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Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Biographical Literature (*Tazkirahs*)

Marcia Hermansen*

The compiling of biographical compendia has been a distinctive and prominent literary and religious activity in Muslim civilization from early times to the present. In Muslim South Asia, the biographical tradition both extends this tradition within new cultural and linguistic spaces and makes its own contributions, in terms of genre and thematic concerns. The spaces evoked in this literature, then, are configured on the basis of an established tradition while integrating new territory, for example, by siting South Asian Muslim individuals and landscapes according to imagined “Islamic” spaces of Mecca, Medina, the Hijaz, and so on. At the same time, the memorializing activity of the *tazkirah* tradition inscribes the tradition on this new ground. While a number of biographical forms existed in the classical tradition of Islamic literature, some were more concerned with genealogy and legal authority, such as the earlier *tabaqat*,¹ while others were more concerned with defining saintly and scholarly legitimacy, such as *manaqib*² and *tazkirahs*. It is these latter works, then, that are more likely to reflect elements of regional identity, although later *tabaqat*, especially those with a regional emphasis, may also contain such material.

In the process of “making Muslim space,” one can trace shifts that occur over time in the conception of these spaces, both in themselves and in relation to others, and particularly in the sense of permanence and security of a space, as well as in its religious and cultural meaning. Early sitings relative to the biographical tradition often involve the association of a figure with a place. An example would be the trope of the saint as originator of a site by choosing it, blessing it, protecting it, or being buried there.

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¹Literally, books of ranking or classes, to be discussed later in this paper.

²Compendia of saintly miracles and virtues.

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The spaces shift and bear various relationships to the land to which they become attached. For example, early motifs consist of siting graves, building mosques, and erecting monuments and of saints giving blessings for the creation of a place, protecting it, and defining it. In later times, it is not so much the creation, but the enshrinement and remembering of a siting that is evoked.

In the case of the expansion of the Islamic tradition to further reaches such as South Asia, lines of resistance may be traced not only along oral versus written axes, but in terms of the charismatic authority of the saints who sanctify local soil and often challenge the representatives of earlier traditions. Motifs of supernatural powers acquired through the practice of austerities have ancient Indian parallels but were also imported from Central Asia, with its own substratum of local shamanic practice.³

It is natural that in the case of expansion of a religion to new locations, the contents of social relations are matched by new experimental models, such as utopias, new philosophical systems, and political programs.⁴ On occasion, these dimensions of newness may be found intertwined as subthemes in hagiographic narratives.

The scope of this memorializing was both concrete inscription in writing and a nostalgic evocation in mood of what had been. The early *tazkirahs* laid a claim to Muslim space in South Asia by Islamicizing the soil and by creating a “new” home, configuring “new” spiritual and intellectual centers, and laying out “new” circuits of pilgrimage.⁵

What are some of the ways of thinking about the interaction of the local with the Islamic biographical tradition? After all, in many cases, the local or regional collections of saintly and scholarly lives were, at the intellectual level, a vernacularization of themes and genres with classical Arabic and later Persian roots. Still, in regions such as South Asia, they

³Simon Digby, “The Sufi Saint as a Source of Authority in Medieval India,” in *Purusartha*, vol. 9, *Islam et société en Asie du sud*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1986), 60.

⁴Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 2.

⁵The incorporation of such pilgrimage circuits into calendars of ritual observances of saints’ anniversaries is discussed in Carl W. Ernst, “An Indo-Persian Guide to Sufi Shrine Pilgrimage,” in *Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam* (Istanbul: Isis, 1993), 43–68. “Whenever one comes to a town, the first thing one has to accomplish is to kiss the feet of the saints who are full of life, and after that, the honor of pilgrimage to the tombs of saints found there. If one’s master’s tomb is in that city, one first carries out the pilgrimage to him; otherwise one visits the tomb of every saint shown him” (61). Quoted from Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, *Lata’ifi Ashrafi*, comp. Nizam Gharib Yamani, 2 vols. (Delhi: Nusrat al-Matabi’, 1295/1878), 2:28.

could take on a distinctive literary character specific to the linguistic and geographic region. An example would be the South Asian *malʿuzat*, the diary-like collections preserved of a saint’s regular pronouncements during sessions with his followers.⁶

Local or regional identity can in some premodern cases be described in the context of a circulation of information and authority facilitated by the unusual cosmopolitanism of medieval Islam and the sanctioning of travel in the pursuit of knowledge and patronage, which linked many local environments with more prestigious centers and traditions.

Often the sites of local identity were, as Richard Bulliet theorizes, most strongly marked at the edges of Islamic expansion. The theoretical discussions of this element of expansion/Islamization by Richard Eaton and Bulliet critique the old model of center and periphery in terms of Islamic lands—because of the static nature of the relationship, which seems to imply its privileging an Arab center. Bulliet notes, for example, that Baghdad, at a certain historical moment, would have been noncentral and that those persons on the edge, the outpost, or the frontier may not themselves have had that sense of their own positioning. According to this formulation, “the story of Islam has always privileged the view from the center.”⁷ The view from the edge, on the other hand, would enable the encompassment of elements of linguistic and cultural diversity.⁸ The edge, for Bulliet, is an evolving front that creates the center through expansion and incorporation. According to Bulliet, it is the biographical dictionaries that preserve the view from the edge and are, thus, a better place to look for the local rather than for other genres.

Eaton, in particular in his work on Bengal, is interested in changing frontiers and in examining how Dar al-Harb areas become transformed into Dar al-Islam institutionally, economically, and ideologically.⁹ Changing frontiers are strongly implicated in shifts in the concept of the local, and these frontiers and boundaries combine geographical and imagined spaces.

⁶A discussion of early *malʿuzat* may be found in Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: Sufi Literature in Pre-Mughal India* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978); Carl Ernst, “The Textual Formation of Oral Teachings in Early Chishti Sufism,” in *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. Jeffrey R. Timm (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 271-297; and Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, *Naqd-i Malʿuzat* (Delhi: Maktabah-i Jami’ah, 1989).

⁷Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam, the View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5.

⁸*Ibid.*, 8.

⁹Richard Maxwell Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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The frontier mentality also crystallizes against the image of the extraterritorial image; for example, at times of threat, the trope of the saint as the warrior reemerges.¹⁰ One may, thus, expect evidences of binary or conflictual spaces preserved in local hagiography of expansion as well as a possibility of the emergence of ternary ones that have been mediated and stabilized. Thus, a shrine may provide the third, mediating element that reconciles the clash of new and previous traditions.¹¹

In this paper, the focus is on South Asian materials that imagine the space or siting of biography and the shifting of these sites and boundaries during the premodern, modern, and nationalist periods. One way to spatially conceive of this shift is in terms of a movement from city to nation as locations of significant spheres for the enactment or celebration of a broader Muslim identity. It must be clarified, however, that, even in the era of the nation, the city theme persists as an important defining element in the literature of memorialization and that local shrines and particular interest groups circulate their counter-memories in the face of overarching narratives of national identity.

South Asian Examples of the Local in Historical Review

While biographical literature is not exclusive to Islamic societies, it fulfills a particularly prominent and significant role in their literary historical traditions. The persistence of certain general cultural themes typical of Islamic civilization are evident in the *taẓkīrah* genre in Muslim South Asia, an example being the moods of nostalgia or boasting which we can trace back even to the Jahiliyyah poetry of the Arabs.¹² The genealogical preoccupation of the Arabs merged with the creation of a sacred history embodied by the early Muslim community in early biographical compendia written in Arabic, such as the *Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd (ca. 784), as well as the practice of extensively listing sometimes very ordinary participants in the Muslim community, as if to somehow represent its existence and

¹⁰Richard Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 19-44.

¹¹Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 272.

¹²Discussed, for example, in Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Nejd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabian Nasib* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993) and Michael Sells, *Desert Tracings; Six Classical Arabian Odes* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).

significance by remembering even the names of those who had been present.¹³

In terms of thematic characteristics, the nature of Islamic civilization, at least from the perspective of the celebrators of its intellectual vibrancy, had an overwhelmingly urban focus, and the memorialization of cities is a feature of this literature, which expanded into the space of Muslim South Asia.¹⁴

Nobles, intellectuals, poets, and saints are major categories of persons memorialized in Islamic biographical literature, and this is also the case in South Asia. Principles of organization of these compendia, known first in Arabic as *tabaqat* (ranks or classes)¹⁵ and later in the Persianate tradition as *tazkirat*, included the rank, affiliation, profession, year or century of death, and locality of the individual's primary activities.

The word *tadhkirah* means "a memorial." *Tazkirah* (the Persian form) collections of the lives of poets, mystics, or scholars are common in later periods, especially in Iran and South Asia. *Tazkirat* (Urdu: *tazkire*) are similar to the Arabic *tabaqat* genre in that they present lives through anecdotes and offer further narrative biographical material on the subject of the notice. But they do not necessarily incorporate ranking systems as

¹³H. A. R. Gibb stated that "the biographical dictionary is a wholly indigenous creation of the Islamic community." "Islamic Biographical Literature," in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, *Historians of the Middle East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 54. Reflecting on the inclusion of very ordinary persons in the biographical dictionaries (*tabaqat*), Gibb further observes that the history of the Islamic community is essentially the contribution of individual men and women to the building up and transmission of its specific culture. That is, it is these persons (rather than the political governors) who represent or reflect the active force of Muslim society (ibid., 54-58).

¹⁴"Urdu literature, almost from its very beginnings, has been concerned with city life. The language has functioned for a long time as an urban-centred, but non-regional language." Leslie Fleming, "Two Pakistani Women Writers View the City: The Short Stories of Bano Qudsiyya and Farkhandah Lodhi," in *Journal of South Asian Literature* 25 (1990), 1:1, quoting A. K. Ramanujan, "Towards an Anthology of City Images," in *Urban India: Society, Space and Images*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Winston-Salem, NC: Duke University Press, 1970), 224-244.

¹⁵An extensive review article on the *tabaqat* genre is Ibrahim Hafsi's "Recherches sur le genre 'Tabaqat' dans la littérature arabe," *Arabica*, 23 (1976), 227-265; 24 (1977), 1-41, 150-186. Hafsi lists and classifies the major *tabaqat* according to types of persons included (i.e., hadith transmitters, mystics, or poets) and century of composition. He then formulates his own classification of *tabaqat* compilers as initiators, innovators, or imitators. Under principles of ranking or classification, Hafsi cites some basic examples of schemata for arranging Sunni *tabaqat*, such as the ordering of Companions of the Prophet, Followers, Successors to the Followers, and later generations. This is, of course, a common way of thinking of merit and authority in early Islam. Parallel Shi'i ranking systems are also cited, including: Companions of the Prophet, Companions of 'Ali, then Hasan, and Husain; or, alternatively, the Pure Ones (asfiya'), Saints (Auliya'), Ones Promised Paradise by 'Ali, and his Companions.

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tabaqat do, although in the Persianate/Urdu context, generational, alphabetical, or other factors of ordering by affinity or family relationships may be used.

A distinctive biographical genre that developed in India within the Chishti Sufi order is the *malʿuzat*, or collections of sessions of prominent Sufi masters as preserved and recorded by their disciples.¹⁶ Carl Ernst has made a useful distinction between the early *malʿuzat* collections preserved for didactic purposes and later, often spurious works which, through their reinforcing the authoritativeness of the teachings and the order, became included in the canon of South Asian Sufi memory.¹⁷

Taz̄kirahs are biographical compendia of lives, often of a hagiographical nature, but also celebrating skills (such as those of calligraphers and poets), ulema groups, residents of particular cities, etc. They were, as their name suggests, primarily intended to memorialize individuals, and they simultaneously located these individuals in imagined spaces that enabled the sanctification of new soil. The trope of the city sanctified, ennobled, and defined by those who had passed there and especially those who were buried within its precincts was one form of the inscription of this communal memory on local sites. In the case of *taz̄kirahs* of poets, the language and imagery of a city's poets inscribed a sort of privileged space and often set the scene for a particular "state of mind" associated with that place.¹⁸ There, thus, exists a possibility of mapping the changing sense and shape of this inscribed space and identity in the premodern, colonial, and postindependence periods of South Asian history through tracing the spatial orientation as it develops in the contemporary poetic and Sufi *taz̄kirahs*.¹⁹

¹⁶Lawrence *Notes from a Distant Flute*, and Carl Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*, especially Ch. 4, "Oral Teachings in the Early Chishti Order" (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), 62-84.

¹⁷Ernst, *Eternal Garden*, 82-83.

¹⁸The phrase was used by Stekevych in *The Zephyrs of Nejd*, 121.

¹⁹A further argument may be made about the relationship of "space" and "landscape" in that landscape, in its usual Western usages, implies a Western visual perspective of surface features. "Landscapes are created by people—through their experience and engagement with the world around them. They may be closegrained, worked-upon, lived-in places, or they may be distant and half-fantasised. In contemporary western societies they involve only the surface of the land; in other parts of the world, or in pre-modern Europe, what lies above the surface, or below, may be as important. In the contemporary western world we 'perceive' landscapes, we are the point from where the 'seeing' occurs. It is thus an ego-centred landscape, a landscape of views and vistas. In other times and places the visual may not be the most significant aspect, and the conception of the land may not be ego-centred." Barbara Bender, ed., *Landscape Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 1.

Muslims over time imagined their space in South Asia differently as their sense of identity changed in the light of social and political developments. As Barbara Bender observes, “the landscape (space) is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation-state.”²⁰ Such changes may be traced, I argue, in the organizing and structuring principles of the *tazkirah* genre.

The impulse behind this genre is memorialization. One key element in this is inscription, which is done through the writing of memory on new spaces whose imagined shape is also subject to reconfiguration. Critical also in the South Asian *tazkirah* tradition is the language of inscription, which serves to define a space even as it is the medium for writing it. Thus, even in the late twentieth century, when the command of Persian is increasingly rare, *tazkirahs* written in Urdu may open with Persian couplets. The composition of texts in regional languages is even more rare, and such “local” texts may only be represented by small quotations or poetic interludes within larger Persian or Urdu works. One example of such a work is a Chishti²¹ *tazkirah* written in Urdu that includes some Punjabi verses and a rhymed list of the previous saints in the lineages written in Punjabi for illiterate/female disciples.²² In another case, the Sindhi Literary Board sponsored the publication of an early Persian *tazkirah*, and the introduction and notes are in the Sindhi language.²³ Each of these cases of

²⁰Ibid, 3.

²¹The Chishti or Chishtiyah Sufi order has been particularly prominent in South Asia.

²²*Maulana Mabbub-i Ilahi Tuhfat-yi Sa'adiyya* (Lahore: Idara Sa'diyya Mujaddadiyya, 1979), 127, mentions the Sufi Haji Abu Sa'd Ahmad Khan's (d. 1941) favorite Punjabi verses. The text explains that while many of his followers were well educated in Islamic disciplines, some had only basic education or were illiterate. “Therefore when he explained complicated concepts such as the transitory nature of existence, inner perfection, the knowledge of God, or the stages of Sufism to them he would only be able to do this in Punjabi, especially since the words of the warm hearted and enlightened Punjabi poets could be put to use in facilitating their understanding.” Indeed, it would not be out of place to mention here that, in addition to his competence in the usual disciplines, he had a mastery of the Punjabi language and its literature.

The *tazkirah* also includes some Punjabi poems in honor of Abu Sa'd Ahmad Khan as well as the rhymed *Shajarah Sa'adiyyah*, 275. The author of the *shajarah*, presumably the compiler of the biographical notice, writes in a footnote, “This Punjabi *shajarah* was written in view of the needs of some Punjabi ladies or other folk who only know a little Qur'an and would find Urdu and the Urdu script difficult. Since this person (the author) has never composed even one hemistich in Punjabi, there is a strong possibility of error in it—so, readers, please forgive this.”

²³Rashid Burhanpuri, *Burhanpur ke Sindhi Auliya' (Tazkirah-i Auliya-i Sindh)* (Jamshoro: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1987).

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diglossia can be interpreted as reflecting an imagined space for local identity. Persian stands as the prestige or “religion” marker, whereas Sindhi and Punjabi function as signifiers of local identity,²⁴ signifying, respectively, local literary heritage and the “quaintness” or “accessibility” of the saint to local or more humble followers.

As noted by Victor Turner, in plural societies, each linguistic or ethnic group has its own favored pilgrimage places.²⁵ In the literate tradition in Islamic South Asia, literacy tended to define groups by religious orientation rather than by ethnicity so that Muslim ethnic groups would either participate in the prestige language (Persian) or lose the possibility of creating a collective memory for themselves. As De Certeau notes, memory protects a group from dispersion²⁶ and points to the relation of the group to other groups.

The celebration of cities and the urge to memorialization are felt both in times of expansion and in times of crisis or despair, as reflected in the laments over chaos in the poetic *shahr ashob* tradition.²⁷ In his work, *Nalah-i Dard* (The Moan of Pain), Khwajah Mir Dard, the famous Sufi poet of eighteenth-century Delhi, provides the following lament for the catastrophes that have befallen his city.

May God preserve it (Delhi) inhabited until Judgement Day. It had been a wonderful rose garden and now the trampling of the autumn of the vicissitudes of time has passed over it, leaving the lovely rivers and trees of all varieties in the districts of its people plundered by the blows of fate:

In every aspect, on the entire face of the earth it was like the countenance of moon-faced beauties and like the heart-attracting newly-sprouted beards. O God, preserve it from all calamities and disasters and make it a peaceful city, bestow fruits (thamarat) upon its people--and may whoever enters there enter in peace.

Ruba'i (poem)

Delhi has now been destroyed by fate
Tears flowed in place of its rivers
The city had been like the faces of beauties,

²⁴Christopher Shackle, “Punjabi in Lahore,” *Modern Asian Studies* 4 (1970), 3:239-267 and “Rival Linguistic Identities in Pakistan Punjab,” in *Rule, Protest, Identity Aspects of Modern South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb and David Taylor (London: Curzon Press, 1978), 213-234.

²⁵Turner, 6.

²⁶De Certeau, 272.

²⁷Carla Petievich, “Poetry of the Declining Mughals: The Shahr Ashob,” *Journal of South Asian Literature* 25 (1990), 99-111.

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Adorned by suburbs like newly-sprouting beards on the cheeks of those lovely idols.²⁸

Following the British reprisals of 1857, the poet Altaf Husain Hali composed for his city a lament (*marthiyah*) which was recited at a poetic gathering (*musba'arah*) in 1874.

Oh friend, don't begin memorializing (*tazkirah*) the late Delhi,
We will never be the ones to relate this sad tale.
O nightingale, don't sing the song of the rose in autumn time,
We will never be able to make the laughing oppressor weep.²⁹

In the course of South Asian Muslim history, spaces have expanded from cities to regions to nations, while the principles of socioreligious affiliation (frontier of conversion/Sufi orders) have loosened from being direct initiation, to contiguity in space and time, to a sense of “imagined community,” as suggested by Benedict Anderson’s study of the construction of nationalist identities.³⁰

Premodern Examples

From an early period, cities played a role in defining the scope of *tazkirahs*. This reflects the impulse to create “new” sacred spaces. For example, Ajmer was recast as Madina³¹ in the biography of Mu'in ad-Din Chishti, the Sufi saint of the thirteenth century whose shrine gradually became associated with the Islamization of India.

A further example of South Asian centers as the “new holy cities” is to be found in *Kalimat as-Sadiqin* of Muhammad Sadiq Dihlavi Kashmiri Hamadani.³² The work is about the Sufis buried in Delhi up to the year 1023 H/1614. The author was a student of Baqi Bi'llah, Naqshbandi *shaykh* of Ahmad Sirhindi, and the work is said to be modeled on the Naqshbandi

²⁸Khawajah Mir Dard, *Nalab-i Dard* (Bhopal: Matba' Shahjahani, 1892). Nalah nos. 20 and 104.

²⁹Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires 1803-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), xviii-xix.

³⁰Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

³¹Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute*, 20.

³²Muhammad Sadiq Dihlavi Kashmiri Hamadani, *Kalimat as-Sadiqin: Tazkirah-i Safiyan-i Madjun dar Dibli ta Sal-i 1023 Hijri*, ed. Muhammad Saleem Akhtar (Islamabad: Iran Pakistan Research Center, 1988).

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model, *Rashabat* of Kashifi.³³ I would like to cite from the author's preface about the city of Delhi as an example of the sanctification of the city as Muslim "sacred space."

Preface in the description of Delhi, May God protect it from calamities

Know, may God support you with the light of gnosis, that Delhi is a very large and noble city and that certain of the saints of the nation (*ummat*) have said things about it like, "One in a thousand and very few out of the multitude recognize its greatness." Thus whoever has the least understanding and the slightest knowledge will surely recognize that after the two holy cities, (of Mecca and Madina) if there is any nobility to be found in a place or greatness in a land, it is in this noble land which is distinguished completely over the rest of cities. Therefore it is said by the common folk that Delhi is a little Mecca and even the elite have no doubt of its greatness. Everyone asserts its exaltedness, whether due to the fact that the great ones of the religion, the *ulema* among the people of certainty, the great *shaiikhs*, the reputable wise men, the powerful rulers, and the exalted nobles have filled this city and have been buried here, or due to its fine buildings, delightful gardens and pleasant localities.

According to some esteemed personages, since one of the people of mystical intuition said in elaboration, "All of Delhi is declared to be a mosque," all of this city is distinguished from other places by its greatness and nobility. In summary, these verses of Khwaja Khusrau inform us of the greatness of this city and certain of its sites.

Noble Delhi, shelter of religion and treasure,
It is the Garden of Eden, may it last forever.

A veritable earthy Paradise in all its qualities
May Allah protect it from calamities.

If it but heard the tale of this garden,
Mecca would make the pilgrimage to Hindustan.³⁴

The city-centered *tazkīrah* is a spatial configuration that persists into the colonial and postcolonial periods. An example of a premodern *tazkīrah* combining regional and urban spaces is the *Mīrat-e Ahmadi*, a historical work about Gujerat by Ali Muhammad Khan, of which a second appendix is dedicated to the city of Ahmedabad and the second chapter to the saints "buried in this land and invited to settle there."

³³Jo-Ann Gross, "Khoja Ahrar: A Study of the Perceptions of Religious Power and Prestige in the Late Timurid Period" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1982) discusses this *tazkīrah*. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn Kashifi, *Rashabat* (Lukhnow: Newal Kishore, 1890).

³⁴Amir Khusrau, *Divan-i Kamīl*, ed. Sa'id Nafisi (Tehran: Intisharat-i Javidan, 1965). Muhammad Sadiq, *Kalimat al-Sadiqin* (Islamabad: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Farsi-i Iran va Pakistan, 1988).

The story of the founding of the city includes both the city's horoscope (auspicious) and the role of Shaykh Ahmad Khattu (d. 1445), one of the four Ahmads involved in its beginning.³⁵

Bazaars, mosques, and gardens are named and described, but there is also a sense of the loss of past glories; indeed, the work, written in 1750-1760, states that many places mentioned in the text are neglected and in disrepair. This work was one of the first to be translated by the British. Interestingly, the section on the saints was omitted just as it was in the case of the early British translation of Abu'l Fazl's chronicle, *Ayeen al-Akbari*.³⁶ As for this section on saints, an early notice tells of a pronouncement by the saint Burhan ud din Bukhari that the "city will last forever."³⁷ Other notices refer to saints' founding towns in Gujerat through miraculous intervention and to familiar tropes of conversion.

Examples of *Tazkirahs* from the Colonial Period

In the late 1800s, Mufti Ghulam Sarwar Lahori composed *Khazinat al-Asfiya'* (Treasury of the Pure Ones) as an essentially Lahore-centered *tazkirah*. As Bruce Lawrence noted, "Even more than the *Akbbar al-Akhyar*, which is a Delhi oriented work, *Khazinat al-Asfiya'* is Lahore directed, but by extension it includes the entire region to the north and northwest of Delhi"³⁸

Maulana Hakim Mufti Ghulam Sarwar Lahori was the third son of Mufti Ghulam Muhammad. He was born at his ancestral locality, Kotli Muftian, Lahore, in 1837 (1244 H.) and acquired his primary education as well as medical training (*tibb*) from his father. He was also initiated by him in the Suhrawardi Sufi order. Later, he joined Maulana Ghulam Allah Lahori's study circle and completed the course in the disciplines of Qur'an interpretation, hadith, *fiqh*, *adab*, composition and grammar, philosophy, logic, and history. He was known in his time as an unparalleled scholar, *belle literateur*, poet, master composer of historical dating couplets (*tarikah-gu*),³⁹

³⁵Ali Muhammad Khan, *Mir'at-i Ahmadi* II, (Bombay: Matba' Nami Garami, 1888), 22. English translation (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1928-1930).

³⁶Abu'l Fazl, *Ayeen al-Akbari or the Institutes of the Emperor Akbar*, trans. Francis Gladwin (London: J. Swan & Co., 1800).

³⁷*Mir'at-i Ahmadi*, English.

³⁸Bruce Lawrence, "Biography and the 17th Century Qadiriyya of North India," *Islam and Indian Regions*, ed. Anna Libera Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zengel-Ave Lallemand (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993), 402.

