. His magnificent coronation mantle, woven in the royal *Ṭirāz* workshop of Palermo, bears an Arabic inscription in Kufic style and the Hijra date 528 (= 1133–4). He retained even the Arab custom of maintaining court poets as eulogists. A later Muslim anthologist has preserved fragments of Arabic poems written in praise of this king and condemns the writers for demeaning themselves by eulogizing infidels—'May God speedily plunge them into hottest hellfire'. It was at Roger's court that the Moroccan-born al-Idrīsī, the greatest of the Arab geographers, wrote his monumental compendium of geography, which he dedicated to the

Norman king and which is known as *Kitāb Rujjār*—the Book of Roger. In 1185 the Spanish Muslim traveller Ibn Jubayr visited the island. He remarks that the King (William II, 1166–89) could read and write Arabic. 'The King relies greatly on Muslims and entrusts to them his affairs, even the most important, so that the superintendent of his kitchen is a Muslim and he has a number of black slaves headed by one of them . . . and [Muslim] . . . Wazirs and chamberlains.' The traveller remarks that even the Christians in Palermo looked and dressed like Muslims and spoke Arabic. The Norman kings continued to mint coins with Arabic inscriptions and Hijra dates, at first even with Muslim formulae. Many of the records were still kept in Arabic, including those of the courts.

At a later date, under the Swabian dynasty that followed the Normans, Latin gradually replaced Arabic in official usage and the last Arabic document in Sicily dates from 1242. But Arabic culture still survived and flourished under the rule of Frederick II (1215–50), strengthened by his extensive dealings with the Muslim Orient. Even under Manfred (d. 1266) signs of Arab influence are still visible, and at the camp of Lucera, the Sicilian Muslim colony established on the mainland by Frederick II, the five canonical prayers were still performed. But the old culture was dying out, and by the beginning of the fourteenth century Arabic was extinct in the island, while Islam was extirpated by emigration or apostasy.

The place of Sicily in the transmission of Muslim culture to Europe is on the whole less than one would expect. Its main achievement dates from the reign of Frederick II, when a number of translators, Christian and Jewish, translated into Latin a series of Arabic works both original and based on Greek texts. Among them were Theodore, an astrologer of oriental origin, who translated works on hygiene and falconry, and the famous Michael Scot, a Scottish or Irish magician and astrologer who, after studying Arabic and Hebrew in Spain, entered the service

of Frederick II in Sicily and remained there until his death. The last of the Sicilian translators was the Jewish doctor Faraj ibn Sālim, who translated a great medical work of al-Rāzī, the Rhases of the medieval West, into Latin for the Angevin King Charles I (d. 1285).

It was in the Iberian peninsula that the Arabs achieved their greatest and most enduring conquest in Europe. In the year 710 the Berber chief Ṭarīf, with the connivance of a rebellious Visigothic dignitary called Julian, led a raiding force across the Straits to Tarifa, which still bears his name. Encouraged by this success, Ṭāriq, a Berber freedman of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, the Arab governor of northwest Africa, prepared a larger expedition, and in the spring of 711—with the help of Julian's ships—landed some 7,000 men at Gibraltar (Jabal Ṭāriq). From there he advanced into the interior, defeating the Visigothic army and capturing Cordoba and Toledo. The Muslim forces engaged hitherto had been almost exclusively Berber, but in 712 Mūsā himself arrived with a strong Arab force of some 10,000 men and seized the cities of Seville and Merida. Thereafter the Arab advance was rapid and by 718 they had occupied the greater part of the peninsula and crossed the Pyrenees into southern France, where they were checked by the Franks under Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers in 732, and more decisively by their failure to hold the city of Narbonne.

Spain on the eve of the Arab conquests was in a weak and deplorable state. 'Of all that she possessed once she retained only the name', says an early chronicler. On the one hand was a small landowning class with enormous latifundia, on the other a vast and miserable mass of serfs and slaves and a ruined and decayed middle class. Around the countryside roved robber bands of runaway serfs and slaves. In 616 an intense persecution of the numerous Jews of the peninsula began, adding one more element to the many who had nothing to lose and all to gain from any change. The Visigoth army crumbled before the Arab

advance. The initial victories of the Arabs brought about the almost immediate collapse of the worm-eaten structure of the Visigoth state. The serfs went on strike; the Jews revolted and joined the invaders, handing over the city of Toledo to them.

The new regime was relatively tolerant, and even some Spanish chroniclers describe it as preferable to the Frankish rule in the north. The greatest benefit that it brought to the country was the elimination of the old ruling class of nobility and clergy and the distribution of their lands, creating a new class of smallholders who were largely responsible for the agricultural prosperity of Muslim Spain. The serfs were far better off, while many of the townspeople found a new life as converts to Islam.

After the conquests the soldiers of the invading armies remained in Spain, where they settled and intermarried. New waves of immigration from North Africa and the East followed during the eighth century, bringing many Arabs and even more North Africans into the peninsula. In 741 the Berbers were strong enough to stage a general revolt in Spain against the Arabs. The Caliph sent an Arab and largely Syrian army which arrived in 742 after a long and adventurous journey, under the command of Balj ibn Bishr. It soon defeated the Berbers and in reward received the Mediterranean coastlands of Spain in fief. These new colonists from Syria were settled on the same plan as in Syria itself, and a Spanish district was allocated to the men of each of the Syrian *Junds* (military districts)—Damascus in Elvira, the Jordan at Malaga, Palestine in Sidonia, Ḥims in Seville, Qinnasrīn in Jaen. The army of Egypt held Beja and Murcia. These Arab fief-holders were liable for military service on the summons of the government in Cordoba, the Arab capital. Otherwise they were supposed to live on their lands. But the Arabs had not yet taken to agriculture, and the fief-holders for the most part preferred to settle in the chief towns of the districts in which their lands were situated and to live on the

revenues they drew from Spanish serfs or share-croppers who cultivated their estates. They formed a new town population, an Arab warrior caste living on their revenues and known as *Shāmī*, or Syrian, to distinguish them from the older settlers who had come with the first invasion.

The strengthening of the Syrian element in Spain by these events created a favourable atmosphere for ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, an Umayyad prince fleeing from the ruin of his house in the east. After some preparatory work among the army of Balj, many of whom were former Umayyad clients, he landed at Almuñecar in 755. He soon defeated the governor who had recognized the ʿAbbāsids, and, seizing Cordoba in 756, established the independent Umayyad dynasty in Spain which was to last until 1031.

The first century of Umayyad rule in Spain was a period of troubles, during which the Amīrs of Cordoba were busy pacifying the country and dealing with latent and open insurrection from the various elements of the population. The Arabs were mainly townsmen, the great vassals of the Jund military aristocracy. They were strongest in the southeast and for a while offered a grave threat to the authority of the government. The cessation of Arab immigration during the ninth century and the progressive fusion between the Arabs and the Arabized Spanish converts to Islam gradually weakened the influence of the great Arab families, who in later Umayyad times ceased to play any significant role in public affairs. Far more numerous and active were the Berbers, whose numbers increased by constant immigration until as late as the eleventh century. In the towns they formed a minority, rapidly assimilated. The majority of them, mountaineers from Morocco, preferred to settle in the mountain districts, attracted by the congenial way of life based on livestock and agriculture and by the military advantages of the familiar type of terrain. Finally, there were the Spaniards themselves, Christian, Jewish, and converts to Islam. The non-Muslim protected communities were more

numerous and better organized in Spain than anywhere else in Islam. The policy of the government towards them was generally tolerant, such repression as occurred being due largely to political considerations. But conversion to Islam, induced by attraction rather than by coercion, was rapid and extensive. Soon the Arabic-speaking Spanish Muslims, free, freedmen, and slaves, formed a major part of the population. Even those who remained faithful to their old religions adopted Arabic to a remarkable extent. As early as the middle of the ninth century Alvaro, a Christian of Cordoba, remarks with regret:

> Many of my co-religionists read the poetry and tales of the Arabs, study the writings of Muhammadan theologians and philosophers, not in order to refute them, but to learn how to express themselves in Arabic with greater correctness and elegance. Where can one find today a layman who reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures? Who among them studies the Gospels, the Prophets, the Apostles? All the young Christians noted for their gifts know only the language and literature of the Arabs, read and study with zeal Arabic books, building up great libraries of them at enormous cost and loudly proclaiming everywhere that this literature is worthy of admiration. Among thousands of us there is hardly one who can write a passable Latin letter to a friend, but innumerable are those who can express themselves in Arabic and compose poetry in that language with greater art than the Arabs themselves.

At about the same time the Archbishop of Seville deemed it necessary to translate and annotate the Bible in Arabic, not for missionary purposes but for his own community. Many Christians worked in the service of the state and even bishops were sent by the Umayyad Amīrs on important diplomatic missions. The term Mozarab—from the Arabic *Musta'rib* (arabizing)—was used to describe the Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews. The term *Muwallad*, roughly meaning adopted, designated the descendants of non-Arab converts to Islam.

The reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II (822–52) was a rela-

tively long period of peace. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān reorganized the Cordoban realm on ʿAbbāsid models, introducing a centralized and bureaucratic administration and the ʿAbbāsid organization of the court. He was noted as a patron of letters who brought many books and scholars from the East, greatly strengthening the cultural connections between Spanish Islam and the centres of Islamic civilization in the Orient. One of the most noteworthy figures among them was Ziryāb, a Persian musician driven from the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd by the jealousy of his teacher. He found a refuge at the court of Cordoba. Ziryāb became the unquestioned arbiter of taste and fashion in the Spanish capital, introducing many new and unknown refinements of Eastern civilization, ranging from the oriental musical modes to wearing fine robes and eating asparagus.

Under the successors of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān the menace of internal dissension dwindled. Arabs, Berbers, and Spanish Muslims gradually fused into a homogeneous Muslim population, proud of its independence in culture and politics, increasingly Iberian in outlook. This movement towards political and cultural unification benefited greatly from the turn of events at the beginning of the tenth century. The rise of the Fāṭimids in North Africa and the establishment of a schismatic anti-Caliphate at the head of a widespread subversive movement led the Amīr ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (921–61) to assume for himself the title and dignity of Caliph, thereby proclaiming himself supreme religious as well as political head of the Muslims of Spain and severing the last bonds of subjection to the East. The Caliphate of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III began the Umayyad apogee. His reign was a period of political stability and internal peace, in which both Arab feudal chiefs and Berber mountaineers were firmly subjected to the central government. Eastern influences dwindled and a distinctive Hispano-Arab civilization began to emerge in which the classical Arab tradition was

affected by the subtle influences of the local environment. At the same time trade relations with the East were maintained and the opening of diplomatic relations with Byzantium indicates the power and prestige of the Umayyad state. Al-Ḥakam II (961–76), a famous Maecenas who built up a library of many thousand volumes, and especially his wazīr al-Manṣūr—or Almanzor—the real ruler of the country, continued the work of 'Abd al-Raḥmān in centralizing the government and unifying the population.

The death of al-Manṣūr during the reign of Hishām (976–1008) was followed by a break-up. The relaxation of central control released the pent-up rivalries between the two parties, the 'Andalusian', that is to say the whole of the Muslim population of Spain, and the Berbers of recent immigration from Africa. In the interlude of civil war and dissension that followed, a third party, known as the Slavs, played a fateful role. This term was applied at first to slaves of east European origin, eventually to all slaves of European origin in the royal service. Many of them were Italian or came from the still unconquered strongholds of independent Christianity in the north. They were imported at an early age and were mainly Muslim and Arabic-speaking. By the middle of the ninth century they were of growing importance in both the army and the palace and under 'Abd al-Raḥmān III are quoted as numbering 13,750. Many were liberated and acquired wealth and status. Umayyad princes had used them to counteract the influence of the Arab chiefs, appointing many of them to high posts in the government and to army commands. Their insubordination and their conflicts with the Berbers contributed to the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate.

The first half of the eleventh century was a period of political fragmentation, during which Muslim Spain was divided among a series of petty kings and princes of Berber, Slav, or Andalusian origin, known as the 'party

kings'. This political weakness led to a double invasion of Muslim Spain by Christians from the north with Frankish assistance, and by Berbers from the south. In 1085 the advancing tide of Christian reconquest engulfed the city of Toledo, the loss of which was a crushing blow to Spanish Islam. Yet despite the political weakness and disunity of the country the interlude of the 'party kings' was a period of cultural efflorescence. The many petty courts were centres of scholarship, philosophy, science, and literature, while the fall of the Caliphate permitted the resumption of active relations, both economic and cultural, with the East.

The reign of the 'party kings' was ended by a new Berber invasion from Africa. Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn, the founder of the Almoravid dynasty, entered Spain at the invitation of the Andalusians themselves in order to meet the Christian menace. Defeating the Christians in 1086, he proceeded to annex the party kingdoms to his Moorish Empire. The Almoravids in turn gave way to the new African dynasty of the Almohades, followers of a fanatical Berber sect. Meanwhile the Christian reconquest continued. In 1195 the Muslims won their last major victory at Alarcos. In 1212 the Muslim defeat at Las Navas de Tolosa initiated a series of Christian advances culminating in the capture of Cordoba in 1236 and of Seville in 1248. The Almoravid kingdom broke up into a new series of party kingdoms of brief duration. By the end of the thirteenth century the Christians had reconquered the whole of the peninsula with the exception only of the city and province of Granada, where for nearly two centuries more a Muslim dynasty ruled. It was there, in the sunset glow of Spanish Islam, that rose the magnificent fantasy of the Alhambra, the last and supreme expression of its creative genius. On 2 January 1492 the combined armies of Castile and Aragon captured the city of Granada. Within a few years, a series of edicts and expulsions achieved the departure of all non-Christians—first Jews

and then Muslims—from the peninsula. The Arabic language lingered on for a while among forced converts to Christianity, but even these—suspected of practising Islam in secret—were deported at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Spanish Islam at its peak presented a proud spectacle. The Arabs enriched the life of the peninsula in many ways: in agriculture they introduced scientific irrigation and a number of new crops including citrus fruits, cotton, sugar-cane, and rice. From Spain and Portugal, cotton and sugar and the method of cultivating them were taken to the Atlantic islands and ultimately to the New World. The changes which they wrought in the system of land tenure were largely responsible for the prosperous state of Spanish agriculture under Arab rule. They developed many industries—textiles, pottery, paper, silk, and sugar-refining, and opened important mines of gold, silver, and other metals. Wool and silk were manufactured in Cordoba, Malaga, and Almeria, pottery in Malaga and Valencia, arms in Cordoba and Toledo, leather in Cordoba, carpets in Beza and Calcena, paper—an Arab introduction from the further East—in Jativa and Valencia. As elsewhere in the lands of Islam, textiles were the chief industry, and we hear of 13,000 weavers in Cordoba alone. Muslim Spain had an extensive foreign trade with the East, and merchant fleets based on the Andalusian ports carried Spanish goods all over the Mediterranean. The chief markets were in North Africa and above all Egypt, and in Constantinople, where Byzantine merchants purchased their products and resold them to India and Central Asia. The many Arabic words surviving in agriculture and in the crafts show the strength of Arab influence. Even in political life the Arabic terms still used in Spanish in local administration and in the military vocabulary testify to the persistence of the Arab tradition. The fourteenth-century Christian king who restored the Alcazar in Seville commemorated his work in inscriptions

in Arabic, 'Glory to our Lord, the Sultan Don Pedro'. The coins of the reconquest remained Arab in pattern for a long time.

Spanish Islam made important contributions to every branch of the main classical Arab tradition, to which, despite its remoteness and its local characteristics, it ultimately belonged. Even the Greek heritage reached the Spanish Arabs from the East through books imported from the Eastern centres of translation, notably during the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II, rather than from local sources. Local influence made itself felt primarily in lyrical poetry, where the Spanish Arabs created new forms not previously known in the Muslim East. These had a considerable influence on early Spanish Christian poetry and possibly also on the other literatures of western Europe. Perhaps the most distinctive creation of Spanish Islam was its art and architecture, based initially on the Arab and Byzantine models of the Near East and developed under local influences into something new, individual, and original. The famous mosque of Cordoba, begun under ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I, marks the starting point of the new Hispano-Moorish style, which was later to produce masterpieces like the Giralda Tower and Alcazar in Seville and the Alhambra of Granada.

The permanent influence of the Arabs on Spain was far smaller than, for example, on Iran. In Persian, almost the whole terminology of cultural and spiritual life is still Arabic. In Spanish, it is Latin. But even the many surviving words relating to material life show the important debt of Spain to the Arabs in economic, social, and, to some extent also, in political matters. In culture, too, the Arab heritage must be regarded as of great importance to Spain, and indeed to all western Europe. Christians from many countries came to Spain to study together with the native Spaniards under Arabic-speaking Muslim and Jewish teachers, and translated many books from Arabic into Latin. A great part of the legacy of ancient Greece

first became known to the West in the Arabic translations found in Spain. The first great centre for the transmission of culture from Islam to Christianity in the West was the city of Toledo, reconquered in 1085. Many learned Muslims remained in the city and were soon reinforced by numbers of Jewish refugees from the Muslim south, now under the rule of the intolerant Almohades, who introduced violent religious persecution into Muslim Spain and drove many Jews to seek a temporary refuge in the more liberal atmosphere of Christian Toledo. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and especially during the reign of Alfonso the Wise of Castile and Leon (1252–84), the Toledo schools of translators produced a great corpus of works including the *Organon* of Aristotle and many of the writings of Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen, and Hippocrates, enriched by their Arabic commentators and successors. The translators usually worked with bilingual natives, many of them Jewish, and included both Spanish and foreign scholars. Among them were Domingo Gundisalvi, converted Jews like John of Seville and Petrus Alphonsi, and, from other countries, Gerard of Cremona from Italy, Herman the Dalmatian from Germany, Adelard of Bath, Daniel of Morlay, and Michael Scot from Britain.

The Arabs left their mark on Spain—in the skills of the Spanish peasant and craftsman and the words with which he describes them, in the art, architecture, music, and literature of the peninsula, and in the science and philosophy of the medieval West, which they had enriched by the transmission of the legacy of antiquity faithfully guarded and increased. Among the Arabs themselves the memory of Muslim Spain survived among the exiles in North Africa, many of whom still bear Andalusian names and keep the keys of their houses in Cordoba and Seville hanging on their walls in Marrakesh and in Casablanca. In more recent times visitors to Spain from the East, like the Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī and the Syrian scholar

Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī, have reminded the Arabs of the Orient of the great achievements of their Spanish brothers and restored the memory of Spanish Islam to its rightful place in the national consciousness of the Arabs.

8 *Islamic Civilization*

> The sciences were transmitted into the Arabic language from different parts of the world; by it they were embellished and penetrated the hearts of men, while the beauties of that language flowed in their veins and arteries.
>
> (Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb as-Ṣaydana*)

DURING the period of greatness of the Arab and Islamic Empires in the Near and Middle East a flourishing civilization grew up that is usually known as Arabic. It was not brought ready-made by the Arab invaders from the desert, but was created after the conquests by the collaboration of many peoples, Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, and others. Nor was it even purely Muslim, for many Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians were among its creators. But its chief medium of expression was Arabic, and it was dominated by Islam and the Islamic outlook on life. It was these two things, their language and their faith, which were the great contributions of the Arab invaders to the new and original civilization which developed under their aegis.

Arabic is one of the Semitic languages, in many ways the richest of them. The pre-Islamic inhabitants of Northern Arabia had been a primitive people with a hard and primitive way of life, little education or formal culture, hardly any written tradition. But they had developed a poetic language and tradition of remarkable richness, a poetry of elaborate and intricate metre, rhyme, and diction, classical exactitude of form, which was the pattern for most later Arabic poetry. With its wealth of passion and image and its limitation of themes it is the true expression of the life of the Bedouins, singing of wine, love, war, hunting, the terrible landscapes of mountain

and desert, the martial valour of the tribesmen themselves, the turpitude of their enemies. As one would expect, it is not a literature of abstraction or pure thought.

The conquests made Arabic an imperial language, soon also the language of a great and diverse culture. Arabic expanded to meet these two needs, partly by borrowing new words and expressions, but mainly by development from within, forming new words from old roots, giving new meanings to old words. As an example of the process we may choose the Arabic word for 'absolute', a notion quite unnecessary to the pre-Islamic Arabs. It is *mujarrad*, the passive participle of *jarrada*, to strip bare or denude, a term normally used of locusts and connected with the words *jarāda*, locust, and *jarīda*, leaf. The language created in this way possessed a vivid, concrete, and pictorial vocabulary, with each term having deep roots in a purely Arab past and tradition. It allowed of the direct and uncushioned impact of ideas on the mind through concrete and familiar words and of unrestricted penetration to and from the deeper layers of consciousness.

The Arabic language, thus enriched, remained the sole instrument of culture for long after the fall of the Arab kingdom. With the language of the Arabs came their poetry as its classical model and the world of ideas embedded therein—concrete rather than abstract, though often subtle and allusive; rhetorical and declamatory more often than intimate and personal; recitative and spasmodic, not epic and sustained; a literature where the impact of words and form often counted for more than the transmission of ideas.

It was the Arabization of the conquered provinces rather than their military conquest that is the true wonder of the Arab expansion. By the eleventh century Arabic had become not only the chief idiom of everyday use from Persia to the Pyrenees, but also the chief instrument of culture, superseding old culture languages like Coptic, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. As the Arabic language spread,

the distinction between Arab conqueror and Arabized conquered faded into relative insignificance, and while all who spoke Arabic and professed Islam were felt to belong to a single community the term 'Arab' was restricted once again to the nomads who had originally borne it, or was used as a title of aristocratic descent with no great economic or social significance.

Even beyond the vast areas that were permanently Arabized, Arabic exercised a tremendous influence on other Muslim languages. Muslim Persian and Turkish, and later also Urdu, Malay, and Swahili, were new languages written in the Arabic script and including an enormous Arabic vocabulary, as great as the Greek and Latin elements in English, and covering the whole world of concepts and ideas.

The survival and expansion of Arabic involved more than the language itself—more, for example, than the continued use of Latin in the medieval West. With the language came Arab taste and tradition in the choice and treatment of themes. It is illuminating to contrast the poetry written in Arabic by Persians until the eleventh century with poetry written in Persian at a later date when Muslim Iran developed an independent Islamic culture of its own. Persian Arabic poetry differs in many important respects from the early poetry of the Arabs themselves, yet basically conforms to Arab taste and is still treasured by the Arabs as part of their heritage. It is lacking in the epic and in the subjective lyricism of later Persian poetry.

