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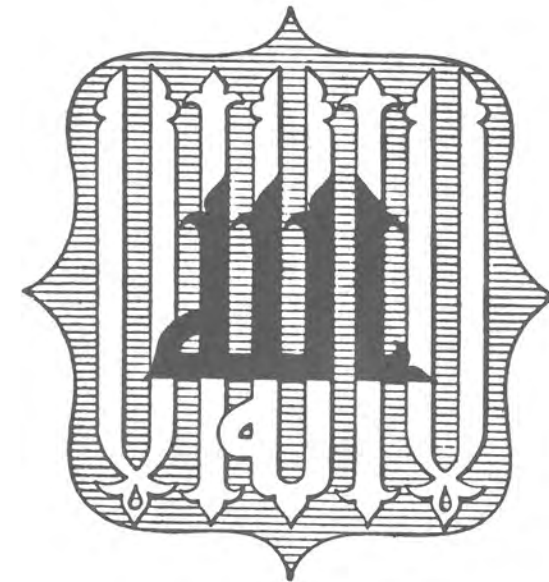
THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE

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# THE ISLAMIC QUARTERLY

A Review of Islamic Culture



THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH

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## Understanding JIHAD: Definition and Methodology

S. ABDULLAH SCHLEIFER

### Editors Note

In this issue of the Islamic Quarterly we publish the first instalment of an important new book by S. Abdullah Schleifer of the American University of Cairo. A chapter from a later section of the manuscript was published in Volume XXIII (Number 2) of the Quarterly.

Mr. Schleifer first conceived the idea for this work, which deals with a subject which has been somewhat neglected by many contemporary Muslim writers, while undertaking research for his book "The Fall of Jerusalem" (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1971) and it was at that time that his attention was first drawn to the "extraordinary yet mysterious figure" of Sheikh 'Izz-ud-Din al-Qassem who, as he says in the Preface to this book, "did much to inspire the Palestinians with the will to resist, by armed struggle, the British occupation and accompanying Zionist colonisation".

His subsequent studies aroused his particular interest in the complex relationship between "Islamic identity" in the deepest psychological sense of the term and the Resistance movement which arose, as he puts it, "at the tail end of a decade in which secular revolutionary Arab nationalism and Marxism-Leninism were so aggressively the intellectual fashions". So far as we are aware no comparable in-depth study of the interaction between the Islamic concept of *Jihad* on the one hand and, on the other, current revolutionary ideologies has been undertaken by any Muslim scholar of repute. This gives Abdullah Schleifer's book, based upon extensive research, a very special relevance in the contemporary context.

We commence serial publication of *Jihad in Modern Islamic Political Thought* with the author's Introduction, together with the first chapter of the book.

### Introduction

**J**IHAD is derived from the verb *jahada* which means "he exerted himself" or "he strove". Literally then, *jihad* means *striving* and properly signifies exerting one's utmost power in contending with an object of disapproval.<sup>1</sup>

Modern scholarship, in accord with traditional Islamic jurisprudence, has generally treated *jihad* in the context of military action — as the one form of war which is permissible in principle in Islam; as the instrument of Islam's universal mission and, if need be, in the defense of Islam; and as an individual duty and collective obligation upon the community of Islam.<sup>2</sup>

Among modern Muslims this subject has been one of great sensitivity since the accusations that Islam "converted by the sword" and is little more than a "warrior's cult" lacking spiritual and ethical depth pervaded so much of the polemical literature largely produced by Christian missionaries in the 19th and early 20th centuries — writers who were often closely associated in ultimate outlook if not in person to many of the modern Western scholars of Islamica.<sup>3</sup>

This sensitivity is not only a factor in the consciousness of some modern Muslims and reflected in their political thought as it bears upon *jihad* (and as such shall be surveyed by this study), but it has also hindered the efforts of modern Muslim scholars as well as political writers in seeking the essence (and thereby the significance) of *jihad* within traditional Muslim consciousness, acceptable to whatever fashions of contemporary Western thought — be it the pacifist or dynamic evangelical witness of rationalist Victorian Protestantism that seems to have weighed so heavily upon Muslims receiving modern educations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries or the more recent requirement of a "revolutionary ideology."<sup>4</sup>

For while this is a study of modern Islamic political theory, it is in the very nature of that modernity that we must turn to the pre-modern, or traditional, consciousness, to determine the essence of *jihad* before we can interpret the significance of its treatment in modern Islamic political thought. Yusuf Iqbal and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have observed that modern

Muslim consciousness is marked by a profound sense of loss — that Islam in its most outward, political dimension has been vanquished by Western conquest and as a result the unity of Islamic consciousness, a reflection of the central doctrine *at-tawhid* in which all dimensions of life and thought are subject to the Will and Unity or Oneness of God, has been disrupted on the plane of temporal existence and thought.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, there is no way of determining the integrity of the concept of *jihad* within any particular strand of modern Islamic political thought in itself given the fact of modernity as the rupture of Islamic Consciousness.

The extensively examined history of that on-going disruption, recorded as military conquests, juridical capitulations, cultural and economic penetration, etc., is not the subject of this study. It is however assumed as the determining experience that separates modern Islamic political thought from the pre-modern, or traditional. From the perspective of this thesis, some of the most relevant work has been done at this point in the recent military political studies published by Ross E. Dunn, John S. Habib, and B. G. Martin.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to modern Islamic political theory which lends itself far more easily to the contemporary categories of the humanities and social sciences precisely because of the rupture of Islamic Consciousness, pre-modern "political" thought as it bears on *jihad* must be derived from the totality of Islamic thought.