³⁹On chronograms in Urdu, see Khalid Hasan Qadiri, "Maulana Hamid Hasan Qadiri and the Art of the Chronogram," in *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell*, ed. Christopher Shackle (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), 151-166.

and historian. He was widely renowned as a compiler of biographical compendia. He spent his entire life writing and compiling. Early in his career, he combined this with administrative positions. He, however, left this type of activity after a short time, for only writing and literary pursuits really suited his temperament. In June of 1890, he departed for the *hajj*, where he died of cholera near Madina. His many works chronicle the saints and history of Muslim South Asia, especially the Punjab. He wrote in both Persian and Urdu and made translations into Urdu as well.

The titles of other *tazkirahs* of saints, such as *Gulzar al-Abrar* (Rose Garden of the Pious),⁴⁰ *Hadiqat al-Auliya'* (Garden of the Saints),⁴¹ and *Madinat al-Auliya'* (City of the Saints),⁴² provide direct associations among the motifs of the holy city/Madina, the city of saints, and the garden (*hadiqah*) with its resonances of the paradisaical garden. The *tazkirahs* often evoke paradisaical utopian spaces of cities as gardens, which, in turn, are set off against the heterotopias (i.e., a space that is marginal, contested, a problem, an inversion) of the city as cemetery.⁴³

"The dominant Islamic vision of the after-life was not so much a vision of a *civitas dei*, but rather of a *hortus dei*, not the city of God but the garden of God, meaning not in a perfect community but in a perfect nature."⁴⁴ Qazvini⁴⁵ writes how the Sufis supposedly shunned city life, but Ibn Asakir and al-Khatib al-Baghdadi had tried to warn off conquerors by listing the tombs and shrines of saints, thus underlining the sacred character of the city.⁴⁶

The symbolic resonance of the cemetery in South Asian Islam is both a transitional space between the higher world and this one and a symbol of distinctive Muslim identity in the Indian context (since Hindus cremate their dead). Graveyards as sites, then, are both a locus of inscription for local communal memory and the means of this inscription.

⁴⁰A sixteenth-century *tazkirah* of Shattari Sufis by Muhammad Ghauthi Shattari.

⁴¹Mufti Ghulam Sarwar, *Hadiqat al-Auliya'*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal Mujaddidi (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1976). The Introduction contains a biography of Sarwar and a list of his writings.

⁴²By Muhammad ad-Din Kalim, *Madinat al-Auliya'* is about 636 saints buried in Lahore and is about seven hundred pages long.

⁴³Michel Foucault, "In Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, nos. 16, 22-27.

⁴⁴Tarif Khalidi, "Some Classical Islamic Views of the City," in *Studia Arabica and Islamica: Festschrift for Ihsan 'Abbas*, ed. Wadad al-Qadi (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), 271.

⁴⁵In his *Athar al-Bilad* (Beirut, 1960), quoted by Khalidi, 274.

⁴⁶Khalidi, 274.

In the case of the *tazkirah Hadiqat al-Anliya*, Sarwar chronicled the saints of the Punjab, this time in the Urdu language, and here again the motif of the garden is played on repeatedly. For example, the work is arranged in seven plots (*chamans*), each *chaman* holding the saints of a specific order except for the final two, where “grow” love-crazed or God-intoxicated Sufis (*majanin* and *majdhubin*) and the righteous women. Indeed, the Whorfian hypothesis seems to be borne out by the number of words available in Urdu, many of Persian or Arabic origin, for spaces which English would simply term “gardens.” Sarwar composed his own *qit'ab-i ta'rikh*, a poem that is a chronogram for the composition of the *tazkirah* (in 1875).

How nice is Sarwar's garden (*hadiqat*),
What a garden (*bagh*) and flourishing are found in the saints,
Autumn cannot enter that garden (*bustan*)
Which is the garden (*bagh*) of the pious and pure,
Where would you ever find another garden (*bagh*) like this,
The rose garden (*gulzar*) of the spiritual effulgence of the great saints,
This is the verdant garden (*bagh*) of the people of gnosis,
For whom the nightingale of the heart would sacrifice itself,
Where greenery, the bud, the rose,
The hyacinth, and the tulip are blossoming,
In short, on the face of the earth, Sarwar had fashioned this garden (*bustan*)
To be a model of the garden of Paradise (*firdaus*)
The angel of Paradise (*Ridwan*) has spoken the seal of the year of the composition,
Of that colorful garden (*hadiqat*) which displays so much beauty.⁴⁷

Examples of the Creation of Space in Nationalist Hagiography

In the nation-building period, cities as locations acquire a renewed importance in the creation of Pakistani national sacred space. With the allocation of Ajmer, the main shrine city of the Chishti Sufi order, to India, the role of Lahore and its “patron,” ‘Ali Hujwiri, and his tomb, the Data Darbar, was increasingly celebrated.

An example of a city-based *tazkirah* from the twentieth century is the *tazkirah Kamilan-i Rampur* (the Perfect Ones of Rampur) by Hafiz ‘Ali Khan Shauq. In a brief preface, Shauq explains his methodological attempt to obtain accurate information from local families about their ancestors by sending out some six hundred questionnaires to which he was disappointed to receive only about a dozen responses. One aspect about the role of *tazkirahs* in the creation of space is found in the reissue of this *tazkirah* in

⁴⁷Sarwar, *Hadiqat al-Anliya*, 26.

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1986⁴⁸ with the addition of a postnationalist preface added to the original composition. In this, the writer of the preface develops the concept of Rampuri Urdu poetry as a “third school” aside from Delhi and Lucknow⁴⁹ and evokes symbols of Rampuri identity, such as a Rampuri cap (*topi*), knife, and a particular style of knife-fighting.⁵⁰ At the same time, he notes the *tazkirah*'s omission of elements of Rampur identity significant for the national space, such as the fact that the prominent freedom activists, the ‘Ali brothers, were from there.

Older motifs, such as the city as a second Mecca or Madina, or the paradisaical garden persist into the contemporary period, along with new elements of political, nationalist, and even anticolonial references. An example from Pakistan is a work entitled *Auliya-i Multan*, (Saints of Multan),⁵¹ which opens with several poems incorporating the traditional elements of imagined Muslim space, for example:

Our Multan is equal to the Exalted Garden,
Tread softly, because angels are performing their prostrations here.⁵²

On the opposite page, a Persian poem stands in dedication, celebrating the city in themes both familiar and new:

The pristine region of Multan and Sind
Is the image of the Arab in the land of Hind
Look toward the desert sands and the palm groves too
The vision of the Hijaz comes into view.
Every lofty palm tree declares,
“This territory in the blessings of Yathrib shares”
I’m delighted by the camels’ stately pace
They remind me of Najd and desert space
See how the spirit of the qualities of the Hijazi
Is concealed within the truthful Multani
The people of Multan are free from formality
Openhearted, eloquent, and full of hospitality.
The essence of elegance is the lot of this place

⁴⁸Hafiz ‘Ali Khan Shauq, *Tazkirah-i Kamilan-i Rampur* (Delhi: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1986), 4; first published by Hamdard Steam Press of Delhi in 1925.

⁴⁹Tajammul Hussain Khan, *Urdu Shai’ri ka Tisra Skul* (Karachi: Jauhar Academy, 1976); Kalb-i ‘Ali Khan Fa’iq, “Rampur ka Shi’ri Skul,” in *Ma’arif* 76 (October 1955), 285-295; Raz Yazdani, “Rampur ka Mahaul,” in *Nigar* 67-68 (1955).

⁵⁰Shauq, 4.

⁵¹Farhat Multani, *Auliya-i Multan* (Multan: Kutubkhana Hajji Niyaz Ahmad, 1980).

⁵²*Ibid.*, 7. This seems to be a popular theme as at least three other works were published under the same title: Bashir Nazim (Lahore, 1971), Nazar Muhammad Sairani (Multan, 1982), and Muhammad Awlad ‘Ali Gilani (Lahore: Sang-i Mil, 1963).

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The footprint of Ibn Qasim⁵³ is on its face.
Here in the ruins of Hindustan
Was the first cradle of the Musalman
This land of the saints will be, it is sure
The direction of prayer for those who are pure.
O Creator, protect this sacred land today
From the Western winds, blowing our way.⁵⁴

The saints of Multan are not conceived of solely as reminders of past blessings—“who knows how many jewels are concealed in this earth”⁵⁵—but extend into the nationalist period. An example is the Naqshbandi Sufi and activist Hamid ‘Ali Khan (1906-1980), whose notice is the last one in the volume. Originally from Rampur, Hamid ‘Ali Khan migrated to Pakistan in 1959, and his various political activities in religious movements, such as the *tabrik-i khatm an-nubuwat*, and his winning of a parliamentary seat form part of his biographical notice.⁵⁶

Another *tazkirah* memorializing the “Saints of Multan”⁵⁷ is a 1930 compilation reissued in 1963 with a new preface explaining how the original collection had been made in honor of the coronation of King George the Sixth⁵⁸ and had included biographical notices of various individuals involved in departments of the British administration in both official and nonofficial capacities. These elements, as well as material on some of the prominent Muslim and non-Muslim families of Multan, were removed from the new edition as they were no longer considered useful or interesting.⁵⁹

The modern/postmodern space imagined through this literature consists both of an aggressive retrieval of memory—for example, translations of old *tazkirahs* from Persian into Urdu in Pakistan—and of attempts to erase that memory. As for the poetic *tazkirahs*, they have been rendered obsolete by new canons of literary appreciation⁶⁰ and even by an

⁵³Muhammad b. Qasim, conqueror of Sind.

⁵⁴Ibid., 6. The Persian poem is by Asad Multani; the English rendition is my own. The poetic celebration of Multan inevitably calls to mind the more familiar Persian couplet, which characterizes the city as the home of the four G’s: beggars (*gada*), dust (*ghubar*), graves (*gur*), and heat (*garmi*).

⁵⁵Ibid., 6

⁵⁶Ibid., 157.

⁵⁷Muhammad Awlad ‘Ali Gilani, *Auliya-i Multan* (Lahore: Sang-i Mil, 1963).

⁵⁸Ibid., 6.

⁵⁹Ibid., 9-10.

⁶⁰On the influence of English literary canons on India and for a postcolonial critique, see Gauri Vishvanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) and Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992).

altered mode of eloquent expression. In his work on Urdu poetry, *Ab-i Hayat*, Muhammad Husain Azad (d. 1910) already mourns the fact that “the page of history would be turned—the old families destroyed, their offspring so ignorant that they would no longer know even their own family traditions.”⁶¹ In terms of this shift in taste and comprehensibility, Frances Pritchett observes that “the critical attitudes and vocabulary used by the tazkiras are all but unintelligible to most scholars—and in fact they arouse considerable disdain.”⁶² The poetic *tazkiras* have dried up as a literary genre, while Sufi *tazkiras* not only continue to be produced, but are produced in greater numbers than before and are translated from Persian into Urdu in Pakistan, republished, excerpted and recombined, set in computerized type, embellished with photographs, and so on. A brief explanation of this phenomenon and its relationship to imagining spaces may be in order. Poetry as a means of expression must compete today both with Westernized literary forms, such as short stories and novels, and with new media, such as films and television dramas, for popular attention. In one sense, the earlier *tazkiras* represented a project of retrieval and preservation of the Urdu literary heritage, and the poets who celebrated certain places were in turn patronized by their rulers and nobility.

The print culture of contemporary Sufi biography reaches a much broader literate public due to mass education, at one level confirming the thesis of a national public or imagined community along the lines of Anderson’s argument.⁶³ On the other hand, the relative accessibility of text production due to technologies of printing enables a contrasting movement of an increasingly localized production and distribution of such works. In this case, the purpose is not primarily the dissemination of historical and religious information or the celebration of a specific city or region. In contrast, to a large degree, these works facilitate symbolic exchanges of cultural capital, which promote loyalty and legitimacy to particular local shrine cults and their custodians. As I have argued elsewhere, the *tazkirah* tradition, even in classical times, was not so much a historical knowledge project, but an activity of inscribing collective memory.⁶⁴ In addition to Sufi *tazkiras*, biographical compendia may be written, listing cohorts of religious scholars and even members of particular *baradaris* or kin groups

⁶¹Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 75.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

⁶⁴“Religious Literature and the Inscription of Identity: The Sufi Tazkira Tradition in Muslim South Asia,” forthcoming in *Muslim World*.

and sectarian or ethnic localities. These, in turn, operate in potential tension with broader forms of national unity.

Pakistani space as represented in the *tazkirahs* has at times been configured so as to place more or less emphasis on regional spaces. During the 1960s, under Ayyub Khan and in the 1970s “Bhutto era,” there seems to have been government support for publishing a number of works in Urdu on “Sufis of Sindh,”⁶⁵ “Sufis of the Punjab,”⁶⁶ “Sufis of Baluchistan,”⁶⁷ “Sufis of the Frontier,”⁶⁸ “Sufis of Bengal,”⁶⁹ and so on.⁷⁰ Katherine Ewing studied pamphlets, written in English, that the Pakistan government had issued in honor of various national and regional saints during both the Bhutto and Zia al-Haq periods. The thesis of her article is that successive governments interpreted the biographies of the saints in terms of their own slogans, policies, and agendas. Clearly, the evocation of the saints as revolutionaries or crusaders for social justice echoed Pakistan People’s Party rhetoric; the portrayal of the same saints as Islamic educators and affirming of Islamic legal injunctions was resonant with a theme of Zia’s reforms.⁷¹ In the nationalist space, print, language, and media promotion weave at least some threads of the *tazkirah* tradition into the fabric of imagined Pakistani space. *Tazkirahs* of saints of Kashmir⁷² and of East Pakistan composed during the same period testify to the contested space of saint worship.

The local sitings of saint cults take on new literary presence in a context where the production and distribution of texts becomes accessible to custodians of the most remote of shrines. In practical terms, the literary activities of devotees of certain orders can affect the status of the order. For example, the reputation of the Naushahi order of Sahanpul was enhanced when a literary and historically inclined leader, Sharafat Naushahi,⁷³ spent his life gathering and publishing the literary heritage of this branch.

⁶⁵I‘jaz ud-din Quddusi, *Tazkirah-i Sufiya-i Sindh*, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Urdu Academy Sindh, 1975).

⁶⁶I‘jaz ud-din Quddusi, *Tazkirah-i Sufiya-i Panjab* (Karachi: Salman Academy, 1962).

⁶⁷In‘am ud-din Kausar, *Tazkirah-i Sufiya-i Baluchistan* (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1976).

⁶⁸I‘jaz ud-din Quddusi, *Tazkirah-i Sufiya-i Sarhadd* (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1966).

⁶⁹I‘jaz ud-din Quddusi, *Tazkirah-i Sufiya-i Bangal* (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1965).

⁷⁰For many Pakistanis, promoting regional cultures and languages is identified with espousing leftist ideology.

⁷¹Katherine P. Ewing, “The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 42 (1983), 2: 251-268.

⁷²Muhammad Tayyib Husain, *Anliya’-i Kashmir* (Lahore: Nazir Sons Publishers, 1986).

⁷³Sharafat’s biography and a bibliography of his works may be found in Sayyid ‘Arif Naushahi, *Ba-Yad-i-Sharafat Naushahi* (Lahore: Markaz-i Tahqiqat-i Farsi-i Iran va Pakistan, 1984).

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The son of the late Naqshbandi *pir* and political activist of Multan, Hamid ‘Ali Khan, attributes the fact that *tazkirah* production is so much more popular among the Muslims of Pakistan than it is in India to the fact that the sectarian differences among Pakistani Muslims are perceived as more acute and controversial.⁷⁴ In other words, this increased production reflects the polemical value of *tazkirahs* among those of the Barelvi, Deobandi, or Ahl al-Hadith persuasions. In Pakistani Islam, these distinctions are considered very important. The Barelvis are those South Asian Muslims who tend to be devoted to saints and their cults and support various practices surrounding these cults, which, in the eyes of more literalist interpreters, are the survivals or accretions from pre-Islamic Hindu traditions or are merely inventions. Most persons in Pakistan are of this persuasion. While it is often characterized as the popular Islam of the masses, one should not overlook the fact that there is a highly literate and active segment of the Barelvi group that supports the publication of works such as biographical literature. The Deobandis are a smaller group who do not oppose the veneration of Sufi saints, but who do criticize innovative practices involved in the saint cults. They tend overall to be better-educated and of a higher socioeconomic status. The Ahl al-Hadith are also a fairly small but important group. As their name suggests, they prefer a literal interpretation of the Qur’an and the Prophet’s sayings (hadith). In general, they oppose any form of saint veneration. On the other hand, the Indian Muslims, due to their minority position, are less likely to polemicize their differences, or, in our terms here, to contest the unity of their space through *tazkirahs* that emphasize sectarian loyalties and divisions among Muslims.⁷⁵

In Pakistan today, one notes the extremely high amount of literary production for a relatively small literate audience. This high level of interest in the printed word is not restricted to religious literature. Still, it is the most popular genre. According to Uwais Suhrawardi, a young publisher and graphics designer in Lahore who uses the latest computerized equipment to issue Islamic magazines and books, those who have a real scholarly or intellectual interest in *tazkirah* production or distribution, such as Mian Jamil Ahmad or Hakim Muhammad Musa Amritsari, are rare.⁷⁶ The costs

⁷⁴Interview, Multan, April 1990. Research on “the Vernacularization of Sacred Tradition” was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright Program.

⁷⁵Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁷⁶Mian Jamil Ahmad is the Naqshbandi *pir* of the shrine at Sharqpur. Hakim Muhammad Musa Amritsari is a traditional *hakim* and bibliophile with a vast knowledge of Islamic works

of producing *tazkirahs* are relatively minimal since calligraphy, paper, and printing are quite inexpensive.⁷⁷ Many of the costs are borne by private donations from friends of the writer. Sometimes, *tazkirahs* may be commissioned and the donors' names cited and even their pictures and some biographical facts about them presented, but, in general, they are written as a labor of love and devotion. On the other hand, a young publisher who frequents *tazkirah* writing circles felt that the recent spate of rehashed *tazkirahs*, in which a writer will patch together previously existing materials with no real unifying principle to produce a voluminous tome, might have a commercial basis since the number of private and public libraries that buy these works is increasing. Judging from the state of the libraries that I visited, this seems unlikely, but there is assuredly a large market for *tazkirahs* of all types. There are particular stores and publishing houses that specialize in this type of literature. In Lahore, these are clustered on Ganj Bakhsh road, near the tomb of the patron saint of Lahore, 'Ali Hujwiri, fondly known as Data Sahib. Many more *tazkirahs* are produced and distributed by small groups in the smaller cities of Pakistan, mainly for disciples—for example, the Chishtiyah Book House in Taunsa, a shrine city in Panjab.

The late *tazkirah* compiler Muhammad ad-Din Kalim (d. 1989), was given the honorific title "Historian of Lahore." His compilation, *Madinat al-Auliya'* (City of Saints), includes his own biography. Kalim was born in 1917 in Dalilpur, Gurdaspur (East Panjab). As a young man, he visited many *shaykhs* in India in search of knowledge and spiritual blessings. After partition, he moved first to Faisalabad and then settled in Lahore. He worked for the Lahore municipal corporation and, finally, in the Lahore development agency as an accounts officer, thereafter retiring with honor in 1975. He was a disciple of Muhyi d-Din Qadiri Gilani of Dera Ghazi Khan. Over two hundred of his books and articles have been published, and as many remain unpublished. At the time of his death, he was working on a three-thousand page manuscript on the Chishtis.

In the preface to *Madinat al-Auliya'*, Kalim compares previous *tazkirahs* in terms of the numbers of Lahori saints they mention. Many of these, he

in Pakistan. His honorific title is *Hakim-i Abl-i Sunnat—Abl-i Sunnat* being another name for the Barelvi movement. In Lahore, a network of Sufis, scholars, and publishers seems to be interconnected with most of the religious biographical activity taking place in Pakistan.

⁷⁷A large tome of 680 pages with a gold-embossed binding might cost 36 rupees (1990), or about \$2, to produce. The retail cost of this volume (*Arbab-i Tariqat*), which was a rehash and not an original work, was 200 rupees, or about \$10—an expensive price in today's Pakistan. An 86-page pamphlet cost 4.5 rupees (\$0.25), and, thus, a printing run of 1,000 pamphlets would cost about \$220 (1990 prices).

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notes, were in fact copied from standard works, such as Ghulam Sarwar's *Khazīnat al-Asfīya*. While most works merely mention that a given saint is buried in Lahore, Kalim gives the exact location of sites so that the visitor will have no problem in locating the tombs and shrines.

The threat of chaos⁷⁸ looms in the background of Kalim's project. In response to space carelessly rendered and prevailing social disintegration, the sites of Kalim's Lahore are rendered precise, specific, and historically accurate:

Wherever you see an old grave, the keepers or greedy persons have spent quite a bit of money on fixing it up, popularizing it, and giving it some name which is unknown in the old sources so that they make it a means of earning money (he then lists several such shrines saying) "God knows who is really buried there."

Nowadays the style of constructing new tombs has incorporated a lot of use of marble and other expensive stones and even the use of inlaid mirrors in some, so that you don't feel that you are in a graveyard but rather in a Shish Mahal (hall of mirrors). These tombs have proliferated to the point that they are found in every lane, street, bazaar, field, government park, and even in cinemas and government offices etc., even though there is no historical mention of them. . . . For some years I have been shocked by the lamentable situation that certain dissolute persons have pitched tents in the public graveyards out of which they deal in drugs.⁷⁹

In response, Kalim writes of the special features of his work as a *tazkīrah* compiler, saying that he personally visited the shrines he writes about, investigated the accurate names of the persons whom he mentions, and reported the names of *pīrs* falsely attributed to shrines when no such individuals were ever known to exist.⁸⁰

I believe that this well illustrates one impulse behind contemporary local hagiography in Muslim South Asia. In this case, the response to the contemporary threat of chaos is the quest for a recovery of local history rather than the fundamentalists' urge to eradicate local custom and promote normative uniformity. The memory of the group, a local group defined by its saints and spaces, works to constitute a community through a localized configuration of collective memory that must compete today with the

⁷⁸Jonathan Z. Smith, in his study of "place" in religion, writes concerning the Jewish and Christian understandings of sacred centers in Jerusalem: "For each there was a triumphant, ideological literature that perceived in their construction a cosmogonic act. For each, there was a literature of indigenous lamentation. . . that found, in the destruction or loss of the sites, a plunge into chaos." *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), 3.

⁷⁹Muhammad ad-Din Kalim, *Madinat al-Anliya* (Lahore: Ma'arif, 1982), 78-79.

⁸⁰Ibid.

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overarching narratives of modern constructions of nationhood, pan-Islamism, and globalization.

Islam in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

David H. Anthony III*

Dar es Salaam was, for the greater part of the twentieth century, the capital of historic Tanganyika, now the mainland portion of the United Republic of Tanzania. It is situated on the East African coast and borders the western Indian Ocean. For most of the brief history of the locality, “religion” has amounted to the predominance of Islam. Although Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and “traditional” African religious communities always exerted differing degrees of influence upon it, the very name Dar es Salaam has Muslim connotations¹ and reflects the relative strength of several “sects” of Islamic provenance.

Historically, the vast majority of Muslims in Dar es Salaam have tended to belong to either the Shi‘i community or to one of the Sunni Sufi brotherhoods (*turuq*; sing. *tariqah*), each assuming a dynamic role in the propagation and institutionalization of the faith in the town. As early as the fourteenth century, the feisty traveler extraordinaire Ibn Battutah recognized East Africa as an area of Islamic efflorescence. His observations regarding Kilwa, the jewel of the region, still may be read profitably as an indication of the religion’s lasting roots.

The tightly organized Shi‘i communities have been primarily Asian in composition. Most of their members have ancestral links with the western coast of India, especially Cutch, Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Sindh. In contrast to them, the Sufi brotherhoods, so influential throughout the world of Sunni Islam, have been of Arab, Afro-Arab, and African composition, most originating in other coastal areas like Brava along the Somali littoral or Hadramawt in southern Arabia, filtering down the East African coast or *mrima* by way of Mombasa and Zanzibar.

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¹See E. H. Becker, “Dar es Salaam,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1913) and J. W. T. Allen, “The Name Dar es Salaam,” *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 19 (1945), 67-68.

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Among Muslims in Dar es Salaam, ethnicity and *nisab*² pedigree have been of prime importance. Rite followed determined communal affiliation. Rite was usually established by the manner and time in which Islam came to prominence within a given Muslim community and whether it was Sunni, Shi'i, or Khariji. Muslims of Asian origin were almost always members of Shi'i communities, either Isma'ili, Ithna 'Ashari, or Bhora (Bohora), while Arab, Afro-Arab, and African Muslims were, as a rule, Sunni, adopting either the Shafi'i or Ibadi rite.