Islam—the offspring of Arabia and the Arabian Prophet—was not only a system of belief and cult. It was also a system of state, society, law, thought, and art—a civilization with religion as its unifying, eventually dominating, factor. From the Hijra onwards Islam meant submission not only to the new faith, but to the community—in practice, to the suzerainty of Medina and the Prophet, later of the Empire and Caliph. Its code was the *Sharī'a*,

the holy law developed by jurists from the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet. The *Sharī'a* was not only a normative code of law but also, in its social and political aspects, a pattern of conduct, an ideal towards which people and society must strive. Islam admitted no legislative power since law could emanate only from God through revelation, but customary law and civil legislation, the will of the ruler, survived unofficially with occasional limited recognition from the jurists. The divinely granted *Sharī'a* regulated every aspect of life, not only belief and cult, but also public law, constitutional and international, and private law, criminal and civil. Its ideal character is clearest in its constitutional aspect. According to the *Sharī'a*, the head of the community is the Caliph, the chosen vicegerent of God with supreme power in all military, civil, and religious matters and with the duty of maintaining intact the spiritual and material legacy of the Prophet. The Caliph had no spiritual powers himself. He could not change doctrine, nor create new doctrine; he was supported by no priesthood, but only by the semi-clerical class of the *'Ulamā'*, the doctors of the divine law. In practice, the Caliph became the puppet of military commanders and political adventurers who, from the ninth century onwards, were the real rulers of Islam. By the eleventh century the Sultan emerged as supreme secular ruler alongside the Caliph, with powers recognized *post facto* and reluctantly by the jurists. In the administration of law we see the same contrast. Alongside the Qāḍī, administering the Holy Law, there were other courts, the ostensible purpose of which was to deal with matters not falling within the Qāḍī's jurisdiction and to remedy injustices by the use of discretionary powers.

Both these gifts of the Arabs, their language and their faith, were of course subject from the earliest times to external influences. There are foreign words even in pre-Islamic poetry and in the Qur'ān, many more in the period of the conquests. Administrative terms from Persian and

Greek, theological and religious terms from Hebrew and Syriac, scientific and philosophic terms from Greek show the immense influence of the older civilizations of the area on the new one that was being born. Islamic society of the classical period was a complex development incorporating within itself many elements of diverse origin: Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian ideas of prophecy, legal religion, eschatology, and mysticism, Sasanid and Byzantine administrative and imperial practices. Perhaps the most important was the impact of Hellenism, especially in science, philosophy, art, and architecture, and even to some slight extent in literature. So great is the Hellenistic influence that Islam has been described as the third heir, alongside Greek and Latin Christendom, of the Hellenistic legacy. But the Hellenism of Islam was the later Near Eastern Hellenism, semi-orientalized by Aramaic and Christian influences, the uninterrupted continuation of late antiquity rather than a rediscovery, as in the West, of classical Athens.

The highest achievement of the Arabs in their own reckoning and the first in order of time was poetry, with the allied art of rhetoric. Pre-Islamic poetry often had a public and social function, with the poet appearing as eulogist or satirist, sometimes with a political role. Under the Umayyads the orally transmitted poetry of pre-Islamic Arabia was codified and served as the model for further development. Under the ʿAbbāsids Arabic poetry was enriched by the accession of many non-Arabs, especially Persians, the first of whom to achieve greatness was the blind and gifted Bashshār ibn Burd (d. 784). These for a while gained a victory for new themes and forms over the pre-Islamic models in a bitterly fought struggle of ancients and moderns. But even these innovators were limited by the need to accommodate themselves to the Arab tastes of the rulers and the governing élite and eventually gave way before a triumph of neo-classicism, the most distinguished exponent of which was al-Mutanabbī

(905–65), regarded by the Arabs as the greatest of their poets.

The Qur'ān itself is the first document of Arab prose literature, which in the early centuries of Islamic rule developed both prose and rhymed prose and was richest in *belles lettres* and in essay. The greatest master of the essay and indeed of Arabic prose was 'Amr ibn Baḥr, known as al-Jāḥiẓ, 'the goggle-eyed' (d. 869). A native of Baṣra and the grandson of a black slave, his versatility, originality, and charm give him a unique place in Arabic letters. Science and learning were religious in origin. Grammar and lexicography arose from the need to interpret and explain the Qur'ān. In Medina the pietists of the old school concentrated on the religious sciences proper—the interpretation of the Qur'ān, the formulation of dogma, and the codification of the Tradition. The last gave rise to the Islamic schools of jurisprudence and history, developed from the legal and biographical material of the Tradition. The former grew into the elaborate juristic corpus of the *Sharī'a*. History among the Arabs began with the biography of the Prophet, enriched by the codification of the pre-Islamic oral historical tradition of the Arabs and later more especially by the example of the Persian court chroniclers of the Sasanids, introduced to the Arabs by Iranian converts.

For Muslims, history, at least Islamic history, is important, since it records the working-out of God's purpose for mankind. Muslims were soon producing voluminous histories of many kinds: universal histories, local histories, histories of families, tribes, and institutions. The earliest Arab historical works are little more than source books written in the manner of the compendia of Tradition, consisting of eye-witness accounts each introduced by a chain of transmitting authorities. From these, narrative and occasionally interpretative, history developed, culminating in the work of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), the greatest historian of the Arabs and perhaps the greatest historical thinker of the Middle Ages.

Religious literature was subject to strong Christian and Jewish influence, especially in the early period, and much apocryphal and talmudic material was incorporated into the Tradition. Theological literature proper began under the influence of Syriac Christianity, later also of Greek thought. Greek influence was fundamental in philosophy and all the sciences: mathematics, astronomy, geography, chemistry, physics, natural history, and medicine. The immense effort of translation of Greek books either directly from the original or from Syriac versions produced a new growth of learning in the ninth and tenth centuries. Greek schools had survived in Alexandria, Antioch, and elsewhere, and in the college of Jundayshapur founded by Nestorian refugees from Byzantium in Sasanid Persia.

The movement of translation began under the Umayyads, when some Greek and Coptic works on chemistry had been translated. Under 'Umar II, Māsarjawayh, a Jew of Baṣra, translated Syriac medical books into Arabic, laying the foundations of Arab medical science. The translators were usually Christians and Jews, mainly Syrian. Under the Umayyads, translation was sporadic and individual; under the 'Abbāsids it was organized and officially encouraged. The greatest period was the ninth century and especially the reign of al-Ma'mūn (813–33), who established a school for translators in Baghdad with a library and a regular staff. One of the most notable translators was Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (*c.*809–77), a Christian doctor of Jundayshapur, who translated the Corpus of Galen, the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates, and many other works. Other translators dealt with astronomy, physics, mathematics, and other subjects, translating them from Greek into Syriac and more frequently into Arabic. The Caliphs sent scholars to different places and even to Byzantium in search of manuscripts.

Some of these early translators also produced works of their own, usually summaries and interpretations of Greek originals. But soon a generation of original Muslim writers arose, mainly Iranian, including such figures as

the physician Rāzī (Rhases) (865–925), the physician and philosopher Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (980–1037), and, greatest of all, al-Bīrūnī (973–1048), physician, astronomer, mathematician, physicist, chemist, geographer, and historian, a profound and original scholar, who was one of the greatest intellectual figures in medieval Islam. In medicine, the Arabs did not touch the basic theory of the Greeks, but enriched it by practical observation and clinical experience. In mathematics, physics, and chemistry their contribution was far greater and more original. The so-called Arabic numerals, a system of positional numbering including the use of the zero, was originally imported from India. It was, however, in the Muslim Middle East that it was incorporated into the main body of mathematical theory and later transmitted to Europe. Algebra and geometry, and especially trigonometry, were largely Arabic developments.

In philosophy, the introduction of Greek ideas was of transcending importance. They first came into their own under al-Ma'mūn, when translations of Aristotle affected the whole philosophy and theological outlook of Islam and influenced the works of a series of original Muslim thinkers, including such notable figures as al-Kindī (d. *c.*850)—incidentally, the only pure Arab among them —al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 1198).

It is usually asserted that whereas the East alone had preserved the scientific and philosophic heritage of ancient Greece it ignored the literary and aesthetic heritage, which was known only in the West. This is not wholly true. The Arabs continued the tradition of Greco-Roman art and architecture, which again they transmuted into something rich and strange. The tendency of Byzantine art towards the abstract and the formal was increased in Islam, where the prohibition of the pictorial representation of the human form led ultimately to an art of stylized and geometrical design.

The Islamic arts also owe a great deal to Iranian and

Chinese influences and contributions. In the decorative and industrial arts we can see most clearly both the eclecticism and the originality of Islamic civilization. On the walls of the Umayyad castles of Syria, in the excavated utensils and other objects of Iraq and Egypt, we see how the Arabs first borrowed the works of art—and even the artists—of other civilizations, then imitated them separately, finally fused them into something new, original, and self-reproducing. The pottery finds of ninth-century Iraq, for example, show side by side the continued output of Byzantine and Sasanid craftsmanship, imported articles from China, local imitations of these, and new developments by experiment with inherited and imported models. One of the characteristic achievements of Islamic art is its famous and beautiful lustred pottery, that spread under Muslim rule from Iran to Spain. In the same way the craftsmen of the Islamic Empire developed the arts of metal, wood, stone, ivory, glass, and above all textiles and carpets, from borrowing, through imitation and experiment, to the creation of new, individual, and characteristic styles, recognizably and distinctively Islamic.

From the older civilizations came too the very idea of the book as a physical entity, a bound collection of pages with title, subject, beginning, and end, later with illustrations and ornamented bindings. A work of literature in Arabic was at first published only by oral transmission and recitation, and for a long time the spoken word was the only recognized form of publication. With the great increase in the range and size of literary creations written texts became necessary, and soon authors made drafts, lectured, dictated, employed amanuenses, and, eventually, wrote books. The process was greatly helped by the introduction of paper from China in the eighth century.

The acceptance of the Greek heritage by Islam gave rise to a struggle between the scientific rationalist tendency of the new learning on the one hand, and the atomistic and intuitive quality of Islamic religious thought on the other.

During the period of struggle Muslims of both schools created a rich and varied culture, much of which is of permanent importance in the history of mankind. The struggle ended in the victory of the more purely Islamic point of view. Islam, a religiously conditioned society, rejected values that challenged its fundamental postulates, while accepting their results, and even developing them by experiment and observation.

It is a fruitless if pleasant pastime to analyse the characters of nations—one that usually throws more light on the analyst than on the subject analysed. The nation is far too complex, too diverse an organism, to admit of the detailed statistical examination which alone could substantiate any serious scientific statement. Still greater is the difficulty in dealing with a civilization remote from us in time and space, known chiefly from its literary remains. Medieval Arabic literature comes almost entirely from the small privileged ruling minority whose privileges included the art of writing and the exercise of patronage. The rest, the common people, are for ever silent, except for such few echoes of their voices as can still be faintly heard. But with this reservation in mind it is still possible to isolate certain characteristics that are typical, if not of the Arabs, at least of the dominant civilization of medieval Islam as expressed in Arab art and letters.

The first feature that strikes us is the unique assimilative power of Arab culture, sometimes misrepresented as merely imitative. The Arab conquests united, for the first time in history, the vast territories stretching from the borders of India and China to the approaches of Greece, Italy, and France. For a while by their military and political power, for much longer by their language and faith, the Arabs united in a single society two formerly conflicting cultures—the millennial and diversified Mediterranean tradition of Greece, Rome, Israel, and the ancient Near East, and the rich civilization of Iran, with its own patterns of life and thought and its fruitful con-

tacts with the great cultures of the remoter East. Of the cohabitation of many peoples, faiths, and cultures within the confines of the Islamic society a new civilization was born, diverse in its origins and its creators, yet bearing on all its manifestations the characteristic imprint of Arab Islam.

From this diversity of Islamic society arises a second feature, particularly striking to the European observer—its comparative tolerance. Unlike his Western contemporaries, the medieval Muslim rarely felt the need to impose his faith by force on all who were subject to his rule. Like them, he knew well enough that in due time those who believed differently would burn in Hell. Unlike them, he saw no point in anticipating the divine judgement in this world. At most times he was content to be of the dominant faith in a society of many faiths. He imposed on the others certain social and legal disabilities in token of his primacy, and gave them an effective reminder if ever they seemed disposed to forget it. Otherwise he left them their religious, economic, and intellectual freedom, and the opportunity to make a notable contribution to his own civilization.

Like almost all other civilizations, medieval Islam was transcendently convinced of its own superiority and, in essentials, self-sufficiency. The Islamic historical view of prophecy, according to which the mission of Muḥammad was the last link in a chain of revelation of which Judaism and Christianity are the earlier links, enabled the Muslim to regard the Jew and the Christian as the possessors of early and imperfect versions of something which he alone possessed in its final perfection. Unlike Christianity, which spread for centuries as the religion of the humble and dispossessed before becoming the state faith of the Roman Empire, Islam became during the lifetime of its founder the guiding code of an expanding and victorious community. The immense conquests of Islam in the first formative generations imprinted on the minds of the Believers the conviction of divine favour as expressed by

the power and success in this world of the only community that lived by the God-given law. Muslims might learn much from wise infidels of other faiths, but the final touchstone of the validity of the lesson was the *Sharī'a*, hallowed by direct revelation and confirmed by the success of its followers.

The word 'atomistic' has often been used to describe a habit of mind and outlook, recognizable in some aspects of the civilization of the Arab, especially in the post-classical stages of his history. By this is meant the tendency to view life and the universe as a series of static, concrete, and disjunct entities, loosely linked in a sort of mechanical or even casual association by circumstances or the mind of an individual, but having no organic interrelation of their own. Though by no means universal, this tendency affected the life of the medieval Arab in many different ways. He conceived his society not as an organic whole, compounded of interrelated and interacting parts, but as an association of separate groups—religions, nations, classes—held together only by the ground beneath and the government above. His town was an agglomeration of quarters, guilds, clans, houses, only rarely with any corporate civic identity of its own. In contrast to the scientists and philosophers on the one hand and the mystics on the other, the ordinary orthodox theologian, scholar, or *littérateur* showed the same quality in his attitude to knowledge. The various disciplines were not different ways of reaching out towards the same heart, pooling their findings in an integrated whole, but separate and self-contained compartments, each holding a finite number of pieces of knowledge, the progressive accumulation of which constitutes learning. Classical Arabic literature, devoid of epic or drama, achieved its effects by a series of separate observations or characterizations, minute and vivid, but fragmentary, linked by the subjective associations of author and reader, rarely by an overriding plan. The Arabic poem was a set of separate and detachable lines, strung pearls that are perfect in them-

selves, sometimes even interchangeable. Arabic music is modal and rhythmic, developed by fantasy and variation, never by harmony. Arabic art—mainly applied and decorative—is distinguished by its minuteness and perfection of detail rather than by composition or perspective. The historians and biographers, like the fiction writers, presented their narrative as a series of loosely connected incidents. Even the individual was sometimes portrayed as a sum of attributes, often listed, as a recent writer remarked, like the description on a passport.

This last brings us to another point, the impersonality—even collectivism—that is a recurring feature of Arabic prose literature. The fiery individualism of the early Arabs survived in full vigour only among the Bedouin, giving way in the centres of civilization to a passive and even anonymous attitude. A book is often presented not as an individual and personal creation of the author, but as a link in the chain of transmission, the author concealing his own personality behind the prestige of authority and the ranks of previous transmitters. Even poetry, essentially an individual expression, is often public and social rather than personal and intimate. This collectivist, rather than humanist, approach appears in many facets of Islamic thought and institutions, perhaps most clearly in the Muslim ideal of the Perfect Man and the Perfect State as externally applied patterns to which all must in theory attempt to conform by imitation rather than by developing their own individual potentialities from within.

The atomistic outlook on life received its complete expression in certain systems of dogmatic theology, the general acceptance of which in one form or another marked the final victory of the reaction against the freer spirit of speculation and enquiry that had produced such magnificent achievements. This theology is determinist, occasionalist, and authoritarian, demanding the unquestioning acceptance of the Divine Law and Revelation *bilā kayf*—without asking how. It denies all secondary

causes and prefers to call even God the Author, rather than the First Cause. There are no necessary consequences and no natural laws or causes. Lack of food does not *necessarily* cause hunger, but merely habitually accompanies it. All proceeds directly from the will of God who has established certain habits of succession or concomitance. Every event in every atom of time is the result of a direct and individual act of creation.

This final and deliberate rejection of all causality, once generally accepted, marked the end of free speculation and research, both in philosophy and in the natural sciences, and frustrated the promising development of Arab historiography. It fitted well the needs of an Islamic society in which the freer social and economic life of a great commercial age was giving way to a quasi-feudal order that changed very little in the course of centuries. The old conflict of conceptions smouldered on, but this new version of Islam was not seriously challenged for a thousand years, until the impact of the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries threatened the whole traditional structure of Islamic society and the modes of thought that were its intellectual counterpart.

By an apparent rather than a real paradox, one of the indirect consequences of this impact was the rediscovery of the great classical Arabic heritage, much of it neglected, forgotten, or, worse still, misunderstood among the peoples who had created it, and the incorporation of the Arab achievement in the common heritage of mankind.

Arabic is one of the great languages of human civilization and history. Like Hebrew, it is a language of revelation, of sacred scripture revered by hundreds of millions of believers. Like Greek, it was a language of science and philosophy, providing the basic texts and even the conceptual vocabulary of a whole civilization. Like Latin, it was the language of law and government and the source of both ideas and vocabulary in these fields; like French, the standard of taste and elegance for that same civiliza-

tion. Like French and English, it has been the language of culture and commerce, of science and politics, of love and war. And even today, like English and Spanish, it is the shared heritage of many nations and the binding thread of a cultural and intellectual association which transcends national, regional, and ideological barriers.

9 *The Arabs in Eclipse*

> Now Turks and Tartars shake their swords at thee,
> Meaning to mangle all thy provinces.
>
> (Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part II)

By the eleventh century the world of Islam was showing many signs of weakness. These can be traced first in the political break-up, involving the loss of the authority of the central government in the remoter provinces, then in all but Iraq itself, finally in the degradation of the Caliphs to the status of mere puppets of their ministers and military commanders. In 945, the decline of the Caliphate went a step further. In that year the Buwayhids, an Iranian local dynasty, advanced into Iraq and seized the capital. For the next century, the Buwayhid princes were the real rulers of the capital, assuming the title 'king' to denote effective supreme authority. Though Shī'ites, they retained the 'Abbāsid Caliphs as figure-heads and as the legal source of the sovereignty of the central government over the provinces. It is perhaps significant that not long before the first moderate Shī'ite dynasty won power, the twelfth Imām pretender of the sect disappeared into eschatological concealment. The Buwayhids restored for a while the order and prosperity of the central provinces. But the signs of economic decay were increasing. The profitable trade with China dwindled and died away, partly for reasons arising from the internal conditions of that country itself. The trade with Russia and the north seems to have diminished and perhaps ceased during the eleventh century, while the growing shortage of precious metals further impeded the already dwindling commerce of the Islamic empire.

One of the primary causes of economic decline was undoubtedly the extravagance and lack of organization at

the centre. The lavish expenditure of the court and the inflated bureaucracy—at times maintained in duplicate in the trains of contenders for power—were not met by any great technological progress or greater development of resources. Soon the shortage of ready money forced rulers to pay senior officials and generals by farming out state revenues to them. Before long, provincial governors were appointed as tax-farmers for the areas they administered, with the duty of maintaining the local forces and officials and remitting an agreed sum to the central treasury. These governors soon became the virtually independent rulers of their provinces, rendering purely legal homage to the Caliph, whose function was reduced to giving formal authorization to their authority. The need to give the requisite military strength to governors and tax-farmers led to the practice of appointing army officers to the tax-farms and this in turn to the break-up of civil and beaucratic government and its replacement by military autocrats governing through their guards.

By the eleventh century, the weakness of the Empire was revealed by a series of almost simultaneous attacks by internal and external invaders on all sides. In Europe, the Christian forces advanced in both Spain and Sicily, wresting great territories from Muslim rule in a wave of reconquest which culminated in the arrival of the Crusaders in the Near East itself at the end of the century. In Africa, a new religious movement among the Berbers of southern Morocco and the Senegal-Niger area led to the creation of a new Berber Empire, formed by the conquest of the greater part of north-west Africa and of those parts of Spain which had remained under Muslim rule. Further east the two great Arab Bedouin tribes of Hilāl and Sulaym burst out of the areas of Upper Egypt where they had hitherto been living and swept across Libya and Tunisia, working havoc and devastation. By 1056–7 they were able to sack the ancient Tunisian capital of Qayrawān. It is to this invasion rather than to the first

Arab invasion of the seventh century that the devastation of North Africa is to be attributed. The fourteenth-century Arab historian Ibn Khaldūn, contemplating the ruin of his native land by these nomadic invasions, elaborated what was probably the first philosophy of history in terms of the cyclic interplay of the Desert and the Sown. Of these invasions he remarks: 'In North Africa and the Maghrib, which were invaded by the Banu Hilal and Banu Sulaim at the beginning of the fifth century of the Muslim era [the mid-eleventh century AD] and ravaged by them during three hundred and fifty years, ruin and devastation still prevail. Yet before that time all the country lying between the Sudan and the Mediterranean was the centre of a flourishing civilization, as witnessed by the remains of buildings and statues and the ruins of towns and villages' (translated by Charles Issawi).

From Central Asia came another wave of invaders, which, in its permanent effects, was the most important of all. The Arabs had first met the Turks in Central Asia and had for some time imported them to the Muslim Near East as slaves, especially of the type trained from early childhood for military and administrative purposes and later known as *Mamlūk*, to distinguish them from the humbler slaves used for domestic and other purposes. We find occasional Turkish slaves under the early 'Abbāsids and even under the Umayyads, but the first to use them extensively was al-Mu'taṣim (833–42), who collected a large force of Turkish military slaves even before his accession, and later arranged to receive a large number annually as part of the tribute from the eastern provinces. The old Khurāsānī guards of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs had become re-Arabized and identified with the local population. The Iranian aristocracy had now found its own political outlet in the independent dynasties of Iran, and so the Caliphs found it necessary to seek a new basis of support. They found it in the Turkish Mamlūks

under their Turkish commanders, expatriates with no local, tribal, family, national, or religious affiliations, therefore the more devoted to the central government. From the beginning the Turks were noted for their superior military qualities, which seem to have lain especially in their use of mounted bowmen and the nomadic speed of their cavalry. From this time on the Caliphs relied to an increasing extent on Turkish troops and commanders, to the detriment of the Arabs and the Iranians. The progressive militarization of the regime increased their strength.

By the eleventh century the Turks were entering the world of Islam, not only as individuals recruited by capture or purchase, but by the migration of whole tribes of free nomadic Turks still organized in their own traditional way. The consolidation of the Sung regime in China after an interregnum of disorder cut off the route of expansion into China and forced the Central Asian nomads to expand westwards. These Turkish invaders of Islam belong to the Oghuz tribes and are usually known as Seljuqs, after the name of the military family that led them.

The Seljuqs entered the territories of the Caliphate *c.*970, and soon accepted Islam. Within a short time they had conquered the greater part of Iran, and in 1055 Tughrul Bey entered Baghdad, defeating the Buwayhids and incorporating Iraq in the Seljuq realm. In a few years the Seljuqs had wrested Syria and Palestine from the local rulers and from the declining Fāṭimids and, succeeding where the Arabs had formerly failed, conquered from the Byzantines a great part of Anatolia, which became and remained a Muslim and Turkish land.

The Seljuqs were Sunnī Muslims, and their capture of the city of Baghdad was regarded by many as a liberation from the Shīʿite Buwayhids. The Caliphs remained as nominal rulers, but the real sovereigns of the Empire, a large part of which was now united under a single

authority for the first time since the early Caliphate, were the Seljuq Grand Sulṭāns, who defeated both the Byzantines and the Fāṭimids in the west.