What were the mechanics of the religious system? Bradford G. Martin, discussing Zanzibar (whose impact upon the opposite mainland has always been considerable), gives insights that are applicable to Dar es Salaam. Martin stated that the influence of Hadhrami holy families was extremely great in both Unguja (Kiswahili: Zanzibar) and the mainland, suggesting to him that the isle of cloves and its nearby coastal extensions were each annexed to Hadrami culture and intellectual life.³

Martin added that the primary instructive spaces were the mosque college (*madrasah*) and the Qur'anic school for Sunni and the mosque, *jamatkhanah*, or *imambarah* for Shi'i *khulafa'*. Pivotal for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge was the *ijazah*. This diploma certificate was signed by a saint or scholar (*khaliifah*) declaring that a disciple had studied a certain sacred text under his direction. The *ijazah* was the standard means through which texts and prophetic traditions were introduced and transmitted to Zanzibar and the *mrima*, the coastal strip extending southward from Vanga (Kenya) to the Rufiji River (Tanzania).⁴

Consistent with Islamic practice throughout the Dar al-Islam, the center of each section of communities in Dar es Salaam is usually the neighborhood mosque. This has generally taken one of two forms, either the elaborate, well-financed limestone edifices located in the center of the town in the appropriately named Mosque Street or the smaller, more modest structures serving the peripheral areas like Msasani and Kinondoni, where local materials employed in *msikiti* construction are indicative of the relative wealth of the inhabitants. The range of variation is great indeed,

²*Nisab* (Ar.; kinship, relationship by marriage, affinity; pl. *nisab*) and the related *nasab* (Ar.; lineage, descent, origin; pl. *ansab*) are central to the Islamic tradition. Prestige in Islam is determined by one's genealogical relationship to the Prophet Muhammad and the original Islamic community.

³Bradford G. Martin, "Notes on Some Members of the Learned Classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the Nineteenth Century," *African Historical Studies* 4 (1971), 3:525-545.

⁴*Ibid.*, 539.

some being as basic as a Swahili-type thatch house while others may be quite old and made of stone.⁵

Administration of these mosques has customarily taken the form of either communal ownership (strongest in the Asian Shi'ī communities) or, what is more common among the Sunni groups, a kind of custodial control being exercised by the resident imam, who often has the prerogative of passing the mosque on to his eldest son. While computation of numbers for mosques in Dar es Salaam can be a difficult task, the few references enumerating these suggest steady growth, and this remains consistent with general population patterns.⁶

Although Kiswahili has played a decisive role in developing a strong religious consciousness among Muslims in Dar es Salaam—due in large part to its intimate relationship with Arabic, the language in which the Qur'an was revealed—paradoxically, its overall significance has been mixed. Despite the richness and expressiveness of Kiswahili in both its spoken and written forms, interpretation of the sacrosanct texts was undertaken only recently and not without controversy. In spite of the fact that three major Kiswahili translations of the Qur'an have been attempted within the twentieth century, there has been little consensus regarding the best of these, the older Arabic Qur'an continuing to be vastly preferred to any of the vernacular editions.⁷

By contrast, the earliest Christian missionaries made translation of the Bible into local vernaculars a priority, which had implications far beyond the realm of the spiritual. Perhaps this suggests as much about the resilience of Kiswahili as it does about the aggressiveness of the proselytizing efforts of European Christians. The indigenous communities of the Dar es Salaam area were confident enough to rely upon their own mastery of Kiswahili

⁵While studies of mosques in Dar es Salaam are rare, historical information on older structures in the general vicinity of the town was of interest during the late colonial and early independence periods. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, "Some Preliminary Observations on Medieval Mosques near Dar es Salaam," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 36 (January 1954), 64-70; Neville Chittick, "Relics of the Past in Dar es Salaam," *Tanzania Notes and Records* 71 (1970), 65-69; W. T. Casson, "Architectural Notes in Dar es Salaam," *ibid.*, 181-183.

⁶A. Leue, "Dar-es-Salaam," *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 6 (1889), 198; M. Klamroth, "Ostafrikanischer Islam," *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift* 37 (1910), 483; J. S. Schacht, "Notes on Islam in East Africa," *Studia Islamica* 23 (Paris, 1965), 130; Lloyd W. Swantz, *The Medicine Man Among the Zaramo of Dar es Salaam* (Uppsala, Sweden: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies and Dar es Salaam University Press, 1990). Swantz was the most authoritative.

⁷James D. Holway, "The Qur'an in Swahili," *The Muslim World* 61 (1971), 2:102-110. See also Simon Digby, "A Qur'an from the East African Coast," *Art and Archeology Research Papers* 7 (June 1975), 49-55.

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and other locally spoken lingua francas (such as Gujarati among the majority of Asian Muslims) to withstand the cultural onslaught of imperialism. There was, however, one major contrast between these two groups of “people of the book” in their approaches to the transmission of revealed truth.

Because Arabic remains the historical language of Islam as the medium through which the Qur’an was made known to the Prophet Muhammad and is revered as the living word of Allah, it is felt by many to be untranslatable. The closest one may come to translation is interpretation, which may be allowable if accomplished correctly. It has, therefore, been no easy matter to render the Qur’an in the spoken language of the majority of the inhabitants of Swahiland, Kiswahili. Traditional instruction usually required rote study of the *surahs*, sometimes with, but often without, exegesis. A measure of the value of this form of study is the designation of *hafiz*, one who has accomplished the difficult task of memorizing the entire Qur’an.

The first Qur’an in Kiswahili was prepared by Godfrey Dale of the Universities Mission to Central Africa in 1923. Canon Dale was in turn followed by Shaykh Mubarak Ahmad Ahmadi, chief missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission in East Africa in 1953. A third was done by Shaykh Abdullah Hasan ibn ‘Amir ash-Shirazi, who was considered the foremost Shafi‘i scholar in Dar es Salaam when he completed his manuscript in 1953.⁸ Each of these editions became a source of much heated debate, though none, perhaps, as intense as that which greeted the Ahmadi text, many continuing to view the Ahmadiyyah as heterodox.⁹

In common with several other Sufi *turuq*—for example, the Rifa‘iyyah and the Qadiriyyah—the Ahmadiyyah order exerted a profound impact

⁸Holway; 101, n. 2.

⁹The Ahmadiyya has been subject to numerous heresy accusations. Ahmadi missionaries have been forbidden to proselytize as Muslims in Pakistan. See S. A. A. Rizvi, *Muhammad is the Last Prophet* (Dar es Salaam, 1971) and Abdullah Saleh al-Farsy, *Upotofu wa Tafsiri ya Makadini* (The Perverseness of the Qadiani Translation). In defense of the Ahmadi translation, see the tract by the Ahmadi Shaykh K. A. Abedi, *Uoongofu wa Tafsiri ya Kurani Tukufu* (The Correctness of the Translation of the Holy Qur’an) (Nairobi: East African Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, 1967). Schacht, however, found that “In Dar es Salaam . . . a young Muslim government official who had had both a traditional Islamic and a modern scientific education, and who was highly suspicious of the Isma‘ilis, expressed the opinion that the differences which divided the Ahmadiyya from the Sunnis were only differences of interpretation” (101). The Ahmadiyyah follow Ghulam Ahmad, an Indian of Persian descent who resided in Punjab from 1836 to 1908 and claimed to be a peaceful *Mahdi* who renounced *jihad* as un-Islamic.

upon Muslim life in Dar es Salaam. It spread to the mainland after being introduced in Zanzibar by Sayyid Mahmud bin Hamid, who initiated Shaykh Uyas. The *tariqah* was then taken to Dar es Salaam by Shaykh ‘Ali bin Salih (d. 1959), a *khalifah* of Shaykh Uyas. Around 1935, the Ahmadiyyah made its first appearance in Bagamoyo, the only other mainland site where it has been established. In the course of his research on Tanzania-based Sufi brotherhoods, August Nimtz found that the Ahmadiyyah was the most popular of all the country’s *turuq*. Such popularity clearly was a factor in the opposition it encountered.

The Shi‘i Communities of Dar es Salaam

There are three major Shi‘i communities in Dar es Salaam. These are the Ithna ‘Ashariyyah and two groups of Khoja Isma‘ili origin, the Isma‘ili or Nizari Isma‘ili and the Bohra (also rendered Bhora and Bohora) or Musta‘li Isma‘ili. The progenitors of the present members of these communities originally converted from Hinduism. Relations between the variegated communities reflect in microcosm the major developments of Shi‘i Islam elsewhere in the Islamic world. Khoja and Bohra merchants wielded great financial influence in Bombay and Gujarat and used their wealth to advance the interests of Islam in early nineteenth-century British India.¹⁰

In the past, the Muslim traders of Gujarat were divided into three groups, Bohra, Khoja and Memon, the former two being Shi‘i, the latter Sunni. The basis of the distinction separating Khoja from Bohra came in a split after the death of the Fatimid caliph Mustansir Billah in 1094.¹¹ Each

¹⁰*Khoja* is derived from the Farsi *khwajah*, meaning both “honorable” and “master” and referring to an ethnic group of Indians from Sindh and Cutch in western India who were converted by Isma‘ili *da‘i* missionaries known as *pir*, especially through Pir Sadr ad-Din, a *da‘i* who preached in Sindh during the fifteenth century under authority of Imam Muhammad ibn Islam Shah (1424-64). Hatim M. Amiji, “Some Notes on Religious Dissent in Nineteenth Century East Africa,” *African Historical Studies* 4 (1971), 3:603. *Bohra* or *Bhora* derives from the Gujarati *vohorvu*, meaning “to trade.” H. Amiji, “The Bohras of East Africa,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 7 (1975), 27.

¹¹The initial schism in the Shi‘a community dates from the death of the sixth imam, Ja‘far Muhammad as-Sadiq, in 756, when two sects were formed, the Imamiyyah, later Ithna ‘Ashariyyah (Twelvers), and the Isma‘iliyyah, or Sab‘iyyah (Seveners), which later subdivided into Nizari and Musta‘lian branches. H. Amiji, “The Asian Communities,” in *Islam in Africa*, ed. James Kritzeck and William H. Lewis (New York: Van Nostrand-Reinhold Co., 1969); cf. M. G. S. Hodgson, “How Did the Early Shi‘a Become Sectarian?” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75 (1955), 1-13; Sh. T. Lokhandawalla, “The Bohras, a Muslim Community of Gujarat,” *Studia Islamica* 3 (1955), 117-135; S. A. A. Rizvi, “The Breakdown of Traditional Society”; P. M. Holt, Anne K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Cambridge History of Islam*

community has, in its turn, had a long and distinguished history of trading and settlement activity in the Indian Ocean region, climaxed in 1840 by the invitation of Sayyid Sa'īd, then sultan of Zanzibar, to live and trade under the auspices of his regime. From the start, therefore, Muslims of Indian ancestry have played a major role in the development of the Dar es Salaam social formation.

Khoja communities in India appeared as early as the fourteenth century when Persian Isma'īli holy men (*piro*) encouraged significant numbers of Hindus, who had formerly been part of the Lohanna caste, to embrace Islam. These conversions later became controversial owing to the alleged willingness of the *piro* to accommodate certain features of Hinduism in order to expedite the conversion process. This action was justified on the basis of the Shi'ī doctrine of *taqiyyah*, translated as "permissible dissimulation of real beliefs in difficult situations."¹²

When most of the Khoja responded to the call of Sayyid Sa'īd in 1840, the key figure in the then unified Isma'īliyyah community was its spiritual leader the Aga Khan (*Agha Khan*), then residing in Persia. By dint of his authority, the Aga Khan issued *firman*s, directives that required the strictest obedience from members of the Shi'ī Imami Isma'īliyyah community at peril of ostracism; Khoja property was also held to be under the administrative custodianship of the Aga Khan.

In 1840, as a consequence of the altered climate of Iran in the wake of an unsuccessful rebellion against the shah, the first Aga Khan fled to Sindh, later assisting the British in the Second Afghan War and in the conquest of Sindh, as a result of which the Aga Khan was awarded a monthly pension of 3,000 rupees from the "British" Indian treasury. As part of the Anglo-Iranian accord, the Aga Khan was not permitted to return to Persia. Consequently, he and his Iranian followers settled in Bombay among the

Volume 2A (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), 78 and A. Sachedina, "A Treatise on the Occultation of the 12th Imamite Imam," *Studia Islamica* 48 (1978), 109-124.

¹²S. A. A. Rizvi and Noel Q. King, "Some East African Ithna 'Asheri *Jamaats* (1840-1967)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 5 (1973), 12. *Taqiyyah* provides for tolerance of certain pre-Islamic beliefs that might be viewed as heterodox in order to expedite the conversion process. See Egbert Meyer, "Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der *Taqiyya*," *Der Islam* (1980), 246-280. Shirin Walji describes it as "adopting alien religious customs and incorporating orthodox Sunni beliefs and customs into Isma'īli faith" (70). See also S. N. Mankarem, "The Philosophical Significance of the Imam in Isma'īlism," *Studia Islamica* 28 (1967), 41-54.

Ismā'īli Khoja, the majority of whom then elected to accept the Aga Khan as their imam.¹³

Following the invitation of Sayyid Sa'īd, members of several Shi'ī Indian communities (many of whom had had lengthy and intimate religious, marital, and mercantile connections with the world of Islam) began to settle in several coastal East African entrepôts, some eventually migrating into the interior as well. Among the most favored of these sites was Zanzibar, the fulcrum of western Indian Ocean commerce. There, Shi'ī scholars, such as Dewji Jamal and Abdullah Saleh Sachedina (students of the Bombay-based Mullah Qadir Husain), both of whom lived and worked in Zanzibar during the 1870s, became involved in proselytization on the coast and in the interior in a manner similar to that of their Sunni rivals.¹⁴ In Dar es Salaam, for example, the first Asian trader is said to have been Shaykh Amiji Musaji, a Bohra who went to Mzizima, a predecessor of Dar es Salaam, in 1860 with Sayyid Majid ibn Sa'īd, the son and successor of Sayyid Sa'īd.¹⁵

From Zanzibar, these learned Muslim *maalimu* and their disciples were instrumental in propagating Shi'ī Islam throughout East Africa, first to Mombasa and Lamu around 1880, then onward to Bagamoyo, Lindi, Pangani, Dar es Salaam, and Kilwa from 1880 to 1904. By the turn of the twentieth century, Ithna 'Ashariyyah, Bohra and Isma'iliyyah were well on their way to establishing residences in Tabora, Ujiji, Kigoma, Lake Tanganyika, Arusha, Kondoa-Irangi, Singida, Moshi, and Dodoma, as well as in diverse areas in Kenya, Uganda, historic Congo (formerly Zaire, now Congo again), and points farther south. Dar es Salaam was crucial in facilitating this penetration since it was the entry point to the hinterland.¹⁶ An extremely important split had occurred within the Khoja sacred community in this period, however, bringing in its wake dramatic and unprecedented transformations.

Prior to the transference of his headquarters from Iran to India, the allegiance of Shi'ī Imami Khoja to the Aga Khan had been nominal, and distance had made it possible for his East Africa-based followers to fulfill their various communal obligations on a relatively informal basis. There had also been an attitude of broad tolerance for syncretic practices among

¹³Amiji, "Some Notes," 609. On Aga Khan, see H. S. Morris, "The Divine Kingship of the Aga Khan: A Study of Theocracy in East Africa," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 14 (1958), 4:454-472.

¹⁴S. A. A. Rizvi and N. Q. King, "The Khoja and Shi'a Ithna 'Aheriya Community in East Africa (1840-1967)," *Muslim World* 64 (1974), 3:196.

¹⁵Hatim Amiji, "The Asian Communities," in *Islam in Africa*, 144.

¹⁶Rizvi and King, 198.

Khoja, incorporating both Sunni and Hindu elements. Following the shift to India, however, the trend initiated by the Aga Khan was a gradual tightening of discipline within Khoja ranks, intended to purify Isma'īlism of its anti-Shi'i and un-Islamic accretions. Because of the ongoing relationship connecting the Asian migrants in East Africa with their ancestral homeland, these changes necessarily affected the new Isma'īli communities that had sprung up in the shadow of Zanzibar, including settlers in a nascent Dar es Salaam.

Influenced by a series of court cases involving the Aga Khan in 1866, 1894, and 1908, a small but significant number of believers of Khoja origin came to feel that the power of the Aga Khan and certain other features of Isma'īli doctrine were objectionable and elected to secede from the community. As Muslims, these Khoja felt obliged to belong to some Islamic collective, which meant joining another Shi'i aggregation. As a result, many of these seceders sought membership in the Ithna 'Ashariyyah.

The gradual process of individual defections from the Imami Isma'īliyyah became a serious problem during the trial of 1894-1895. This litigation centered around the commingling of property owned by the Aga Khan as custodian for the entire Isma'īli community. It had its roots in the court case of 1866 that had resulted in, among other things, the secession of five of the 450 Zanzibar Khoja families. They subsequently formed the nucleus of Ithna 'Ashari opposition to the Aga Khan, particularly regarding ownership of the *Jamatkhanah* (House of Assembly) and other communal property in common use among Isma'īliyyah and seceders alike. The 1895 judgment gave Khoja the choice of remaining unconditionally allied to the Aga Khan or going their own way. Those preferring to join the Ithna 'Ashariyyah lost their benefits as Isma'īliyyah, specifically regarding burial rights.

In his autobiography, the Aga Khan discusses this situation, both in Zanzibar and in Dar es Salaam. In the former case, he viewed it as a matter of coastal land ownership complicated by burial rights. By 1890, however, Zanzibar was held in British hands while Dar es Salaam, along with that part of the mainland claimed by Germany, was now ruled by them as part of German East Africa. He portrays that difficulty thus:

In Dar es Salaam I was faced with a similar sort of conflict, in this case between the German authorities and my followers over land trading rights. This dispute had smoldered and flickered throughout the nineties; the Germans were suspicious of my Ismaili followers, and there were accusations that they were smuggling in arms and had had a hand in the Arab rebellion of some ten years before. There was a certain stiffness on the part of the German Governor and his officials when I first arrived. However I persevered, and before I left I was able to see the dispute settled and the suspicions (which were probably one cause of the

stubbornness of the dispute) thoroughly dissipated. When I left, it was in the knowledge that there was a clean slate, so far as differences between my followers and the German administration were concerned.¹⁷

Population figures for members of these Asian Islamic groups suffer from the same kinds of inconsistencies that plague statisticians in Dar es Salaam. Often, these were outsiders incapable of differentiating between Indians; distinctions observed occasionally appear arbitrary. Goans and Baluchis, for example, fell into different categories, neither of which was considered Asian, and so these were enumerated separately. The earliest totals for people of Indian ancestry in Dar es Salaam treat them as a group. In his estimates for the year 1873, Bartle Frere found a total of 107 Indians, who included 47 Khoja, 45 Bohra, and 15 Hindus. Elton, in 1874, tabulated 21 families, including “1 Wannia, 13 Battiahs, 1 Mooltani, 3 Bhoras, and 1 Khoja.” In 1886, Kitchener reiterated Frere’s 1873 total of 107, reckoning a total population that he believed to number in the range of 5,000. Subsequent statistics pay less attention to groups within the Asian community, with the exception of Seidel’s estimate of 1898, which shows 600 Muslims and 200 Hindus, and that of Schmidt for 1913, which makes mention of 150 to 200 Goans. By the turn of the century, Asians as a whole in Dar es Salaam were averaged between about 900 and 950.¹⁸

Comparatively little is known about these Asian participants in the early life of Dar es Salaam other than that the majority were engaged in commerce, whether seasonally or as permanent residents. These traders were able to exert influence out of proportion to their modest numbers, especially through financing safaris and caravans to the interior, several of which had been assembled in order to secure slaves for transport to

¹⁷His Highness, The Aga Khan, *World Enough and Time: The Memoirs of Aga Khan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 88.

¹⁸Robert F. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations Within the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 10, 37; John Gray, “Dar es Salaam Under the Sultans of Zanzibar,” *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 33 (July 1952), 11. “Wannia” is likely “Banya,” which, like Bhatia and Mooltani, were names of Hindu trading castes. Frere’s 1874 report deals with an 1873 trip: “Memorandum by Sir Bartle Frere regarding Banias or Natives of India in East Africa,” enclosure number 1 in “Frere to Lord Granville,” 10 April 1873, in *Correspondence Respecting Sir Bartle Frere’s Mission to the East Coast of Africa* (London, 1873), C. 820, 100. August Seidel’s estimate appears in Karl-Günther Schneider, *Dar es Salaam.. Stadtentwicklung unter dem Einfluss der Araber und Inder* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1965). Schmidt’s estimate is cited in Sigurd von Sicard, *The Lutheran Church on the Coast of Tanzania, 1887-1914* (Lund: Gleerup, 1970). Henry Charles Clement Dundas, *Report on German East Africa, 1 July 1892 to 31 July 1899. Aug. 1900* (Dip. Cons. Reports: misc. ser., no. 535), Cd. 353, xci, Foreign Office, 39-46.

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Zanzibar. The involvement of people of Indian descent in the slave trade in the Dar es Salaam area seems primarily to have been related to usury, although Frere and Elton commented on a small portion of resident Asian slaveholders in Dar es Salaam.

The major distinction that seems to have existed within the Asian community revolved more around settlement than religion, most Hindus apparently preferring to travel to and from India on a largely seasonal basis, while Muslims both chose on an individual basis and were encouraged as groups, particularly in the case of the Khoja, to settle permanently. The relative size of these communities probably made for a greater degree of cohesion than was possible in India itself, where caste, faith, and geographical origin were of greater consequence. The tolerance of the Sayyids of Zanzibar seems to have been shared to a significant extent by their mainland coreligionists.

The role of various sects of Asian Muslims in Dar es Salaam during the interwar period appears to have been fairly independent from that of the African Muslims. These were accompanied by some of the ethnic and sectarian particularism which revealed itself in the succession of schisms common to both Shi'i Islam in general and the Khoja communities of East Africa in particular. At the same time, it is evident that there was some degree of cohesion between members of various Asian communities that transcended cultural, regional, and caste barriers at crucial points during the twenties and thirties, most notably in the Indian Association, which consistently sought reform during these decades.

Muslim activity, however, continued to follow much the same communal pattern as pertained throughout the nineteenth century. The possibility of a wider level of pan-Islamic cooperation arose in the twenties with the advent of the East African Moslem Association, open not only to members of the various Asian communities, but to African and Arab Muslims as well. The ostensible unity of the daring pioneering venture broke down in the thirties, however, the separate constituents lapsing backward into their previous identities, leading to a renewed reliance upon the communally based assembly halls (*jamatkehanahs*), which had been so central to the Bhora and Isma'ili.¹⁹

¹⁹Aisha Daisy Sykes-Buruku, "The Townsman," in *Modern Tanzanians: A Volume of Biographies*, ed. John Iliff (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), 105-106. Interview, Mzee Muhammad Kigwe, Msasani-Mikoroshoni, Dar es Salaam, 25 December 1976. Mzee Muhammad said that the organization was funded by the Aga Khan and had, as its first non-Asian head, an African named Hajji. The Aga Khan is said to have matched contributions.

Anthony: Islam in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Asian Population in Dar es Salaam, 1873-1934 (Estimated)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>
1873	107
1874	21 (families)
1885	200
1886	107
1887	200
1894	620
1896	1,000
1898	800
1900	950
1904	900
1913	2,500
1921	4,000
1931	9,000
1934	11,000

Sources: Sir John Gray, "Dar es Salaam Under the Sultans of Zanzibar," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 33 (1952); Clement Gillman, "Dar es Salaam 1860-1940, A Story of Growth and Change," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 20 (1945); Karl-Gunther Schneider, *Dar es Salaam Unter dem Einfluß der Araber und Inder* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1965); Robert G. Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations Within the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Sigurd von Sicard, *Lutheran Church on the Coast of Tanzania, 1887-1914, With Special Reference to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, Synod of Uzaramo-Uluguru* (Uppsala, 1970); *Report on Tanganyika Territory From the Armistice to 1920* (London: His Britannic Majesty's Government, 1921); A. C. Mascarenhas, "The Impact of Nationhood on Dar es Salaam," *East African Geographical Review* (1967); J. A. K. Leslie, *A Survey of Dar es Salaam* (London: Oxford, 1963); Ralph Roylance Scott, "The Growth of a Public Health Service in a Tropical Town," *East African Medical Journal* 10 (1933); J. E. G. Sutton, "Dar es Salaam, A Sketch of a Hundred Years," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 71 (1970); Henry Charles Clement Dundas, *Report on*

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German East Africa, 1 July 1892 to 31 July 1899. Aug. 1900. (Dip Cons. Reports: misc. ser., no 535), 1900 Cd. 353, xci, Foreign Office.

Many of the changes that occurred within these settings in the colonial period reflected bureaucratic pressures and preoccupations. Apart from descriptions of structural and theological innovation, the analysis of change among Muslims of Indian origin in Dar es Salaam has sometimes been fragmentary and hagiographical. Generally done by members of given communities, such studies have unearthed data concerning leading figures and pivotal teachers and their legacy to the improvement of the Islamic life of their specific segment of the town but have tended to replicate historically rooted sectarianism.

As elsewhere in the coastal towns of East Africa, Isma'ilis in Dar es Salaam still represent the largest portion of Muslims of Indian ancestry. Since the mid-1920s, they have been able to make their presence felt in Dar es Salaam through the formation of a strong interterritorial organization capable of championing their interests. In 1926, for example, the Aga Khan established Provincial Councils in Uganda; these were subsequently followed by others in Kenya and Tanganyika. The councils sought to coordinate communal activities in the three British-ruled localities.²⁰

Individual Muslims of Indian extraction have gained fame in Dar es Salaam as philanthropists since the era of German hegemony. During that period, Sewa Haji Paroo, a millionaire wholesaler of Khoja background, lent a measure of support to the Dar es Salaam school for Indians and Africans "intended for the free secular education of the poorer native classes." The Karimjee family, of Bhora origin, and the seemingly indefatigable Aga Khan, both financed projects of benefit to both Isma'ilis and non-Isma'ilis, including Africans. Prominent among these have been various educational institutions, such as the Dar es Salaam Secondary School for Boys, established in 1939, from its inception providing for inclusion of up to one third non-Khoja pupils.

Relations between Asian and African Muslims, like those of the two larger ethnic communities created by colonialism, have been mixed. It is undeniable that, occasionally, these have been marred by conflicts, many of which have been economic and political in nature. Of these, many were

²⁰Shirin Remtulla Walji, "A History of the Ismaili Community in Tanzania" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1974). Cf. Eva Kjellberg, "The Ismailis in Tanzania" (Dar es Salaam: Institute of Public Administration, University College of Dar es Salaam, 1967).

nurtured by colonial authorities and their settler allies in order to deter manifestations of Islamic unity in the face of alien occupation. Two such threats could be seen in the misnamed “Arab” rebellion led by Abushiri bin Salim al-Harhi, waged against the imposition of German Rule in 1888, and in the notorious “Mecca Letter Affair” of the First World War. In each instance, Islam acted as a unifying factor, though not effective enough to guarantee victory.

Clearly, those precedents set by the Mecca Letter incident and Abushiri’s Rebellion, when viewed alongside some of the instances of cooperation and philanthropy, demonstrate that, in spite of outbreaks of friction and the racialism aggravated by European occupation, real concern for the welfare of the local non-Asian population has been a recurrent theme among sectors of the Asian community; this has been especially evident in the more progressive leadership stratum. Some “Asians” were implicated in gunrunning during the Maji-Maji war of 1905-1907 while others became casualties of the movement. One measure of the ambivalence of social relations between Islamic communities has been the thorny issue of miscegenation between Africans and persons of Indian backgrounds. An extremely complex matter, this seems never to have occurred on a large scale in Dar es Salaam but certainly was not unknown there. Historically, the sanctions against such choices have been great, including the risk of ostracism.

While racial prejudice must be considered an element here, local practice has long eschewed exogamous relationships among African, Indian, and “Arab” communities. It is true, however, that the strongly exclusivistic tendencies characteristic of Indian communities seeking to retain their caste purity, a pre-Islamic accretion, made even inter-Islamic marriages among “Asians” appear as a serious problem. The offspring of Afro-Indian relationships were called *jotama* in Gujarati and *chotara* in Kiswahili, opprobrious terms that meant “half-caste.” While multicultural, this group has been strongly African in identity, outlook, and social relations, though often forced to exist in isolation.

The Sufi Brotherhoods of Dar es Salaam

Among the most important vehicles for understanding the role Islam has played in the everyday lives of Africans in Dar es Salaam is the Sufi brotherhood. Sufi brotherhoods were pivotal to East African Sunni Islam. Most Sufi communities revolve around a scholar and teacher, usually called a *mu’allim* (Kiswahili, *mwalimu*), who is a member of the intelligentsia

(*ulama*) and is most often addressed by the honorific title of *shaykh* (Kiswahili, *shehe*). The Sufi *shaykh* attracts disciples or *murids*, who formally undertake the study of *ilm*, the Islamic sciences, generally in either a college mosque (*madrassa*) or in another compatible setting. These schools confer upon the *murid* an *ijazah*, or license, upon the completion of the prescribed term of study. In East Africa, it has long been considered advantageous for Muslims anxious to demonstrate their scholarly attainments as *shuyukh* (pl. of *shaykh*) to acquire as many of these documents as possible from a wide variety of highly reputed teachers (*mu'allimin*).²¹

Down through the years, the *turuq* have often competed with one another, sometimes quite sharply, for both influence and adherents. In the middle and late nineteenth century, this manifested itself in the keen rivalry between Shadhili and Qadiri communities, the latter profoundly affected by the proselytizing activities of the Sufi saint Shaykh 'Uways bin Muhammad al-Barawi al-Qadiri (1847-1909), founder of the Uwasiyyah movement. Shaykh 'Uways was a frequent visitor to Zanzibar and the adjacent coastal areas of East Africa until his assassination in 1909 by disciples of the Salihyyah *tariqah*, led by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abdallah. The Salihyyah was an offshoot of the Ahmadiyyah and was stimulated by the Wahhabiyyah resurgence.²²

The first *tariqah* on the mainland of historic Tanganyika was the Qadiriyyah, appearing at the end of the nineteenth century, although it is possible that this order may have been preceded in Zanzibar by a branch of the 'Alawiyyah. Around 1880, the Qadiri Shaykh Husayn bin 'Abd Allah Mu'in traveled to Zanzibar, developing an intimate relationship with Shaykh 'Ali bin 'Umar, who subsequently became the first successor (*khalifah*) of Shaykh Husayn in the *tariqah*. Shaykh 'Ali is considered to have been responsible for the spread of the Qadiriyyah to the mainland of the Dar es Salaam-Rufiji region. The best known Qadiri proselytizer, however, remains Shaykh 'Uways.²³

Dar es Salaam seems to have had some importance to the spread of these orders since it lay on the main route connecting Zanzibar with the

²¹August H. Nimtz, *Islam and Politics in East Africa: The Sufi Order in Tanzania* (Minneapolis, 1980), 16-19.

²²B. G. Martin, "Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh 'Uways bin Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriyya Brotherhood in East Africa," *Journal of African History* 10 (1969), 3:471-486; Martin, "The Qadiri and Shadhili Brotherhoods in East Africa, 1880-1910," *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century East Africa* (London, 1976), chapter 6, 152-176.

²³Nimtz, *Islam and Politics in East Africa*, 59.

interior.²⁴ Shaykh ‘Uways, who was popular with the Sayyids of Zanzibar (probably for political as well as religious reasons),²⁵ was able to generate enough support among his *kebulafa*’ and *murids* to establish a branch of the ‘Uwaysiyyah on the coast facing Zanzibar, alarming the German authorities ensconced there.²⁶ Other *shuyukh* prominently involved in spreading the Qadiriyyah included Shaykh ‘Umar al-Qullatayn, one of the most well-known *kebulafa*’ of Shaykh ‘Uways, who was intimately involved in spreading the Qadiriyyah from Zanzibar to the vicinity of Dar es Salaam, as well as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Aziz bin al-Ghani al-Amawi, Shaykh Zahur bin Muhammad al-Jabri al-Barawi, and his brother, Shaykh Sufi bin Muhammad al-Jabri.

While the main concern of the leaders of various brotherhoods was the propagation of their particular interpretation of Sunni Islam, their work did not exist in a vacuum. Several other tensions existed in the greater East African area, affecting different Muslim groupings. The most distressing of these was racialism. The pioneering Islamic influences in the region were identified with Arabs, principally from Hadramawt or southern Arabia, followed by Omanis throughout the course of the nineteenth century. For these people, the issue of *nasab*, or ancestry, was of decisive importance, especially with regard to the length of time a given group had been part of the Muslim faithful.

Owing to the circumstances that had prevailed in nineteenth-century East Africa, during which the Indian Ocean slave trade had been of major significance, comparatively large numbers of Africans had been Islamized. This created a cleavage between Arabs, who prided themselves on being descended from lineages that existed during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and those who had joined the Islamic community much more recently. Those who claimed direct descent from the original community of Muslims bore the extremely prestigious title of *sharif*. As the number of African Muslims grew, some Arabs found subtle and even blatant means of restricting the progress of African accession to the *‘ulama*’, effectively creating, principally through nepotism, a system in which African Muslims could be relegated to second-class status. Colonialism strengthened this tendency, under both German and British hegemony, with the result that “African” Islam tended to develop certain characteristics and to incorporate certain practices considered heterodox by some of the *‘ulama*’ of Arab origin.

²⁴Ibid., 6.

²⁵Ibid., 2-73.

²⁶C. H. Becker, “Materialien zur Kenntnis des Islam in Deutsch-Ostafrika,” *Der Islam* 2 (1911).

One of the areas in which this could be observed was in the practice of *dhikr* (Kiswahili, *ziker*), a quintessential Sufi ritual. *Dhikr* was the incantation of particular praises of Allah by members of a given *tariqah*. Because it was often accompanied by drumming, *dhikr* became very popular among Africans in Dar es Salaam, for whom music in general, but drumming in particular, was such a vital part of many different kinds of ceremonies. Those who had looked askance at African participation in Islam generally seized upon *dhikr* as a means through which to limit the influence of particular *shuyukh*, especially those whose *turuq* had gained adherents by using *dhikr*.

In their opposition to the great popularity of *dhikr* as it was practiced by African Muslims in Dar es Salaam and elsewhere on the mainland, some of the old Arab and “Shirazi” elites who attempted to exert hegemony over the Islamic communities of the region were not above cooperation with the colonial authorities, who considered *dhikr* objectionable for other reasons. The major concern of the German and British authorities in this connection was the possibility that *dhikr* might represent a potential threat to their rule since it was evidently something that touched the pulse of the broad masses of Islamized Africans in East Africa both on the coast and in the interior.²⁷

This concern about *dhikr* as latently inimical to public safety intensified after the Maji-Maji War of 1905-1907, when, despite the fact that the uprising was ruthlessly suppressed by the Germans, Islam gained potency among the African population of Dar es Salaam and throughout the German East African Protectorate.²⁸ Moreover, toward the end of the period of German overlordship, the *turuq* had a tremendous impact upon conversion in the vicinity of Dar es Salaam. German scholars, particularly Orientalists, took this activity very seriously, especially the Lutheran missionary-intellectual Martin Klamroth and Islamicist Carl H. Becker. Both studied the African component of Islam in Dar es Salaam.

One of the compelling features of Klamroth’s research is that it reveals his efforts to enter into a dialogue with *waalimu* in the Dar es Salaam area. This appears significant not only because it sheds light upon his scholarship, but also for what it suggests about the confidence of some of the ‘*ulama*’ in Dar es Salaam. In spite of the apparent rivalry for “hearts and minds,” polarizing the mass of Muslims and Christians in Dar, this clerical

²⁷John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 210-216.

²⁸Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, 6.

ecumenical interaction attests to the simultaneous desire to foster a unique climate of elite level Afro-German interfaith tolerance.

Klamroth met with a certain *mu'allim* named Shaykh Idris, an African born in the vicinity of Kilwa, who seemed to be in his thirties. On greeting him in 1910, Klamroth was impressed by the intellectuality of this *shaykh*, who had studied in Zanzibar (“under exceptional instruction”) and subsequently built a reputation among Muslims in Dar es Salaam and Morogoro. Their major concern was disputation with regard to ecclesiastical matters, and in this sphere, the well-trained, intellectually sophisticated Shaykh Idris proved particularly adept.²⁹

In 1910, Klamroth called Dar es Salaam “a unique district in East Africa,” calculating as one of its assets “the strength of Islam.” He wrote: “Dar es Salaam is in many respects an entirely Islamic city.” Although “enumeration had not been undertaken until then,” the population seemed to “vacillate between 20 and 30,000 coloured [people]. There are eight mosques, one each for the four known Indian sects, one for the Ibadhi, one for people from the Comoros and two Sunnite.”³⁰ Allowed to visit these mosques, Klamroth was shown an extraordinary level of deference.

Like Klamroth, Carl Becker investigated Islam in Dar es Salaam. He too was concerned about the degree to which indigenous rituals affected practice, especially concerning the *turuq*. Becker was, in fact, one of the earliest foreign observers of Islam in Dar es Salaam and its environs to acknowledge the importance of the role of the *tariqah* in its dissemination. Both Klamroth and Becker examined the degree to which local practices of *dhikr* and *jando* (circumcision) assumed a unique form, especially among Dar’s numerically and culturally prominent Zaramo.³¹

As the exchange between Klamroth and Shaykh Idris showed, by the early 1900s, the successes attributed to saints and scholars associated with Zanzibar and the mainland contributed to the development of a strong and vibrant tradition of high Islamic learning that has continued until the present day.³² Communication between Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam was

²⁹M. Klamroth, “Religionsgespräche mit einem Führer der Daressalamer Mohammedaner,” *Beiblatt zur Allgemeinen Missions-Zeitschrift* 5 (September 1913), 65-80. For Klamroth’s views regarding Islam in Dar es Salaam and its environs, see his “Ostafrikanischer Islam,” *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift* 37 (1910), 477-493 and 536-546; cf. his “Die literarische Charakter des ostafrikanischen Islam,” *Die Welt des Islam* (1913). For his role in Dar es Salaam, see von Sicard, *Lutheran Church on the Coast of Tanzania*, 170-184.

³⁰M. Klamroth, “Ostafrikanischer Islam,” 483.

³¹C. H. Becker, “Materialien zur Kenntnis des Islam in Deutsch-Ostafrika.”

³²Joseph Schacht, “Notes on Islam in East Africa,” *Studia Islamica* 23 (1965).

frequent and animated, pupils and teachers alike shuttling back and forth with regularity. This included not only those *shuyukh* already mentioned, but also others, such as Shaykh ‘Abd Allah Mjana Khayri, Shaykh Shauri al-Hajj, and Shaykh Muhammad bin ‘Umar al-Qullatayn, who succeeded his noted father, Shaykh ‘Umar al-Qullatayn, as *khalifat as-Sadat al-Qadiriyyah bi-Zanzibar*, or chief of the Qadiri *kbulafa* of Zanzibar.³³

As the German period drew to a close, other *turuq* made an impact on the mainland, especially in the vicinity of Dar es Salaam. These included a Qadiri branch led by Shaykh Husayn bin ‘Abd Allah Mu‘in, which sent *kbulafa*’ to Dar es Salaam and the Rufiji area. A second generation of leaders subsequently appeared, prominent among whom were Shaykh Athman bin ‘Abd Allah Muki (d. 1954), a *khalifah* of Shaykh ‘Ali bin ‘Umar, who was pivotal in establishing the Qadiri order in Dar es Salaam, Shinyanga, Bukoba, and Mwanza.

At the close of the German period, the Shadhili order was the most popular *tariqah* on the mainland, having extended itself from the Comoro Islands. This brotherhood had been founded by Sayyid Muhammad Ma‘ruf bin Shaykh Ahmad bin Abu Bakr between 1885 and 1905, after a trip to Zanzibar brought him under the influence of Shaykh ‘Uways. Shaykh Husayn bin Mahmud of Kilwa, the most famous *khalifah* of Sayyid Muhammad, taught Shaykh ‘Abd al-Khayri and Shaykh ‘Ali Wafa of Dar es Salaam.³⁴

The ‘Askariyyah

In the 1920s, the influence of *turuq* on the life of Dar es Salaam continued to grow. This was especially true during times of uncertainty, epidemics, famines, and other crises, such as those experienced in historic Tanganyika in the years 1916-1924.³⁵ During this period, the role of Islamic teachers and scholars from Dar es Salaam seems to have changed considerably from the subsidiary function they had fulfilled while in the shadow of Zanzibar. Evidence of this is the greater visibility of *shuyukh* from Dar es Salaam in conversions undertaken inland, such as those achieved by the Qadiri

³³Nimtz, “The Role of the Muslim Sufi Order in Political Change: An Overview and Micro-analysis from Tanzania” (unpublished PhD diss., Indiana University, 1973).

³⁴Ibid, 73-74, and *Islam and Politics*, 60. While Shaykh Husayn did not travel to the mainland, his successors Shaykh ‘Ali bin ‘Umar and Shaykh Hajji Mchenga proselytized in Rufiji. Shaykh ‘Ali Msemakweli (Kiswahili: lit., “speaks the truth”) spread the order to Lindi, Kilwa, Malawi (then Nyasaland), and Mozambique (then Portuguese East Africa).

³⁵Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, 13-14.

khalifah Shaykh Athman Muki, who traveled from Dar es Salaam to Shinyanga in the 1920s to work with the support of Sukuma leader Sultan Makwaya.³⁶

Somewhat later, in the 1930s, an innovation of a different kind occurred in Dar es Salaam, when Shaykh Idris bin Sa'ad, a well-respected Qadiri *mwalimu* of Makua ethnicity, founded a *tariqah* of his own, the 'Askariyyah, the mainland's only indigenous brotherhood. The decision to start his own *tariqah* came as a result of his inability to obtain the *ijazah* under Qadiri *mwalimu* Shaykh 'Umar al-Qullatayn in Zanzibar. Shaykh Idris appealed to Shaykh 'Umar but was put off, being told that it would take some time before he would be allowed to study with the Sufi master. Undeterred, Shaykh Idris returned to Dar es Salaam and founded a new brotherhood, which he named after a famous Shadhili Shaykh, 'Abd al-Hasan al-'Askar.³⁷

The decision by Shaykh Idris to found the 'Askariyya has been compared to the activity of African Christians in establishing their own independent churches.³⁸ Indeed, the order was eyed somewhat suspiciously by the established *shuyukh* because of its local origins. The opposition of members of the more orthodox *turuq* to this new *tariqah* led to what Shaykh Idris considered a kind of sabotage against him, which he felt was undertaken with the connivance of the colonial authorities.³⁹

In 1934, Shaykh Idris brought his case to the District Office in Dar es Salaam, charging that some other leaders of Sufi orders were undermining his efforts, particularly in the nearby hamlet of Ruvu, where the local council had forbidden his followers to perform *dbiker*. This Shaykh Idris interpreted as the result of a conspiracy between by Qadiri leaders in Dar es Salaam and the Ruvu local council.⁴⁰

In spite of the obstacles placed in his path by the Qadiri old guard, Shaykh Idris cultivated a reputation for devoutness sufficient to attract a large number of followers. In time, he was able to found branches of the 'Askariyyah in Morogoro, Kilosa, Mahenge, Songea, and other localities. The principles and doctrine of the *tariqah* were written down in an unpublished manuscript authored by the founder and available only to *murids* of the order.

³⁶Ibid., 69.

³⁷Ibid., 60; Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 369-370.

³⁸Iliffe, *Modern History*.

³⁹Nimtz, *Islam and Politics*, 60-61.

⁴⁰Ibid., 84-85.

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Although it is not clear whether Shaykh Idris bin Sa'ad was the same *mwalimu* with whom Klamroth discussed religious matters in 1910, it has been suggested that Shaykh Idris was very much interested in taking part in religious interchanges in Dar es Salaam, occasionally meeting leaders from different places and of various backgrounds. One such series of meetings is said to have been held at the home of Leslie Matola, an early member of the African Association. Shaykh Idris is believed to have exchanged views with Christian clerics in Matola's Swahili street residence.⁴¹

As the case of Shaykh Idris illustrates, Islam was a crucial vehicle for change among African Muslims in Dar es Salaam. It also makes clear the fact that African Muslims operated within a system over which they exerted comparatively limited control, although persistence seems to have altered this somewhat by the 1930s. A major factor in this connection was the extremely great influence wielded by Hadhrami families on both Zanzibar and the mainland. In many ways, this suggests that Zanzibar and its nineteenth-century mainland extensions were ancillary to Hadhrami cultural and intellectual life.⁴² Hadhrami Muslims appear to have played a central role in the development of Islam in this part of East Africa. As a group, they were much more comfortable in dealing with the former lowest class of coastal society. In the words of Martin,

The East African '*ulama*' class was . . . closely knit. Whether Shafi'i or Ibadi, they knew each other personally, and many posts and positions were reserved for recruits from within their own groups. Because of the hereditary factor—descent from the Prophet—nepotism could hardly be excluded. Hence the best qualification for becoming a learned man was to be the son of another learned man. For the person who wished to reach the higher ranks of the Shafi'i '*ulama*', one of the better prerequisites was to be of Hadrami descent. For the smaller unit of Ibadi clergy, Umani ancestry was indispensable. This is not to disparage the achievements of individuals for the traditional system of advancement among the '*ulama*' did indeed raise up many men of outstanding merit to be *imams*, *qadis* or teachers.⁴³

The story of Shaykh Idris also demonstrates the importance of the *ijazah* in facilitating status mobility in Islamic society in Dar es Salaam. The *ijazah* had social parallels as well. Not everyone could aspire to become an

⁴¹Interview, Abdallah Mwinyimvua Abdallah, Dar es Salaam, 26 January 1977.

⁴²Martin, "Notes on Some Members of the Learned Classes," 525-545.

⁴³Ibid., 539.

imam or *mwalimu*. Nevertheless, the kind of relationship exemplified by the *ijazab* system for entrance into the group of 'ulama' had bearing for Muslims whose professional activities were primarily secular. In the secular sphere of Dar es Salaam society, this role was filled by patron-client relationships. These were crucial for outsiders who wished to fully participate in the cultural and political life of the town. A famous example is that of Kleist Sykes Mbuwan.

Kleist Sykes Mbuwan⁴⁴

Born in Pangani in 1894, Kleist Sykes, son of Sykes Mbuwan, went to Dar es Salaam in 1899 and, with few interruptions, lived in the town continuously from the armistice concluding the First World War until his death in the 1940s. His life may be seen as a practical example of the influence of Islam and "Swahilization" as vehicles for social integration in the municipality.

Of Zulu origin, Kleist Sykes entered Dar es Salaam as an outsider. It was, therefore, necessary for him to ally with local forces in order to facilitate his acculturation into Dar es Salaam society. In 1906, Sykes enlisted in the Imperial *Schutztruppe*, serving as a clerk until 1914, when he was shifted to the infantry. After a difficult period in combat in the arduous East African campaign, Sykes was captured by Allied troops and interned in British-occupied Dar es Salaam, where only illness spared him the rigors of hard labor. His confinement ended late in 1917. The following year, Sykes began work in the Railway Department as a typist. During these years, momentous changes had occurred in the family life of Kleist Sykes.

Having lost his father in childhood, Sykes had been very close to his Nyaturu mother, who had been born in historic Tanganyika. The death of Kleist's father, Sykes Mbuwan, brought the young man under the guardianship of his uncle, Effendi Plantan. It was through the agency of Plantan that Sykes was introduced to the society of Dar es Salaam. In the subsequent decade, Sykes gradually became one of the more prominent Africans in Dar es Salaam. This was related to three factors: (1) his meeting with Gold Coast nationalist James E. Kweggyir Aggrey during Aggrey's

⁴⁴This section draws on A. Sykes-Buruka, "The Townsman," in *Modern Tanzanians*, 95-114; Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 408, 410, and on several conversations with Kleist Sykes, grandson of his namesake. Sykes showed me his collected but uncatalogued papers, written by his grandfather, and talked to me at length about his family connections and their impact upon life in Dar es Salaam. He also facilitated interviews with his uncles Ally and Abbs.

1924 trip to Dar es Salaam, (2) his position as a clerk in government service, and (3) his stature as a member of the African Muslim community of Dar es Salaam.

The meeting with Aggrey was significant in providing a certain amount of inspiration for Sykes's own political role in the foundation and early years of the African Association, the progenitor of the Tanganyika African National Union, under whose banner Tanganyika Territory achieved independence in 1961. Equally pivotal, however, was Sykes's part in the formation of the Tanganyika Muslim Association (TMA). This led to his appointment as one of the members of the Provincial Education Committee.

In the same way that the formation of the Tanganyika African Association was partly a response to the gains made by the earlier Indian Association, the predecessor of the religious group in which Sykes became active in the 1930s was the East African Moslem Association, an interracial, intercommunal organization made up of Africans, Arabs, and Indians. After a time, however, the Indians withdrew, forming a grouping of their own, the Anjuman Islamiyyah. It was in the wake of this defection that Sykes and a few other persons interested in Islamic education and related matters decided to found an organization expressly designed to meet the needs of African Muslims in Dar es Salaam. One of the other key figures in the body was Mzee bin Sudi, who became its second president in 1936, after the departure of the first president, Shariff Salim Omar, also the *imam* of Dar es Salaam. A measure of the influence of the TMA is the fact that, when Mzee bin Sudi became its president in 1936, he was also the president of the African Association.⁴⁵

Daisy Sykes-Buruku, daughter and biographer of Kleist Sykes, revealed that an entire network of relationships existed in Dar es Salaam revolving around this ginger group of African Muslims, Mzee bin Sudi, Mzee Popo Saleh, and Kleist Sykes. The kind of interlocking membership in both the African Association and the TMA seems to be only one example. Sykes made good use of his clerical skills. Never a president or vice president of any of the organizations in which he was active, he was, nonetheless, consistently a secretary. During the 1920s and 1930s, he served as secretary of the African Association, the Railway Workers' Union and the TMA.