The new rulers of the Empire relied largely in administration on Iranians and on the Iranian bureaucracy. One of the most notable figures of the age was the great Iranian minister Niẓām al-Mulk, who developed and systematized the trend towards feudalism that was already inherent in the tax-farming practices of the immediately preceding period. The misuses of the previous era became the rules of a new social and administrative order based on land instead of money. Land was granted to or taken by officers. In return they furnished a number of armed men. These grants carried rights not merely to a commission on the collection of taxes, but to the revenues themselves. Though occasionally they became hereditary by usurpation, in theory and in usual practice they were granted only for a term of years, and were always revocable. The historian 'Imād ad-Dīn, writing in the Seljuq period, points out that this was the only way to give the turbulent Turkish tribesmen and soldiery an interest in the prosperity of agriculture, and remarks: 'It had been the custom to collect money from the country and pay it to the troops and no one had previously had a fief. Niẓām al-Mulk saw that the money was not coming in from the country on account of its disturbed state and that the yield was uncertain because of its disorder. Therefore he divided it among the troops in fiefs, assigning to them both the yield and the revenue. Their interest in its development increased greatly and it returned rapidly to a flourishing state.' In these few simple words he described the long transition from a monetary to a feudal economy.

Social upheavals in such a period of change were inevitable. Those who had owned land under the old regime were now overshadowed or displaced by new landowners installed by the military conquerors. The coin

hoards found in Scandinavia give some evidence of a decline in trade, or at least in long-distance commerce. During the ninth and tenth centuries Arabic and Persian coins are very numerous and indeed predominate in these hoards. During the eleventh century they decrease greatly in numbers; thereafter they disappear.

The chief opposition movement in this period was again the Ismā'īlīs, but in a new and changed form. In 1078 Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, a Persian Ismā'īlī leader, visited the Fāṭimid capital of Cairo. There he came into conflict with the military autocrat who was the real ruler of the Fāṭimid realms in the name of the Imām. On the death of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir in 1094, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and his followers in Iran refused to recognize the successor nominated by the military ruler, and severed connections with the emasculated organization in Cairo. The eastern Ismā'īlīs now proclaimed their allegiance to Nizār, an elder son of al-Mustansir who had been passed over in the succession, and embarked on a new period of intense activity in the Seljuq dominions. The followers of the 'New Preaching', as the reformed Ismā'īlism of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ is known, are usually called Assassins, from the Arabic *ḥashīshī*. This name, a term of abuse applied to the Ismā'īlīs by their neighbours in Syria, was brought to Europe by the Crusaders. The modern, Western meaning of the word derives from the political tactics of the sect.

In 1090 Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ obtained control of the inaccessible mountain fastness of Alamūt in northern Persia. Here, and in similar bases established in Syria in the following century, the 'Old Man of the Mountain', as the Grand Masters of the sect were called, commanded bands of devoted and fanatical followers, waging a campaign of terror and 'assassination' against the kings and princes of Islam in the name of a mysterious hidden Imām. The emissaries of the Grand Masters carried out a series of daring murders of prominent Muslim statesmen and generals, including Nizām al-Mulk himself in 1092.

The Western chroniclers of the Crusades depict vividly the fear which the assassins inspired in Syria among Muslims and Crusaders alike, and made their name known and feared even in Europe. The terror of the assassins was not finally exorcised until the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, after which Ismā'īlism stagnated as a minor heresy.

The economic reorganization of the early Seljuq period had its counterpart in religious life. In Baghdad and elsewhere religious colleges, known as *Madrasa*, were founded, which became the pattern of the many others that followed in the Islamic world. The Niẓāmiyya of Baghdad, named after the great minister who founded it, and its sisters were centres of orthodoxy, more especially of the revived traditionalism now becoming general, and were intended to a large extent to counter the subversive teachings of the Ismā'īlīs and the intellectual radicalism of the preceding period. Al-Ghazālī (1059–1111), one of the greatest of Muslim religious thinkers, taught here for a while. His works include refutations both of philosophy and of heresy.

After the death of Niẓām al-Mulk the political fragmentation of the Near and Middle East was resumed. The Seljuq Empire broke up into a series of smaller successor states ruled by members or officers of the Seljuq House. It was during this period of weakness that in 1096 the Crusaders arrived in the Near East.

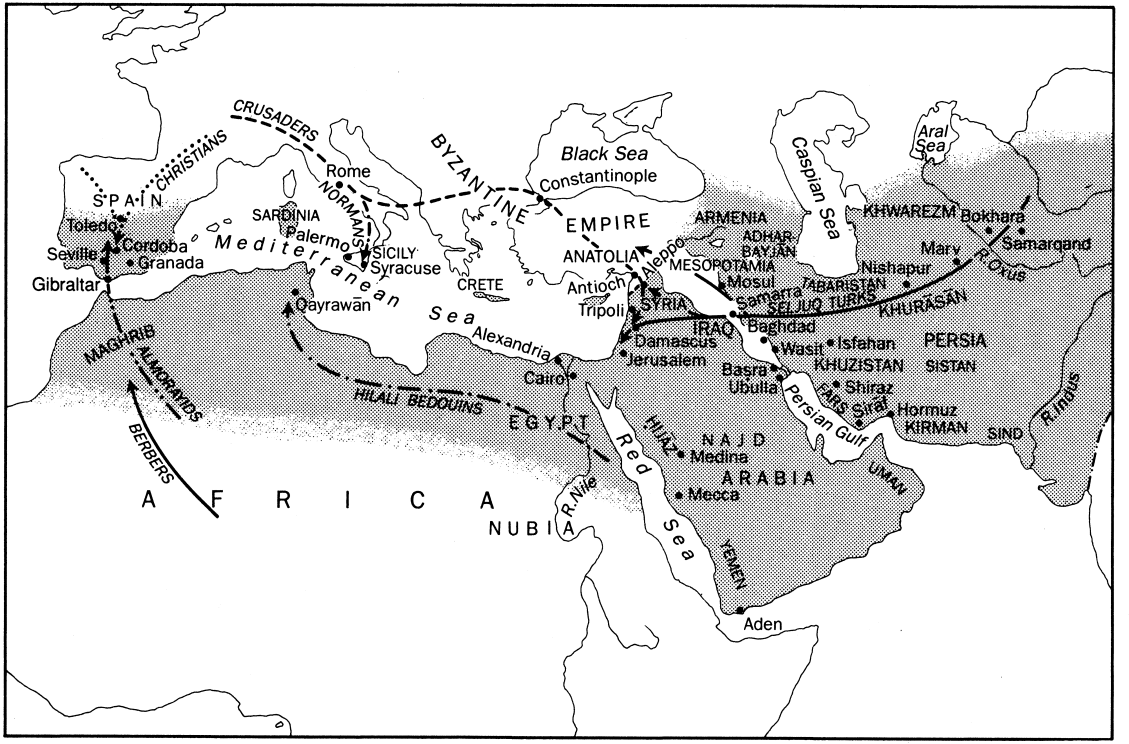
At the present time, the Crusades are often depicted as an early experiment in expansionist imperialism—a prefigurement of the modern European empires. To the people of the time, both Muslim and Christian, they were no such thing. When the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, barely four hundred years had passed since that city, along with the rest of the Levant and North Africa, had been wrested by the armies of Islam from their Christian rulers, and their Christian populations forcibly incorporated in a new Muslim empire. The Crusade was a

delayed response to the *jihād*, the holy war for Islam, and its purpose was to recover by war what had been lost by war—to free the holy places of Christendom and open them once again, without impediment, to Christian pilgrimage.

But in the Crusade as in the *jihād*, material and practical considerations were not lacking, and there were many, among the Crusaders and those who accompanied them, whose purposes were more worldly than religious. Besides the seekers of the Holy Sepulchre, there were traders from the Italian city republics following the trade they had established with Byzantium and the Fāṭimids to the sources of supply, warlike and ambitious barons, younger sons in search of principalities, and sinners in search of profitable penance, all of whom played a part in creating and maintaining the Crusader principalities.

For the first thirty years, the Muslim world showed a remarkable indifference to the arrival and conquests of the Crusaders, and even to the loss of Jerusalem. Muslim disunity made things easy for the invaders, who advanced rapidly down the coast of Syria into Palestine, establishing a chain of Latin feudal principalities, based on Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli, and Jerusalem. This first period was one of colonization and assimilation. Conquerors and pilgrims settled in Syria, adopting local dress and customs, intermarrying with the local Christians. Fulcher of Chartres, a chronicler of the First Crusade, remarks:

> Now we who were westerners have become easterners. He who was Italian or French has in this land become a Galilean or a Palestinian. He who was a citizen of Rheims or Chartres is now a Tyrian or an Antiochene. We have already forgotten our birthplaces. Most of us do not know them or even hear of them. One already owns home and household as if by paternal and hereditary right, another has taken as wife not a compatriot, but a Syrian, Armenian, or even a baptised Saracen woman.... He who was an alien has become a native, he who was immigrant is now a resident. Every day our relations and friends follow us,



The great invasions of the eleventh century

willingly abandoning whatever they possessed in the West. For those who were poor there, God has made rich here. Those who had a few pence there, have numberless gold pieces here; he who had not a village there possesses, with God as giver, a whole town here. Why then return to the West, when the East suits us so well?

With which we may compare the remark of the twelfth-century Syrian Usāma ibn Munqidh: 'There are some Franks who have settled in our country and lived among the Muslims: they are of a better sort than those who have come recently....'

But even in this first period of success the Crusaders were limited in the main to the coastal plains and slopes, always in close touch with the Mediterranean and Western world. In the interior, looking eastwards to the desert and Iraq, the reaction was preparing. In 1127 Zangī, a Seljuq officer, seized the city of Mosul for himself, and in the following years gradually built up an ever stronger Muslim state in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. His progress was at first impeded by the rivalry of other Muslim states and notably of Damascus, the ruler of which did not scruple to ally himself with the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem against the common enemy. In 1147, the Crusaders unwisely broke the alliance, and Nūr al-Dīn, the son and successor of Zangī, was able to take Damascus in 1154, creating a single Muslim state in Syria and confronting the Crusaders for the first time with a really formidable adversary.

The issue before the two sides now was the control of Egypt, where the Fāṭimid Caliphate, in the last stages of decrepitude, was tottering towards its final collapse. The result could not long remain in doubt. A Kurdish officer called Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, better known in the West as Saladin, went to Egypt, where he served as Wazīr to the Fāṭimids while representing the interests of Nūr al-Dīn. In 1171 Saladin declared the Fāṭimid Caliphate at an end. He restored the mention of the name of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs

of Baghdad in the bidding prayer and on the coinage and established himself as effective ruler of Egypt, professing an uneasy and uncertain allegiance to Nūr al-Dīn. After the latter's death in 1174, leaving a minor as heir, Saladin absorbed his Syrian domains, thus creating a united Syro-Egyptian Muslim Empire. In 1187 he felt strong enough to attack the Crusaders. By his death in 1193 he had recaptured Jerusalem and expelled them from all but a narrow coastal strip which they held from the towns of Acre, Tyre, Tripoli, and Antioch.

The united Syro-Egyptian state created by Saladin did not last long. Under his successors, the Ayyūbids, Syria broke up once again into a number of small states, but Egypt remained a strong united monarchy, the chief Muslim power in the Near East and the main bulwark of Islam against the West, defeating the repeated attempts of the later Crusades to recapture the Holy Land.

An important and enduring consequence of the war against the Crusaders was the devastation and depopulation of the Palestine coast. The Christian powers were at most times able to maintain supremacy at sea. As long as they could keep even a foothold on the Palestine coast, which they could resupply and reinforce from Europe, there was always the danger that they might mount a new Crusade and strike inland towards Jerusalem. To forestall any such attempt, successive Muslim rulers applied a scorched earth policy to the Palestinian coastlands, and thus effectively prevented any renewal of the great struggle of the Middle Ages. The effects of this policy could still be seen even in late Ottoman times.

The chief permanent effect of the Crusades in the region as a whole was in trade. Colonies of Western merchants had flourished in the Levant ports under crusading rule. They survived under the Muslim reconquest and developed a considerable trade both of export and import. In 1174, Saladin, writing to the Caliph in Baghdad, justified his encouragement of this trade. The Venetians, the

Genoese, and the Pisans, he said, were bringing choice products of the West, especially arms and war material. This constituted an advantage for the Muslims and an injury for the Christians. The thunder of the church in Europe against this trade and the decrees of excommunication against those who engaged in it were ineffective.

Meanwhile a new and more dangerous threat to Islam was arising in the East. Far away in eastern Asia Jenghiz Khān had, after a bitter internal war, united the nomadic tribes of Mongolia and launched them on a career of conquest which in extent must rank as one of the most remarkable in human history. By 1220 the Mongols had conquered all Transoxania. In 1221 Jenghiz crossed the Oxus river and entered Iran. His death in 1227 was followed by a pause, but in the middle of the century a new move westward was planned and executed. The Mongol Prince Hülekü crossed the Oxus river with instructions from the Great Khān of Mongolia to conquer all the lands of Islam as far as Egypt. His armies swept through Iran, overcoming all resistance and crushing even the Ismā'īlīs, who had withstood all previous attacks. In 1258, Hülekü captured Baghdad, killed the Caliph, and abolished the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. The destruction of this great historic institution, even in decay still the legal centre of Islam and the token of its unity, was the end of an era in Islamic history. Yet in some ways the shock was perhaps not as great as is sometimes suggested. The Caliphs had long since lost almost all their real power, and military Sulṭāns, both in the capital and in the provinces, had begun to arrogate to themselves not only the powers, but even some of the prerogatives, of the Caliphs. The Mongols did little more than lay the ghost of an institution that was already dead.

Unlike the Seljuqs, the Mongol invaders at first still followed their old religion and showed no interest in Islam, its traditions, and its institutions. The destruction

which they wrought in the lands they conquered has been much exaggerated. Most of it was purely strategic, not wilful. It ceased after the campaigns of conquest of which it was a part, and in Iran under Mongol rule a new period of economic and cultural development began. But in Iraq the immediate effects of the Mongol conquests were the breakdown of civil government and the collapse of the irrigation works on which the country depended, aggravated by the inroads of Bedouin tribes once the control of the sedentary power was relaxed.

Still more fatal for the prosperity of Iraq was its inclusion, as an outlying province, in an eastern empire the centre of which lay in Iran. Henceforth the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates, cut off from the Mediterranean provinces in the west by a frontier of sand and steel, outflanked in the east by the rise of the Iranian centre to which it was subordinated, could no longer serve as channel for the East–West trade, which moved north and east to Turkey and Iran, westward to Egypt and the Red Sea, leaving Iraq and the fallen city of the Caliphs to centuries of poverty and neglect.

Despite some raids into Syria, the direct effects of the Mongol conquest on the Arab world were confined to Iraq, which was now attached to the Mongol State centred on Iran. Syria and Egypt were saved from the Mongols by the new regime that had grown out of the Ayyūbid monarchy. Though the Ayyūbids themselves were Kurds in origin, their regime was of Turkish Seljuq type. The ruling element was a military autocracy of Turkish praetorians, often able to control the Ayyūbid Sulṭān himself.

In the middle of the thirteenth century the power of the Turkish Mamlūks in Cairo was supreme and a new regime emerged, the Mamlūk Sulṭānate, which ruled Egypt and Syria until 1517. In 1260, after a period of confusion following the death of the last Ayyūbid, a Qipchaq Turk called Baybars became Sulṭān. His career in many ways

forms an interesting parallel with that of Saladin. He united Muslim Syria and Egypt into a single state, this time more permanently. He defeated the external enemies of that state, repulsing Mongol invaders from the east and crushing all but the last remnants of the Crusaders in Syria. He also destroyed the last strongholds of the Assassins in Syria. An idea of genius was to invite a member of the 'Abbāsid family to establish himself in Cairo with the title of Caliph. The line of 'Abbāsid Caliphs in Cairo were mere court functionaries of the Mamlūk Sulṭāns. The Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) remarks: 'The Turkish Mamlūks installed as Caliph a man to whom they gave the name and titles of Caliph. He had no authority and no right to express his opinion. He passed his time with the commanders, the great officers, the officials and the judges, visiting them to thank them for the dinners and parties to which they had invited him.' The Cairo Caliphs represent the final stage in the decay of the Caliphate.

The Mamlūk system of Baybars and his successors was of feudal type and was an adaptation of the Seljuq order brought into Syria and Egypt by the Ayyūbids. An officer or amīr received a grant of land in lieu of pay and on condition of maintaining a certain number of Mamlūk soldiers, varying between five and a hundred according to his rank. He normally devoted two-thirds of his revenues to their upkeep. The grants were not hereditary though there were many attempts to make them so. The system was based on the permanent eviction of the Arabized descendants of the Mamlūk officers by newly imported Mamlūks, thus preventing, no doubt deliberately, the formation of a hereditary landed aristocracy. A Mamlūk officer received his grant for life or less. He did not normally reside on his estates, but in Cairo or in the chief town of the district where his fief lay. He was interested in revenue rather than possession. The system therefore developed no *châteaux* or manors or strong local author-

ities of the Western type. There was no subinfeudation, and even the division of the land in Egypt into fiefs was not permanent, being subject to a periodic territorial refount.

The Mamlūks themselves were bought slaves, trained and educated in Egypt. Constituting a military and governing élite, they were very different from the eunuchs and domestic slaves who served in palaces and households. At first they were mainly Qipchaq Turks from the northern shores of the Black Sea; later they included Mongol deserters and men of other races, chiefly Circassians, with occasional Greeks, Kurds, and even some West Europeans. But Turkish or Circassian remained the language of the dominant class, many of whom, including some Sulṭāns, could hardly speak Arabic. The Mamlūk state as developed by Baybars and his successors was based on a highly elaborate dual administration, civil and military, both sides controlled by Mamlūk officers with civilian staffs. Until 1383 the Mamlūk Sulṭāns followed one another in more or less hereditary succession. Thereafter the Sulṭānate was held by the strongest commander. On the death of a Sulṭān, his son succeeded as formal head during an interregnum while the real succession was decided.

In the first period the Mamlūks were threatened by Christian and Mongol enemies, and their supreme achievement is their defence of the Islamic civilization of the Near East against these enemies. During the fifteenth century a new power arose—the Ottoman Empire, rising like a phoenix from the ruins of the Seljuq Sulṭānate of Anatolia. Relations between the two states were at first friendly, but conflicts arose when the Ottomans, safely established in Europe, turned their attention to Asia.

The trade with Europe, and particularly the trade between Europe and the further East via the Near East, was of vital importance to Egypt, both for the trade itself and for the customs revenues derived from it. During

periods of strength Mamlūk governments protected and encouraged this trade, which brought Egypt great prosperity and a new flowering of arts and letters. But the Mongol threat, warded off by Baybars, was not yet averted. In 1400–1 the Turco-Mongol forces of Tīmūr (Tamerlane) ravaged Syria and sacked Damascus. Plague, locusts, and the depredations of the unleashed Bedouin completed the work of the departed Mongols, and the Mamlūk Sulṭānate suffered a blow to its economic and military strength from which it never fully recovered.

The crises of the fifteenth century brought new fiscal policies aimed at extracting the maximum profit from the transit trade. After first encouraging Indian and even Chinese merchants to bring their wares to ports under Egyptian control, Sulṭān Barsbay (1422–38) had the idea that it might be even better to seize the trade than to tax it. He began by making sugar a royal monopoly, and followed it with pepper and other commodities. These policies, maintained by his successors, led to rising prices, foreign reprisals, and ultimately to general economic collapse, in which the government could survive only by currency depreciation and by drastic and violent taxation.

The historians of the period paint a vivid picture of the increasing corruption and inefficiency of the regime in its last days. One historian, speaking of the wazīrs, remarks: 'They were cruel rascals, inventors of a thousand injustices, arrogant and presumptuous. They were famous neither for their knowledge nor for their religious spirit. They were the scourges of their age, always with a causeless insult ready in their mouths. Their existence, passed exclusively in oppressing the people of their time, was a disgrace to humanity.' When Sulṭān Barsbay convened the four chief Qāḍīs of Cairo and asked them to authorize new taxes over and above those laid down by the Holy Law, one of them was reputed to have replied: 'How can we authorize the taking of money from the Muslims when a wife of the Sulṭān wore on the day of her son's cir-

cumcision a dress worth 30,000 dinars; and that was only one dress and only one of his women.'

In 1498 came the crowning catastrophe. On 17 May of that year the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama landed in India, having come by sea round the Cape of Good Hope. In August 1499 he returned to Lisbon with a cargo of spices. He had opened a new route from Europe to the further East, cheaper and safer than the old one. Other expeditions followed rapidly. The Portuguese, followed after a while by the Dutch, the French, and the English, developed direct trade between south and south-east Asia and western Europe by the sea route round southern Africa. For a while the trade through the Middle East survived this competition; it remained important, though somewhat reduced, throughout the sixteenth century. The deathblow to the Middle Eastern transit trade came when the trading powers of western Europe established themselves not only as merchants but as rulers in south Asia, and were thus able to control the trade from both ends.

From the first, the Mamlūks, recognizing the immediate consequences of these events, and urged to action by their Venetian fellow-sufferers from this diversion, tried by diplomacy and then by war to avert the Portuguese menace. Their efforts were fruitless. The Portuguese fleets, built to face the Atlantic gales, were superior in structure, armament, and navigational skill to those of the Muslims. Soon they were able to defeat the Egyptian squadrons, systematically destroy Arab merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean, and penetrate even to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. This naval disparity was only part of the increasing technological gap between the Islamic Middle East and the rising powers of the West. In the sixteenth century, after the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands and the growth of European commercial enterprise in the eastern Mediterranean, the Levant trade revived to some extent, but remained of secondary importance. The Arab Near East had been outflanked. Not until the

nineteenth century did the main routes of world trade return to it.

During the long period of Arab eclipse three significant changes emerge. The first of these is the transformation of the Islamic Near East from a commercial, monetary economy to one which, despite an extensive and important foreign and transit trade, was internally a quasi-feudal economy, based on subsistence agriculture. The second is the end of the political independence of the sedentary Arabs and Arabic-speaking people and their replacement by the Turks. In the vast but thinly peopled deserts the Arab tribes retained the independence they had recovered during the decay of the ʿAbbāsids, defying repeated attempts to impose control over them and often eroding the frontiers of the cultivated land in their long struggle with authority. In a few mountain outposts, too, Arabic-speaking peoples remained under Arab rule. But everywhere else, in the cities and in the cultivated valleys and plains of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, for a thousand years people of Arabic speech were no longer to rule themselves. So deep-rooted was the feeling that only the Turks were equipped by nature to govern that in the fourteenth century we find a Mamlūk secretary of Syrian birth addressing the Arabs in Turkish through an interpreter rather than in his mother-tongue, for fear lest he should lose face by speaking the despised language of the subject people. As late as the beginning of the nineteenth century Bonaparte, when he invaded Egypt, tried unsuccessfully to appoint Arabic-speaking Egyptians to positions of authority and was forced to resort to Turks who alone could command obedience.

The third change is the shifting of the centre of gravity of the Arabic-speaking world from Iraq to Egypt. The disorganization and weakness of Iraq and its remoteness from the Mediterranean, across which both the traders and the enemies of the later period were to come, ruled that country out as a possible base. The alternative

was Egypt, the other trade-route, and the irrigated valley of a single river, which by its very nature demanded a single centralized government—the only powerful centralized state in the Arab East.

With the power of the Arabs went the glory. The Persian and Turkish-speaking rulers who inherited the thrones of the Arabs patronized poets who could praise them in their own languages, according to their own tastes and traditions. First the Persians then the Turks developed independent Muslim culture languages of their own, and, with the political leadership, assumed the cultural leadership of Islam. Under Seljuq and Mongol rule the Islamic arts entered new periods of efflorescence. Both Persian and Turkish literatures, while strongly coloured by the Arab-Islamic tradition, branched out on independent and significant lines. After Seljuq times the literary use of Arabic was confined to the Arabic-speaking countries, except for a limited output of theological, legal, and scientific works. The movement of the centre of gravity of the Arab world westwards gave greater importance to Syria, and still more to Egypt, which now became the main centres of Arabic culture.

Changes in government and society were mirrored in intellectual life. The passive dependence on authority in public life found its parallel in literature, which suffered a loss of vitality and independence. The most striking feature of the time is the increasing stress on form for artists, on memory for scholars. But there were still some great figures—al-Ghazālī (1059–1111), one of the greatest thinkers of Islam, who attempted to combine the new scholasticism with the intuitive and mystical religion of the Sūfīs; al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122), still regarded by the Arabic-speaking peoples as the supreme exponent of literary form and elegance; Yāqūt (1179–1229), biographer, geographer, and scholar; and in post-Mongol times a series of historians or rather historical compilers among whom the Tunisian Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406)

stands alone as the greatest historical genius of Islam, and the first to produce a philosophic and sociological conception of history.

Characteristically, the rulers of the Mamlūk military society, unlike their vigorous Ottoman neighbours, despised and rejected the new weapon, firearms, which they adopted only to a very limited extent and relegated to the use of a small corps of despised black menial slaves. Not surprisingly, their armies crumbled before the Ottoman gunners and musketeers. In 1517 the Ottomans won their final victory over the Mamlūks, and for four hundred years Syria and Egypt formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Soon the Barbary States as far as the frontiers of Morocco accepted Ottoman suzerainty, and with the Ottoman conquest of Iraq from Iran in 1534, almost the whole Arabic-speaking world was under Ottoman rule.

East of Morocco, there were only a few places where peoples of Arabic speech retained any real independence. In Arabia, the south-western province of Yemen became an Ottoman Pashalik in 1537, but became effectively independent in 1635. The Arab rulers of Mecca and the Ḥijāz, the Sharīfs, recognized Ottoman suzerainty and were dependent on Cairo rather than on Constantinople. For the rest the Bedouin of the peninsula maintained their independence in the inhospitable deserts. In the mid-eighteenth century they produced a potent spiritual movement, in some ways resembling the rise of Islam itself. A jurist of Najd called Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–92) founded a new sect, based on a rigid, anti-mystical puritanism. In the name of the pure, pristine Islam of the first century, he denounced all subsequent accretions of belief and ritual as superstitious 'innovation', alien to true Islam. He forbade the worship of holy men and holy places, even the exaggerated veneration of Muḥammad. He applied the same puritan austerity to religious and personal life. The conversion to the Wahhābī doctrine of the Najdī amīr Muḥammad ibn Suʿūd gave

the sect a military and political focus. Soon Wahhābism spread by conquest over most of central Arabia, wresting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina from the Sharīfs who ruled them in the Ottoman name and threatening even the Ottoman provinces of Syria and Iraq. The reaction came in 1818, when an invading Turco-Egyptian army sent by Muḥammad ʿAlī, the Pasha of Egypt, broke the power of the Wahhābī empire and confined Wahhābism to its native Najd. There the sect survived with somewhat diminished vigour, to reappear as a political factor in the mid-nineteenth and again in the twentieth century.

In the Lebanon a tradition of independence in the mountain areas had existed from early times, when Christian invaders from Anatolia turned the upper reaches of the mountain into a Christian island among the surrounding sea of Islam. Semi-independent local dynasties, some Christian, some Muslim, some Druze, continued to rule parts of the mountain under Ottoman suzerainty, with a degree of independence that varied with the efficacy of Ottoman government. Finally, in the Far West, the mixed Arab–Berber Empire of Morocco retained its independence and developed along lines peculiarly its own.

For the rest, the subjection of the Arabs to Turkish rule, begun under the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim, confirmed by the Seljuqs and Mamlūks, was maintained by the Ottomans. Such movements of independence as there were in the Arab provinces were organized more often than not by rebellious Turkish Pashas rather than by any local leaders.

In Egypt the Ottomans maintained the Mamlūk order, superimposing an Ottoman Pasha and garrison upon it. But the system lost its military character and came to be based on revenue rather than on military service. Most of the fiefs became *iltizām*—usufructuary assignments of state lands to officials and others with limited rights of succession and disposal. The assignee collected annual payments from non-owning peasants. Both the assignee (*multazim*) and the peasant paid taxes. The Multazim's

heirs could succeed on payment of a due. With the weakening of central control the local Beys seized power and the Pasha became a passive observer of their rivalries. Sometimes they were able to win full control.

The Ottoman conquest brought a greater degree of change to Syria. In the early seventeenth century the country was divided into the three Ottoman Pashaliks of Damascus, Aleppo, and Tripoli, to which a fourth, Sayda, was added in 1660. Each was under a Pasha who bought his post and enjoyed a large measure of local freedom of action, varying according to circumstances and personality. The Pashaliks themselves were organized on Ottoman lines. Most of the land was divided among fief-holders, mainly, but not exclusively, Turks. The fiefs were semi-hereditary and carried the obligation of paying annual dues and rendering military service with retainers. The rights of the fief-holder were the collection of taxes and the exercise of some seigneurial powers over the peasantry. Many iltizāms of crown lands were held by court dignitaries in Constantinople. The Pashas had great powers, increasing with the distance from the capital and the weakness of the government.

At first the Ottoman conquest was an advantage, bringing relative security and prosperity after the heady nightmare of late Mamlūk rule. The records in the Ottoman archives show a marked increase in both population and prosperity. But by the eighteenth century the enfeeblement of the Ottoman central power brought widespread misrule and corruption, anarchy, and stagnation. During this long period of alien rule, this mutually disadvantageous association of two cultures, each perforce entangled in the other's decline, the spirit of revolt is still discernible. The Ismā'īlī movement had dwindled into insignificance after the Mongol invasions, but other movements replaced it. Even under the Mamlūks there were sporadic revolts of the Arabic-speaking Egyptian population. Occasional movements for independence under the Ottomans were

usually due to ambitious individuals, often themselves Turkish governors. The really popular opposition, in accordance with Islamic tradition, was religiously expressed, this time in Sūfism. This was at first a purely individual mystical experience, then a social movement with an extensive following among the lower orders, organized in Dervish brotherhoods, often associated with craft guilds. The Sūfīs were not formally anti-Sunnī as the Ismā'īlīs had been, and were politically quietist. Some of them indeed were supportive of the government and enjoyed close links with either its civilian or its military branches. In religion they opposed a personal mystic faith to the dominant orthodox transcendentalism which at times they succeeded in influencing. But the Sūfī revolt by infiltration failed just as the head-on Ismā'īlī assault had failed in its time. The resistance to change was too strong. Real change was to come from a new factor from outside, more powerful and infinitely more aggressive than the Hellenistic impulses that had quickened the intellectual ferment of medieval Islam.

10 *The Impact of the West*

> Icci, beatis nunc Arabum invides
> gazis, et acrem militiam paras
> non ante devictis Sabaeae
> regibus, horribilique Medo
> nectis catenas?
>
> (Horace: *Odes* I. 29)

THE Arabs had been in contact with western Europe since the time of the first conquests. In Spain, Portugal, and Sicily they had ruled western European populations and had maintained military, diplomatic, and commercial relations with other western European states. They had received west European students in their centres of learning. The Crusaders had brought a piece of western Europe to the very heart of the Arab East. But these contacts, fruitful for the West which had learnt much from the Arabs, had little effect on the latter. For them the relations were and remained external and superficial and had but little influence on Arab life and culture. The geographical and historical literature of the medieval Arabs reflects their complete lack of interest in western Europe, which they regarded as an outer darkness of barbarism from which the sunlit world of Islam had little to fear and less to learn. 'The peoples of the north', says the tenth-century geographer al-Mas'ūdī, 'are those for whom the sun is distant from the Zenith . . . cold and damp prevail in those regions, and snow and ice follow one another in endless succession. The warm humour is lacking among them; their bodies are large, their natures gross, their manners harsh, their understanding dull and their tongues heavy . . . their religious beliefs lack solidity . . . those of them who are farthest to the north are the most subject to stupidity, grossness and brutishness.' An eleventh-century

Qāḍī of Toledo, in a work on the nations who have cultivated knowledge, enumerates the Indians, Persians, Chaldees, Greeks, Romans (including Byzantines and eastern Christians), Egyptians, Arabs, and Jews. Among the rest, he singles out the Chinese and the Turks as 'noble peoples' who have distinguished themselves in other fields, and contemptuously dismisses the remainder as the northern and southern barbarians, remarking of the former: 'Their bellies are big, their colour pale, their hair long and lank. They lack keenness of understanding and clarity of intelligence, and are overcome by ignorance and foolishness, blindness and stupidity.' As late as the fourteenth century no less a man than Ibn Khaldūn could still remark dubiously: 'We have heard of late that in the lands of the Franks, that is, the country of Rome and its dependencies on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, the philosophic sciences flourish... and their students are plentiful. But God knows best what goes on in those parts.' This attitude was at first justified, but with the progress of western Europe it became dangerously out of date.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century a new relationship between Islam and the West is discernible. The West made great technological advances in the crafts of war and peace. It renewed itself through the Renaissance and the Reformation, and enriched itself through the discovery and exploitation of the New World. The break-up of the feudal order freed trade and unleashed enterprise, for which the consolidation of centralized nation states provided solid and reliable political instruments. At both ends of Europe, in the Iberian peninsula and in Russia, Christian peoples were able to complete the long struggle of the Reconquest, and to end the centuries of Muslim rule. But the struggle did not end with the defeat of the Moors in Spain and of the Tatars in Muscovy. At both ends, the triumphant Europeans pursued their former masters into their homelands—the

Spaniards and Portuguese into and around Africa, the Russians into Asia—and thus inaugurated the great process of the expansion of Europe which by the twentieth century had forced the whole world into its economic, political, and cultural orbit.

European expansion at the beginning of the sixteenth century was of a new type. It began with French negotiations with the Ottomans for an alliance against a common enemy. Skilful diplomacy transformed that alliance into a trade pact, giving certain rights and privileges to French traders in the Ottoman territories. These rights were enshrined in the so-called Capitulations of 1535, guaranteeing to French traders the safety of their persons and property, freedom of worship, etc. This was in effect a measure of extra-territoriality. It was at first not a concession wrung from a weak non-Western power, but the granting, by a gesture almost of condescension, of the rights of Dhimmīs in Muslim society, extended by the inner logic of the Muslim code to foreign Christians and—since their presence was temporary—without the disabilities to which Dhimmīs were subject.

French penetration developed rapidly. French traders took advantage of the opportunities they had won to establish trading posts and consular missions in both Syria and Egypt. Other Capitulations followed later, to the English (1580), the Dutch (1612), and other powers. During the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries European trade grew steadily and numerous colonies of traders settled in the ports and other towns of Syria and Egypt under the protection of their consuls.

Until the nineteenth century, the military, as distinct from the commercial, advance of Europe in the Near and Middle Eastern Muslim world was limited to its northern borders, where Austria and Russia advanced steadily at the Ottoman expense into the Balkans and along the northern and eastern shores of the Black Sea. The Arab lands were affected only commercially, mainly by

English, French, and Italian traders, who came to buy and sell.

A great change came with the occupation of Egypt in 1798 by General Bonaparte. This expedition, the first armed inroad of Europe on the Arab Near East since the Crusades, began a new era. The Ottoman Mamlūk order crumbled at once and the French were able to occupy the country without serious difficulty. They were ejected from Egypt not by the Egyptians, nor yet by the Ottomans, but by their European rivals, the British. French rule in Egypt was of brief duration but profound significance. It began the period of direct Western intervention in the Arab world, with great economic and social consequences. By the easy victory which they won the French shattered the illusion of the unchallengeable superiority of the Islamic world to the infidel West, thus posing a profound problem of readjustment to a new relationship.

The period of anarchy that followed the French withdrawal ended with the emergence of Muḥammad ʿAlī, an Ottoman soldier of Balkan origin, who succeeded in making himself virtually independent ruler of Egypt and for a short time of Arabia and Syria also, until confined to Egypt once more by the European Powers.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's efforts at independence and expansion were frustrated by the Powers. He succeeded only in establishing a hereditary governorship of an autonomous Ottoman province of Egypt, but he began a great programme of reforms. They were military in origin, deriving from the desire to have a new European-type army. To accomplish this, he initiated a series of economic and educational measures. Both achieved some success. His project of industrialization failed, but he began to break up the quasi-feudal order in Egypt and Syria, and rationalized and extended agriculture. In education he opened new schools with Western teachers, sponsored translations of Western books which were printed on a press set up for the purpose in Cairo, and sent student missions

to Europe, the first of many. The extension of cotton cultivation in Egypt under Muḥammad ʿAlī and his successors led to closer economic links with western Europe and especially with England, the main market for Egyptian cotton. The spread of European languages and ideas through education at home and by missions abroad subjected the traditional outlook to the impact of new ideas.

Muḥammad ʿAlī himself was a Turkish-speaking Ottoman and no Arab; he had no thought of an Arab Empire based on a people with whom, like most Turks of his time, he did not identify himself. But he operated in Arab countries, to which he gave a measure of political independence, and raised Egyptian and Syrian armies—and his son (or step-son) Ibrāhīm spoke Arabic and thought of an Arab Empire.

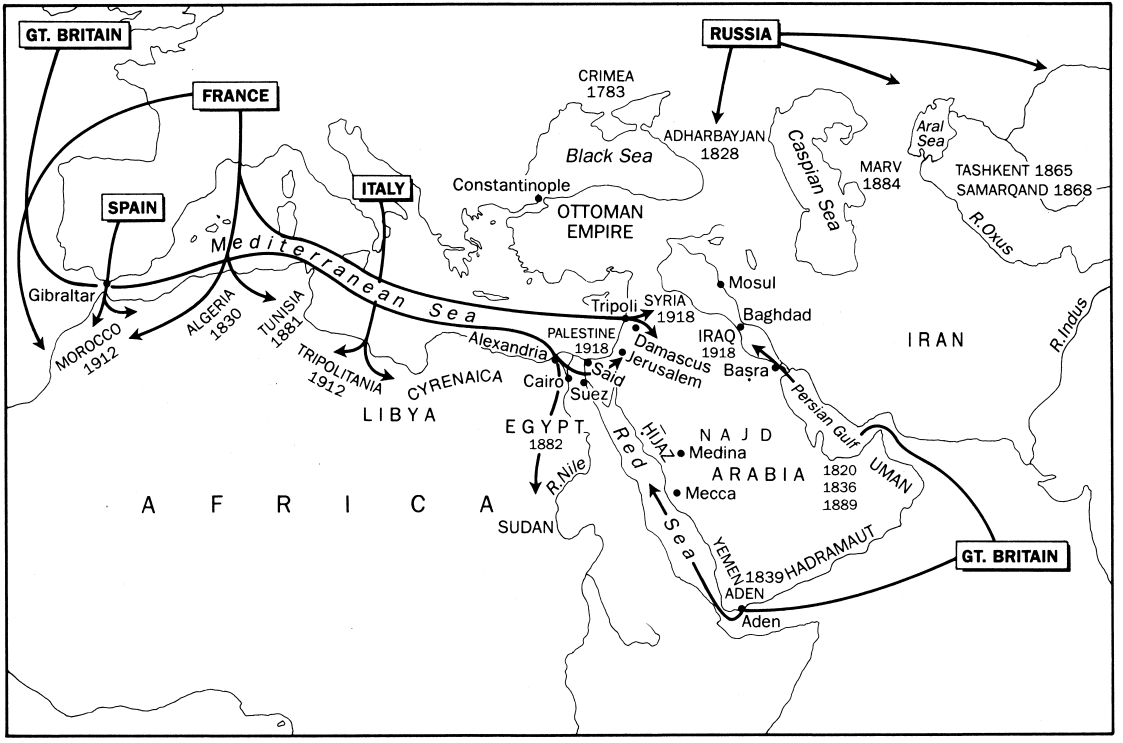
Syria returned to the Ottoman Empire after the withdrawal of Muḥammad ʿAlī's forces in 1840. But the break-up of the old order and its replacement by a centralized administration continued under Ottoman auspices. The Ottoman reforms brought an increased measure of centralization. The provinces now were no longer grants held by military Pashas, but administrative districts governed by salaried officials of the central government. The landowners, though deprived of their privileges and powers in law, retained their social and economic pre-eminence and remained the dominant class in economic and administrative life.

Meanwhile, European economic activity in the Middle East had entered upon a new phase. Europeans were now no longer mainly concerned with trade, but with the development and control, either directly by concessions or indirectly by loans to local governments, of resources and services, and most especially of communications. Since the establishment of the European Empires in Asia, the western approach to India, whether for trade or war, had been by the open sea, round the Cape of Good Hope,

rather than through the Middle East. But throughout this period there had been some who had thought of a return to the ancient overland highways, and had even attempted, without success, to accomplish it. Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt drew attention sharply to the possibility. The advent of the steamship, independent of the periodic winds of the eastern seas, made it a reality.

European vessels, mainly sailing from India, had for centuries occasionally penetrated the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, bringing the produce of the Indies to the marts of Baṣra, Jedda, and sometimes even Suez. From the beginning of the nineteenth century British companies in India ran regular shipping services to both Baṣra and Suez. To secure them, British Indian naval units charted the Arabian seas, put down Arabian piracy by force of arms, and at the same time acquired coaling-stations and strategic watch-points. A series of expeditions from Bombay against the pirates of the eastern and south-eastern coasts of Arabia culminated in the treaty of peace of 1820 with the Gulf Sheikhs, founding a British political supremacy in the area that was strengthened in gradual stages through the century. The convenient piracy of the Sultan of Aden provoked its capture and occupation in 1839, similarly securing the approaches to the Red Sea. On the Mediterranean side, a British steamship company began regular services to Egypt and Syria in 1836, rapidly followed by French, Austrian, Italian, and other lines.

A corresponding development of the overland links between the two seas was not long delayed. In 1800 there was hardly a road or a wheeled vehicle in the Arab East, transport being mainly by pack and riding animals or by inland waterways. European capital and engineers wrought a vast change. In 1834 a British officer surveyed both the Iraqi and Egyptian routes, and from 1836 a regular British steamboat service plied the rivers of Iraq, linking Mesopotamia with Baṣra and the Persian Gulf.



The attack of the European Empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

But it was on Egypt, rather than on Iraq, that the final choice fell. The East India Company and, from 1840, the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company were first in the field, with an Alexandria–Suez overland link for goods and passengers, using steamboats on the Nile and inland canals and wheel-carts on the newly built roads. In 1851 the Pasha of Egypt gave George Stephenson a contract to build the first Egyptian railway. The Cairo–Alexandria line was completed in 1856, the link from Cairo to Suez in the following year. Railway development in Egypt was rapid. By 1863 there were 245 miles of track, by 1882 well over a thousand, by 1914 over 3,000. The opening of the Suez Canal, after ten years' work, on 17 November 1869, finally confirmed the restoration of the Egypt–Red Sea highway, and the key position of Egypt upon it.

In Arab Asia, off the main road, the development of communication was slower and later. It was due mainly to French companies, which built a few roads in central Syria and, between 1892 and 1911, built some five hundred miles of railway in Syria and Palestine, linking some of the main towns. The Turks themselves contributed the Ḥijāz railway, on the pilgrim route from Damascus to Medina, while the famous German-built Baghdad railway via Aleppo and Mosul was, by 1914, almost complete. Ports, bridges, canals, telegraphs, and other services developed along parallel lines, and from the 1860s European firms began to install water, gas, municipal transport, and other amenities in some of the chief ports and other cities.

But all this vast development was concerned essentially with transit, with only limited effects on the economies of the countries traversed. The transfer of the main overland link from the Egyptian railways to the Suez Canal in 1869 for a while further diminished the direct effect on Egyptian economy. Consequently, less progress was made in the development of capital resources in the Arab lands. The most important was the extension of cotton and sugar

cultivation in Egypt, thanks to the very rapid progress of irrigation with new modern equipment and to the new railways, roads, and ports, giving quicker access to vaster markets. The American Civil War and the consequent interruption of the supply of raw cotton from America to British factories gave a tremendous fillip to Egyptian production and sales, and brought a temporary enrichment of the Egyptian countryside.

The changes of the twentieth century were far more radical. The advent of the internal combustion engine added the aeroplane, the motor-car, and the lorry to the means of locomotion. The first had revolutionized the transit routes both in their economic and their strategic aspects, while the car and the lorry have covered the whole of the Middle East with a network of new internal communications, making possible the rapid exchange of people, goods, and ideas on a hitherto undreamt-of scale. The replacement of horse, ass, and camel by car, bus, and truck has, more than any other single factor, changed the whole face of the Arab world. A parallel development was the exploitation of oil, by now the most important natural resource of the Middle East for the outside world. After some years' work in Iran and Anatolia, the oil companies were just extending their activities to Iraq when war broke out in 1914. The full development of Iraqi oil resources was delayed until after the peace, when a number of companies, with British interests at first predominating, began work in different parts of the country. Still more recent is the exploitation of the oil resources of Sa'ūdī Arabia, where American interests took the lead. The oil companies, with their great installations and large-scale employment of Arab labour, their pipelines and refineries, are again changing beyond recognition both the economic and the strategic picture. In Egypt the progress of industrialization, still in its early stages, has nevertheless begun far-reaching processes of social change.

European cultural penetration was at first mainly religious, and came through the Christian minorities. The Vatican maintained contacts with Lebanese Maronite Catholics from the sixteenth century. Italian and French Capuchins and Jesuits operated in Syria, Maronite priests came to Rome and Paris. The Ottoman Sulṭāns for long banned printing in Arabic or Turkish. The first printing-presses in the Near East were Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac, used by the local Jews and Christians. But Arabic books were printed in Italy and elsewhere in the West and circulated in the Near East. The first Turkish printing-press, producing books in the Arabic script, was established in Istanbul in 1729. It produced books in Arabic and Persian, as well as Turkish. Bonaparte brought an Arabic press with him to Cairo, to print newspapers and proclamations in Arabic and Turkish. The first Muslim printing-press in the Arab world was that of Muḥammad ʿAlī in Egypt. Between 1822, when it was established, and 1842 it printed 243 books, most of them textbooks for Muḥammad ʿAlī's new schools and training colleges. It is significant that Turkish books outnumber Arabic books, and that works on military and naval subjects, as well as on mathematics and mechanics, are almost all in Turkish.

The religious rivalry of the great Powers for the profitable protection of holy places and Christian minorities was intensified in the nineteenth century. The most active of the missionaries in the Arab world were the French Jesuits and the American Protestant Missionaries, who maintained schools and colleges in Syria. They established Arabic printing-presses and printed many books, restoring to the Arabs their half-forgotten classics and translating for them some of the sources of Western knowledge. They trained a new generation of Arabs, at once more conscious of their Arab heritage and more affected by Western influences.