It is doubtful that this simply meant a person who took notes at meetings. If the examples of later African Associations in other localities have any bearing on the situation of Dar es Salaam in the interwar period, it

⁴⁵Sykes-Buruku, "The Townsman," 106.

is more likely that the role included some degree of policymaking. In the trade union movement that developed within Africa as a whole following the Second World War, for instance, organizational secretaries were often the most powerful figures, while presidents and vice presidents were ceremonial titularies.

However, even if this were not true, a secretary would have been important. Secretaries were as essential to these groups as were scribes to the royal courts of preindustrial social formations. They were responsible for helping to frame bylaws, drafting letters and petitions to members of the colonial administrative apparatus, and generally keeping things in order. These skills depended upon literacy and flexibility, particularly in the multicultural and multilingual environment of Dar es Salaam, in which linguistic and cultural translations were made by people who, of necessity, had had to develop a kind of double vision, as “children of two worlds.”

Sykes was part of the new stratum of Tanganyikan clerks which emerged during the interwar period and carved for itself a relatively powerful position in Dar es Salaam. While the perspective of many studies of the town has tended to emphasize the parameters of African, Asian, and Arab activity in what was often portrayed as a European-controlled locality, much of the evidence suggests that an indigenous dynamic was operating in Dar es Salaam in a manner wholly independent from that of the European “quarter.” In this regard, it has long been necessary for outsiders to have persons possessing locally certified credentials and reputations assist them in their introduction and seasoning into the social and cultural life of Dar es Salaam, a town in which no one could stand alone and realistically expect to attain success.

It would have been quite impossible for Sykes to become one of the influential figures of Dar es Salaam without a European-styled education and an Islamic background. The combination of these kinds of training endowed Sykes with precisely the type of legitimacy a colonial African needed to become a full participant in colonial society, in which it was necessary to speak both the language of the administration and the language of social relations among Africans in an overwhelmingly Islamic setting. At some point after he began his German education, therefore, he would have to begin the process of seasoning through which an older family member, friend, or guardian would serve as his patron. He may have enrolled in a Qur’anic school (*madrassa*) or joined a Sufi brotherhood.

It seems unlikely that Kleist Sykes would have been able to make the kind of entrance he did into Dar es Salaam society without having had the benefit of a patron. The most logical choice for such support would seem

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to have been his uncle, Effendi Plantan. Admittedly, the evidence for this is slim and circumstantial, but two points stand out. First, it is of some significance that Plantan served as the guardian of Sykes during the period of the latter's introduction to Dar es Salaam. Not only did Plantan assist Sykes after the death of his nephew's mother, but it was clear that Plantan made efforts to integrate Sykes into his own family.

During the 1920s, Sykes was known as Kleist Sykes Mbuwan, adopting his father's surname. Many, however, knew Sykes as Kleist Sykes Plantan, intimating that the avuncular relationship was generally understood to be filial. In the aftermath of the passing of Plantan, Sykes found it necessary to sever all ties with the Plantan branch of his family, including, significantly, the dropping of the Plantan name.⁴⁶ This would tend to suggest that, his uncle's efforts notwithstanding, Sykes experienced some difficulty in being fully accepted into the Plantan family. The direct relationship with Effendi Plantan was what had mattered. Upon the termination imposed by Plantan's demise, this no longer may have seemed vital to the younger man. By this time, Sykes had been fully accepted into Dar es Salaam society.

Second, Islam was critical for Sykes throughout his life in Dar es Salaam. In addition to his own activities as an advocate of Islamic education, he saw to it that all of his children had Muslim names and made preparations for them to receive proper Islamic as well as Western education in order to guarantee their later success in the dualistic world of colonial and Islamic Dar es Salaam. Sykes planned careers for each of his progeny shortly after they were born and actively intervened in those situations during his lifetime when he perceived that his plans for their futures risked being thwarted. In each case, the Islamic factor loomed prominent, as did his studied mastery of Kiswahili.⁴⁷

Taken together, these elements made possible the ascendance of what has become the Sykes "dynasty," one of the most prestigious families in modern Tanzania in general and Dar es Salaam in particular, of whose *nisbah* Sykes was the architect. His family has reproduced itself and its social position, contributing greatly to the independence struggle in both material and political ways. Its surviving members take seriously their status as Muslims, Africans, and participants in the society of Dar es Salaam.

⁴⁶Sykes-Buruku, "The Townsman," 99-100. The root of the split was a question regarding the rights of heirs of Plantan to property held by Sykes.

⁴⁷Interview, Kleist Sykes and Yusuf Zialo, Dar es Salaam. Sykes-Buruku, 112-113. Ironically, all of the plans Kleist made for his children went unfulfilled, due largely to their own very different interests. Nevertheless, each became successful in his or her own way.

Concluding Note

Within Dar es Salaam, religion, language, education, and stratum position have been significant and interdependent factors. Each, taken on its own and in combination with the others, has played a role in the creation of social networks, many of which intersected at critical junctures. We have not discussed recreation here, a subject of great importance in the lives of working people. What has been consistent, however, is the centrality of Islam for Muslims of divergent origins, different ethnic and linguistic affiliations, and occasionally contrasting interpretations of Islamic rite, praxis, or history. Irrespective of these distinctions, their faith did unite all of them as members of a larger Islamic community to which each professed allegiance and through which they expressed themselves in those collective activities that reinforced the pillars of their faith.

Many of the changes that occurred within these settings in the colonial period reflected bureaucratic pressures and preoccupations. Apart from descriptions of structural and theological innovation, the analysis of change among Muslims of Indian origin in Dar es Salaam has sometimes been fragmentary and hagiographical. Generally done by members of given communities, such studies have unearthed data concerning leading figures and pivotal teachers and their legacy to the improvement of the Islamic life of their specific segment of the town but have tended to replicate historically rooted sectarianism. In recent years, it has even become possible for Shi'is to worship alongside Sunni, something undreamed of a generation ago. In this respect, perhaps all of the Muslims of Dar es Salaam have undergone the singular sacrament of Africanization.

The Muslim World and the United States

*Abdullah al-Ahsan**

Many observers of international affairs have expressed the view that the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, were not isolated incidents of terrorism but attacks on the symbols of Western capitalism. The U.S. government has held a small group of Muslims responsible for the event, but many think that the attacks represented an aspect of what Samuel Huntington has called the “clash of civilizations.” While most Muslims have emphatically condemned the attacks, many in the Muslim world are unconvinced that the evidence produced by the U.S. government conclusively establishes the involvement of any Muslim group in the incidents. Since 9/11, the United States has taken military action in Afghanistan, ousted the Taliban regime, and installed a government of its own choice, claiming that it acted to safeguard the civilized world and to support good in its battle against evil. A momentous international event like this has brought into sharp relief the issue of the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world, and this paper looks at some aspects of that relationship.

The Muslim world is not a single political, economic, or even a geographical entity, and, therefore, one needs to define the term “Muslim world”¹ before initiating discussion on the subject. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which claims to be based on the Qur’anic concept of *ummah*, is presumed to represent the entire body of Muslims in the world,² and, for our purposes, we will take it as representing the

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¹In the 1950s and 1960s, most academicians meant by “Muslim world” a religious, rather than a political, entity. For example, Wilfred Cantwell Smith believed that “[t]he unity of the Muslim world is a unity of sentiment.” *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 88-89.

²See Abdullah al-Ahsan, *Organization of the Islamic Conference: An Introduction to an Islamic Political Institution* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1988), 18-21.

international Muslim community. The OIC is composed of fifty-seven mostly Muslim-majority nation-states that intend to pool their resources, “combine their efforts and speak with one voice to safeguard the interests and secure the progress and well-being of their peoples and of all Muslims in the world.”³ The OIC has developed policies of interaction with other international organizations and major nation-states and adopts resolutions to express its views on world events. We will examine the relationship between the OIC and the major world powers in light of some its resolutions.

The decision to establish the OIC was taken at a Rabat summit conference of Muslim countries in response to the damage caused by an arson attack on the Aqsa mosque by an Australian in August 1969. Most of the states participating in the conference belonged to the pro-American camp in the then bipolar world. Since then, in its numerous resolutions, the OIC has called on what it regards as the major players in world affairs, especially the United States and the former Soviet Union, to work for peace and justice in the world, particularly where Muslims are concerned. Most of the OIC resolutions were adopted in connection with what the OIC viewed as occupation of Muslim lands by foreign forces, most notable among these lands being Palestine and Afghanistan.

OIC Resolutions and the United States

Although most OIC countries have traditionally been pro-American, the OIC’s stance has gradually turned against the United States because of what the OIC calls the United States’ unconditional support for Israel. At the end of the First Islamic Summit Conference (1969), Muslim heads of state appealed to France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union to intervene against what they saw as Israeli atrocities in Jerusalem and Palestine. In the preamble to the first resolution of the OIC’s Third Foreign Ministers Conference (1972), the United States was singled out as the main supporter of Israel, and the OIC asked the United States to compel Israel to accept the United Nations resolutions on Palestine.⁴ The resolution passed at the OIC’s Ninth Conference of Foreign Ministers (1978) deplored the United States’ vetoes in the United Nations Security

³See “Overview,” Home Page of the Permanent Delegation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, <http://www.oic-un.org/about/over.html>.

⁴OIC principles, policy, and activities on the issue of Palestine can be found in resolutions 1/1; 2/1; 4/3; 2/2-(IS); 14/5-P; 1/6-P; 9/7-P; 13/9-P; 3,4,5,9/10-P; 4,5,6,7,8,9,12/11-P; etc.

Council on behalf of Israel. The 1978 Camp David Accords between Egypt (an OIC member state) and Israel, sponsored by the United States in September 1978, brought a drastic change in the OIC's approach toward the United States. A May 1979 OIC resolution stated:

The Conference condemns the Camp David Accord signed in September 1978 and the Washington Treaty signed between Israel and the regime in Egypt on March 26, 1979, and considers them a blatant departure from the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and a violation of international law and the United Nations resolutions related to the Palestinian problem and the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, and repudiates all their results and effects and considers them null, void and not binding on Arabs and Muslims, particularly on the Palestinian people. It further considers these agreements a bilateral settlement that ignores the core of the problem—namely the Palestinian question—an attempt to liquidate the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, notably their right to return to their homeland, to self-determination and to the establishment of their national territory. Accordingly the Conference calls for resistance to the agreements by all ways and means, and condemns the role of the United States of America in the conclusion of these agreements and the attempts to impose them on the Palestinian people.⁵

The OIC used similar rhetoric in subsequent resolutions.⁶ In contrast to its frequent condemnation of the United States, the OIC has, after the Camp David Accords, condemned the Soviet Union only once—in the resolution adopted in the extraordinary session of the Foreign Ministers Conference (1980) held immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In later resolutions, it has only demanded that foreign troops withdraw from Afghanistan unconditionally but has not condemned the Soviet Union for the invasion. This is, perhaps, due to the very close ties between a few of the OIC countries and the former Soviet Union.

Subsequent to the Camp David Accords and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the OIC's concern over the major powers' involvement in Muslim affairs appears to have increased. For the OIC, the most disturbing element of this involvement was the establishment of military bases in OIC countries by these powers. In a 1980 resolution entitled "The Establishment of Foreign Military Bases in Some Islamic States," the OIC defined its fundamental stand on the issue as one of "rejecting and condemning any attempt by the Big Powers to establish military bases or acquire military facilities on the territory of Islamic States." It declared:

[The OIC] hereby gives fair warning to all [big powers] to abstain from attempting to set up foreign military bases whether naval, air or land-based in the territories of Islamic states, and

⁵Resolution 8/10-P.

⁶Resolutions 1/11-P; 2/11-P; 1/13-P, etc.

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[from] providing any kind of facilities to the armed forces of any of these [Islamic] countries under any form, pretext, cover and for any reason whatsoever.

The same resolution also expressed

[i]ts deep concern over the consequences over . . . granting of military facilities to the United States of America which encouraged the latter to give the full vent to her belligerent and aggressive inclinations in the Muslim region, as fully reflected by her attempts to establish military bases and acquire military facilities inside certain Islamic countries and using such bases and facilities as a springboard to imperil the sovereignty and independence of the Islamic states, while imposing what she terms a framework for cooperation in the field of security in the area.⁷

In another resolution, the OIC suspended Egypt's OIC membership for violating the charters of the OIC and the United Nations and for violating OIC resolutions concerning Jerusalem and Palestine. The resolution urged the other member states to sever all diplomatic and economic relations with Egypt.⁸ In a later resolution, however, the OIC lifted its suspension of Egypt's membership.⁹ In readmitting Egypt to the OIC, no mention was made of Egypt's deviation from the OIC charter, though it was clear that the OIC was interested in accommodating Egypt, one of its most important member states. The continued use of the anti-Israel and anti-American rhetoric in all these OIC resolutions does suggest, however, that such rhetoric was used to gain legitimacy for the ruling elite in Muslim countries.¹⁰

The Question of Israel

Scholars like Huntington would like us to believe that a fundamental and perpetual conflict exists between Islamic and European/Western civilizations. This view is questionable. There are, in fact, some striking similarities between the Islamic and American value systems. As noted above, the OIC only gradually came to have an anti-American stance. There are four reasons for this shift in the OIC's perception of the United States:

- (1) the United States' opposition to giving the Palestinians their rights
- (2) its continuous military, political, and economic support for Israel

⁷Resolution 17/11-P.

⁸Resolution 18/10-P.

⁹Resolution 1/4 –ORG (IS).

¹⁰See Abdullah al-Ahsan, *Ummah or Nation?: Identity Crisis in Contemporary Muslim Society* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1992), 113-118.

- (3) its use of its veto power in the United Nations Security Council on issues pertaining to Jerusalem, Palestine, and the Middle East
- (4) its diplomatic and propaganda campaign against the Palestinian Liberation Organization, particularly in Western Europe, with the intention of eliminating the political presence of the Palestinian people¹¹

In historic Palestine, of course, there has been no tradition of enmity between Jews and Muslims. In fact, Jews suffered along with Muslims when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1096, and they were able to return to Jerusalem along with Muslims in 1187, when Salahuddin Ayyubi took the city from the Crusaders' hands. About five thousand Jews lived in Palestine during the Napoleonic invasion of the region at the end of the eighteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, before World War I, the number increased to an estimated eighty thousand owing to the growth of nationalist fervor in Europe, which led many European Jews to migrate elsewhere. However, most of those who migrated to Palestine were old people who wished to die in the Holy Land. During the war, the number of Jews in Palestine declined to about fifty-five thousand. The late nineteenth-century European nationalist fervor also made an impact on some Jewish leaders, who began to conceive of a state for Jews in the modern world, many of them envisioning, on the basis of biblical stories, that that state would be located in modern Palestine. Although most religiously oriented Jews opposed this idea,¹² the nationalist Jews, arguing that the Jews were oppressed in Europe, established Zionist organizations and institutions to promote the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as a humanitarian cause. The nationalists also established contact with the British War Office to further that cause. Meanwhile, the British, with the help of some local Arab tribes, had taken the territory from the Ottomans. Soon, the Zionists received support from the British government and, with the help of the British, began to bring European Jews into Palestine. The indigenous Palestinians opposed the Zionist plans, and the British authorities, having, by then, received the League of Nations' mandate to administer the land of Palestine, were now caught in the middle. Although the British attempted to

¹¹See Resolution 1/16-P.

¹²Jacob H. Schiff, a member of the American Jewish Committee during the war is reported to have said, "I believe that I am not far wrong if I say that from fifty to seventy per cent of the so-called Jewish Nationalists are either atheists or agnostics and that the great majority of the Jewish Nationalist leaders have absolutely no interest in the Jewish religion." Quoted in George Lenczowski, *Middle East in World Affairs*. (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press, 1962), 374-375.

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restrict Jewish migration to Palestine, the indigenous population continued to view the British mandate authorities as a party in the conflict—one that supported the Zionist aspirations—for Zionist leaders in Britain were able to achieve many of their objectives through personal contact with British leaders, even though not all of this was intended by the League of Nations' mandate

President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, who had proposed the creation of the League of Nations and taken the initiative to end American isolationism, participated in a conference in Paris to establish world peace. Huntington writes,

In 1919 Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George [British prime minister], and Georges Clemenceau [French prime minister] together virtually controlled the world. Sitting in Paris, they determined what countries would exist and which would not, what new countries would be created, what their boundaries would be and who would rule them, and how the Middle East and other parts of the world would be divided up among the victorious powers.¹³

The president had sent a delegation (known as the King-Crane Commission) to the Middle East in order to find out the local population's views on the matter. Based on the president's policy of self-determination, the King-Crane Commission recommended against the idea of establishing a Jewish state in the area.¹⁴ The British authorities, however, continued to allow increasingly greater numbers of Jews to migrate to the area. By 1930, the number of Jews in Palestine increased to about 156,000. But the Zionists were not satisfied with the restrictions still in place on Jewish migration. With the rise of nationalist sentiments in Germany, as more Jews were thrown out of the country, the mandate authorities came under increasing pressure to allow Jews to migrate to Palestine. By 1935, the number of Jews had doubled in Palestine. It should be pointed out that the peaceful indigenous protest against the Jewish migration to Palestine was brutally suppressed by the British mandate administration. Becoming more pro-Zionist with time, the administration allowed the Zionists to establish a regular army battalion for the support of the Allied forces during World War II. As the pressure increased on the Jews in Germany during and immediately after the war, demands were made to allow more Jews to enter

¹³Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 91.

¹⁴For a report of the King-Crane Commission on the issue, see Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement: Written from His Unpublished and Personal Material*. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1960), 213-216.

Palestine. Truman also joined in this demand on what he called humanitarian grounds.¹⁵

In 1948, under chaotic circumstances, the mandate authorities withdrew from Palestine, and the Zionists—mostly immigrants since 1918—declared the establishment of the State of Israel. Within eleven minutes, the United States recognized the new state, even though Secretary of State George Marshall had vehemently opposed the idea. Between 1918 and 1948, significant demographic change had occurred in Palestine. In 1918, the number of Jewish people in Palestine was 55,000, which increased to about 646,000 in 1948. In terms of its ratio with the local population, during the same period, the Jewish population had increased from 8.4 percent to 31.7 percent, and in terms of land possession, the Jews had increased their portion from 2 percent to 6.5 percent.¹⁶ Now that it possessed political power and military might, Israel started a vigorous campaign to create more space for existing and new immigrants, and, in the process, about 800,000 Palestinians were forced out to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and other neighboring Arab countries. In this way, the Palestinian crisis, which had originated in World War I, became critical for international peace and security. Supporting the Palestinians, the neighboring Arab countries declared war against Israel. A number of these countries, newly independent, were still commanded by British officers and did not do well in the war. OIC resolutions on Israel reflect the Muslim countries' weakness and inability to contain the Zionist expansion in the area. The resolutions also clearly suggest that the Muslim countries' failure to do so was due to the United States' unqualified support of Israel.

Still, OIC countries did not always have a negative attitude toward the United States. In fact, they were favorably disposed toward the United States on account of the latter's general anticolonialist stance in the United Nations and on account of the position it took on the 1956 Suez crisis (the United States openly rebuked Israel, Britain, and France for creating the crisis). The Soviet Union staged a diplomatic coup in the Middle East by winning over Egypt to its side. This enabled Israel to present itself as America's ally in the area and to successfully campaign for larger American aid. In 1967, it was with mostly American weapons that Israel had fought against the Arab countries. Later, American financial and military aid to

¹⁵It is noteworthy that the general Jewish position was that Zionism as an ideology was political, rather than religious, in character. See Irwin M. Herman, *Zionism is Political, not Humanitarian*. (New York: The American Council for Judaism, 1962).

¹⁶These figures have been taken from Mohsen M. Saleh, *The Palestinian Issue: Its Background and Development up to 2000* (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Ulang, 2001), 43.

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Israel increased greatly, and this gradually made a negative impact on the Muslim world. Massive American assistance helped Israel to survive the 1973 war. The Arab countries, under Saudi Arabia's leadership, imposed an oil embargo on countries that had supported Israel in the war. This had a devastating impact on the American economy, but it also had an adverse effect on the Muslim countries. The United States was now solidly behind Israel.

The United States moved to deal with OIC countries outside the framework of the OIC. It acted as a catalyst in getting Egypt, an OIC member, to recognize Israel and sign a treaty with it. For this, as we noted above, the OIC condemned the United States.

The failure of the OIC countries to carry out OIC resolutions has had disastrous consequences for a number of those countries. President Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt was assassinated. Governments in other countries have been threatened by radical Muslim elements and are being watched by human rights groups. Referring to the Muslim governments' responses to the situation, Huntington writes:

The strength of the Resurgence and the appeal of Islamist movements induced governments to promote Islamic institutions and practices and to incorporate Islamic symbols and practices into their regime. At the broadest level this meant affirming or reaffirming the Islamic character of their state and society. In the 1970s and 1980s political leaders rushed to identify their regimes and themselves with Islam. King Hussein of Jordan, convinced that secular governments had little future in the Arab world, spoke of the need to create "Islamic democracy" and a "modernizing Islam." King Hassan of Morocco emphasized his descent from the Prophet and his role as "Commander of the Faithful." The sultan of Brunei, not previously noted for Islamic practices, became "increasingly devout" and defined his regime as a "Malay Muslim monarchy." Ben Ali in Tunisia began regularly to invoke Allah in his speeches and "wrapped himself in the mantle of Islam" to check the growing appeal of Islamic groups. In the early 1990s Suharto explicitly adopted a policy of becoming "more Muslim." In Bangladesh the principle of "secularism" was dropped from the constitution in the mid 1970s, and by the early 1990s the secular, Kemalist identity of Turkey was, for the first time, coming under serious challenge. To underline their Islamic commitment, governmental leaders—Özal, Suharto, Karimov—hastened to their *hajj*.¹⁷

¹⁷Huntington, 115. It is interesting to note that Huntington writes "Islamic resurgence" (the phenomenon of Islamic awakening in the latter part of the twentieth century) with a capital *r*. He justifies this by saying that "it refers to an extremely important historical event affecting one-fifth or more of humanity, that is at least as significant as the American Revolution, French Revolution, or Russian Revolution, whose 'r's' are usually capitalized, and that is similar to and comparable to the Protestant Reformation in Western society, whose 'R' is almost invariably capitalized" (109).

While such responses from Muslim leaders are not new,¹⁸ interestingly, Huntington does not foresee any danger in them.

Two significant developments occurred in the second half of the 1980s: (1) in 1987 began a new wave of Palestinian uprising, and, (2) in 1988, the Palestinian National Council adopted a new strategy by accepting the United Nations resolutions that recommended a division of Palestine between the immigrant Jews and the local Palestinians. In 1993, the Clinton administration succeeded in bringing the Palestinian leadership to sign an agreement with Israel. Under the terms of the agreement, the Palestinians were to be granted self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, to which other Palestinian areas would be added later. It was also agreed that the issue of the final status of Jerusalem and “other sensitive issues,” including that of the right of the Palestinians to return to their original homes, would be settled within two years.

The Palestinian-Israeli agreement, from which Israel benefited greatly, was immediately followed by a similar agreement between Israel and Jordan. A number of other OIC countries recognized and established diplomatic and commercial relations with Israel. This was a major success both for Israel and the United States. By the end of 2000, the Jews in Israel numbered more than 4,947,000, while the number of Palestinians in the Diaspora also reached about 4,900,000. For many years after the Palestinian-Israeli treaty, the situation on the ground changed little for the Palestinians. The Palestinians were allowed to establish a political institution called the Palestinian Authority but were denied the status of statehood. The Palestinian Authority received administrative responsibilities in parts of the territories they claimed to own, but Israel retained the right and had the power to enter those areas at will and take any action it deemed necessary for its security. While the Palestinian Authority accuses Israel of conducting illegal operations in the Palestinian territories and of being involved in extrajudicial assassinations, Israel accuses the Palestinians of committing acts of violence and claims that its own actions are in response to that violence. Many Palestinians have become suicide activists, with some radical Muslim organizations claiming sponsorship of their actions. The unreserved U.S. support for Israel in this situation of conflict has created anger and resentment in the Muslim world.

There are, besides the Palestinian issue, other factors that breed resentment against the United States in Muslim countries. The OIC member states include monarchies, Islamic republics, democratic republics,

¹⁸See al-Ahsan, *Ummah or Nation*, 77-79.

socialist republics, and a few other self-styled forms of government. The United States' policy toward these states lacks consistency. In fact, the United States is often perceived as supporting repressive regimes in Muslim countries, the Shah of Iran's government preceding the 1979 Revolution being only one example. Also, many Muslims strongly disapprove of the American position on globalization and the environment. Furthermore, the policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are generally seen as driven by the interests of the United States and intended to economically cripple Muslim countries.