The social effects of all these changes were more limited than one would expect. The new local middle class of

traders and intellectuals came largely from the minorities and, because of its insecurity of status and separation from the population as a whole, it was unable to play its full role. But this new class spoke and wrote in Arabic. Mission-educated Syrian Christians established newspapers and periodicals in Egypt as well as Syria, and reached a wider public as more and more of the population were affected by economic and social change.

It was in this period that Arab nationalism was born. It was of mixed origin. To the growing Arab resentment of Turkish domination and the urgent mistrust of the encroaching and alien West were added the European idea of nationality and a revival of the Arabic language and culture. Nationalism was strongest among the Christians, least affected by the Muslim ideal of unity, most by economic change and Western cultural influence. The Christian could not subscribe to the pan-Islamic idea which was the modern political expression of the old community of Islam. He sought instead to give a new expression, in national rather than religious terms, to the solidarity of the East against the invading West. For Muslims the two forms of expression were never really distinguished. The basic sentiment of identity was religious and social, the complete society of Islam expressed sometimes in national terms, sometimes in religious terms as synonymous and interchangeable sets of words denoting the same basic reality.

The advance of a nationalist movement was accelerated by the coming of direct European control, at first on the periphery of the Arab world—the French in Algeria, 1830, the British in Aden, 1839—then in its very heart. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt, in the centre of the Arab world. The occupation led to an intensive development of the nationalist movement in Egypt, this time more local because with infinitely more concrete grievances and objectives.

By this time the nationalist movement was politically

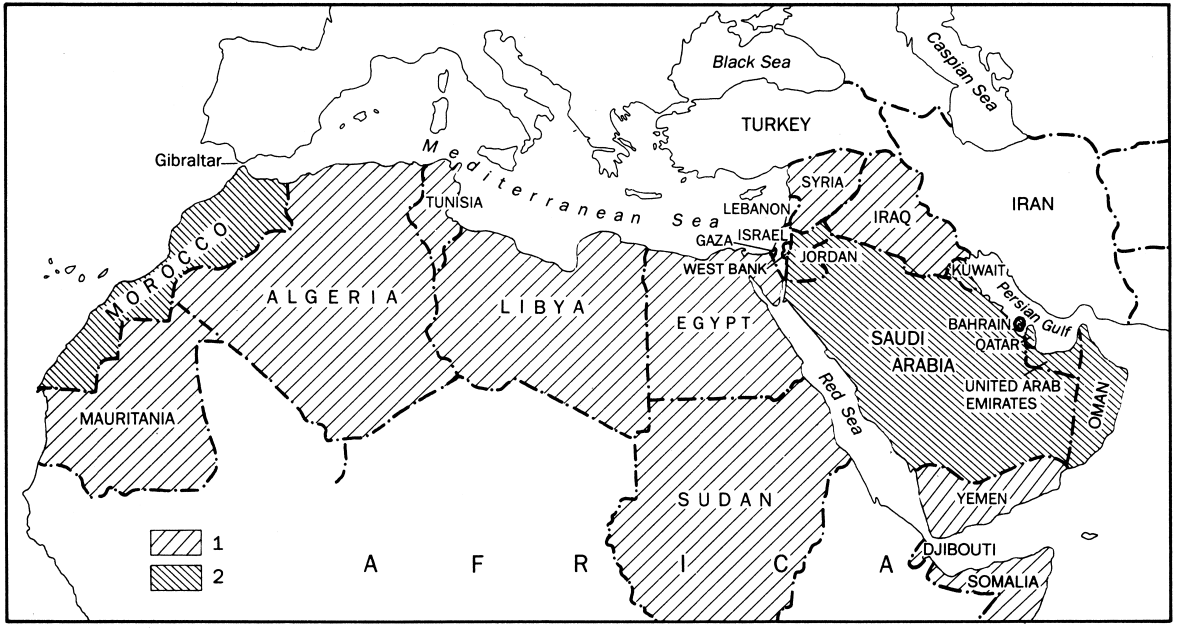
expressed—in political societies and then in parties. This marks another important change. The old religious forms of social expression were not dead. In Arabia the Wahhābī movement burst into life again at the beginning of the twentieth century, when ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Suʿūd began a process of expansion in the course of which the devoted Wahhābī warriors added most of Arabia to his Najdī patrimony. He annexed Ḥasā in 1913, Jabal Shammar in 1921, the Ḥijāz in 1924–5, and in 1932 proclaimed the new kingdom of Saʿūdī Arabia, with Wahhābism as its official creed. But the main organized expression was in most Arab countries political in the Western manner—until, after the Second World War, the sudden rise of militant religious brotherhoods seemed to indicate a return to an older pattern of loyalty and association.

This Westernization of public life was to a large extent external and superficial. The rights formerly exercised over the peasants by large landowners and government officials were legally abolished or reduced, but the effective relationship was little changed and the notables still enjoyed a virtual monopoly of leadership. Though the traders of the cities and seaports included a significant number of Muslims, the expansion of European trade gave an obvious advantage to the already important non-Muslim element. These, by the mere fact of being non-Muslim, were precluded from playing the normal role of a rising bourgeoisie in reshaping the political structure to their needs. The final repository of political power was still the old ruling elements—the military, the bureaucrats, the religious hierarchy, and the great landowners. These for long retained the same basic interests and ideas, only slowly responding to modernization. The west European political apparatus of parliaments and elections, parties and programmes, newspapers and appeals to 'public opinion' as the source of authority was borrowed ready-made and superimposed on a foundation of social reality to which it did not yet correspond. Hence

the strong religious character of such movements as went beyond small cliques. The attempt to replace the old Islamic solidarity and dynastic allegiance, which had kept the vast majority of Arabs loyal subjects of the Ottoman Sulṭāns, by a kind of modernized Ottoman patriotism did not work well in the Arab provinces. The constitutional revolution of 1908 won little support, and aroused active opposition in these provinces, where Sulṭān ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was still held in high regard. The attempt to replace both the Islamic and Ottoman loyalties by Turkish nationalism inevitably provoked a nationalist reaction among Arabs and other non-Turkish Ottomans.

The war of 1914 found Muslim feeling still predominant. Most Ottoman Arabs were still loyal to their sovereign, who found sympathy also in British-occupied Egypt. But the pressures of the war years and the activities of the Allies led to a rapid development of Arab nationalism. In 1916 the British succeeded in organizing an Arab revolt in the Ḥijāz, and in return for immediate material aid and a somewhat vague promise of Arab independence, perhaps intentionally ambiguous, after the war, Bedouin auxiliaries aided the British forces in the conquest of Syria.

The peace settlement fell far short of the full hopes of the Arabs, but nevertheless gave them much. New political entities were created in the Fertile Crescent, where Allied arms had ended Ottoman rule. But the coveted independence was deferred and British and French mandates established. The eastern arm of the Fertile Crescent, named Iraq, was placed under British mandate. The western arm of the Fertile Crescent was divided into a British mandate in the south, and a French mandate in the centre and north. The French mandate, Syria, after some experiments, was divided into two units, of which one was named Lebanon and the other retained the name Syria. The southern region was placed under British mandate and named Palestine. This too was subdivided, the eastern part being renamed Transjordan, while the western part retained the name Palestine.



The Arab world in 1992: 1 Republics; 2 Monarchies

Arab disappointment, rendered more vocal by the rapid economic and cultural development of the inter-war years, found expression in a series of vigorous nationalist movements, still religiously coloured, still conditioned in their leadership and many of their policies by the old social order. But in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, they were in their time true popular movements, affecting every section of Arab Muslim society, from the educated and politically conscious minorities who gave them their leadership and ideology, to the illiterate and unhappy peasant whom they served as a mouthpiece for his inarticulate mingling of resentment and fear in the presence of alien and incomprehensible forces that were dislocating his entire way of life.

The struggle was bitter and sustained. In the pursuit of their political objectives the nationalists were in the main successful. When war broke out in 1914, there was not a single sovereign, independent Arab state in existence. The whole of the Arab world was divided—or sometimes disputed—between the Ottoman and west European empires, which exercised varying degrees of sovereignty or suzerainty over their Arab provinces or colonies. In a few places, too remote and too poor to be worth policing, tribal or local rulers managed to maintain a precarious autonomy, as in much of the Arabian peninsula. In a few countries, notably Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, local dynasts were kept in power by the imperial suzerains as a convenient form of indirect rule. Elsewhere, as in Algeria, Libya, and the Fertile Crescent, they were directly administered by officials appointed from the imperial capital.

When the Second World War began in 1939, the situation had changed enormously. Iraq, Yemen, Sa'ūdī Arabia, and Egypt had all been recognized as sovereign, independent states and admitted to membership of the League of Nations. Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, though still under mandatary authority, already had their own governments and governmental apparatus, and were on

their way towards sovereign independence, the achievement of which was recognized by the mandatary powers as the ultimate goal of the mandates. The Sheikhs and emirs of eastern and southern Arabia had thrown off the yoke of the Ottomans, and were loosening that of Britain.

From the point of view of the nationalists, all this was too little and too late, and in any case far short of Western promises and Arab expectations. French and Italian North Africa and British south-west Arabia remained firmly under colonial rule, while even the nominally independent states of Iraq and Egypt were tied to their former imperial masters by unequal treaties and compelled to endure the presence of foreign bases and troops. The mandates for Syria and Palestine remained in force, and in Palestine west of the Jordan the situation was complicated by the emergence of a rival nationalism, that of the Jews. Zionist settlement had begun in the late nineteenth century. In 1917, in the Balfour Declaration, the British government made a formal promise of support for the policy of 'a national home for the Jewish people' in Palestine and this promise was incorporated in the League of Nations mandate for Palestine. The rise of militant anti-Semitism in continental Europe, and the flood of desperate refugees who, at a time of world depression, could find no refuge, gave a new urgency to the Zionist ideal of the Jewish state in the ancient Jewish homeland, and brought the simmering discontents of the Arab population to boiling point. An extensive armed Arab rebellion against the mandatary power began in 1936, and ended only with the outbreak of war in 1939.

The Second World War and its aftermath brought sovereign independence in one way or another to almost all the remaining Arab lands. The withdrawal of France from the Levant added Syria and Lebanon to the number of independent Arab states, and in March 1945, after long preparation, the 'League of Arab States' was constituted, consisting of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Sa'ūdī Arabia,

Yemen, and Transjordan, the last of which, subsequently known as Jordan, became a sovereign state in March 1946. Since then, the member states of the Arab League have increased in number from the founding seven to twenty-two in 1992. In some areas, notably in Algeria and to a lesser extent in Aden, later renamed South Yemen, independence came after a bitter and hard-fought struggle. In others, it was negotiated more or less amicably with the departing suzerain.

Two of the members of the League of Arab States, Somalia and Jibuti, are not Arab by language or national identity, but were admitted to membership because of cultural and political affinities with the Arab world. A third member, the Palestine Liberation Organization, was authentically Arab, but was not a state, in that it exercised no sovereignty and possessed no territory. On 2 April 1947 the British government informed the United Nations, as successor to the defunct League of Nations, that it would relinquish the Palestine Mandate on Saturday, 15 May 1948, leaving it to the UN to decide the further fate of the mandated territory. The Indian empire had gone, the importance of Middle Eastern oil was not yet fully realized, and there was no good reason for a weakened and impoverished post-war Britain to continue the struggle with this intractable problem. The United Nations, after long and intricate discussions and negotiations, adopted a formal resolution on 29 November 1947 for the partition of the mandated territory into three—a Jewish state, an Arab state, and a *corpus separatum* under international jurisdiction for the city of Jerusalem. The United Nations made no provision for the execution and enforcement of these decisions. Very soon after, on 17 December, the Council of the Arab League announced that it would prevent the proposed partition of Palestine by force. The UN plan was accepted by the Jewish leadership, who, anticipating the end of the mandate by some hours because of the Sabbath, set up a state which they

called Israel. It was rejected by both the Palestinian leadership and the Arab states, which went to war to prevent its implementation.

At first, it seemed unlikely that the newborn state of Israel would long survive its birth. But within a few weeks, the military situation changed dramatically, and by the time an armistice was negotiated by the United Nations, several important changes had taken place. The Israelis had held, and even improved their ground. The remainder of mandatary Palestine was held by neighbouring Arab states—the Gaza strip by Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Jordan, and a small foothold in the north by Syria. Jerusalem was *de facto* partitioned between Jordan and Israel, and the plan for a *corpus separatum* became a dead letter. In the course of the fighting, a large number of Palestinian Arabs, estimated by the UN Economic Survey Mission and the UN Relief and Works Agency at 726,000, fled or were driven from their homes—claims and evidence are conflicting, but it seems likely that both descriptions are true of different places.

In this confusion and uncertainty, the fate of the Palestinian refugees was not different from that of countless millions of other refugees who fled or were driven from their homes in Eastern Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere, in the brutal reshaping of the world after the ending of the Second World War. They differed from all these others in that they were neither repatriated nor resettled, but remained as refugees in camps. The one exception was Jordan. The Jordanians formally annexed the territories which they held west of the Jordan River, and offered citizenship to all Arab Palestinians. The Israelis did the same for the large numbers of Jews who had fled or been driven from Arab countries.

By a sad paradox, the humanitarian efforts of the United Nations and its agencies made matters on the whole rather worse than better. UN peacemaking could

stop the fighting, but not make peace, and thus prevented a decisive outcome one way or the other. The UN financed and operated refugee camps in Arab countries, at immense cost—in the first twenty years the figure reached $700,000,000, of which the United States provided two-thirds. These camps kept the refugees alive, and spared them and the governments concerned the need to confront the alternatives of repatriation or resettlement. Many in fact found new careers, but generations later, most of them and their descendants in Arab countries other than Jordan remain stateless refugees. All this is in striking contrast with the almost contemporary partition of British India, which ended with mutual recognition and the resettlement as citizens of vastly greater numbers of refugees.

The unresolved Palestine problem led to a succession of further Arab–Israel wars—in 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. The most important of these was undoubtedly the war of June 1967, which brought a swift and decisive Israeli victory over Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and the occupation, not only of all the Palestinian territories held by these three powers, but also of territories conquered from Arab states—the Golan Heights from Syria and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. The 1973 war and its diplomatic aftermath brought the return of parts of these two territories to Syria and Egypt. The remaining Egyptian territories were returned after the signature of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt—the first with any Arab country—in March 1979. The West Bank and Gaza remained in Israeli hands.

The withdrawal of the Arab states from direct territorial involvement in Palestine, and their increasing preoccupation with their own concerns, domestic and foreign, gave a new importance to the emergent Palestinian leadership, at first among the Diaspora, then within the Israel-occupied territories. The former was principally represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Founded

in 1964, it became more active after 1967, when it received substantial support from Arab governments, and recognition in many parts of the world.

The Arab–Israel conflict has been by far the most publicized of Middle Eastern conflicts. But it is not the only conflict, still less the only problem of the Arab world. There have been struggles within Arab countries, such as the Lebanese and Sudanese civil wars of 1975–90; there have been wars with non-Arab neighbours, such as the Libya–Chad wars and the Iraq–Iran war of 1980–8; there have even been wars between Arab states, such as the Saudi wars against the Ḥijāz, 1924–5, and against Yemen in 1934. Another barrier was crossed with the Gulf War of 1990–1, when the United States and other outside powers became involved in what began and ended as an inter-Arab conflict.

There were also major changes—and hence also conflicts and problems—in their social, economic, and political life. Although the Arab nations took no effective part in the Second World War, they were profoundly affected by it. Allied and Axis propagandists wooed them by every means at their disposal; Allied and Axis armies lived and fought on their soil, employing thousands of Arabs in supply, maintenance, and other services, enriching some and dislocating the lives of others. The economic and social stresses due to war conditions forced an increasing proportion of the population to consider the problems of their public life in terms which had not hitherto occurred to them. The economic change due to industrialization and war and the intellectual effects of the spread of education brought the emergence of new interests, new ideas, and new leaders, dissatisfied with purely political liberation, which many of them felt to be a sham, challenging the still unbroken domination of the old rulers and leaders.

The power of Britain and France, once dominant in the region, ended with the break-up of their empires; the

influence of Nazi Germany, once so dangerous, ended with its military defeat. But a new alignment of outside superpowers was taking shape, which again filled the Arab world with the clash of conflicting interests and ideologies, bringing new dangers, and also new and tempting opportunities for short-term political advantage.

The strains and stresses of rapid modernization, fuelled by oil and powered by money; the threats and plots and blandishments of regional and external powers, each pursuing its own interests; the sense of humiliation and frustration at the perceived inability of the Arab states, despite independence, to deal with even the smallest of enemies or solve even the simplest of problems; the mounting anger against self-proclaimed innovative regimes whose economics brought poverty, whose politics brought tyranny, whose armies suffered defeat abroad and inflicted repression at home—all these combined to create a deeply troubled society with manifold and growing discontents, and an increasingly urgent search among some for culprits, among others for saviours.

From the nineteenth century, when Arab intellectuals first became aware of the relative weakness and poverty of their countries as contrasted with the rest of the world, they were able to provide explanations. For a long time these explanations were almost entirely political and military, and placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of foreign invaders and rulers. According to this perception, classical Islamic civilization was destroyed by the Mongol invaders. Had it not thus been untimely struck down, it would have gone on to reach ever new heights. The Mongols, having shattered the great civilization of the Caliphate, ruined and devastated the Arab lands, so that they fell an easy prey to the Ottoman Turks, whose oppressive rule endured from 1517 until the First World War. And when the Arabs, promised their freedom by the Western powers, tried to assert their independence, they were once again subjected to foreign rule, this time

by Britain and France. Even after the withdrawal of the British and French imperial armies, the Arab lands remained at the mercy of outsider powers and of their local puppets and protégés.

Such explanations are at first sight sufficient, and were no doubt satisfying. The Mongol invaders did indeed devastate parts of the Middle East and destroyed the Caliphate. The Ottomans did indeed rule much of the Arab world for some four centuries, and when they left they were replaced, not by independent Arab rulers, but by the imperial powers of the West. But subsequent historical research and reflection have shown that other factors besides the political and military were at work, and that even the political and military changes were not as simple and one-sided as was at one time believed. Classical Islamic civilization had long passed its prime when the Mongols arrived on the scene in the thirteenth century, and was already in an advanced state of what most historians would call decline. The Mongol disruption, though immense, was confined, among Arab lands, to Iraq. Syria was only minimally affected, Egypt and North Africa hardly at all. And in the lands where the Mongols ruled, in the eastern half of the Middle East, they presided over a new age of prosperity and even of cultural efflorescence, much of it, however, expressed in Persian and not in Arabic. The Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands, far from being a subjugation, was in many respects a liberation from the harsh rule of the late Mamlūk Sulṭāns. In Syria especially, it inaugurated an era of peace and plenty. Those Arab countries, like Morocco, that escaped Ottoman rule did not fare better than those that experienced it.

Nor is there any evidence that the Ottoman Sulṭāns were regarded by their Arab subjects as foreign oppressors. The Western notions of nationalism and national self-determination did not reach the Middle East until centuries later, and for most of their rule, the Ottoman

Sulṭāns were accepted by all their Muslim subjects, irrespective of language and ethnic origin, as the legitimate sovereigns of a universal Islamic empire.

The period of European rule was, in the larger perspective of history, of remarkably brief duration, beginning in the central lands in the aftermath of the First World War and ending in the aftermath of the Second. The processes, moreover, of European impact and influence were more complex and more varied than was at first realized.

The domination of the Arabs by the Turks and the subsequent domination of the larger Islamic world, to which both the Turks and the Arabs belonged, by Europe, were part of a larger process extending over many centuries. It began as far back as the seventh century, when the advancing power of the new faith of Islam carried its *jihād* against Christendom from the once Christian lands of the Levant and North Africa into the European mainland. Twice, Islam almost conquered Europe, through the Arab invasions of Spain and, some centuries later, the Ottoman advance into the Balkan peninsular. Meanwhile further east, another attempt had been launched by the Tatars, the Islamized Mongol and Turkish peoples who conquered Russia and established a Muslim domination over Muscovy.

In time, the peoples of the Iberian peninsula at one end of Europe, and of Russia at the other, were able to defeat and expel their former Muslim rulers. At both ends of Europe, the reconquest developed into a conquest, and in time to a world domination.

The important question for the historian is not why the Europeans tried to dominate the Muslims—this had for centuries been the normal behaviour of both sides—but why they succeeded. And for this, answers may be sought both in European strength and Muslim weakness.

Modern scholarship has found much of the explanation in economic change and particularly in the decline of agriculture. This in itself was in no small degree the con-

sequence of political change. Agriculture in the great river valley economies of Iraq and Egypt depended very heavily on artificial irrigation, and this in turn depended on administrative efficiency and the maintenance of public order. When the Mongols failed to conquer Egypt and Syria, and established their base in Iran, Iraq became a border province, poorly policed and administered. This opened the breach to the depredations of the Bedouin, who, unlike the Mongols, did not go away and did not change their habits. Agriculture also suffered from the increasing salinity of the soil, due to the quantities of salt brought down by the Tigris and the Euphrates, and the gradual deterioration of the soil of Iraq.

An important feature all over the Middle East was the lack of technological progress, notably in agriculture. Until the nineteenth century wheeled vehicles were rare; even in the days of Ottoman greatness in the sixteenth century, the number of watermills and windmills listed in the Ottoman tax registers is proportionately much smaller than that shown in the Domesday Book in eleventh-century England. The social and political conditions of the Muslim countryside precluded the emergence of a class of educated gentleman farmers, like those who contributed so much to the technological revolution of Western agriculture, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

There was also the problem of competition from the European states. These, thanks to the acquisition of tropical and sub-tropical colonies, were able to grow and export products that had previously figured prominently among exports of the Middle East to the West and elsewhere. Notable among them were sugar, coffee, and cotton, which the Europeans transplanted first to the Atlantic islands, and then to the New World, and eventually exported even to the Middle East itself. The mercantilist policies of the producer-oriented European trading states, their more efficient production and more aggressive

marketing, enabled them first to penetrate, and finally to dominate Middle Eastern markets. This applied not only to agricultural products, but also to industry and notably to textiles, which had once been a prominent Middle Eastern export to the West, and which were now brought to the Middle East by European merchants, both from their home industries and from their new Asian possessions and dependencies.

The advantage which these methods gave to the Western traders was compounded by their access to capital and to credit on a scale totally beyond Middle Eastern resources or possibilities. Already in the Middle Ages, Middle Eastern trade had suffered from a shortage of precious metals. In this they were no worse off than Christian Europe, which was at least equally deficient in bullion. But the situation changed dramatically with the discovery of America and the enrichment of European trade through the gold and silver of the New World.

Western supremacy in trade also benefited from a number of political and military factors. Perhaps of primary importance was the loss of sea-power by the Muslim states in both the Mediterranean and the Indian ocean, and the domination of the seas by Western fleets with larger and stronger ships built to face the Atlantic gales, and therefore more manœuvrable and able to mount a much larger armament. The flimsy vessels of the Eastern powers were no match for a Portuguese, Dutch, French, or English man-o'-war. It was not the presence of Portuguese and other Westerners in India and south-east Asia that changed the conditions of trade decisively against the Middle East. There is evidence that trade continued on a quite considerable scale throughout the sixteenth century. The decisive change came when the west European trading nations established naval and even military bases in south and south-east Asia, and were thus able to use armed force as well as economic strength to dominate the trade with Europe. The peoples

of the Middle East—Turks, Iranians, and Arabs alike—were now caught in a slowly closing vice as the maritime powers advanced from western Europe and from southern Asia, and the Russians moved forward relentlessly from the north.

The social institutions and attitudes inherited from earlier times and maintained with increasing rigidity made it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances or to create new political and economic institutions which would facilitate such an adaptation. An attitude towards unbelievers that varied from condescension in good times, to hostility and mistrust in bad times, made it difficult to learn from them, or even to understand them, at a time when it was the West, and not as previously the Islamic world, that had something to teach. The traditional household, based on polygamy, concubinage, and domestic slavery, was ill-suited to the processes of social and cultural, and therefore also of political and economic modernization. All these factors combined to accelerate and accentuate the growing disparity between the Islamic and Western worlds, not only in wealth and power, but also, indeed more especially, in the ability to create wealth and to attain and use power constructively.

For a long time the Arab world was shielded by the might of the Ottoman Empire—still, even in its decline, a formidable barrier—from the advance of Europe and the impact of the new reality.

Since the ending of Ottoman power, the Middle East and North Africa have gone through several phases. In the first of these, the British and French empires ruled or dominated almost the whole of the Arab world. During this period, new institutions were created, new ideas were expressed, which prepared the way for a second phase marked this time by formal, legal independence. Both Britain and France had attempted, while they were in control, to protect their interests by signing treaties with the newly independent states. These treaties failed in

their purpose of gaining the Arab lands as allies. At best, they were able to secure the sullen acquiescence of Arab governments when, during the Second World War, they were backed by overwhelming military force. When that force was withdrawn, the alliances collapsed.

The Arab states were now fully sovereign and independent, and all foreign troops had been removed from their soil. Some of them were, moreover, strengthened by the enormous wealth which they derived from the possession of oil. But, as they quickly learnt, the region was still dominated by outside powers—no longer the classical colonial powers of Western Europe, but the two new superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, meeting face to face in the Middle East as in every other part of the world where their spheres of influence collided. Western attempts to organize the Arab states in the Middle East in a defensive alliance with the West proved self-defeating, and indeed resulted in the overthrow of pro-Western regimes. The Soviets were quick to take advantage of this, and from 1955 onwards cultivated increasingly close relations with a number of Arab states, including, at different times, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, South Yemen, Libya, and Algeria. The Soviets, however, made the same mistakes as their Western imperial predecessors. By inducing Arab governments to sign treaties and to accept bases and military personnel, they too aroused suspicion and then hostility.

The phase of Soviet domination by treaty ended where it had begun. As late as May 1971, Egypt signed a treaty of 'friendship and co-operation' with the Soviet Union. On 18 July 1972 President Sadat ordered Soviet military experts to leave the country, and they went. This inaugurated a period of growing American involvement in the Arab world, helped by the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the American-led military victory of the Arab allies against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991.

The Gulf War and its aftermath—the swift withdrawal of

United States forces—revealed a profound change. Russia, for the time being at least, is out of the game. The United States, by the very nature of its society and institutions, has no desire, and certainly no aptitude, for the imperial game. The older imperial powers of the West have long since abandoned any such ambitions, and it will be a long time before other imperial powers emerge, if indeed they ever do. This means that for the first time in centuries, the countries of the Middle East are on their own, and can really determine their own destinies.

Once again, as in the days when the advance of the Arab warriors brought their faith into contact with the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and of the Mediterranean, and engendered a new and fruitful offspring, Islam today stands face to face with an alien civilization that challenges many of its fundamental values and appeals seductively to many of its followers. This time, the forces of resistance are far stronger. Islam is no longer a new faith, hot and malleable from the Arabian crucible, but an old and institutionalized religion, set by centuries of usage and tradition into rigid patterns of conduct and belief. But if the metal is harder, so too is the hammer—for the challenge of today is incomparably more radical, more aggressive, more pervasive—and it comes not from a conquered, but a conquering world. The impact of the West, with its printing-presses and computers, aeroplanes and cinemas, factories and universities, oil-prospectors and archaeologists, machine-guns and ideas, has shattered beyond repair the traditional structure of life, affecting every Arab in his livelihood and his leisure, his private and public affairs, demanding a readjustment of the inherited social, political, and cultural forms.

For much of the twentieth century two imported Western ideologies dominated opinion in the Arab world: socialism and nationalism. By the beginning of the twenty-first century both were discredited, the one by its failure, the other by its success. Socialist plans and projects were

put into effect, but did not bring prosperity; national independence was achieved, but did not bring freedom. If anything, both brought the reverse of their declared aims. Another imported European model, the one-party ideological dictatorship, brought neither prosperity nor dignity—only tyranny sustained by indoctrination and repression. Since the death in 1970 of Gamal Abd al-Nasser, President of Egypt and leader of pan-Arabism, no Arab leader has enjoyed much support outside his own country. Even inside his own country, no leader has dared to submit his attainment or retention of power to the genuinely free choice of his people.

At the present time two competing diagnoses of the ills of the region are on offer, each with its own appropriate prescription for a cure. According to the one, the trouble is all due to infidels and their local dupes and imitators, and to the aping of infidel ways. The remedy is a resumption of the millennial struggle against the infidel adversary in the West, and a return to authenticity, to their own God-given laws and traditions which they have foolishly and sinfully abandoned. According to the other, it is the old ways, now degenerate and corrupt, that are crippling them. The remedy is openness and freedom in the economy, the society, and the state—in a word, democracy. Both kinds of regime, liberal democracy and Islamic theocracy, are represented in the region and elsewhere. Both have their passionate proponents and opponents. The future place of the Arabs in history will depend, in no small measure, on the outcome of the struggle between them.

Chronological Table

BC	
853	First mention of Arabs, in an inscription of Shalmaneser III.
65	Pompey visits Petra—first Roman contact with the Nabatean kingdom.
25–24	Expedition of Aelius Gallus to southern Arabia.
AD	
105–6	Fall of the Nabatean kingdom, part of which becomes a Roman province.
*c.*250	Rise of 'Kingdom' of Palmyra.
273	Aurelian suppresses Palmyra.
288–328	Reign of Imr al-Qays.
525	Fall of Ḥimyar—the Ethiopians occupy southern Arabia.
542	Breaking of the Ma'rib dam.
575	Persian occupation of southern Arabia, which for a few years becomes a satrapy.
602	End of Arab principality of Ḥīra, on Iraq–Arabian borderlands.
622	Hijra of Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina—beginning of Islamic era.
624	Battle of Badr.
625	Battle of Uḥud.
628	Truce of Ḥudaybiyya.
630	Muḥammad conquers Mecca.
632	Death of Muḥammad. Abū Bakr becomes the first Caliph.
633–7	Arabs conquer Syria and Iraq.
634	'Umar becomes Caliph.
635–6	Capture of Damascus.
637	Battle of Qādisiyya. Fall of Ctesiphon.
639–42	Conquest of Egypt.
642–6	Capture of Alexandria.
644	'Uthmān becomes Caliph.
654–5	Battle of the Masts—naval victory over Byzantines.

AD	
656	Murder of 'Uthmān—beginning of first civil war in Islam.
657–9	Battle of Ṣiffīn.
661	Murder of 'Alī—beginning of Umayyad dynasty.
668–73	First siege of Constantinople.
670	Foundation of Qayrawān.
680	Massacre of Ḥusayn and 'Alids at Karbalā'.
683–90	Second civil war.
685–7	Revolt of Mukhtār in Iraq—beginning of extremist Shī'a.
691	Construction of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.
696	'Abd al-Malik introduces Arabic coinage, as part of reorganization of imperial administration.
705–15	Construction of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.
709–17	Construction of Aqṣā Mosque in Jeruslaem.
710	Muslims land in Spain.
717–18	Siege of Constantinople.
728	Death of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.
732	Battle of Tours and Poitiers.
750	Fall of Umayyads, accession of 'Abbāsids.
751	Arabs capture Chinese paper-makers in Central Asia; use of paper begins to spread westward across Islamic Empire. Battle of Talas—Chinese retreat.
756	Umayyad prince 'Abd al-Raḥmān becomes independent Amīr of Cordoba.
759	Arabs withdraw from Narbonne.
762–3	Foundation of Baghdad by al-Manṣūr.
765	Death of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.
788–	Independent Idrīsid dynasty in Morocco.
799–800	Independent Aghlabid dynasty in Tunisia.
803	Hārūn al-Rashīd deposes Barmecides.
809–13	Civil war of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn.
813–33	Reign of al-Ma'mūn—development of Arabic science and letters.
825–	Aghlabids of Tunisia begin conquest of Sicily.
833–42	Reign of al-Mu'taṣim—beginning of Turkish domination.

AD	
836	Foundation of Sāmarrā'—construction of Mosque of Qayrawān.
867–	Rise of Ṣaffārids in Persia.
868–	Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, a Turkish general, founds a dynasty in Egypt and later Syria.
869	Death of al-Jāḥiẓ.
869–83	Revolt of black slaves in southern Iraq.
877	Death of Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq, translator of Greek scientific works into Arabic.
890	First appearance of Carmathians in Iraq.
901–6	Carmathian bands active in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia.
910	Establishment of Fāṭimid Caliphate in North Africa.
923	Death of al-Ṭabarī.
925	Death of physician Rāzī (Rhases).
929	'Abd al-Raḥmān III of Cordoba adopts title of Caliph.
932	Persian Buwayhid dynasty established in West Persia.
935	Creation of office of *Amīr al-Umarā'*, commander in chief of Turkish guards in the capital, and effective ruler.
945	Buwayhids occupy Baghdad.
969	Fāṭimids conquer Egypt—found Cairo.
*c.*970	Seljuq Turks enter territories of Caliphate from East.
1030	Umayyad Caliphate of Spain breaks up into 'Party Kingdoms'.
1037	Death of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).
1048	Death of al-Bīrūnī.
1055	Seljuqs take Baghdad.
1056–7	Hilālī Arab invaders sack Qayrawān.
1061	Normans take Messina—begin conquest of Sicily.
1070–80	Seljuqs occupy Syria and Palestine.
1085	Christians capture Toledo.
1086	Almoravid victory at Sagrajas.
1090	Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ seizes Alamūt.
1094	Death of Fāṭimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir—split in

AD	
	Ismāʿīlī movement—Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ leads extremist (Assassin) wing.
1096	Crusaders arrive in Near East.
1099	Crusaders take Jerusalem.
1111	Death of al-Ghazālī.
1127	Zangī, a Seljuq officer, seizes Mosul—begins Muslim reaction against Crusaders.
1171	Saladin declares Fāṭimid Caliphate at an end—founds Ayyūbid dynasty in Syria and Egypt.
1187	Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn. Saladin defeats Crusaders and captures Jerusalem.
1220	Mongols conquer eastern territories of the Caliphate.
1236	Christians capture Cordoba.
1250	A woman, Shajar al-Durr, rules Egypt.
1250–60	Emergence of Mamlūk Sulṭānate in Egypt and Syria, from the decay of the Ayyūbid kingdoms.
1254	Alphonso X establishes a school of Latin and Arabic studies in Seville.
1258	Mongols under Hülekü Khān capture Baghdad and end the Caliphate.
1260	Mamlūks defeat Mongols at ʿAyn Jālūt in Palestine.
1291	Fall of Acre.
1348	Construction of the Gate of Justice at the Alhambra, Granada.
1400–1	Tīmūr ravages Syria.
1406	Death of Ibn Khaldūn.
1492	Christians capture Granada.
1498	Vasco da Gama sails to India via Cape of Good Hope.
1517	Ottomans conquer Syria and Egypt—destroy Mamlūk Sulṭānate. The Sharīf of Mecca accepts Ottoman suzerainty.
1519	Ottoman authority extended to North Africa, excluding Morocco.
1520	Revolt of Jānbirdī Ghazālī in Syria.
1524	Revolt of Aḥmad Pasha in Egypt.
1534	First Ottoman conquest of Iraq.
1535	First Capitulations granted by Ottoman Sulṭān to France.

AD	
1631	Insurrections in Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon.
1635	Execution of Fakhr al-Dīn Maʿn.
1639	Final Ottoman conquest of Iraq.
1658–9	Revolt of Abaza Kara Ḥasan Pasha in Aleppo.
1708	Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī becomes Bey and Dey in Tunis—founds a dynasty.
1710	Aḥmad Karamanli Dey of Tripoli—founds a dynasty.
1775–1804	Jezzār Pasha governor of Ṣayda.
1792	Death of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, founder of Wahhābī sect in Arabia.
1798–1801	French occupation of Egypt.
1805–	Muḥammad ʿAlī becomes effective ruler of Egypt.
1809	Beginning of regular shipping service from India to Suez.
1820	British pact with Arab Sheikhs on the Persian Gulf coast—beginning of British supremacy in the area.
1820–31	Bashīr Shihāb in Lebanon.
1822	Muḥammad ʿAlī establishes printing-press in Egypt.
1830	French invade Algeria.
1831–40	Egyptian occupation of Syria.
1836	British steamboat service established on Iraqi inland waterways.
1836	Beginning of regular British steamship service to Egypt and Syria.
1839	British occupation of Aden.
1851–7	Alexandria–Cairo–Suez Railway built.
1855	Introduction of telegraph.
1860	Trouble in Lebanon.
1861	Creation of autonomous Lebanon.
1869	Suez Canal opened.
1881	French occupy Tunisia.
1882	British occupy Egypt.
1901–	Ibn Saʿūd begins the restoration of the Saʿūdī amirate of Najd.
1908	Young Turk Revolution. Opening of Ḥijāz railway.
1911–12	Italians seize Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.
1914	British capture Baṣra.

AD	
1916	Arab revolt in Ḥijāz. Sharīf Ḥusayn assumes title of King.
1917	British occupy Baghdad and Jerusalem.
1918	End of Ottoman rule in Arab lands.
1919	Yemen independent.
1920	Mandates established for Syria (French), Palestine, and Iraq (British).
1924–5	Ibn Saʿūd conquers Ḥijāz.
1932	End of Mandate in Iraq.
1932	Ibn Saʿūd proclaims Saʿūdī Arabian Kingdom.
1934	Ibn Saʿūd defeats the Yemen in short war. Peace treaty of Ṭāʾif. Yemen independence formally recognized. Italians establish colony of Libya, combining Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.
1936	Anglo-Egyptian treaty, recognizing independence of Egypt.
1941	Overthrow of Rashīd ʿAlī in Iraq—end of Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, which nominally become independent republics.
1945	League of Arab States formed.
1946	Britain recognizes independence of Transjordan, which becomes a monarchy.
1948	End of Mandate for Palestine—establishment of state of Israel—Arab–Israel war.
1951	Libya becomes an independent kingdom.
1952	Military coup in Cairo; King Farouk abdicates—King Talyl of Jordan abdicates; Ḥusayn proclaimed king.
1953	Egypt becomes a republic—Ibn Saʿūd dies.
1954	Colonel Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir (Nasser) becomes leader in Egypt.
1955	British evacuation of Suez Canal zone—signature of Baghdad Pact; Egyptian–Czechoslovak arms deal.
1956	Sudan, Tunisia, and Morocco become independent—Egypt nationalizes Suez Canal—Israel–Egypt war—Anglo-French expedition to Suez.

AD	
1957	Tunisia becomes a republic. Israelis withdraw from Sinai and Gaza.
1958	Formation of United Arab Republic—civil war in Lebanon—revolution in Iraq, which becomes a republic.
1960	Mauritania becomes independent.
1961	Kuwait becomes independent—Syria secedes from the United Arab Republic—'Arab socialism' adopted in Egypt.
1962	Algeria becomes independent—Republican revolution in the Yemen.
1963	Revolutions in Syria and Iraq.
1964	Palestine Liberation Organization founded.
1965	Revolution in Algeria.
1967	Israel–Arab war—South Yemen becomes independent.
1968	Revolution in Iraq.
1969	Revolutions in Sudan and in Libya, which becomes a republic, headed by Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi.
1970	Sultan Sa'id of 'Oman deposed—succeeded by his son Sultan Qabus.
1970	Clashes in Jordan—Palestinian organizations move to Lebanon and establish bases for operations against Israel.
1970	Death of President Nasser—succeeded by President Anwar Sadat.
1970	Hafiz al-Asad takes power in Syria.
1971	Gulf states become independent—formation of Union of Arab Emirates.
1971	Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and the United Arab Republic, followed by similar treaties with Iraq (1971), Yemen (1979), Syria (1980).
1972	Israelis raid Palestinian bases in Lebanon.
1973	Arab–Israel War.
1975	Assassination of King Faysal in Saudi Arabia—succeeded by his brother King Khalid.
1975–78	Civil war begins in Lebanon—first Syrian military intervention.

AD	
1976	Spain withdraws from Western Sahara.
1977	President Sadat visits Israel.
1979	Saddam Hussein becomes President of Iraq—war between North and South Yemen.
1979	Egypt and Israel sign peace treaty. Revolution in Iran.
1980–88	Iraq–Iran War.
1981	Assassination of President Sadat, succeeded by President Husni Mubarak.
1982	Death of King Khalid in Saudi Arabia—succeeded by his brother King Fahd.
1982–1990	Civil war intensifies in Lebanon—Israeli and Syrian forces enter the country.
1982	Massacre in Hama, following suppression of an Islamist rising—assassination of President Bashir Gemayyel in Lebanon—reprisal massacre by Lebanese militia in Palestinian refugee camps.
1983	Israel–Lebanon peace treaty signed but not ratified.
1986-1991	Establishment of Syrian military control in Lebanon.
December 1987	Beginning of the Palestinian Intifada.
1989–1990	Unification of North and South Yemen.
1990–91	Iraq invades Kuwait—Gulf War.
1991–2001	Lebanon becomes a Syrian protectorate.
1993	Oslo accords: mutual recognition and preliminary agreement between Israel and P.L.O.
1994	Jordan and Israel sign a peace treaty.
1998	General Lahoud becomes President of Lebanon.
1999	Death of King Hussein of Jordan—succeeded by his son King Abdullah II.
1999	Death of King Hasan II of Morocco—succeeded by his son King Muhammad VI.
2000	Death of President Hafiz-al-Asad of Syria—succeeded by his son President Bashar al-Asad.
2000	Israelis withdraw all forces from Lebanon—outbreak of new Palestinian Intifada.

Notes

4 II Chronicles 9: 14; Isaiah 20: 13; Jeremiah 25: 23; Ezekiel 27: 31.

4 *Prometheus*, 420–5; *Persians*, 318.

4–5 *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* (*RCEA*) (Cairo, 1931—in progress), i. 1.

32 Ernest Renan, *Études d'histoire religieuse*[2] (Paris, 1857), 217 ff.

39 Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858–60), 341–2.

46 Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa'l-muʾānasa*, ed. Ahmad Amīn and Ahmad al-Zayn (Cairo, 1939), i. 81.

57–8 Translated in Bernard Lewis, 'An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* xiii, 2 (1950), 321; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, ed. Abbeloos and Lamy (Louvain, 1872), 274, cit. A. J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*[2] (Oxford, 1978), 158.

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72 Al-Mubārak, *Al-Kāmil fī'l-adab*, ed. W. Wright (Leipzig, 1864–92), 712.

75 Al-Ṭabarī, ii. 650.

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87–8 Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Leiden, 1892), vii. 237–8.

91 Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā, *Al-Fakhrī* (Cairo, AH 1317), 20–1; Abūʿl-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *Al-Aghānī* (Bulaq, AH 1285), xvi. 84.

94 Al-Jāḥiẓ (attrib.), *Al-Tabaṣṣur bi'l-tijāra*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥusnī ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (Cairo, 1354/1935).

95–7 Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje

(Leiden, 1906), 324–5; Ibn Khordādhbeh, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1889), 153.

98–9 Ibn Qāḍīkhān al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-ummāl* (Hyderabad, 1313/1895–6), ii. 4084, 4086, 4112.

111 Al-Ṭabarī, iii. 1270; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (Cairo, 1906), s.v. (i. 160).

113 Al-Ṭabarī, iii. 1751.

117 Yāqūt, *Dictionary of Learned Men*, ed. D. S. Margoliouth (London, 1925), ii. 81; al-Baghdādī, *Al-Farq bayn al-firaq*, ed. Muḥammad Badr (Cairo, AH 1328), 281.

118 Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fonds arabe MS 1576), fol. 48v.

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135 Alvaro, *Indiculus Luminosus*, in *España sagrada*, xi. 274–5, cit. Dozy, i. 317–18.

139 *RCEA*, xvii. 48.

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159 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddima*, ed. E. Quatremère (Paris, 1858), i. 272. Translated in Charles Issawi, *An Arab Philosophy of History* (London, 1950), 57–8.

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181 Ṣā'id al-Andalūsī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-umam* (Cairo, n.d.), 11; Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, iii. 93.

Guide to Further Reading

EXCELLENT guidance to medieval Islamic history, with special reference to Arab history, may be found in R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Enquiry*, revised edn., Princeton, NJ, 1991, and Jean Sauvaget's *Introduction to the History of the Muslim East: A Bibliographical Guide*, based on the second French edition as recast by Claude Cahen, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965. These works contain useful discussions of the sources, problems, and methodology of the study of Arab history, as well as annotated and critical bibliographical guidance. There is unfortunately no single comparable work for the modern period, but bibliographical information may be found in Diane Grimwood Jones, Derek Hopwood, and J. D. Pearson (eds.), *Arab Islamic Bibliography: The Middle East Library Committee's Guide*, based on Giuseppe Gabrieli's *Manuale di bibliografia musulmana*, Hassocks, Sussex and Atlantic Highland, NJ, 1977; in the relevant sections of the bibliographical guides published by the American Historical Association; and in a number of bibliographical works dealing with specific countries. Comprehensive, classified, but not annotated bibliographies on publications relating to the Islamic world will be found in J. D. Pearson *et al.*, *Index Islamicus 1906–1955* plus supplements, published in Cambridge and London. Less comprehensive but more critical bibliographical guidance will be found in the *Abstracta Islamica*, published in Paris as a supplement to the *Revue des Études Islamiques* from 1927 onwards.

Considering the interest and importance of the subject, there are remarkably few one-volume histories devoted exclusively to the Arabs. Two widely read narratives of Arab achievement are: Philip K. Hitti, *A History of the Arabs*, London, 1937 and many subsequent editions; and Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, London and Cambridge, MA, 1991. The first is based more directly on Arabic primary sources; the second is more attuned to present-day perceptions and concerns. An excellent general history of the Arab world, unfortunately still available only in German, was written by a number of authors and edited

by Ulrich Haarmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, 2nd edition, Munich, 1994.

Extensive treatments of Arab history may also be found in larger and more general works devoted to the Islamic world, e.g. P. M. Holt, A. K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Cambridge History of Islam*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1970; M. G. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols., Chicago and London, 1974; Ira Lapidus, *A History of Muslim Societies*, Cambridge, 1988; Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach (eds.), *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, Munich, 1984; and in histories of the Middle East and North Africa, e.g., Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: 2000 Years of History from the Rise of Christianity to the Present Day*, London, 1995. The most comprehensive and up to date of these is the series edited by P. M. Holt, under the general title *A History of the Near East*, published by Longmans in London and New York. The volumes so far published include Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, 1986; P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517*, 1986; M. E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Middle East: 1792–1923*, 1987; M. E. Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War*, London, 1991. Other notable studies of the recent and current history of the region include R. Stephen Humphreys, *Between Memory and Desire: the Middle East in a Troubled Age*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999; P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Middle East: from the end of Empire to the end of the Cold War*, London and New York, 1997; Fouad Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: a Generation's Odyssey*, New York, 1998. There are also numerous histories of particular regions and countries, most of which are listed or described in the bibliographical works already cited.