The Current Situation in the Muslim World

One of the Muslim responses to Europe's aggressive campaign to acquire colonies in Africa and Asia took the form of *jihad*, which, however, failed to stem the European penetration into the Muslim world. Huntington remarks that Muslims "invoked Western values of self-determination, liberalism, democracy, and independence to justify their opposition to Western domination."¹⁹ He failed to note that, during their nationalist struggles, most Muslims defined their national identity on the basis of their religion. For example, the Algerians wanted to be Muslim Algerian by rejecting their French Algerian identity, and the British Indian Muslims wanted to be Indian or Pakistani Muslim. In the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Nationalism, for Muslims, is everywhere a Muslim nationalism."²⁰ After achieving independence, however, their new national identity clashed with their religious identity, creating a crisis.²¹ We shall return to the question of Islamic and Western values later in this essay; now, we would like to consider a few observations by Huntington on the current situation in the Muslim world into consideration. Huntington says:

Beginning in the 1970s, Islamic symbols, beliefs, practices, institutions, policies, and organizations won increasing commitment and support throughout the world of 1 billion Muslims stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and from Nigeria to Kazakhstan. . . . In 1995 every country with a predominantly Muslim population, . . . was more Islamic and Islamist culturally, socially, and politically than it was fifteen years earlier.²²

He further observes:

¹⁹Huntington, 93.

²⁰Smith, 85.

²¹On this subject, see al-Ahsan, *Ummah or Nation*, 109-140.

²²Huntington, 111.

In Egypt by the early 1990s Islamic organizations had developed an extensive network of organizations which, filling a vacuum left by the government, provided health, welfare, educational, and other services to a large number of Egypt's poor. After the 1992 earthquake in Cairo, these organizations "were on the streets within hours, handing out food and blankets while the Government's relief efforts lagged." . . . Islamist activists "probably include a disproportionately large number of the best-educated and most intelligent young people in their respective populations," including doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, teachers, civil servants.²³

Although Huntington believes that these "Islamists are overwhelmingly participants in and products of the processes of modernization" and are "mobile and modern-oriented younger people," yet, indeed, "it is hard to find statements by any Muslims, whether politicians, officials, academics, businesspersons, or journalists, praising Western values, and institutions."²⁴ This is not true. An objective observer of contemporary Muslim society will find numerous individuals, organizations, and institutions praising such typically "Western" values of Western/European civilization as freedom, human rights, and human dignity. The OIC resolutions pertaining to Palestine, which have appealed to Israel and the United States to follow the United Nations resolutions on the issue, are an obvious proof. Huntington's work contains a great deal of statistical information, but the information presented is often selective. In a post-9/11 article, Edward Said pointed out that, "[t]he carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington's thesis."²⁵ Huntington provides a long list of conflicts involving Muslims both within and outside Islam, but he does not address the obvious question of whether Islam alone has experienced intra- and intercivilizational conflicts in history.²⁶

Another author, Olivier Roy, after analyzing what Huntington calls "Islamic Resurgence" and what he himself calls "neofundamentalism or political Islam," remarks that the phenomenon is "founded on a stated rejection of all Western values."²⁷ Interestingly, unlike Huntington, he believes that "neofundamentalist society does not represent hatred of the

²³Ibid., 112-113.

²⁴Ibid., 112, 213.

²⁵Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Ignorance," *The Nation* (USA) (22 October 2001).

²⁶In separatist movements in many countries—for example, the Basque, Tamil, and Nagaland movements in, respectively, Spain, Sri Lanka, and India—no Muslims are involved.

²⁷Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 202.

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other, but rather hatred of oneself and of one's desires."²⁸ Roy summarizes the threat to Muslim society as:

The culture that threatens Muslim society is neither Jewish nor Christian; it is world culture of consumption and communication, a culture that is secular, atheist, and ultimately empty; it has no values or strategies, but it is already here, in the cassette and the transistor, present in the most remote village.²⁹

In Roy's judgment, political Islam is a failure. But if that were so, one would see much less Islamic activism in the world today. Quite the opposite is true. It is well known that Islamic revivalist activities have met with severe repression at the hands of the rulers in Muslim countries.³⁰ In some Muslim countries, Islamically oriented political parties performed well in the elections, yet they were denied the right to form a government or stay in the government, Algeria being one, but not the only, example. The repression in Algeria turned many Algerians into suicide activists, and the same phenomenon has occurred in Palestine, Egypt, and Indian-held Kashmir. There is, it seems, a direct relationship between violent suppression of public opinion and suicidal activities of the so-called Islamic militants.

Conclusion

We have already quoted Huntington as saying that Muslims invoked "Western values of self-determination, liberalism, democracy, and independence to justify their opposition to Western domination." Huntington goes on to say:

Now that they are no longer weak but increasingly powerful, they do not hesitate to attack those same values which they previously used to promote their interests. The revolt against the West was originally legitimated by asserting the universality of Western values; it is now legitimated by asserting the superiority of non-Western values.³¹

One can, however, argue that contemporary Muslim thinkers, rather than "invoking" the above-stated Western values for ulterior motives, believe that the solution to the problems of the world consists in the revival of values held in common between Islam and the West. To take an example:

²⁸Ibid., 199.

²⁹Ibid., 203.

³⁰Even humanitarian activities, such as distribution of aid to victims of earthquakes or other natural disasters by Islamically oriented nongovernmental organizations were banned.

³¹Huntington, *The Clash*, 93.

Several pioneers of Islamic resurgence movements accepted the European idea of democracy but rejected the view that sovereignty belongs to people; to them, God is the only sovereign authority. Many European-educated Muslims found this understanding of sovereignty confusing. Consequently, the “Islamic” concept of democracy was redefined to accommodate the European concept. The Syrian scholar Sa’id Hawwa, for example, initially defined democracy as “a Greek term which signifies sovereignty of the people,” while in Islam, as he put it, “people do not govern themselves by laws they make on their own.” A few years later, he expressed his revised opinion thus:

We see that democracy in the Muslim world will eventually produce victory for Islam. Thus we warn ourselves and our brothers against fighting practical democracy. In fact, we see that asking for more democracy is the practical way to the success of Islam on Islam’s territory. Our enemies have realised this fact, and that is why they have assassinated democracy and established dictatorships and other alternatives. Many of the followers of Islam have been unable to see the positive things democracy provides to us; they only looked at the issue from a purely theoretical and ideological perspective, and failed to look at it from the perspective of reality, namely that the majority rules, that the values of such a majority dominate and that in whichever country a Muslim majority exists Islam will prevail. Even where the Muslims are in a minority, democracy is mostly in their interest.³²

Huntington also refers to liberalism as a value. But is it possible to define liberalism in a universally acceptable way? Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), which was instrumental in shaping conservative thought in Europe, also became “the Bible of nineteenth-century English liberals.”³³ Likewise, socialism as an ideology emerged as an extension of liberalism in the beginning of the nineteenth century but posed a challenge to liberalism in the twentieth. Liberalism is best called an approach rather than a value. The real values of the Enlightenment tradition that became the foundation of the French Revolution and the American constitution are equality, justice, freedom, human rights, and human dignity, and these values can certainly be said to have universal validity. To be sure, many nineteenth-century Muslim scholars identified these values with the Qur’an, and, in the post-9/11 world, most Muslims would continue to subscribe to them.

The Huntingtonian wish that, by the year 2020, the Muslim teenage population will shrink,³⁴ bringing the present conflict between the United

³²See Sa’id Hawwa, quoted in Azzam Tamimi, “Democracy in Islamic Political Thought,” *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives* 3 (1997), 1:35.

³³Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 39.

³⁴Huntington, “The Age of Muslim Wars,” 13.

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States and the Muslim world to an end, is, to say the least, not rational. The best hope for the resolution of the so-called conflict between the United States and the Muslim world—as, indeed, between any two international parties—lies in an honest acceptance of and faithful adherence to the United Nations Declarations of Human Rights of 1948.

Fazlur Rahman: Prophecy, the Qur'an, and Islamic Reform

R. Kevin Jaques*

Introduction: A Historical Overview of Islamic Reform Ideologies

In the late nineteenth century, at the height of colonial power and in the waning years of the Ottoman Empire, many Muslims from across the Islamic world began to argue that Islam had become corrupted and, thus, economically, militarily, and even spiritually subservient to the West. Although the causes of corruption were a matter of debate, many Muslims placed the blame on forms of ecstatic mysticism that, they argued, imported into Islam ideas that weakened piety and intellectual activity. Others blamed European colonialism for oppressing Muslims and stifling creativity and growth. Still others blamed the Islamic tradition itself, which, they held, carried within it the seeds of its own decline due to a hyperfixation on intellectual authority and a literal interpretation of its sacred texts. By the 1920s, the idea that Islam had declined into almost total submission to the West was so pervasive that few believed that the status quo was sufficient for Muslim survival.¹

The roots of these internal critiques of Islam lie not in the Muslim experience of colonialism, but in the early periods of Islamic history and, indeed, inhere in Islam's intellectual tradition. Since the earliest period of Islamic history, Muslims have argued that religion needs a regular process

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¹For a good example of the range of critiques of Islamic history and intellectual authority, see Muhammad Abduh, *Risalat at-Tawhid*, ed. Mahmud Abu Rayyah (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1977), and Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Muhawarat al-Muslib wa l-Muqallid* (Cairo: Matba'at Majallat al-Manar al-Islamiyyah, 1906-1907). See also Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

of renewal. The Qur'an suggests that Christianity and Judaism had lapsed into a spiritual decline because they lacked the creativity to reexamine and renew the basic principles that gave rise to each.² This is further strengthened by the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, which states that, in each century, a "reviver" (*mujaddid*) will be sent by God to reclaim Islam and bring it back to its founding principles.³

The ideology of renewal began to take formal shape during the second Islamic century, when scholars—known as the Ahl al-Hadith (The People of Tradition)—who embraced the traditions (*ahadith*, sing. hadith) of the Prophet as guides for correct action were persecuted by rationalists who insisted on the supremacy of reason over tradition. Following the end of the rationalist persecution of hadith-centered scholars, many of the Ahl al-Hadith formed a school of thought named after Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 855), one of the champions of the antirationalist cause. The Hanbali school articulated a vision of Islam that was centered on living life based on the model of the Prophet and his closest companions. Although pro-tradition scholars could be found in other legal schools of thought, the Hanbalis became the main proponents of pious conservatism in medieval Islam.⁴ One Hanbali, the Syrian Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), lived in the period following the Mongol invasion and devastation of the core Muslim lands of Central Asia and the Middle East. Ibn Taymiyyah began to articulate a view of Islam that would become increasingly powerful by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He argued that the causes for Muslim weakness in the face of the Mongol invasion lay in the widespread attraction to ecstatic forms of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), which had become Islam's core doctrinal system in the centuries before the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, ecstatic mysticism led to, among other things, a form of rigid fatalism that encouraged passivity, especially in the face of doctrinal corruption and political weakness.⁵

Ultimately, Ibn Taymiyyah blamed the decline of Islamic society on the scholars, politicians, and intellectual leaders of Islam, who, he claimed, had forgotten the truth of Islamic law. He argued that they had been led to

²See, for instance, Qur'an 2:75, 79; 3:78; 4:46.

³For instance, the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud (4278) states: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years one who will renovate its religion for it.'"

⁴George Makdisi, *Ibn 'Aqil: Religion and Culture in Classical Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 6-16.

⁵Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'at al-Rasa'il wa l-Masa'il*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Lajnat al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1976), 25-70. See also Victor E. Makari, *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 69-81.

believe in their own abilities to perceive what God wanted through mystical means and had ignored the methods of legal discovery that the tradition had developed. Furthermore, he held that, in the atmosphere of legal decline, scholars had increasingly based their views on authoritative statements made by previous generations of scholars. This reliance on earlier opinion stifled Islamic growth and prevented it from finding new solutions in ever-changing cultural, political, and economic circumstances. He called for a broad-based reform of Islam, on both the scholarly and popular levels, to root out the influences of Sufism and reawaken the ability of independent thought.⁶

Ibn Taymiyyah was followed by a number of reformers who also argued that Islam had become weak, an argument that in the context of colonialism, had become more popular. Reform movements began to form across the Muslim world. Although many did not follow the ideology of Ibn Taymiyyah, most held that Islam was in need of serious reform if it was to survive.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, five distinct schools of reformist thought began to develop. The most widespread were Sufi reformist groups that argued that mysticism, far from being the cause of decline, was instead the source of Islamic liberation. Sufi reform movements spread across North Africa and India and were especially active in locales with particularly brutal colonial administrations.⁷ There were also traditionalist reform movements that contended that decline could only be stopped by repairing traditional structures of Islamic authority that had deteriorated due to antiquated and irregular educational systems.⁸

In addition to the Sufi and traditionalist reformers, there were also a number of groups that espoused an ideology of reform that could be traced to Ibn Taymiyyah and that collectively became known as revivalism. Many revivalist reformers interpreted Ibn Taymiyyah through the ideology of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1206/1792). 'Abd al-Wahhab was raised as a Sufi and, in his teens, began to read the works of Ibn Taymiyyah. 'Abd al-Wahhab came to agree with Ibn Taymiyyah that Islam had become

⁶Ibn Taymiyyah, *As-Siyasah ash-Shar'iyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1966), 9-14; *Ma'arij al-Wusul ila anna Usul ad-in wa furu'ahu qad Bayyannah ar-Rasul* (Cairo: Qassi Muhibb ad-Din al-Khatib, 1968), 13-20; and *Majmu'at ar-Rasa'il wa l-Masa'il*, 1:149-181.

⁷For an interesting examination of Sufis and reform, see Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁸One of the most detailed examinations of the development of a traditional reformist movement is Abubakar Aceh's *Sedjarah Hidup K.H.A. Wahid Hasjim dan Karangan Terstar*, vol. 2 (Yogyakarta: n.p., 1957), 469-559.

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corrupt due to Sufi influences on Muslim society. But where Ibn Taymiyyah had called for legal reform and enforcement as the means of Islamic renewal, ‘Abd al-Wahhab believed that legal reform alone was not sufficient. Reform of Islamic society was only possible through education and force. According to ‘Abd al-Wahhab, education was necessary in order to instill correct belief in people, but without the use of coercive violence, people would not leave their un-Islamic practices behind.⁹

The ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and ‘Abd al-Wahhab began to spread across the Islamic world in the nineteenth century as Muslims from colonized countries carried them with them upon returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca. Two movements developed out of ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s philosophy, one that focused on the combination of coercive violence and education and another that prioritized education. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the latter form of ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s ideology was most popular and can be seen in the establishment of such groups as the Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. Other groups, such as the Ikhwan al-Muslimin (The Muslim Brotherhood), founded in Egypt in 1928, began by stressing education but drifted to coercive violence in the absence of avenues for political participation.

Finally, Muslim intellectuals influenced by the West began to develop ideas that popularly became known as “modernism.” Modernist ideologies developed in intellectual circles that were influenced by Muslim scholars who had gone to Europe or the United States for higher education. The father of Islamic modernism was Muhammad Abduh (d. 1906), an Egyptian scholar and jurist who combined a traditional Islamic legal education with a European academic background. Abduh, influenced in part by the earlier ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, also saw Sufism as one of the primary causes of intellectual and spiritual weakness in Islam. He argued, however, that the tools for correcting the malaise of the Muslim world were to be found in the philosophical and intellectual currents of the Western world. Like Ibn Taymiyyah, Abduh argued that Islam had become weak because Muslims had lost the ability to apply reason to the problems confronting them and had instead fallen back on the authoritative judgments of previous generations. He argued that the inability of Muslim intellectuals to apply independent reason to modern problems forced the Islamic world to exist in an intellectual and epistemological universe more suited to the 1500s than the 1900s. Only by applying the tools of modern learning and thought

⁹Hourani, 37-38, 232. See also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, rev. 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 199-200.

to the core texts of the tradition could Muslim solutions to modern problems be devised.¹⁰

Throughout the twentieth century, all five reform schools continued to develop and articulate approaches to addressing Islamic decline. By the latter half of the twentieth century, however, revivalism (in both its violent and nonviolent forms) and modernism were the two most dominant reform movements. Due to the political conditions in much of the Islamic world during the period, modernism became far more contested than revivalism. Modernist thinkers, because of their Western educations in the liberal arts, were frequent targets of conservative forces that made everything Western the enemy of all developing-world movements. For the most part, modernism has only found its voice in American and European universities and in a few Western-style colleges and universities in the Muslim world. Revivalism, on the other hand, has become much more pervasive because of its emphasis on education (especially technical), on simple forms of piety, and on glorifying the past over the present. Violent forms of revivalism also became popular, especially in places where political participation was tightly controlled by dictatorial and oppressive governments.

All Islamic reformers, in one sense or another, attempt to revive an intellectual tradition that they argue best represents the essence of Islamic faith, piety, and thought. Sufi reformers typically represent the early Muslim community as being the foundation for proper mystical piety and action. But they also place great emphasis on the founders of their specific brotherhoods as representing the ideal community toward which Muslims should strive. Traditionalists frequently point to the eponymous founders of their respective schools as representing the golden age of Islam that Muslims need to revive in order to mend the ills of the modern world. Revivalists typically lay greatest emphasis on the first four generations of Islamic history, which, from their point of view, represents the pristine period of Islamic thought that should be duplicated. Modernists, on the other hand, look to various periods of intellectual growth, which, for them,

¹⁰Hourani, 130-160. This survey of Islamic modernism is not meant to diminish the contributions of other modernist reformers, such as Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, or Muhammad Iqbal. While it is true that Afghani was an important teacher and mentor to 'Abduh, his lasting impact on the course of modernist thought worldwide (like that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan) is somewhat less important than that of Abduh. Iqbal was an important influence on Fazlur Rahman and has become increasingly important in some modernist circles over the last fifty years. Giving a full account of Iqbal's thought and its influence on Rahman would, however, take us beyond the scope and limits of this paper and is deserving of a separate treatment.

represent the pinnacles of Islamic civilization and hold the keys to Muslim regeneration.

Fazlur Rahman: Education and Life

The Pakistani modernist Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) represents an attempt by a Muslim thinker to use the tools of early Islamic philosophical thought to develop a hermeneutic that returns Islam to the intellectual glory that it once possessed. Rahman was born on 21 September 1919 in the Punjab. His father was a traditional jurist and scholar, and much of Rahman's early Islamic education was at his father's knee. Rahman's father, wanting his son to have a secular education, sent him to local Panjabi schools until he completed his MA degree from Punjab University in 1942. From there, he traveled to England and completed a PhD at Oxford University in 1949.¹¹ In the 1950s, Rahman taught at Durham University in England and, from 1958 to 1961, at the newly established Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Canada.¹² In 1961, Rahman was appointed to Pakistan's Central Institute of Islamic Research and became its director in 1962.¹³

The 1960s were a turbulent period in Pakistani politics, and, from the start, Rahman had difficulty dealing with the country's revivalist extremists. His difficulties increased when Pakistani President Muhammad Ayyub Khan appointed him to the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology. The council was responsible for advising the president on how to steer Pakistan, as an Islamic country, into the modern world.¹⁴ One of Rahman's most influential books, *Islam*, was written during this period and speaks to his desire to portray Islam as being founded on an enlightened Qur'anic philosophy that could be utilized in drastically different cultural circumstances. The Qur'an, for Rahman, was the centerpiece of his approach to reform. He did not view the Qur'an as the primary source of law, as the traditionalists and revivalists did, but as the source of Islam's moral and religious philosophy. According to Rahman, it is the spirit of the

¹¹Donald Berry, "Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988): A Life in Review," in *The Shaping of an American Islamic Discourse: A Memorial to Fazlur Rahman*, ed. Earle Waugh and Frederick M. Denny (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 38.

¹²Tamara Sonn, "Rahman, Fazlur," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ed. John L. Esposito; Frederick Mathewson Denny, "The Legacy of Fazlur Rahman," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 96-97.

¹³Berry, 39; Sonn, 408; Denny 97.

¹⁴ Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan: 1857-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 251.

Qur'an that guides Muslims to right action; it is not, however, and was never meant to be the source of unchanging and unbending law.¹⁵

During this period, Rahman also developed a critique of the second source of Islamic law—the Sunnah (example) of the Prophet Muhammad—that would earn him a wide range of critics and ultimately force him to leave Pakistan for exile in the United States. Rahman argued in the third chapter of *Islam*, and more forcefully in his *Islamic Methodology in History*,¹⁶ that scholars must approach hadith with caution. He argued that the Sunnah originally reflected the example of the Prophet Muhammad on a narrow range of issues and that a very small number of written reports were made of his acts and sayings. Over time, however, the idea of the Sunnah came to represent the living tradition of Muslims who were faced with changing and dynamic circumstances. Written records of these created acts and sayings were added to the collected body that came to represent the life of the Prophet. By the end of the third century, all *ahadith*, according to Rahman, were considered to reflect the Sunnah of the Prophet, forcing scholars to create methods justifying contradictions between *ahadith* and between hadith and the Qur'an.¹⁷

Because of his controversial views, Rahman was forced to leave Pakistan in 1968 and, in 1969, was appointed a professor of Islamic thought at the University of Chicago, where he remained until his death in 1988. At Chicago, he wrote two of his most important contributions to Islamic modernism, *Islam and Modernity* and *Major Themes of the Qur'an*. According to Frederick Denny, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* was a “marked departure in Rahman’s thought, bringing his other concerns more definitively than ever under the guidance of Islam’s scripture and showing how that message can and should be directly applied in new and creative ways in the real world of today.”¹⁸ This paper will examine how Rahman understood the role of revelation and the Qur'an in Islamic thought and how reviving, from his perspective, long lost hermeneutical approaches to scripture could serve as the instrument of reform in Islam.

¹⁵Rahman, *Islam*, 39.

¹⁶Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History* (Karachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965), 27-84.

¹⁷Rahman, *Islam*, 51-67.

¹⁸Denny, “The Legacy of Fazlur Rahman,” 98.

Philosophy, Revelation, and Ethics

Much of Rahman's early work was on classical Islamic philosophic traditions. His doctoral dissertation at Oxford, for instance, explored the Aristotelian and Neoplatonist traditions prevalent in early Islam, most particularly how classical philosophical thought described the nature of prophecy. His interest in the nature of prophecy is also demonstrated in other early works, such as his *Avicenna's Psychology*, which examines the Aristotelian construction of the mind. According to Rahman, Avicenna's (Ibn Sina, d. 1037) main ideas "are no doubt taken from his predecessors, [but] . . . it would be incorrect to suppose that there is nothing new in his work."¹⁹ What was new for Rahman was Ibn Sina's theory of prophecy, namely, that the rational soul acquires knowledge on a variety of levels, the highest level being achieved by one who "can acquire knowledge from within himself," which Rahman referred to as "intuition."²⁰

Intuition occurs when the soul immediately perceives knowledge without prior instruction. Although Ibn Sina argues that the level of knowledge varies with the individual, a man can either intuitively know the "truth within himself"²¹ or the truth concerning "all or most problems."²² Thus, according to Rahman, Ibn Sina argues that

there might be a man whose soul has such an intense purity and is so firmly linked to the rational principles that he blazes with intuition, i.e., with the receptivity of inspiration coming from the active intelligence concerning everything. So the forms of all things contained in the active intelligence are imprinted on his soul either all at once or nearly so, not that he accepts them merely on authority but on account of their logical order which encompasses all [things]. . . . For beliefs accepted on authority concerning those things which are known only through their causes possess no rational certainty. This is a kind of prophetic inspiration, indeed its highest form and the one most fitted to be called Divine power; and it is the highest human faculty.²³

Therefore, according to Ibn Sina, intuition is the basis of prophetic inspiration. God's active intelligence possesses all knowledge and reaches out to those who are pure of heart and mind. The purity of an individual, according to Ibn Sina, increases his or her rational abilities and makes one

¹⁹Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb al-Najāt, Book II, Chapter VI with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 19.

²⁰Ibid., 21.

²¹Ibid., 36.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 37-38.

more receptive to contact with God. When contact occurs, the individual intuits the knowledge that God's active intellect dispenses, and this knowledge becomes part of the individual's being. The sudden realization of new knowledge is accepted not because one realizes that it originated with God, but because of the inherent logic of the information.

In his commentary on the above passage, Rahman maintains that Ibn Sina is probably correct in his assessment of the role that intuitive intelligence plays in prophecy. He proposes, however, that knowledge does not have to be dispensed all at once, for this assumes that the intellect starts with no knowledge and then suddenly attains complete knowledge. To the contrary, Rahman argues that the intuitive intellect receives instantaneous divine knowledge only "where there is no prior proposition, or in other words, only in those situations where the native intuition is not enough to handle the problems which confront the individual at any particular moment."²⁴ Thus, prophetic knowledge occurs when the intuitive intellect of the prophet reaches out to the active intellect of God when the prophet is faced with crises that his native intellect is unable to resolve.

Much of Rahman's theory on the nature of prophecy is laid out in his book *Prophecy in Islam*. In this book, written during his days at McGill University, Rahman builds on the ideas developed in his doctoral dissertation to demonstrate various theories of prophecy. Rahman provides a survey of both the philosophic and orthodox (Sunni) views of prophecy and suggests that although there are many aspects of Greek thought that the orthodox theologians disputed, the core elements of philosophical positions were incorporated into Sunni *kalam* (speculative theology).²⁵ In *Prophecy in Islam*, Rahman begins by examining the theories of al-Farabi (d. 950) to support his own emerging ideas on the function of prophecy. Like Ibn Sina, al-Farabi maintains that the intuitive intellect is the highest level of knowledge that a person can achieve.²⁶ When the intuitive intellect of a person has reached its highest capacity, it makes contact with the active intellect of God, which, according to Muslim philosophical traditions, is the lowest of ten levels of intelligence issuing from God.²⁷ At the highest end of these intelligences exists "the transcendent intelligence," and at the

²⁴Ibid., 95.

²⁵Fazlur Rahman, Preface to *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

²⁶Although al-Farabi uses the term "cognitive intellect," Rahman argues that they are talking about the same phenomena (*Prophecy in Islam*, 11).

²⁷Ibid., 11-12.

lowest exists the “Holy Ghost.”²⁸ It is only the lowest level of intelligence with which a human can potentially have contact.

Rahman demonstrates that, according to classical philosophic thought, there are two kinds of prophetic activities: the intellectual revelation and the imaginative revelation.²⁹ The intellectual revelation, according to Ibn Sina, occurs “when a man has actually attained all knowledge and gnosis (by himself) and he is not in need of anyone to direct him in any matter. . . . This happens only . . . when his soul attains contact with the Active intelligence” of God.³⁰ Rahman goes on to show that contact between the rational soul of man and the active intelligence of God occurs through the agency of an intermediary. He quotes Ibn Sina, who argued that “revelation is [the] . . . emanation (from the [Active] Intellect into the prophet’s soul) and the Angel is this (extra) faculty or power received (by the prophet as a part of his nature).”³¹ Thus, for Ibn Sina, the angel is not a creature in the real sense, but a power that connects God to the prophet. The final aspect of the intellectual revelation concerns how much knowledge is gained and when. Rahman paraphrases Ibn Sina when he says that

the ordinary consciousness is, for the most part, receptive, not creative and receives piecemeal what the Active Intellect creates as a totality. . . . The ordinary mind has only reflections in the mirror, not real, veritable knowledge which can be possessed only when a man’s phenomenal self unites itself with the Ideal personality, the Angelic Intellect. Hence the [intellectual] prophet is described as a Divine Being, deserving of honours and almost to be worshipped.³²

Thus, Rahman argues that the intellectual prophet, because of his total instantaneous knowledge of all things past, present, and future, is raised almost to the level of God.

On the other hand, imaginative or technical revelation represents a “strong imaginative faculty” on the part of the prophet.³³ This prophet, due to this increased imaginative faculty, is able to receive sensations or realizations from the active intellect of God while awake, whereas ordinary people only receive it while asleep.³⁴ The distinction is important. Since the imagination is so strong in this type of intellect, that which is perceived

²⁸Ibid., 14.

²⁹Ibid., 30-36.

³⁰Ibid., 30.

³¹Ibid., 34.

³²Ibid., 35.

³³Ibid., 36.

³⁴Ibid., 37.

spiritually is deemed by the perceiver to exist in reality. Such a person “becomes a prophet giving news of the Divine Realm, thanks to the intelligibles he has received. This is the highest degree of perfection a person can reach with his imaginative powers.”³⁵ As with the intellectual revelation, “the appearance of an angel and the hearing of the angel’s voice [are] . . . purely mental phenomena.”³⁶

Technical revelation goes hand in hand with imaginative revelation. Technical revelation occurs when the masses are unable to understand the spiritual—symbolic—truth that originates in the imagination of the prophet. Rahman argues that this form of revelation is political “in the wider sense of the word.”³⁷ He states that “since the masses cannot grasp the purely spiritual truth, the prophets communicate this truth to them in materialistic symbols and metaphors.”³⁸

This of course raises the issue of how to interpret these symbolic truths. Rahman held that, within “orthodox” Sunni Islam, the prophetic message is taken as literal. The philosophers held, however, that “if a person speaks the bare truth to the public, his message must be considered to be devoid of divine origin.”³⁹ But this position fails to take into account the “religio-moral” experience of the prophet. Rahman parted with the philosophers in that, for the philosophers,

a moral principle is, in its cognitive aspects, exactly like a mathematical proposition. They do not realize that religio-moral experience, although it certainly has a cognitive element, radically differs from other forms of cognition in the sense that it is full of authority, meaning and imperiousness for the subject whereas [the] ordinary form of cognition is simply information.⁴⁰

Thus, for the masses, revelatory symbols must be interpreted and placed in context in light of the moral experience of the prophet. Rahman argued that, in this regard, the prophet is inherently different from the philosopher. The classical school of Islamic philosophy held that the philosophers and the prophets were essentially the same thing. Both were seen to employ the same intuitive mechanisms in the formation of knowledge, and both

³⁵Ibid., 38.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 40.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 42.

⁴⁰Fazlur Rahman, “The Post-Formative Developments in Islam-II,” *Islamic Studies*, 2 (1963), 301. Frederick Denny, “Fazlur Rahman: Muslim Intellectual,” *The Muslim World* 79 (1989), 1:93.

religious and philosophical knowledge were thought to be composed of the same truths. Religious truths for the masses were, however, to be couched in simple terms, on a level acceptable for the mass intellect.⁴¹

In *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, Rahman continued his quest to develop a theory concerning the philosophical roots of prophecy. According to him, Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, d. 1640) kept alive the philosophic traditions thought to have died with al-Ghazali (d. 1111).⁴² Mulla Sadra, a Shi'i scholar and lawyer, stood outside the "Philosophy of Illumination" traditions of his day and the Peripatetic traditions of Ibn Sina.⁴³ The philosophy of illumination (*hikmat al-isbraq*) was a non-Aristotelian philosophy developed by the Shi'i philosopher al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191). The details of his philosophical ideas are beyond the scope of this paper, but Mulla Sadra stands out in seventeenth-century Muslim philosophical thought because he was one of the few scholars to continue to employ aspects of Neoplatonist and Aristotelian philosophy that cut against the dominate ideas of al-Suhrawardi.

According to Rahman, Mulla Sadra argued that the mechanism of prophetic knowledge is God's command to "be."⁴⁴ Rahman argued that "although other levels of existence also come into existence by this command to 'be,' the difference is that whereas at this level the command to 'be' is an end in itself . . . the realm of the intellect [is] . . . identified by Sadra with the realm of *qada'* or God's eternal Decree."⁴⁵ Secondly, Mulla Sadra argued that the active intelligence that Ibn Sina described did not exist solely within humans but was in some kind of union with the active intelligence of God. When this union reaches its highest level of development, "a complete identification takes place and they are able to create all knowledge from within themselves without external instruction. These are the Prophets."⁴⁶ Mulla Sadra, therefore, proposes that God created the capacity of prophetic knowledge as an instantaneous act of creation—of the command "be." In doing so, the creative act allows humans to enter into direct union with God's spirit. The knowledge imparted through this union, the Divine Decree, is what the Qur'an portrays by terms like "the Pen," "the Preserved Tablet," "the root of all

⁴¹Denny, "Fazlur Rahman: Muslim Intellectual," 92-93.

⁴²Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra (Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), vii.

⁴³Rahman, *Mulla Sadra*, 1-2.

⁴⁴Ibid., 184.

⁴⁵Ibid., 184-185.

⁴⁶Ibid., 241.

Books,” that is, the fundamental knowledge of God.⁴⁷ Mulla Sadra also contends that Divine Decree is constituted of Higher Angels, Intelligences, or God’s Attributes, in other words, that God’s essence and decree are united and inseparable.⁴⁸ Finally, Mulla Sadra argues that all those things outside God’s absolute essence is *qadar* (God’s power or ability). *Qada’* and *qadar*, taken together, mean that while God’s Divine Decree is a part of his essence and is, thus, eternal and unchanging, its manifestation outside his essence (*qadar*) occurs in time, is changing, and is malleable. The extension of God’s *qadar*, according to Mulla Sadra, is also referred to in the Qur’an as a “book” whose text is constantly changing. As with *qada’*, angels also act as intelligences that transmit knowledge.⁴⁹ These two realms of prophetic knowledge and their transmission are central to Rahman’s own theories of revelation.

Prophets, according to Rahman, intuit God’s knowledge through a process of intellectual realization that is, in turn, passed on to others through symbolic language that is meant to convey the meaning of the experience. It is therefore necessary to have a clearer understanding of the context of the revelation because the prophet’s understanding of these symbols is influenced by his religio-moral experience of the world. Thus, to understand the Qur’an, it is necessary to come to an unbiased understanding of Muhammad’s experience of the world.

Qur’an and Society

The idea that one must understand the context of revelation to understand the revelation itself is not original to Rahman. Traditional scholars have long maintained that one must know the contexts of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*) in order to apply methods of interpretation to the Qur’an and Sunnah. The end result is to discover rules in the texts that dictate how one is to live in the world. Indeed, traditional scholars have held that the Qur’an and Sunnah carry in them all the rules necessary for life, covering, literally, everything from birth to death—from how to wash after defecating to how to conduct foreign policy.⁵⁰ But Rahman argued that Islamic law was never established using a systematic approach that rendered a coherent system of

⁴⁷Ibid., 181.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Many traditional legal texts cover an extremely comprehensive range of subjects. See, for example, Abu al-Qasim ‘Abd al-Karim al-Rafi’i, *al-‘Aziz fi Sharh al-Sajiz*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1997).

thought. The degeneration of Islam came about because, very early on, Muslim scholars began to focus on the fideist discovery of rules and not on developing a systematic understanding of the nature of revelation.

As discussed above, Rahman argued that early Muslim scholars began to confuse Muhammad's authentic Sunnah with the living Sunnah of the community as it developed over the course of the first three Islamic centuries. The rise of an ever-growing Sunnah attributed to the Prophet came, over time, to supplant the Qur'an as being the most important source for understanding Islam. By the end of the third century, the Sunnah became the template through which the Qur'an was understood so that contradictions between the Qur'an and the Sunnah were resolved by arguing that because Muhammad was the chief interpreter of the Qur'an, and his Sunnah was the living expression of that understanding, any conflict between the two must be resolved by assuming that the Sunnah provides evidence for the abrogation of Qur'anic principles.⁵¹

Rahman, however, maintained that, in order to understand the Qur'an, one must look at the text alone, divested of later theological and historical positions that are not original to the text. By doing this, the true sociopolitical agenda of the text is revealed. Rahman demonstrates how this sociopolitical agenda rises to the challenge of modernity by laying out a plan whereby humans can deal with all of the effects of the modern, postindustrial age. This is best done thematically, from Rahman's point of view, by examining (1) the nature of God, (2) man as an individual, (3) man's role in society, and (4) the nature of prophethood, all of which influence his understanding of the importance of Islamic law.

Rahman's most complete statement on the role of the Qur'an in Islamic reform is his *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, written during his years in exile at the University of Chicago. In this book, Rahman argues that while the Qur'an is aimed at people, the importance of God, of his nature, and his purposes lies at the heart of revelation.⁵² Rahman contends that the main theme of the Qur'an is that humankind cannot survive without God. God, according to Rahman,

is that dimension which makes other dimensions possible; He gives meaning and life to everything. He is all-enveloping, literally infinite, and He *alone* is infinite. All else carries in the very texture of its being the hallmark of its finitude and creatureliness. . . . Things and Humans are, indeed, *directly* related to God just as they are related to each other, and we must further interpret our statement that God is not an item among other items of the universe,

⁵¹For instance, see Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi'i, *Risalah*, ed. Ahmad Muhammad al-Shakir (Cairo: Matba'at Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1940), 106-155.

⁵²Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989), 1.

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or just an existent among other existents. He is “with” everything; He constitutes the integrity of everything. . . . And just as everything is related to Him, so is everything, *through* and *in* relation to other things, related to God as well. God then is the very meaning of reality, a meaning manifested, clarified, and brought home by the universe, helped even further by man.⁵³

Rahman argues that God’s creation is, thus, organic, all things being related to God and nothing disconnected from his all-encompassing system, of which he is the center.

Humankind’s purpose is to serve God and to develop its intellect. God gives people freedom of choice and points humans in directions whereby they can develop natural resources for their betterment.⁵⁴ Rahman also argues that God created humankind in an orderly manner, not capriciously or without design. In doing so, God created in humankind the capacity for good and justice. This “Primordial Covenant” that God has with humans, forces them to continually strive and search within themselves to do right.⁵⁵ This is why God sends messengers and prophets, to remind humans of their collective responsibilities. In the absence of these reminders, humans have a tendency to give themselves over to their other basic or ingrained character, that of pettiness and narrowness of mind.⁵⁶ Thus, human beings have a dualistic nature, having both a good and an evil character.⁵⁷

The task for humankind is to strike a balance, a middle road, between its good and evil character. For Rahman, this balance is characterized by the term *taqwa* and is one of the core messages of the Qur’an. *Taqwa* is traditionally translated as “fear of God” and is a major component of Sunni pietistic views of humankind’s relationship with God. For Rahman, *taqwa* is, in Denny’s words,

a kind of knowledge that is much more than the basic fear of the supernatural that comes on the threshold of religious experience. . . . [But it] is the constant application of critical reason. . . . [that] requires intelligent action in order to be implemented in ways that embody and express Islamic values.⁵⁸

Through *taqwa*, one creates an internal stability, a conscience that can protect against the “harmful or evil consequences of one’s conduct.”⁵⁹ This

⁵³Ibid., 4-5 (italics in the original).

⁵⁴Ibid., 8.

⁵⁵Ibid., 24-35.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷*Islam*, 35.

⁵⁸Denny, “Fazlur Rahman: Muslim Intellectual,” 91.

⁵⁹Rahman, *Major Themes*, 29.

conscience, furthermore, within the individual has societal implications. Since, as Rahman argues, the judgment of one's actions lies beyond the individual, *taqwa* establishes societal rules for behavior. In a larger sense, it also places the judgment of society in the hands of God.⁶⁰

According to Rahman, what arises out of the emphasis on the power of God and the *taqwa* of humankind is the Qur'anic goal of establishing a viable and ethical social order on the earth that conforms to the rules of justice.⁶¹ Since humans are social animals, their weaknesses and sinfulness will be expressed in society. The Qur'an, therefore, focuses criticism on the reflections of humankind's grossest sins: polytheism and socioeconomic disparities.⁶² It seeks to establish a sociopolitical system based on egalitarian principles similar to those of eighteenth-century liberalism.⁶³ In doing so, it means to redress economic and social dislocations that prevent people from exercising their total human capacity. Disparities among classes and between sexes are redressed. The basis of this change is the worship and service to the One God. All changes in society flow from this central principle. According to Rahman, *jihad*—striving to achieve this service—therefore becomes an absolute necessity.⁶⁴ It becomes the all-encompassing effort to “make God's cause succeed” and becomes the “concept pivotal to the whole system of Qur'anic thought.”⁶⁵

Rahman then moves on thematically to examine the organic wholeness of God's creation and, specifically, the relationship between nature and the need for prophecy. He argues that God created a natural order that reflects his intent for humanity. The Qur'an demonstrates that nature has no choice but to submit (to be *muslim*) to the will of God.⁶⁶ God uses nature not only as a sign of his unity and mercy, but also as a reminder of how humanity should live. Since, however, humans are weak and forgetful of their responsibilities, God sends other, more potent signs (*ayat*, sing. *ayah*) to remind them of what is right. The greatest sign is that of *sultan*, or authority, which, according to Rahman, is a power attributed to God and an authority rooted in knowledge. *Sultan* is of such power that it can almost coerce a nonbeliever into believing the truth.⁶⁷ According to the Qur'an, a prophet possesses *sultan*, or, in other words, he possesses “overwhelming powerful

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 37.

⁶²Ibid., 38.

⁶³Ibid., 44-45.

⁶⁴Ibid., 63.

⁶⁵Ibid., 64.

⁶⁶Ibid., 65.

⁶⁷Ibid., 74.

proof” and knowledge that comes directly from God.⁶⁸ *Sultan* is sent to the prophet so that he can redress the ills of society and reestablish God’s commonwealth through the promulgation of a moral system.⁶⁹ Here, the imaginative prophet, who manifests his message through symbols, becomes a symbol himself.

In his early works, Rahman always buried his ideas on the nature of prophecy and revelation in the philosophy of others. In *Major Themes of the Qur’an*, however, he, for the first time, explicates a theory of revelation and prophecy. Contrary to established Islamic theology, he argues that, according to the Qur’an, Muhammad did not receive his revelation in the manner described by traditional and revivalist scholars. Sunni orthodoxy declares that Muhammad received his revelations directly from God through the angel Gabriel; that the angel uttered directly what God uttered to him; and that Muhammad, in turn, recited exactly what he heard from the angel. For instance, Abu l-Hasan al-Ash’ari (d. 935) argues in his *al-Ibanah ‘an Usul ad-Diyanah* that when the Qur’an says “God had discourse with Moses,” it clearly means that “discourse is intercourse by speech” and that the faculty of speech inheres in God’s essence and is not separable from himself.⁷⁰ Rahman, however, contends instead that Muhammad, as an imaginative prophet, heard internalized voices. These voices came to him in the form of a spiritual messenger (the Holy Spirit end of the active intelligence), and this messenger, over time, related messages as situations arose that challenged the nascent Muslim community.⁷¹ What is most important is not that Muhammad received these messages through some sort of infallible intuition, such as *kashf* (literally, “unveiling”)—which became, for Sufi mystics, a kind of infallible intuition whereby God would reveal knowledge through mystical union)—nor that he acted simply as a vehicle for God’s words, but that he became the conduit for God’s *ideas* because of his moral concerns for his community.⁷² As such, the message was shaped by Muhammad’s own immediate moral struggle, or his own religio-moral experience.⁷³ As Denny points out, Rahman argued that Muhammad was ““*ab initio* impatient with men and even with most of their ideas, and wishes to recreate history.””⁷⁴ He saw the community of Mecca as

⁶⁸Ibid., 75.

⁶⁹Ibid., 79.

⁷⁰Abu al-Hasan al-Ash’ari, *al-Ibanah ‘an Usul al-Diyanah*, trans. Walter C. Klein (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1940), 70.

⁷¹Rahman, *Major Themes*, 95-99, 102.

⁷²Denny, “Fazlur Rahman: Muslim Intellectual,” 98.

⁷³Ibid., 99.

⁷⁴Ibid.

being immoral and unable to correct its own course. As such, he secluded himself to contemplate his own errors and those of his community. In this anguish, the Qur'an comes into being as a manifestation of Muhammad's ability to purify himself through self-reflection and self-correction.⁷⁵

Rahman, therefore, argues that "when Muhammad's moral intuitive perception rose to the highest point and became identified with the moral law itself, the Word was given with the inspiration itself."⁷⁶ The Qur'an is thus divine in origin but told in Muhammad's own words. The message is so intertwined with Muhammad's personality that the two cannot be separated. Thus, Muhammad's perception of God's inspiration flavors and influences the message.⁷⁷ Here, both streams of Rahman's thought come together, the notion that Muhammad received his revelations through the mechanisms described by the philosophers and that these revelations were caused, not out of any internal quality, but due to his own crying out for moral relief.

Rahman's position radically challenges the foundations of Islamic law. He argues that the Shari'ah is based on an erroneous assumption. Since Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi'i (d. 820), Islamic law has held that general rules (*ahkam al-'amm*) for action are based on isolated situations mentioned in the Qur'an, in the Qur'an and Sunnah, or just in the Sunnah.⁷⁸ Rahman argues, however, that the instances in which Muhammad acted to correct isolated problems have no larger implication for Islamic law or society.⁷⁹ Rahman, as stated above, criticizes hadith for representing views that were not original to the Prophet. Rahman's critique goes deeper than simply arguing against the authenticity of certain reports and goes to the very foundation of traditionalist and revivalist support for hadith. Al-Shafi'i, and jurists following him, have held that Muhammad's life was revelation and that God controlled Muhammad and prevented him from committing errors. Therefore, since both the Qur'an and the Sunnah is God's revealed word, both can be used as a source for specific and general rules. By defining revelation, however, as an imaginative process in which God inspired Muhammad—but the Prophet's sayings and actions were nonetheless his alone—the Sunnah becomes stripped of its air of infallibility. If the words of the Qur'an are Muhammad's, then the Sunnah

⁷⁵Rahman, *Islam*, 16-17.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁸Shafi'i, *Risalah*, 147-175.

⁷⁹Rahman, *Major Themes*, 89.

must also be his attempt to live out his experience of inspiration in response to the moral dilemmas he faced.

Furthermore, by removing the Sunnah as a source for basing one's life, Rahman, by extension, is tearing at the third pillar of law, that being the consensus of the community of jurists (*ijma'*). Rahman maintains that consensus is nothing more than an extension of the infallibility of the Prophet to the jurists. *Ijma'* is based on a *hadith* that states: "my community will never agree on an error."⁸⁰ Jurists interpreted this passage to mean that God will protect the community from making mistakes on decisions of unanimity in the same way God protected the Prophet from mistakes.⁸¹ Rahman argues that as the Sunnah of the Prophet became mixed with the living Sunnah of the community, the line between the infallibility of the Prophet and that of the community of jurists became blurred, and the doctrine of communal infallibility in matters of consensus followed.⁸²

Rahman implies that if one assumes that the Sunnah and *ijma'* are no longer valid sources of knowing what God wants for those who submit to him, then the only things left are the Qur'an and individual reason. He calls, as the first order of reform, for an overall interpretation of the Qur'an, examining what was intended by certain *surahs* (chapters) at the time they were revealed and why they were revealed in the first place.⁸³ He maintains that the Qur'an must be seen as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. He states:

if this kind of analysis shows anything, it is that the Qur'an must be so studied that its concrete unity will emerge in its fullness, and that to select certain verses from the Qur'an to project a partial and subjective point of view may satisfy the subjective observer but it necessarily does violence to the Qur'an itself and results in extremely dangerous abstraction.⁸⁴

Taken as a whole, Rahman argues that the Qur'an lays out a plan for the establishment of an Islamic community based on ethics and moral struggle that would correct the ills that the misinterpretation of the Qur'an had caused. The Qur'an thus becomes a guide for action in the broadest sense possible. What is necessary for the Qur'an to have meaning in a changing

⁸⁰*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, 173.

⁸¹It is more often implied than stated. See, for instance, Shafi'i, *Risalah*, 471-476. See also Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Din al-Amidi* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1992), 204-205.

⁸²Rahman, *Islam*, 70.

⁸³Rahman, *Major Themes*, 98-99.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 15.

world is to understand the context in which Muhammad's moral and ethical experience of revelation took place, not a specific dating of instances of revelation that jurists have traditionally sought. The latter, according to Rahman, is so contaminated by the later interpolation of events into the Sunnah that knowing exactly when a particular verse was revealed is no longer possible.⁸⁵

What is necessary for understanding the Qur'an is to be able to articulate the "moral ideal towards which the society was expected to move."⁸⁶ In other words, the Qur'an, in establishing certain rules, points people toward moral and ethical ideals that are to be points of departure for the creation of a just society and not the final destination. For instance, Rahman says that the Qur'an establishes many rules for the role of women in Muslim society that today are considered unegalitarian. Rules permitting polygamy, requirements for two female witnesses for each male witness, and unequal rights of divorce were not intended to be the final statement on the rights of women, but were meant to point toward the future equality of the genders. Pre-Islamic society was especially harsh toward women. The Qur'anic rules for the rights of women were improvements over what had come before. Thus, the Qur'an creates the ideal of equality within the confines of current moral and ethical issues. As history progressed, standards for the ethical treatment of women also changed. What had been liberation now became corruption as scholars attempted to enforce medieval standards in modern times.

Rahman argues that one of the main themes of the Qur'an is the idea of "judgment in history." He argues that the Qur'an says that God will judge people collectively for the failings of their society. Part of God's judgment is to punish societies by causing them to fail and become subservient to other, more morally and ethically advanced societies. When this occurs, the society that has fallen into decline must learn from the sad fate of earlier societies and rebuild itself and regain God's favor.⁸⁷ In this way, God reveals himself through the historical process and points people toward proper activities. Rahman is, obviously, talking about Islam and its corruption and decay. All is not lost, however. If Muslims return to the moral ideals of equality and respect of human honor and dignity in the context of contemporary moral struggles, Islam will once again rise to its favored position in God's plan.⁸⁸

⁸⁵Ibid., 170.

⁸⁶Ibid., 48.

⁸⁷Ibid., 51-56.

⁸⁸Ibid., 56-58.

Conclusion

Fazlur Rahman attempted to recast the meaning of the Qur'an as a moral and ethical blueprint for action in the modern world. In doing so, he sought to strip the Islamic tradition of the founding ideals of Islamic law and to do away with thirteen-hundred years of intellectual tradition. Rahman was part of a movement that directly resulted from the colonial and postcolonial experiences of the Muslim world. While Rahman extolled the greatness of Muslim intellectual achievements and called for the revival of Islamic philosophical understandings of the nature of revelation and science, most modernists sought to import into Islam Western philosophical traditions that, for many Muslims, were seen as being more morally corrupt than anything Islam had produced.