Since the 1970s, the economic and social history of the region has received increasing attention. The most comprehensive coverage will be found in the volumes edited by A. L. Udovitch, *The Islamic Middle East—1700–1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, Princeton, NJ, 1981; and by M. A. Cook, *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, London, 1970. Another work, by E. Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976, deals generally with the

pre-Ottoman period. The economic history of the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been treated in two well-known works: Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy—1800–1914*, London, 1981; and Charles Issawi, *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa*, New York, 1982. The first is more extensive; the second is based on Arabic as well as Western sources, and is informed by a profound knowledge of Arab history and culture. Charles Issawi also edited *The Fertile Crescent 1800–1914, a Documentary Economic History*, New York-Oxford, 1988.

Guidance of a more technical character may be found in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Handbook of Oriental History*, London, 1951, the first section of which, on the Near and Middle East, deals with such questions as transcription, the structure of personal and place names, and systems of dating. It also provides a select glossary of terms and a table of dynasties and rulers. More detailed guidance of the same kind may be found in Jere L. Bacharach, *A Middle East Studies Handbook*, revised edn., Seattle and London, 1984. For specialized treatments see:

(*a*) *Chronology*:

Robert Mantran (ed.), *Les Grandes Dates de l'Islam*, Paris, 1990.

H. U. Rahman, *A Chronology of Islamic History 570–1000 C.E.*, London, 1989.

(*b*) *Dynasties*:

C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*, New York, 1996.

Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Mohammedan Dynasties*, London, 1894; reprinted Beirut, 1965.

(*c*) *Names*:

Article 'Ism', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, Leiden, 1954– (in progress).

Jacqueline Sublet, *Le Voile du nom: essai sur le nom propre arabe*, Paris, 1991.

Annemarie Schimmel, *Islamic Names*, Edinburgh, 1989.

(*d*) *Atlases*:

William C. Brice, *An Historical Atlas of Islam*, Leiden, 1981.

H. W. Hazard, *Atlas of Islamic History*, Princeton, NJ, 1951.
R. Roolvink *et al.*, *Historical Atlas of the Muslim Peoples*, Amsterdam, 1957.
Jean Sellier and André Sellier, *Atlas des peuples d'orient: moyen orient, Caucase, Asie Centrale*, Paris, 1993.

The study of Arab history, as of any other kind, is greatly enriched, even at the elementary level, by some acquaintance with the primary sources. Many of these are now available in English translation. A comprehensive bibliography is provided by Margaret Anderson, *Arabic Materials in English Translation: A Bibliography of Works from the Pre-Islamic Period to 1977*, Boston, 1980. Pages 113–31 deal with history. Collections of translated sources and documents will be found in Bernard Lewis (ed. and trans.), *Islam, from the Prophet Muhammed to the Capture of Constantinople*, 2 vols., New York, 1974; Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert (ed. and trans.), *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, Chicago, 1986; J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, 2nd revised edn., New Haven and London, 1975; Sylvia G. Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962; Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East*, London, 1968.

The following works, dealing with specific periods, areas, and topics are selected from a very much larger number:

(*a*) *Periods and Regions*:

G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, Cambridge, Mass., 1983.
M. A. Cook, *Muhammad*, Oxford, 1983.
G. E. von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam: A History 600–1258*, London, 1970.
L. P. Harvey, *Islamic Spain 1250 to 1500*, Chicago, 1990.
Claude Cahen, *L'Islam des origines au début de l'empire Ottoman*, Paris, 1970.
Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382*, London, 1986.
P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516–1922: A Political History*, London, 1966.
Yusuf Fadl Hasan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, Edinburgh, 1967.
J. M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period*, Cambridge, 1987.

Magali Morsy, *Lexique du monde arabe moderne*, Paris, 1986.

(*b*) *Topics*:

T. Arnold and A. Guillaume (eds.), *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1931.

J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (eds.), *The Legacy of Islam*, second edition, Oxford, 1974.

G. E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam*, 2nd edn., Chicago, 1953.

I. Goldziher, *An Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, Princeton, NJ, 1981.

Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, Chicago, 1988.

H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*, 2nd edn., Oxford, 1930.

R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge, 1930.

J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, Princeton, NJ, 1984.

R. Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, Lausanne, 1962.

E. G. Browne, *Arabian Medicine*, Cambridge, 1921.

H. G. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music to the XIIIth Century*, London, 1929.

J. Ribera, *Music in ancient Arabia and Spain*, Stanford, Ca., 1929.

Ahmad Y. al-Hasan and Donald R. Hill, *Islamic Technology: An Illustrated History*, Cambridge, 1986.

V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (eds.), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, London, 1975.

Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, New York, 1990.

Wiebke Walther, *Women in Islam*, second edition, Princeton and New York, 1992.

Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History*, New Haven, Conn., and London, 1991.

Index

'Abbāsids 65, 82–3, 84–91, 108–9, 110, 115, 120, 126, 133, 157, 159
'abd 90
'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Su'ūd 191
'Abd al-Hamīd II 192
'Abd al-Malik 69, 72, 76, 78
'Abd al-Raḥmān I 133, 139
'Abd al-Raḥmān II 133, 139
'Abd al-Raḥmān III 134, 136
'Abdallah ibn Sa'd ibn Abī Sarḥ 125
Abnā'al-'Arab (Sons of the Arabs) 8
abstract art 149
Abū Bakr 37, 49–51
Abū Hāshim 81
Abū Mūsā 61, 63
Abū Muslim 82, 84, 109, 110, 111
Abū 'Ubayda 49, 52
Abū'l-'Abbās 83
Abū'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī 122
Abyssinia 18
Acre 167
Adelard of Bath 140
Aden 10, 185, 190, 196
Adharbayjān 111
'Adī 37
administration:
  Arab Empire 56–60, 65, 74, 78, 80, 89–90, 158, 203
  by Fāṭimids 121, 122
  Spain 133, 138
  Turkish empire 161, 171
Aelius Gallus 21
Aeschylus 4
Africa:
  North 12, 67, 120–1, 127, 159
  trade with 95
African slaves 90, 92, 95, 112–13
Aghlabids 127, 128
agriculture 202–3, 204
  Arab Empire 91, 92, 161, 174
  Arabia 17, 18, 19
  Egypt 183, 203
  Iraq 203
  prices 55
  productivity 92
  Sicily 129
  Spain 132–3, 138
Ahl al-bayt 24–5
Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn 104
Aḥmad Shawqī 140
'Ā'isha 60–1, 62
Ajnādayn 52
al-, *see under the immediately following word*
Alamūt 162
Alarcos 137
Alcazar 138, 139
Aleppo 104, 178
Alexander the Great 19
Alexandria 53, 123, 124, 187
Alfonso the Wise 140
algebra 149
Algeria 11, 190, 196
Alhambra, Granada 137, 139
'Alī, cousin of Muḥammad 36, 49, 60–4, 73, 76, 115
'Alī ibn Muḥammad 113–15
'Alids 75, 115, 116
Allāt 25
Almanzor 134
Almohades 137, 140
Almoravids 137
Alvaro 135
Amalfi 123
'Āmils 90
al-Amīn 86, 103
Amīr al-Mu'minīn 106
Amīr al-Umarā' 105
Amīrs 90
'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ 43, 53, 60, 62, 63
'Amr ibn Bahr (al-Jāhiz) 85, 99, 147
Amṣār 54, 69, 71–2, 77, 100

Anatolia 47, 48, 54, 160, 171, 188
Anbār 87
Andalusian party 136–7
Angevins 131
Anṣār 38–9
anti-semitism 195
Antioch 164, 167
apocalyptic literature 148
Aqaba, Gulf of 21
ʿAqrabā 51
Arab:
  definition of 1–13, 101, 144
  synonymous with Bedouin 1, 4, 5–9, 101, 144
ʿArab al-Dawla 90
Arab League 195–6
Arabaya 4
Arabia 4, 10
  Fāṭimids 121
  pre-Islamic 15–31
Arabia Eudaemon 19
Arabia Felix 19
Arabic language 4–9, 100, 155–6
  in Amṣār 54
  and Aramaic 20
  classical 18
  and culture 142–4
  external influences on 145–6
  and literature 142–3
  and nationalism 190
  non-Arabs 100, 130, 136, 171
  northern Arabia 18
  official 78, 100
  origins 17–18, 142
  Sicily 129, 130, 131
  southern Arabia 18
  Spain 138, 139
  spread of 7, 10, 143–4
Arabic literature 26, 129, 139, 142–3, 145, 146–8, 150, 153–4, 175
Arabic numerals 149
arabization 100–1, 136, 143–4
Aramaic culture 5, 20, 21, 27, 47, 55, 91
archaeology of Arabia 16
architecture 129, 137, 138, 139, 140, 149
Aretas, *see* Ḥārith; Ḥāritha
Aribi 3
Al-ʿArīsh 53
aristocracy 86–7, 111, 134, 144, 170
Aristotle 149
Armenia 112
arms imports 168
army 90, 105, 112, 114, 122, 159–60, 161, 183
arts 139, 140, 149–50, 154, 175
Asia 67, 111, 138, 152
Assassins (hashīshī) 162–3, 170
assimilation by Arabs 151
Assyrians 3
Athenodorus 22
atomism 150, 153–5
Augustus 21
Aurelian 22
Austria, and Ottoman Empire 182
authoritarian theology 154
authority:
  of Caliphate 58, 90–1, 105–6, 145
  of Ḥadīths 32–3
  of Muḥammad 40–1
autocracy of Caliph 88–9
autonomy of regions 90, 158, 194
Averroes (Ibn Rushd) 149
Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) 149
Awlād al-ʿArab (Children of the Arabs) 8
Aws 37
ʿAyhdhāb 124
Ayyūbids 167, 169, 170
Al-Azhar 121

Bābak 111–12
Babylon 53
Badr 41
Baghdad:
  as capital 103, 105
  Fāṭimids 121–2
  foundation of 87–8
  Mongols 168
  Seljuq period 160, 163
al-Baghdādī 117
Baḥrayn (Al-Ḥasā) 119, 191
Balfour Declaration 195
Balj ibn Bishr 132

Balkans 182
Baltic states 95
Bankers of the Presence 98
banking 98, 100
Barbary states 176
Bari 127
Barmecides (Barmak) 90, 103, 109
Barsbay 172
Bashshār ibn Burd 146
Baṣra 61, 62, 98, 114, 185
Battle of Ajnādayn 52
Battle of Aqrabā 51
Battle of the Bridge 52
Battle of the Camel 61–2
Battle of Great Zab 83
Battle of the Masts 67
Battle of Poitiers 131
Baybars 169–70, 171
Bedouins:
  and British 192
  collectivism 24
  dependent tribes 31
  gods 25
  Hamdānids 104
  Hilāl 158–9
  independence of 104–5
  individualism 24, 43, 154
  and Islam 43–4
  in literature 142–3
  and Muḥammad 5
  paganism 25
  polydaemonism 25
  raids by 158–9, 169, 172, 203
  Sulaym 158–9
  synonymous with Arabs 1, 4, 5–9, 101, 144
  tribalism 24–6
  and Turks 176
  Wahhābism 176–7
  see also nomads
Berbers:
  in North Africa 11, 12, 127, 158, 177
  in Spain 131, 132, 135, 136–7, 158
Beys 178
Bible 18, 35, 136
Bihāfarīd 110
bimetallism 98
biography 154
al-Bīrūnī 149
black (of ʿAbbāsids) 82
Black Sea 95
blood feuds 40
Bokhara 67, 78, 111
Bonaparte, Napoleon 174, 183, 185, 189
Book of Roger 130
books 94, 150, 189
border states of Arabia 27, 28–9, 52
Bosra 55
bread riots 117
Britain:
  colonies 195, 199, 205
  and Egypt 183, 184, 190, 192
  and Gulf Sheikhs 185, 195
  and Iraq 188
  and Jews 195
  mandates in Middle East 192, 195, 196
Brunschvig, Robert 34
Bulgars 95
bureaucracy, *see* administration
Buwayhids 105, 157, 160
Byzantium 19, 47
  and Arab conquests 51–3
  Constantinople 46, 67–8, 79
  and Jews 58
  relations with Arab Empire 66, 67–8, 78, 79, 94, 112, 124–5, 127
  relations with Arabia 23, 27, 28, 51
  relations with Persia 27, 28, 29, 46, 47, 48
  relations with Spain 134
  trade with 124, 138
  see also Roman

Caesarea 52
Caetani, Leone 17, 34, 55
Cairo 53, 121, 162
Caliph/Caliphate 5–7, 13, 62
  ʿAbbāsid 88–9, 108–9, 157, 166, 168, 170
  and army 105

Caliph/Caliphate (*cont.*):
authority of 58, 90–1, 105–6, 145
autocracy of 88–9
beginning of 49
decline of 104–6, 157, 168, 170
Fāṭimid 120–4, 126, 162, 166
Imāms as 115
luxury of 71, 105
murder of 61
Spain 134
succession to 59, 63, 67, 74, 86, 120, 122
under Turks 160–1, 168, 170
Umayyad 64, 65, 76, 77
Campagna 128
Cape of Good Hope 173, 184
capital, concentration of 116–17
Capitulations 182
Capuchins 189
caravans, *see* trade routes
Carmathians 119–21
Caspian Sea 95
caste, *see* social caste
Castrogiovanni 127
causality 155
centralization, Arab Empire 66–7, 75–6
Chad 11, 199
Charles I 131
chemistry 148, 149
China:
Sung dynasty 160
trade 94, 95, 157, 172
Chinese art 149–50
Chosroes Anushirvan 28, 110
Christians/Christianity:
Arab 51, 190
in Arabia 19, 27, 28
and Arabs 189–90
as bankers 100
in Byzantine Empire 47, 58
Capuchins 189
in Ḥīra 28
influence on Islam 146, 148
invasion of Arab Empire 158, 163–8, 171, 177, 181–2
in Iraq 100
and Islam 42, 57–8, 152
Jesuits 189
Maronites 12, 189
Monophysite 27, 47
and Muḥammad 35
Nestorian 27, 28
in Spain 135, 136, 137, 139
in Syria 189, 190
Circassian language 171
civil service, *see* administration
civil wars 61, 65, 69, 77–8, 103, 128, 136–7, 199
see also revolts
civilization, Islamic 142–56
class, *see* social class
coinage 71, 78, 95, 120, 130, 139, 162
collectivism:
of Bedouins 24
in literature 154
colonialism, western, *see* western imperialism
commerce, *see* industry; merchants; trade
communications 16, 184, 187–8
see also trade routes
communism 109, 111, 118–19
conquest, wars of 47–64
Constantinople 46, 67–8, 79, 126, 138
copper 91
Copts 12, 47, 53, 100, 148
Cordoba 131, 137, 138, 139
cotton 184, 187, 203
Crete 126
Crusades 158, 163–8, 170
Ctesiphon (Al-Madā'in) 52, 87
currency 71, 78
customs revenue 171–2
Cyprus 126
Cyzicus 126

Damascus 52, 66, 172, 178
Daniel of Morlay 140
de-Islamization 65
dead lands (*Mawāt*) 70
decorative arts 150, 154
Dervish brotherhoods 179
descent, *see* succession
desert warfare 54, 66

deserts of Arabia 14–15, 17, 159
desiccation of Arabia 17
determinist theology 154
Dhimmīs 57, 71, 79, 81, 101
Dhū Nuwās 19
Dihqāns 85, 111
divine judgement 36
Divine Law 154–5
Dīwāns 58, 69, 73, 89–90
dogma 147, 154–5
Domingo Gundisalvi 140
Druze 12, 177
drying up of Arabia 17

East India Company 187
economic conditions:
  Arab Empire 69–73, 85–7, 91–9, 105, 157–8
  Egypt 172
  Middle East 107, 202
economic organization:
  Carmathians 119–20
  Seljuqs 163
Edessa 164
education:
  Egypt 183–4
  Syria 189
Egypt 12
  agriculture 183, 203
  Arab conquests 53, 56
  British rule 183, 184, 190, 192
  Byzantine rule 47
  as centre of Arab empire 174, 175
  communications 187
  cotton 184
  economic conditions 172
  education 183–4
  exports 123
  Fāṭimid rule 121–4, 128, 162, 166
  fiscal policies 80
  French rule 183
  Greeks in 53
  independence 194
  industrialization 183, 188
  and Israel 198
  and Mongols 169, 170
  nationalism 9, 190
  pre-Islamic 19, 23, 29
  railways 187
  revolts 100, 178, 179
  and Ridda 50
  Saladin 122
  seized by Mu'āwiya 63–4
  sugar 187
  taxation 172, 177
  trade 123–4, 138
  Turkish rule 104, 166–7, 169–73, 174, 176, 177–9
  and UAR 11
Emphyteusis 70
encyclopaedist movement, Iraq 123
equality 101, 113
essayists 147
Ethiopia 19
Ethiopians in Arabia 28
Ethiopic language 18
Euphemius 127
Euphrates 23, 29, 87–8, 169, 203
Europe:
  Arabs in 12, 125–41
  trade with 95–7
European, *see* western
expansion of Arab nation 46, 47–64, 67–8
exports:
  from Arabia 19
  from Egypt 123
  see also trade
extravagance and luxury 71, 105, 156–7

al-Fārābī 149
Faraj ibn Sālim 131
Faramā (Pelusium) 53
Fars 88
Fāṭima 49, 74, 75, 115
Fāṭimids 115, 120–4, 126, 128, 134, 162, 166
Fertile Crescent 11, 15, 17, 53, 55
feudalism 13–14, 155, 161, 174
  southern Arabia 20
feuds among tribes 76–7, 81, 82, 99
Fez 93
fiefs, *see* land

firearms 176
fiscal policies 78, 79, 80, 97, 172
foreign influences in Arabia 27–31
  see also western
France 12, 97, 131
  colonies 195, 199, 205
  and Egypt 183
  mandates in Middle East 192, 194, 195
  and Ottoman Empire 182
  trade 182
Franks in Spain 137
Franks in Syria 166
Frederick II 130–1
Fulcher of Chartres 164

Galen 148
Gallienus 21
Garigliano 128
garrison towns 54, 100
Gaza 55
Gaza Strip 197
Genesis 18
Genghiz Khān 168
geographers 129
geometry 149
Gerard of Cremona 140
Germany 200
Ghassān 27–8
al-Ghazālī 118, 163, 175
Gibb, Sir Hamilton 2
Gibraltar 131
Gindibu the Aribi 3
Giralda Tower, Seville 139
Gobineau, J. A. de 84
God 36, 99, 107, 145, 155
gods:
  Bedouins 25
  southern Arabia 20
Golan Heights 198
gold 91, 94, 95, 98, 204
Goldziher, Ignaz 34
government, *see* administration; state
grammar 147
Granada 137, 139
Great Zāb 83
Greek influences 47, 139, 148, 149, 150–1
  see also Hellenic
Greeks in Egypt 53
Guidi, Ignazio 17–18
Gulf Sheikhs and Britain 185, 195
Gulf States 11
Gulf War (1990–1) 199, 206

Ḥabashat 18
Ḥabīb ibn Abī 'Ubayda 127
al-Hādī 86
Ḥadīths (Traditions) 32–4, 71, 99, 147
al-Ḥajjāj 78
al-Ḥakam II 134
half-Arabs 74, 82, 85, 86, 87
Halkin, A. S. 117
  see also Mawālī; racial divisions
Ḥamād 15
Ḥamdānids 104
Ḥanīfs 35, 46
al-Ḥarīrī 175
al-Ḥārith ibn Jabala (Aretas) 27, 28
Ḥāritha (Aretas) 21
Hārūn al-Rashīd 86, 90, 93, 103
Al-Ḥasā (Baḥrayn) 119, 191
Ḥasan-i Sabbāh 162
al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Kalbī 128
Hāshim 34
Hāshimiyya 81–2, 87
ḥashīshī (Assassins) 162–3, 170
Hegira (Hijra) 37, 38
Hell 152
Hellenic/Hellenistic influences 19, 20, 27, 28, 146
  see also Aramaic; Greek
Heraclius 28, 51–2
Herat 67
hereditary succession, *see* succession
Herman the Dalmatian 140
Ḥijāz 16, 21, 26, 29, 176, 191, 192
Hijra (Hegira) 37, 38
Hilāl, Banū 158–9
Himyarites 19
Hippocrates 148
Hīra 27, 28, 52

Hishām 80, 89, 136
Hispano-Moorish architecture 139
historiography 147, 154, 155, 175–6
Ḥudaybiyya 42–3
Hülekü 168
Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq 148
Ḥusayn 68

Iberian peninsula 79, 131–41
Ibn al-Zubayr 77
Ibn ʿĀmir 71
Ibn Ḥamdīs 129
Ibn Ḥawqal 128
Ibn Jubayr 130
Ibn Khaldūn 8, 147, 159, 175, 181
Ibn Khurradādhbeh 97
Ibn Muljam 64
Ibn Rushd (Averroes) 149
Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) 149
Ibrāhīm (ʿAbbāsid) 82, 83
Ibrāhīm (son of Muhammad ʿAlī) 184
idolatry 36
al-Idrīsī 129
Iltizāms 177, 178
ʿImād ad-Dīn 161
Imāms 115, 116, 122
imperialism, western, *see* western imperialism
impersonality in literature 154
imports to Arab Empire 91–2, 94–7
  see also trade
Imru'l-Qays 5
independence of Arab states 194–5, 196
India:
  Muslims in 79, 124
  trade with 94, 123, 138, 172, 184, 185, 187
individual in Bedouin society 24, 43, 154
industrial arts 150
industry 204
  Arab Empire 92–4, 97
  Egypt 183, 188
  Fāṭimid era 123–4
  Spain 138
infiltration by Arabs 55, 77
inheritance, *see* succession
inland waterways 185, 187
interest rates 98
investment 98–9
Iran/Iranians 11, 48, 54, 103–5
  art 149–50
  culture 151–2
  independence movements 109–10, 159
  invasion by Mongols 168–9
  invasion by Turks 160
  in Iraq 48, 157
  oil 188
  scholars 148–9
  in Turkish administration 161
  war with Iraq (1980–8) 199
  see also Persia
Iraq 11, 12
  as ʿAbbāsid centre 87
  agriculture 203
  and al-Amīn 103
  Arab conquest 52–3, 56, 64
  and Britain 188
  British mandate 192
  Caliphate 104–6
  Christians 100
  communications 187
  encyclopaedist movement 123
  fiscal policies 80
  Gulf War (1990–1) 199, 206
  independence 194
  invasion by Mongols 168–9, 201
  invasion by Turks 160
  Iranians in 48, 157
  Jews in 100
  oil 188
  revolts 68, 76, 77–8, 112–15
  and Ridda 50
  trade 169
  Turks in 160, 177
  war with Iran (1980–9) 199
iron 91
irrigation and drainage 91–2, 112–13, 129, 169, 188
Isḥāq the Turk 110–11
Islam 13, 144–5
  and Arabism 58