Ultimately, modernism in the face of revivalism has failed to have an impact on Muslim thinking beyond the confines of academia. While Rahman is very popular with Western scholars of Islam (both Muslim and non-Muslim), he has remained a source of controversy and derision in the larger Muslim community. Rahman believed that revivalism would ultimately fail because its emphasis on literal interpretations of the text would prevent it from meeting the needs of Muslims living in the modern world. He failed to foresee the wave of international violent revivalist movements and the extent to which revivalism in its nonviolent form would appeal to Muslim masses. Rahman was first and foremost an optimist. He believed that the ills of the Muslim world would right themselves in the course of time as Western nations pursued more enlightened policies that have, to date, not been the case. Regardless of history's final assessment of Rahman's views, he was correct in believing that Islam had started on a process of reform that would take centuries to resolve. The final destination of that process of reform is still very much in doubt.

Book Reviews

Chase F. Robinson. *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. xvi, 207 pages. ISBN 0-521-78115-9. HB \$59.95.

For the contemporary historian, one of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of early Islamic history is the paucity of source material. Thus, Western historians accustomed to working with “authentic” and “verifiable” source material find it increasingly difficult to write about the first 150 years of Islamic history. It is only around 750 CE, with the emergence of the Abbasid caliphate, that source materials start to multiply and become accessible and “reliable.”

The difficulty in dealing with the said era of Islamic history arises from the nature of the demands that modern historians make: they seek to build their theories and ideas on material inscribed in stone, as if it were. For them, the oral tradition remains a secondary, unreliable, and unverifiable source. Also, their demand that the source material be verifiable through multiple channels has led them to doubt single narrations, especially if these happen to have a Muslim source. This cautious approach has not been without all merit since it has given birth to numerous substantive questions about the use of source materials for writing the history of the seventh and eighth centuries. It has also generated fierce debates among historians over the last quarter century: how do we come to terms with early Islamic archaeology, epigraphy, papyrology, and numismatics? What are we to make of the latter, politically motivated sources?

Chase F. Robinson holds that one can write Islamic provincial history of the period after the early conquests and of the Umayyad period (ca. 640–750 CE) by marrying history and historiography. *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest* deals with a peripheral area—present-day northern Syria and Iraq—discussing its transformation from a backward area situated between the Byzantine east and the Sasanian west into the important northern tier of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires. Beginning with northern Mesopotamia and then narrowing the focus of inquiry to medieval Mosul—which allows a relatively more thorough scrutiny since a native Mosuli, Yazid b. Muhammad al-Azdi (d. ca. 334/945) has left behind a

partly extant history of Mosul—Robinson undertakes his investigation of this early period by blending history with historiography.

Medieval Mosul, Robinson notes, came into existence in the wake of the Muslim “conquests of the early seventh century [that] set in motion waves of settlement and urbanization whose ripples travelled up the Tigris as far as northern Iraq” (ix). Having “inherited Nineveh’s enviable position astride the Tigris,” Mosul was naturally positioned to become “an administrative and military centre early on, and, by the end of the eighth century, had become an entrepôt for riverine trade to the heart of the empire” (ibid.). This produced an elite that, like the elites of many other Muslim cities of that era, not only patronized learning, but was itself steeped in a tradition of learning that sought knowledge from any source it could find. It was this ambitious and learned elite—which cultivated a love of learning, record-keeping, and investigating the past—out of which emerged Azdi’s remarkable chronicle almost 150 years after the events that established Mosul as the region’s administrative center. This reflection on the Umayyad and Abbasid past, emerging out of a mature local historiographic tradition that was nurtured by the Hamdanid milieu in which Azdi wrote, is one of the primary source materials used by Robinson.

In contrast to Mosul, Robinson says, “cities of the early Islamic Jazira such as Edessa and Nisibis” do not offer an easy access to their remote past: they did not produce an Azdi, for their geographical location, together with the cultural milieu of the Syriac-speaking pre-conquest elite, did not attract the Muslim elite to that region. Thus, writing the history of Mosul amounts to “re-writing al-Azdi, whereas writing a history of the Jazira is writing almost *ex nihilo*” (ix). By treating the two areas together, Robinson attempts to shed light on the Jazirah by contrasting its situation with Mosul.

The first chapter of the book, “Conquest History and Its Uses,” closely examines the conquest traditions of the Jazirah and Mosul with a view to drawing some conclusions about the character of the conquest tradition and the early Islamic rule. This is followed by an investigation of the transformation of the region (chapters 2–5). The last two chapters of the book look at the first and the greatest crisis of the state-provincial relations in the early medieval history of Mosul: the 132/750 massacre committed by the Abbasid army only months after its defeat of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II, at the nearby river, Zab. There follows a short “Conclusion” (165-171) and an extensive bibliography (172-199).

The most important contribution of the book to our understanding of early Islamic history is made in the very first chapter, which places the early conquest accounts in their social and political milieu. Here, Robinson plays

the role of both a critic and an architect, investigating the emergence of the historiographic tradition through an examination of a variety of sources.

That these conquest accounts are controversial is only natural. The accounts on which Robinson builds his main arguments were written by those who were directly affected by the conquests: the Christian and Muslim urban elites. But the fascinating thing about Robinson's examination is that it recreates the aura of a period—the late seventh and eighth centuries—during which a tribal-based rule in the Jazirah gave birth to a formal, taxation-based provincial system (chapter 2). It is also important to note that Robinson's conclusions reflect the general scholarly consensus about the impact of the conquests on non-Muslim elites. The conquest had only minimal impact on the local elites; the social power of some urban Christian notables, who seemed to have enjoyed virtual autonomy, may actually have increased. (20-21, 168-169). This had enormous consequences for the Islamic intellectual tradition, which would be enhanced by translations from Syriac sources since the local elite enthusiastically cooperated in the translation movement.

Robinson's book, which is "about social power on the periphery of the nascent Islamic state" (165), investigates a small area of the larger canvas, attempting to extrapolate findings that can be applied to the larger unit consisting of that extremely complex and organically growing institution of the time—the caliphate. This is a movement from local to grand history, from the periphery to the center—a movement that is not without pitfalls.

To begin with, reliance on local history for the construction or understanding of the history of the caliphate can potentially reduce the latter to no more than an aggregation of local histories without paying sufficient attention to the internal dynamics of the forces that created an Islamic civilization, based on a metaphysical foundation, that transformed the existing social realities by reconstructing their meanings, mutual relationships, and orientation. This reconstruction had, as its basis, the Qur'anic Weltanschauung, which played a central role in the transformation of existing relationships, both social and intellectual. Thus, histories that construct their narratives on the basis of local traditions by focusing on small areas (both geographically as well as intellectually) tend to push into the background the more subtle but vastly important forces at work. The story of the birth of Mosul, as reconstructed by Robinson (chapter 3), has all the ingredients of an authentic story that draws its material from local sources. It follows, almost mechanically and step by step, significant developments: the arrival of the Muslim army and the establishment of the garrison through the settlement of four thousand tribesmen of the Azd,

Tayy, Kindah, and ‘Abd al-Qays tribes (73). But when it comes to explaining why this garrison was transformed into a thriving city, too much reliance on local history becomes problematic, for the new city seems to have emerged in isolation from all the events that were taking place elsewhere in the Muslim world. True, Azdi’s account can be used to construct a cohesive narrative about the governors of the garrison. But why would Muhammad b. Marwan, who is said to have built the city, decide to lay out the plans for medieval Mosul at the site where he did? What were the larger economic, political, and social factors that brought hundreds of craftsmen, engineers, and artisans to the site in 729-730 to dig an open canal (*an-nabr al-makshuf*), and what relationship does this have with the general administrative practices of the time? These, and numerous other related issues, remain outside the purview of local histories. Azdi does tell us (and Robinson quotes him) that the canal was built when al-Hurr b. Yusuf, the city’s governor, was “distressed by the sight of a woman struggling to carry water from the Tigris into the city” (78). The governor wrote to Hisham about the lack of drinking water, and the “caliph responded by directing him to cut the canal” (78). But all of this merely helps to reconstruct the local history, without placing it in the larger context.

This narrow focus, with all its admirable fruits, becomes even more problematic when it is applied for the purposes of understanding the broad parameters under which historical events were taking shape. This happens because the close attention paid to local families and the tendency to explain everything on the basis of material evidence leave out the transforming spiritual, ethical, and moral issues that were at the center of new conquests. This is apparent in the fifth chapter of the book, “Islam in the north: Jaziran Kharijism,” in which Robinson uses a famous hadith—“Two religions shall not come together in the Arabian Peninsula” (*la-yajtami’u dinani fi Jazirati l-‘Arab*)—to make a case for the Christians of Jazira. (109). He states that “[t]he tradition held that Jews and Christians had no place in the *jazirat al-‘arab* (the Arabian Peninsula) but there was no such restriction in the Jazira,” and, hence, they could live undisturbed as long as they paid the *jizyah* (109). This interpretation of the hadith is highly problematic in view of the clearly recognized status of the Christians and Jews, as *ahl al-Kitab*, in the Qur’an itself. This status was duly recognized by the Prophet, and there are no grounds for the assumption that the phrase *dinan* in the hadith refers to the Christian or Judaic traditions, both of which were recognized by Islam as true religions. The grounds become even more precarious when one reads the assertion that “the material generally reflects

the prevailing character of early Muslim belief, when Muhammad's (apparent) marriage of ethnicity and creed had not yet been dissolved" (109). This reverse application of the local sources to the grand historical narrative, unfolding on the basis of internal dynamics of a civilization that saw itself uniquely anchored in a metaphysical vision, is highly problematic.

The author himself is aware of this limitation. He attempts to restore some balance in the last chapter of the book, simply entitled "Conclusion," in which he states:

This has been a book about social power on the periphery of the nascent Islamic state, but whereas much has been said about the periphery, relatively little has been said about the state. It might therefore be useful to conclude by making some general comments about the evolution of the caliphate, particularly those features upon which the history of the north sheds some light. (165)

But these seven pages in the last chapter fail to provide the much-needed balance; they are filled with generalizations, as this example will show: "The Abbasids thus overcame Umayyad regionalism by establishing an imperial administration and by fostering the *shari'a* too; but this is the end of the story" (166).

Notwithstanding these pitfalls, Robinson, like Richard Bulliet before him (*The Patricians of Nisapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*), has brought out new dimensions of local histories that might prove invaluable for constructing grand narratives, which can throw light on the true contours of Islamic civilization in its formative era.

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Mohammed Hashim Kamali. *Islamic Law in Malaysia: Issues and Developments*, with a Foreword by Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers Sdn. Bhd., 2000), v, 352 pages. ISBN 983-2092-27-2. Paperback. Price not indicated.

Mohammed Kamali, a scholar of Islamic law and native Afghan, has taught his subject at the academic level in Malaysia for more than fourteen years and writes extensively in the field. Among his works are *Law in Afghanistan* (1985), *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (1989)—a useful introduction to the semantics, terminologies, and fundamental concepts of classical Islamic

legal theory—and *Freedom of Expression in Islam* (1997). His recent *Islamic Law in Malaysia* gives an account of the application of Islamic law within the private sector of that country's essentially secular legal system. Malaysia is an important barometer for the Islamic world, and Kamali's topic is of profound international significance; regrettably, his presentation has only nominal academic value.

Islamic Law in Malaysia suffers from a number of technical shortcomings, which might be overlooked if the book's scholarly underpinnings had been sound. It is poorly organized and edited; typos abound; and the index is incomplete and often inaccurate. A short Arabic-English glossary is provided but lacks many important terms that occur in the main text; the glossary would have been more functional with a complementary English-Arabic section. Arabic-Islamic terminologies occur profusely throughout the work but generally in a disorderly fashion and sometimes inconsistently. Within a few adjoining paragraphs, for example, the reader encounters *qard al-basanah*, *qardul basan*, and *qard al-basan*, none of which is technically correct or listed in the glossary. Such variations of the correct form, *al-qard al-basan*, are likely to bewilder the untrained reader, who will be sorely taxed to discern that they are all meant to stand for a single meaning, the "benevolent [noninterest-bearing] loan." Kamali makes frequent use of the awkward *bay' bi-thaman ājil*, which he occasionally modifies to "BBA." As in the case of the "benevolent loan," however, his style would have been more reader-friendly had he restricted himself to an easily understandable English rendition (in this case, "deferred payment sale") after an initial parenthetical reference to the Arabic term.

Kamali draws upon Malaysian sources—juristic, journalistic, and scholarly—and makes lengthy digressions into classical and modern Arabic references on Islamic law, which, however, are not always of clear relevance, especially when touching on such matters as tax farming in the Ancient Roman Empire and Sasanian Persia, pre-Islamic Arabian guardianship customs, and the stoning of adulterers in Rabbinic law. One digression leaves us with the comforting thought, extracted from the tomes of medieval scholasticism, that "the majority (*jumbur*) [of classical jurists] have held it possible for a woman to assume [political] office if she takes it by military force in order to prevent bloodshed."

Kamali fails to take advantage of complementary, alternative, and competing views expressed in the expansive academic literature that has appeared in recent years on the application of Islamic law in the modern world and a number of indirectly germane topics like the socioeconomic background of fundamentalism, the dynamics of the nation-state regarding

modern Islamic political and legal developments, and the issue of Islam and human rights. Kamali offers occasional comparisons between Malaysia and other Muslim states, but they are random, incomplete, and superficial and pertain mostly to the Arab Middle East. There is an occasional reference to the influence of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, but Iran's contemporary legal history is thoroughly ignored. Minimal attention is given to regional parallels in Indonesia and Singapore and none to Nigeria, which shares a common colonial legacy in English civil law and has a degree of ethnic and religious diversity comparable to Malaysia.

Kamali draws attention to his many years of experience in Malaysia, but one wonders what academic value that experience has, as long as he fails to incorporate it into a credible analysis of socioeconomic dynamics, fundamentalist agendas, the deeper anthropological realities of communitarian politics, and similar underlying issues. His approach tends to be expository, but its objective value is undercut by insertion of personal opinion. It is often difficult for the reader to distinguish between Kamali's personal views and those of the Malaysian parties he is discussing. Moreover, he tends to treat discrepancies and disagreements in Malay legal opinion as mere questions of scholastic interpretation, which can be adequately assessed by reference to classical texts and juristic considerations of what is formally right or wrong. In an earlier work, *Islamic Jurisprudence*, Kamali would habitually make himself the adjudicator of Islamic tradition and resolve centuries-old differences among classical jurists by casting his own opinion as the "correct view." Unfortunately, in the present work, he demonstrates a similar penchant for presenting personal interpretation as the authentic traditional perspective, although his juristic opinions lack the methodological rigor required by classical standards, are often idiosyncratic, and certainly would be unlikely to convince fundamentalists or other "conservative reactionaries," whose opinions he tends to challenge.

Generous citations from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, whose signed Foreword and illuminated photograph appear at the beginning of the book, and Anwar Ibrahim, his former Deputy Prime Minister, run throughout the book and evince a sense of their wisdom on how Islamic law ought to be applied in Malaysian society. Several pages are devoted to the political crisis that broke out between the two figures in 1998. But Kamali downplays its importance and bearing on Malaysia's future or the broader Islamic world and treats the case of Anwar Ibrahim as resulting from disinterested confusion regarding overlapping jurisdictions between secular and Islamic courts.

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Since the charge against Anwar Ibrahim was “gross indecency,” his case should have been tried, according to the Federal Constitution, in the Islamic courts, where standards of evidence would have been difficult to meet and the failure to do so might have redounded upon Mahathir Mohamad with the serious countercharge of slander. Kamali contends that moving the case to the civil courts was justifiable because they enjoy “wider powers and [are] more resourceful,” also suggesting that Malaysia’s Islamic courts lacked sufficient seating capacity to provide “maximum space for participants and observers.” With a notable degree of understatement, Kamali states that the case was “seen as a major political crisis” and “became the focus of media attention, including international observers.”

Not having expertise in Malaysian law, I cannot make a judgment on the legal technicalities of the case, nor do I presume to know its full background and the ultimate innocence or guilt of Anwar Ibrahim. As the case stands, however, it raises serious questions about the health of Malaysian democracy and its legal system. Kamali’s approach to the case, if not merely cynical, is surely obscurantist and apologetic. According to reliable accounts, the Prime Minister used high-handed methods, utilized executive authority to intervene in the judiciary, countervened the Federal Constitution, and violated fundamental principles of habeas corpus, due process, and a string of other basic human rights. Any serious analysis of Islamic law in Malaysia today must focus adequately on this crisis, which rightfully deserved the heightened international attention it received and remains an abiding concern for the entire Muslim world. Throughout most of the second half of the twentieth century, Malaysia developed a well-earned reputation for being one of the most progressive nations in Southeast Asia and served as a possible model for pluralism and democracy in the Muslim world, where executive authority is coercive by definition and political systems—whatever their claims or however eloquent their constitutions—are dominated by personalism and vested interests. It is doubtful what kind of an exemplar Malaysia can now be for the Muslim world or what kind of confidence can be retained in a system of law and politics that is unable to guarantee due process and basic human rights to its own Deputy Prime Minister, not to mention its average citizen.

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Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby. *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*. Revised and updated. Boulder: CO: Westview Press, 2002. xiv, 289 pages. ISBN 0-8133-4019-5. PB US\$17.50.

The book begins by offering basic information on the people, history, and landscape of Afghanistan, and then it focuses on the role of Islam, ethnicity, and tribalism in shaping modern Afghanistan. The work may generally be seen as belonging to the genre of modern history since attention to personalities, time, and events is one of its salient features; otherwise, the work is interdisciplinary, combining as it does history, anthropology, modern developments, and religion. By far, the larger part of the book is devoted to the events of recent decades, especially those following the 1978 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The historical part and the sections on Islam are different, in content and style, from the familiar pattern of English works on the colonial and even postcolonial periods of Afghanistan. This book is authored by two scholars, one American and the other most probably of Afghan origin, with considerable work experience in American universities. As a result, the book presents Afghan perspectives on Afghan history and self-image, but it also reflects some of the best qualities of Western scholarship. The authors' extensive knowledge of the native language(s), Afghan customs, places, and personalities provides much insight and contributes significantly to the accuracy of the details the book seeks to furnish.

The book under review also covers a new area of interest on Afghanistan that developed only in the 1990s—namely, Afghanistan's relations with its new neighbors in the north, the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, and the newly emerging patterns of relations that have yet to realize their full potential. Pakistan's closer involvement in Afghanistan in recent years has also meant that the book addresses many issues of interest in this context in fuller detail than they are found in many previous works.

One of the coauthors, Ralph Magnus, was coordinator of Middle-Eastern studies at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, and subsequently served as assistant cultural attaché to the U.S. embassy in Kabul. Eden Naby has lived in “many countries of central Asia and has served on the faculties of Harvard, Columbia, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin universities in the U.S.”

The book consists of eight chapters and three appendices. The first chapter, which introduces the geography, ethnic groups, and lifestyles of the people of Afghanistan, also records the authors' assessment that the Afghan

worldview at the start of the twenty-first century and for several decades thereafter “will be shaped by the Soviet invasion, the civil war and the regional and international diaspora” (22). The worldview of the Afghans in the twenty-first century will thus be determined less by their own history, custom, and culture than by the traumas they have experienced in the most recent decades.

Chapter 2, which is on the modern history of Afghanistan, has a section on each of the nine or so rulers and monarchs Afghanistan has had from Ahmad Shah Durrani (d. 1773) to Zahir Shah (1933-1973) and also gives details of the Anglo-Afghan wars and the legacy of the Cold War. The final section of this chapter provides fresh information and analysis on Zahir Shah and the late President Daud (1973-1978). This chapter also features Afghanistan’s brief experience in liberal democracy following the introduction of the 1964 constitution under Zahir Shah. The latter’s cousin, Mohammad Daud, who was the country’s premier from 1953 to 1963, “moved Afghanistan into a debilitating military and economic dependency on the Soviet Union, and paid a high personal price when he tried to reverse directions during his presidency between 1973 and 1978” (52).

Zahir Shah’s long rule was marked not so much by his own personal initiatives as monarch but by his influential uncles and cousins as prime ministers. During the last ten years of Zahir Shah’s rule, especially after the introduction of the new constitution, “expectations rose that Zahir Shah would grasp the monarchical reins to help shape the direction of government. He approached his constitutional responsibilities with indecision and procrastination” (47). In this period, Pakistan’s control of Afghanistan’s access to sea drove the Afghans to increase trade with the Soviet Union to such an extent that, by the end of the 1960s, about 50 percent of their trade was locked into Soviet dependency.

Chapter 3 continues the historical narrative and explores deeper the dynamics of the Great Game and the Soviet invasion and also relates parts of that history to Islam. The succeeding three chapters bear the titles of, respectively, “Traditional Afghan Islam,” “Marx Among the Afghans,” and “Holy Warriors, Mujahidin, and Fighting for Islam,” which explore the beliefs and practices of Islam among the Afghans and the emergence of a myriad of movements ranging from traditional Islamist to moderate reformist, from liberals and constitutionalists to Marxist and Mujahidin militants. The sections on Islam provides especially useful information about the doctrines and practices of Afghanistan’s Shi’ites—both Ja’fari and Isma’ili branches—who make up about 15 to 20 percent of the Afghan populace. This is, once again, an interesting feature of this work, as many

previous works have tended to provide only cursory information about the Shi'ite segment of the Afghan population.

Chapter 7, "Beyond War: Afghanistan in the Post-Cold War Central Asia," addresses developments in the new central Asian republics in the north, whose emergence in the last decade or so has added a new dimension to the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan. In this connection, Afghanistan is seen as a trade route, and the dynamics this has generated are of interest not only to the country's neighbors, such as Pakistan and Iran, but also to the Western countries that are currently engaged in opening fresh avenues of contact and cooperation with the region. The prospects of regional cooperation in times of peace are examined in light especially of the fact that Afghanistan has been engaged in civil war and conflict ever since the emergence of these new states.

The last chapter is devoted to the five years of the Taliban rule (1996-2001), exploring the brief history of the Taliban, their initial success in restoring peace to the war-torn country, and their disarmament of the civilian population. The initial success of the Taliban was, however, soon overshadowed by the repressive policies they introduced concerning female education and employment. The Taliban took a generally punitive attitude on religious matters, which invoked hostile responses not only from the outside world but also from the native population. Except for three countries—namely, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates—the Taliban regime was denied recognition by the international community, including the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. International isolation, internal conflict—especially with the Northern Alliance and other factions—crop failure due to an extended draught, and Taliban involvement in international terrorism exacerbated the problems of poverty in Afghanistan and contributed to the Taliban's eventual collapse as a result of the (unnecessary) U.S. military action, which destroyed much of the already shattered infrastructure of Afghanistan.

In the two-and-a-half page epilogue entitled "Building a New Afghanistan," the authors conclude with this sentence: "The future, like the near past, is bleak for Afghans" (211). What they wrote at the end of 2001 seems to be valid a year later. Karzai's government is hamstrung by several factors: the security situation in the countryside, the emergence of powerful warlords, the destruction of the infrastructure, and the lack of adequate resources for reconstruction. The situation is not likely to change significantly until Afghanistan raises a national army and police that can bring security to the country as a whole and then effectively engages in

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reconstruction. The international coalition has so far been reluctant to expand its presence outside Kabul, notwithstanding its success in bringing peace to Kabul itself.

The book's three appendices provide an annotated bibliography (Appendix A; 212-216), biographical notes on the rulers of Afghanistan from 1880 to date (Appendix B; 216-220), and a chronology of events since the emergence of modern Afghanistan in 1880 under Ahmad Shah Durrani to the present period (Appendix C; 220-263).

This revised version is a considerable improvement on the original, 1998 publication. The text is written in an engaging style and reads well, and the data supplied are generally accurate and reliable. A few minor corrections, however, still need to be made:

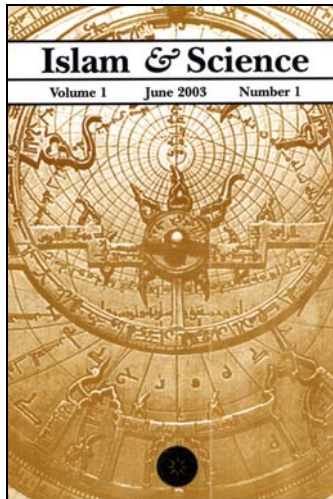
- page 150, line 12: "his two-month tenure" (read "his two-year tenure")
- page 152, middle: "Hizb-i Irshad (Party of Help)" (read ". . . (Party of Guidance)")
- page 218, line 6: "1972-1983" (read "1972-1973")

One or two passages still need to be updated. On page 36, lines 4-5, we read: "the emerging policies of the Taliban indicate that their social policy will be strictly Islamic, that their composition is pro-Pashtun." By 2002, when the present edition appeared, the Taliban had already collapsed and were no longer an emerging factor. Similar adjustments need to be made on page 149, lines 9-10, where the authors say: "The success of the Taliban, however, will probably mean the establishment of a Saudi-Arabian-style conservative Islamic government," and on page 155, lines 9-10, where we read: "The Taliban . . . may represent for many Afghans the best hope for the end of civil war." But these minor matters do not take away from the merit of this attractive handbook on modern Afghanistan. In view of the current interest in reliable literature on Afghanistan, this book will probably need to be published again, and it is with this prospect in mind that I have drawn attention to the needed adjustments.

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