Islam (*cont.*):
and Christianity 42, 57–8, 146, 148, 152
and Jews 43, 57–8, 148, 152
morality 45
and non-Arabs 58, 71
rise of 5–10, 32–46
sects 12, 73–7
tolerance of 57, 71, 101, 103, 135, 152
see also religion
Islamic civilization 142–56
'Islamic' compared with 'Muslim' 7
Islamic Empire 84–106
Ismā'īl, Imām 116
Ismā'īlīs 12, 115–24, 162–3, 168, 178, 179
Israel 11, 196–7, 198
Issawi, Charles 159
Italy:
colonies 195
trade with 123

Jabal Shammar 191
Jabal Ṭāriq 131
Ja'far, Imām 115
al-Jāḥiẓ ('Amr ibn Bahr) 85, 99, 147
Jawf oases 16
Jedda 30
Jenghiz Khān 168
Jerusalem 52, 164, 166, 167, 196, 197
Jesuits 189
Jews/Judaism:
anti-semitism 195
in Arabia 19, 27
as bankers 98
Bible 18, 35, 136
and Britain 195
and Byzantines 47, 58
influence on Islamic tradition 148
in Iraq 100
and Islam 43, 57–8, 152
Israel 11, 196–7, 198
in Medina 27, 37, 42
and Muhammad 35, 39, 42
in Palestine 47, 195
in Spain 131, 132, 135, 137, 139, 140
and trade 95–7
Jibuti 196
jihād 43, 164
Jizya 57, 80, 81
John of Seville 140
Jordan 11
British mandate 192, 194
independence 196
and Israel 197, 198
Palestinians in 197, 198
Julian (the Visigoth) 131
Jundayshapur 148
Junds 132, 134
Jurjān 93
Justinian 27

Ka'ba 42
Kabul 67
Kalbids 128
Karbalā' 73
Khadīja 35, 36
Khālid al-Barmakī 90
Khālid al-Qaṣrī 80
Khālid ibn al-Walīd 43, 51–2
Kharāj 57, 79–81
Khārijites (Khawārij) 63, 76, 81, 113
Khaybar 43
Khazraj 37, 49
Khazars 95
Khidāsh 82
Khurāsān/Khurāsānī 54, 80, 81, 82, 100, 103, 109, 111, 159
Khurramiyya 111
Khwārizm 95
Kinda 26, 46
al-Kindī 149
kingdom, Arab 65–83
kings, Buwayhid 157
kingship (Mulk) 65
Kitāb Rujjār 130
Koran, *see* Qur'ān
Kūfa 61, 62, 73, 74, 77–8, 81, 87
Kurds 12, 111

Laḥsā 119, 120

Lakhm dynasty 28
Lammens, Henri 31, 34
land:
  dead lands (*Mawāt*) 70
  distribution and ownership of 57, 69–72, 79–80, 161, 170–1, 177, 178
  leases (Qatī'a/Qatā'i') 57, 70
  Spain 132–3, 138
  taxation of 57, 69, 70, 79–81, 87, 92
language 144
  Arabic, *see* Arabic language
  Circassian 171
  Ethiopic 18
  Latin 130–1, 139–40
  of law 100
  Malay 144
  Persian 144
  Semitic 17–18
  Spanish 140
  of theology 100
  Turkish 144, 171, 174, 175, 189
  written 20, 94, 147, 151
Latin translation of Arabic works 130–1, 139–40
Latium 128
law:
  Arab Empire 56
  Caliphs subject to 89
  language of 100
  Qur'ān 38
  and religion 33, 106, 144–5, 154–5
  tolerated religions 57
League of Arab States 195–6
League of Nations 194, 195
leagues of tribes 77
learning 147
leases (Qatī'a/Qatā'i') 57, 70
Lebanon 11, 12, 177
  civil war 199
  French mandate 192, 194
  independence 195
lexicography 147
libraries:
  Alexandria 53
  Baghdad 148
Libya 11, 158, 199
Liḥyān 23
literature:
  Arabic 26, 129, 139, 142–3, 145, 146–8, 150, 153–4, 175
  Persian 144, 146, 175
  religious 148
  Turkish 175
Long Peace 23, 29
Lucera 130
luxury and extravagance 71, 105, 156–7

Macoraba 30
Al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon) 52, 87
Madīnat as-Salām 87
Madrasa 163
Maghrib 159
Mahdī 74, 75
al-Mahdī 86
Majlis 25, 27, 31, 48
Mala' 31
Malay language 144
Mamlūks 90, 105, 112, 159–60, 169–72, 173, 176, 177
al-Ma'mūn 86, 103, 104, 109, 112, 148, 149
Manāt 25
mandates 192, 194–5
Manfred 130
al-Manṣūr (Caliph) 86, 87–8, 89, 103, 109, 110
al-Manṣūr (wazīr) 134, 136
al-Maqrīzī 170
Ma'rib dam 18, 23
maritime transport 124–5, 167, 173, 184–7, 204
Marj Rāhiṭ 68, 77
Marmara, Sea of 126
Maronites 12, 189
marriage, inter-racial 72, 74, 86
Marv 103, 111
Marwān I 68–9
Marwān II 81, 86
Māsarjawayh 148
al-Mas'ūdī 180
mathematics 149
Mauritania 11
Mawālī (Mawlā) 58, 71–5, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89, 100

Mawālī (Mawlā) (*cont.*):
see also half-Arabs
Mawāt (dead lands) 70
Mazara 127
Mazdak 109–10, 111
Māzyār 111
Mecca 26–7, 30–1, 35, 61
merchants 35, 71
and Muḥammad 36–7, 38
patriciate 27, 31, 36, 59, 65, 75–6
theocracy 75–6
Turkish rule 176
medicine 148, 149
Medina (Yathrib) 27, 37–41, 50, 60–1, 75–6
Mediterranean 123, 124–5, 138, 151, 174, 185, 204
merchants 35, 71, 98–9
see also trade
Merida 131
Mesopotamia 18, 53, 88, 166
Messianic pretenders 74–5, 82, 107, 108
Messina 127, 128
metals 91, 156, 204
Michael Scot 130, 140
migratory peoples, *see* Bedouins; nomads
militant religious brotherhoods 191
military dictatorships 122, 158, 160, 169
military service 170, 177, 178
mixed marriages 72, 74, 86
monarchy:
Arab Kingdom 65–83
southern Arabia 20
monetary economy 71, 78, 105, 158, 161, 174
money-changers 98
Mongols 168–9, 170, 171, 172, 200, 201
Monophysite Christians 27, 47
monotheism 29, 35, 45
morality 29, 45
Moroccans in Spain 135
Morocco 11, 104, 158, 177, 201
Mosul 104, 166
motor vehicles 188
mountain peoples 174, 177
Mozarabs 136
Muʿāwiya I 59, 62–4, 65–8, 124, 126
Muhājirūn 38–9
Muḥammad 32–46
and Bedouin 5
birth of 31, 34
death of 45, 48, 50
and merchants 98–9
succession to 48–9, 73, 81–2
Muḥammad ʿAlī 177, 183, 184, 189
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb 176
Muḥammad ibn ʿAli ibn al-ʿAbbās 81, 82
Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya 74–5, 115
Muḥammad Kurd ʿAli 141
Muḥtasib 97
al-Muʿizz 121
Mukhtār 74–5
al-Mukhtāra 114
Mulk (kingship) 65
Multazim 177
Munāfiqūn 38–9
al-Mundhir III 28
al-Muqaddasī 95
al-Muqannaʿ 111
murder:
of Caliph 61
see also Assassins
Mūsā, Imām 116, 131
music 133, 154
'Muslim' compared with 'Islamic' 7
al-Mustanṣir 121, 162
Mustaʿrib 136
al-Mutanabbī 122, 146–7
al-Muʿtaṣim 105, 112, 159, 177
Muwallad 136

Nabateans 5, 21, 23, 30
Naḍīr, Banū 37
Nahrawān 76
Najd 16, 51, 176, 177
Najrān 27

Namāra Epitaph 4–5
Naples 127
Napoleon, *see* Bonaparte
Narbonne 131
Naṣr ibn Sayyār 80
nationalism, Arab 9, 190–6, 201
nationality of Arabs 1, 8–9
Navas de Tolosa, Las 137
navigation 95, 124
navy 67, 79, 123, 124–5, 204
neo-classicism 146–7
Nestorian Christians 27, 28
New Preaching 162
Nile 175, 187
Nile Valley 29
Nīshāpūr 110
Niẓām al-Mulk 161, 162
Nizāmiyya 163
Nizār 162
nomads 4, 8, 9, 20, 31, 43, 60, 65, 159
  see also Bedouins; tribes
Normans in Sicily 128–30
northern Arabia 18, 20–3, 26, 28, 30, 76–7
Nufūd desert 15, 16
numerals, Arabic 149
Nūr al-Dīn 166, 167

oases 26
occasionalist theology 154
Odenathus (Udhayna) 21
Oghuz 160
oil 188, 206
oligarchy of Mecca 27, 31, 36, 59, 65, 75–6
opposition to the state 73–6, 107–24, 162–3, 178–9
  see also revolts
oral culture 26, 32–3, 146, 147, 150
Ottoman Empire 9, 11, 171, 176–9, 184, 200, 201
  and western Europe 182–4, 192, 205
  see also Turkey
Oxus 168

paganism 25
Palermo 127, 128
Palestine 47, 51, 52
  British mandate 192, 195, 196
  Crusades 164, 167
  Fāṭimids 121
  partition 196–7, 198
  revolts 195
  Turks in 160
Palestine Liberation Organization 196, 198–9
Palmyra 2, 21, 30
Pantellaria 127
paper 93–4, 150
party kings in Spain 136–7
Pashas 177–8, 184
pastoral economy 24
patricians of Mecca 27, 31, 36, 59, 65, 75–6
patronage 151
pay and pensions 69, 80, 87, 90, 93
peasants 16, 92, 109, 110, 115, 177
Pelusium (Faramā) 53
Peninsular and Orient Company 187
pensions 69, 80, 90
Perfect Man/Perfect State 154
persecution:
  of Christian heretics 47
  of Dhimmīs 101
  of Islam 36–7
  of Jews 47, 131, 140
  see also tolerance
Persia/Persians 48
  and Arab conquests 52–4, 73
  influence on Arab empire 89
  under Arab rule 73–4
  in Arabia 19, 21, 23, 27, 28, 52
  Assassins 162
  independence movements 109–12
  relations with Arabs 84–5, 88, 103–4, 109
  relations with Byzantium 27, 28, 29, 47, 48
  relations with Rome 23, 27
  revolts 114–15
  see also Iran
Persian Gulf 23, 29
Persian language 144

Persian literature 175
Persian poetry 144, 146, 175
personal independence in Bedouin society 24, 43, 154
Petra 21
Petrus Alphonsi 140
Philip, Emperor of Rome 21
philosophy 140, 148, 149, 163
physics 149
piracy 185
Pisa 123
poetry 142–3, 145, 146, 153–4
  Persian 144, 175
Poitiers 131
political organization
  Arab Empire 56–60, 66–7, 103–6, 191, 203
  Bedouins 24–5
  Carmathians 119–20
  Islam 33, 40–1, 49–50
  Mecca 31, 36
  Medina 38–41, 42
  oases 26
  southern Arabia 20
  Spain 133–7, 138
  tribes 24–5
politics, and religion 40–1, 107–12, 192
poll tax 57, 80
  see also Jizya
polydaemonism of Bedouins 25
polytheism in southern Arabia 20
Pompey 21
Portugal/Portuguese 173
pottery 150
precious stones 91
pretenders, Messianic 74–5, 82, 107, 108
prices 55, 172
printing 189
productivity in agriculture 92
prophets 152
  see also Muḥammad
prose literature 147, 154
provinces, autonomy of 90, 158, 194
Ptolemies 19

Qāḍī 145, 181
Qādisiyya 52
Qatī'a (Qatā'i') 57, 70
Qaynuqā' 37
Qayrawān 158
Qays 77
Qipchaqs 169–70, 171
Qumm 73
Qur'ān 36, 100
  on battle of Badr 41
  and Bedouin 5
  esoteric interpretations 116
  interpretation of 147
  and Judaeo-Christian scriptures 35
  law 38
  as literature 147
  on Muḥammad 32, 34, 35
  on vengeance 62
Quraysh tribe 30–1, 34, 37, 39, 42–3, 44
Qurayẓa, Banū 37, 42
Qutayba ibn Muslim 78

racial divisions 85, 99–103
  see also half-Arabs
raiders and raiding 24, 41, 50–1
railways 16, 187–8
Raqqa 88
rationalism, scientific 150
al-Rāzī (Rhases) 131, 149
Red Sea 23, 29, 185
Red Sea coast 16
refugees 195, 197, 198
regional autonomy 90, 158, 194
religion 147
  and 'Abbāsids 90–1
  and Arab conquests 55–6
  in Arab Empire 65–6
  Arabia 20, 29, 35, 46
  Bedouins 25
  and Fāṭimids 122
  and law 33, 106, 144–5, 154–5
  Middle East 29
  and nationalism 190, 194
  and politics 40–1, 107–12, 192
  revelation 35, 36
  Seljuq period 163, 175
  as social bond 40, 55, 65–6, 144, 190

tolerated minorities 57, 71, 101, 103, 135, 152
see also Islam; theology
religious literature 148
Renan, Ernest 32
revelation in religion 35, 36
revenge 62
revolts:
Africa 127
Egypt 100, 178, 179
Iraq 68, 76, 77–8, 112–15
Palestine 195
Persia 114–15
slaves 112–15
Spain 132
Syria 108
tribes 60, 61, 75
revolutionary change 84–6, 107–24
Rhases (al-Rāzī) 131, 149
rhetoric 146
Rhodes 126
Ridda 50
river transport 185, 187
roads 187, 188
Roger I 128
Roger II (the Pagan) 129
Roman Empire:
relations with Arabia 21–3
relations with Persia 23
see also Byzantium
Rome 127
royal monopolies 172
Russia 207
and Ottoman Empire 182
trade 95, 157

Saba 18, 19
Saddam Hussein 199, 206
al-Saffāḥ 83, 86, 87
Ṣaffārids 104
Saladin (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn) 122, 166–7
salinity of soil 203
salt extraction 112–13
Sāmānids 104
Samarqand 79
sand deserts of Arabia 14–15
Saracenic-Norman architecture 129
Saracens 7
Ṣarrāf 98
Sasanids 28, 48, 89, 109–10
Sa'ūdī Arabia 10, 191
independence 194
oil 188
Sayda 178
Sayyids (Sheikhs) 24–5, 49, 66
Scandinavia 95, 162
Schacht, Joseph 34
scholarship 147, 148–50, 153, 175
science 140, 147, 148–9
scientific rationalism 150
sea transport 124–5, 167, 173, 184–7, 204
sedentary peoples 4, 9, 26, 29
Seljuqs 124, 160–3, 169, 177
Semitic languages 17–18
Semitic peoples 17–18, 25
Senegal 158
settlement by Arabs 55, 70–1, 77
Seville 131, 137, 138, 139
Seville, Archbishop of 136
Shalmaneser III 3
Shāmī 133
Sharī'a 43, 89, 144–5, 147, 153
see also law
Sharīfs 176, 177
Sheba (Saba) 18, 19
Sheikhs 24–5, 49, 66
Shem 18
Shī'a/Shī'ism 12, 73–5, 77, 81, 82, 110, 115, 157, 160
shipping 124–5, 167, 173, 184–7
Shūrā 59, 63, 66, 67
Shu'ūbīya 100
Sicily 121, 126–31
Ṣiffīn 62, 63
silver 91, 94, 95, 98, 204
Sinai Peninsula 198
Sincere Brethren of Basra 123
Sind 79
Sīra 32, 34, 35
Sīstān 93
Slav party in Spain 136
slaves and slavery 86, 92
Egypt 171
Mamlūks 90, 105, 112, 159–60, 169–72, 173, 176, 177

slaves and slavery (*cont.*):
revolts 112–15, 116
Spain 136
trade in 95
social aspects of Islam 33
social caste 69, 99, 100
social class:
in Arab Empire 72–4, 99–103
in Mecca 36
social effects of western influence 189–90
social organization:
Arab Empire 69–74, 85–7, 99–103, 105, 116–17, 161–2, 203
Bedouins 24
Carmathians 119–20
Medina 38, 40–1
Spain 132–41
Somalia 196
Sonpādh 110
South Yemen 196
southern Arabia 18–20, 76–7
sovereignty and loyalty 66
Soviet Union 206, 207
Spain 79, 104
Christians in 135, 136, 137, 139
Jews in 131, 132, 135, 137, 139, 140
Muslims in 124, 131–41
revolts 132
trade with 123
Spanish language 140
spice trade 19–20, 30
state:
control of land 57, 69–70, 161, 170, 177
intervention 97
steamships 185, 187
steppes of Arabia 15
succession:
to Caliphate 59, 63, 67, 74, 86, 120, 122
to Muḥammad 48–9, 73, 81–2
to Sultānate 171
Sudan 11, 199
Suez 185, 187
Suez Canal 187
Sūfīs 175, 179
sugar 187, 203
Sulaym 158–9
Sulaymān 79
Sulaymān ibn Kathīr 82
Sultāns/Sultanate 145, 161, 168, 169–72
Sunna 25
Sunnī 73, 160
surrender and law 56
Swabians 130
Swahili 144
Sweden 95
Syracuse 127
Syria 11, 20, 28, 29, 47
Arab conquests 50–3, 56
Assassins 162, 170
British occupation 192
Caliphate 62–4
Christians 189, 190
communications 187
Crusades 164, 170
education 189
Fāṭimids 121
French mandate 192, 194, 195
independence 195
and Israel 198
and Mongols 169
revolts 108
rule by Egypt 104
trade 182
tribes and tribalism 68, 99, 104
Turco-Mongol invasion 172
Turks in 160, 166, 176, 177, 178, 184, 201
as Umayyad centre 66, 73, 81, 87
Syriac writings 148
Syrians in Spain 132–3
Syro-Egyptian empire 167, 170

al-Ṭabarī 113
Ṭāhir 104
Ṭā'īf 37
Ṭalḥa 60, 61, 62
Talmudic literature 148
Taranto 127
Ṭarīf 131
Ṭāriq 131
Tasso, Torquato 7

taxation 71, 78
by Carmathians 120
customs revenue 171–2
discriminatory 55, 57, 58, 69, 72, 79, 80, 87
Egypt 172, 177
farming of 105, 158, 161, 178
by Fāṭimids 121
by Ismā'īlīs 118
Jizya 57, 80, 91
Kharāj 57, 79–81
of land 57, 69, 70, 79–81, 87, 92
poll tax 57, 80
'Ushr 57, 69, 70
Zakāt 44
technological innovation 92, 158, 173, 181, 203, 207
textile industry 92–3, 138, 204
Thamūd 23
theocracy of Islam 65, 75–6, 78, 107, 208
Theodore Prodromos 130
theological literature 148
theology:
dogma 147, 154–5
language of 100
western, and Islam 45–6
Theophanes 66
Tigris 87–8, 169, 203
Tihāma 16
timber 91
Tinnīs 93
Ṭirāz 93, 129
tithes ('Ushr) 57, 69, 70
Toledo 131, 132, 137, 140
tolerance 57, 71, 101, 103, 135, 152
see also persecution
trade 71, 94–9
China 94, 95, 157, 172
effect of Crusades 167–8
Egypt 123–4, 171–2, 182
Fāṭimid era 123–4
France 182
India 94, 123, 138, 172, 184, 185, 187
Iraq 169
Italy 123
and Jews 95–7
Muḥammad's experience of 35
routes 16, 20, 21, 23, 27, 29, 94, 103, 105, 112, 169, 173–4, 175
Russia 95, 157
Scandinavia 95, 162
Spain 138
Syria 182
western competition 204
see also merchants
Traditions of Muḥammad, *see* Ḥadīths
Trajan 21
Transjordan 192
translations:
from Arabic 130–1, 139–40
to Arabic 148–9, 183
Transoxania 168
tribes and tribalism 24–5
Christianized 51
feuds 76–7, 81, 82, 99
political organization 24–5, 49, 66–7
revolts 60, 61, 75
Ridda 50
Syria 68, 99, 104
and Turkish rule 174
see also Budouins
trigonometry 149
Tripoli (Syrian) 123, 164, 167, 178
Tughrul Bey 160
Tūlūnids 104
Tunisia 11, 104, 120, 127, 158
Turco-Mongol invasions 172
Turkey/Turks 8, 11, 124
in Arab army 90, 105, 159–60
rule of Arab Empire 159–79, 202
see also Ottoman Empire
Turkish culture 175
Turkish language 144, 171, 174, 175, 189
Turkish literature 175
Twelver Shī'a 116
Tyre 167

'Ubaydallāh, Imām 120
'Ubaydallah ibn Ziyād 68
'Ubaydullah ibn al-Ḥabḥāb 80
Udhayna (Odenathus) 21

Uḥud 42
'Ukāẓ 30
'Ulamā' 145
Ulfa 118
'Umar I 37, 49, 50, 52, 56, 57, 58–9, 60, 65, 99, 126
'Umar II ('Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz) 65, 79–80, 126
Umayyads 37, 59–64, 65–83, 84–5, 89, 108–9, 110, 134–6, 148, 159
Umma 40–1, 43, 50
Ummat al-Islām 8
Union of Arab Emirates 11
United Arab Republic 11
United Nations 196, 197–8
United States 188, 189, 207
Urdu 144
Usāma ibn Munqidh 166
'Ushr 57, 79, 81
USSR 206, 207
Ustādhsīs 111
usury 98
'Uthmān ibn 'Affān 37, 59–61, 62, 126
'Uzza 25

Vasco da Gama 173
Veiled One (al-Muqanna') 111
vengeance 62
Venice/Venetians 123, 167, 173
Visigoths 131–2
Volga 95

Wādī'l-Dawāsir 16
Wādī'l-Rumma 16
Wādī'l-Sirḥān 16
Wahballāt 22
Wahhābism 176–7, 191
Walīd 78
warrior caste 99
water 17
see also irrigation and drainage
waterways, inland 185, 187
al-Wāthiq 105
Wazīrs 89–90, 103, 117, 122, 172
West Bank 197
western culture, Arab views of 180–1
western imperialism 163, 200, 201, 202, 207
and Arab nationalism 8–9, 190–6
western influences:
on Arabs 180–208
on Islam 155, 181, 207–8
western views of Islam 45–6
will of God 155
William II 130
Winckler–Caetani theory 17
World War I 188, 192, 194–5
World War II 194–5, 199, 206
written language 20, 94, 147, 151
Wufūd 44, 66, 67

Ya'qūb ibn Killis 121
al-Ya'qūbī 87
Yāqūt 111, 175
Yarmūk 27, 52
Yathrib, *see* Medina
Yazdajird 52
Yazīd 67, 68
Yazīd II 80
Yazīdīs 12
Yemen 10–11, 12, 19, 28, 29, 120, 176, 194, 199
Yūsuf ibn Tashfīn 137

Zakāt 44
Zangī 166
Zanj 112–15, 119
Zaydīs 12
Zaynab (Zenobia) 21–2
Zionism 195
Ziryāb 133
Ziyād 67, 68
Ziyādatallāh 127
Zoroastrianism 48, 74, 109, 110
Zubayr 60, 61, 62

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