The most apparent strand would seem to be Islamic political philosophy where, Muhsin Mahdi suggests, *jihad* could be identified with the "just war" waged by al-Farabi's virtuous ruler to establish the virtuous regime, but only in the most provisional sense given in Mahdi's reading of al-Farabi's denial that any religion has a universal mission.<sup>7</sup>

The very "apparentness" should also be a warning. Not only, as Leo Strauss observes, because "political philosophy is not the same as political thought in general. Political thought is coeval with political life,"<sup>8</sup> but because Islam is an all-inclusive social order based directly upon revealed Law. This precludes from the outset, as Ernest L. Fortin notes, "any sphere of activity in which reason could operate independently of the divine Law,"<sup>9</sup> and it is the rationalistic, autonomous aspect of Islamic philosophy that has had the least impact in the formation of Islamic Consciousness.<sup>10</sup>

Majid Khadduri has extensively examined the treatment of *jihad* as subject of Islamic Jurisprudence, as has Muhammad Hamidullah to a lesser extent, in the context of international relations, and both have interpreted the traditional juridical treatment of *jihad* as an Islamic "Law of Nations."<sup>11</sup> Less ambitious but of great value is Rudolph Peters' treatment of similar material (in his case the chapter on *jihad* from Ibn Rushd's legal handbook *Bidayat al-Mudjtahid* in Ibn Rushd's capacity as Qadi, not as philosopher)

since it is accompanied for comparative purposes by Peters' notes — and translation of a contemporary treatise on *jihad* by the modernist 'alim Mahmud Shaltut.<sup>12</sup>

The jurists also considered *jihad* as an element among the conditions of legitimate rule in the Sunni theories of Imamate. These works most approximate self-conscious political thought within an intrinsically Islamic (rather than classic, or Aristotelian) context and as observed by both H. A. R. Gibb and Yusuf Iqbal, are definite responses to political life.<sup>13</sup>

Just as there is no political thought separate from religious thoughts, so in *at-tawhid* shaped consciousness, there is no aspect of religious thought necessarily separate from political thought. As Muhammad Aziz Ahmed observes, a traditional Muslim "is shocked to think of religion and politics; he only thinks in terms of Islam."<sup>14</sup>

*Jihad* is an Islamic phenomenon and this study attempts to comprehend pre-Modern Islamic Consciousness on its own terms — deriving its primary sense of meaning, as Maurice Natanson advises, from "the meaning the activity has for the one who performs it;"<sup>15</sup> in this case, to rethink past thought in the mode of historical sympathy, which Donald M. Lowe has defined as "the understanding of meaning in context."<sup>16</sup>

The limits we have set to that definition are doctrinal — orthodox Sunni Islam, self-defined *ijma* (consensus); geographic — Western and Central Asia; and historic — within a comprehensive religious culture, its institutions and thought, that as Gibb notes had largely defined itself in full by the 14th century; a culture in which "the religious institution" and "religious thought" could by no means be said to be exclusively defined or necessarily dominated by a juridical mode of thought.<sup>17</sup>

What can be said with certainty about Modern Islamic Political Theory is that it shares with traditional Islamic Consciousness a belief that the purpose of political life is defined by religion, not vice versa (that is, finally, what determines modern political thought to be "Islamic" and not "Arab Nationalist" or even "Muslim" in the communal sense of liberal democratic pluralist politics),<sup>18</sup> although this "belief" is a highly ethical, embattled conviction in modern thought in contrast to its easy participation in the metaphysical assumptions of traditional Islamic Consciousness.

The modern conviction is self-conscious and embattled precisely because the overall trend is so clearly to the contrary. The on-going secularization of the political and economic life of the Muslim peoples, as Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes, "is in total contrast to the Islamic conception, which has *sacralized* man's daily life including of course, his political and economic activities and institutions."<sup>19</sup>

Mircea Eliade conceives of *sacralization* as the axiom of all religious experience:

Whatever the historical context in which he is placed, *homo religiosus* always believes that there is an absolute reality, *the sacred*, which transcends this world but manifests itself in this world, thereby sanctifying it and making it real. He further believes that life has a sacred origin and that human existence realizes all of its potentialities in proportion as it is religious — that it participates in reality.

... Needless to say, there is nothing corresponding to this on the level of the profane experience life. For non-religious man, all vital experiences — whether sex or eating, work or play — have been desacralized. This means that all these physiological acts are deprived of spiritual significance...<sup>20</sup>

Frithjof Schuon, in his discussion of the theophanic phenomenon of consciousness is still more concise: "... to sacralize; it is to open the natural to the supernatural whence it proceeds ontologically; it is to make the natural element a means of supporting an awareness of the supernatural."<sup>21</sup>

Arthur Jeffery derives sacralization in Islam from *ahrama* which he translates as "to declare a thing sacred" in his discussion of the rites of *ihram* (translated as "putting oneself in the sacred state") that precede pilgrimage to Mecca,<sup>22</sup> and again applies the concept in his discussion of the most basic Islamic invocations, the *basmala* which he describes as being "freely used on all sorts of occasions by pious Muslims... as a phrase of sacralization."<sup>23</sup>

The thesis of this study is that *jihad* is the instrument of sacralization of the social-political order in Islam.

Part One of this study will first attempt to define the essence of *jihad* in traditional Islamic consciousness and then to survey the elaboration of its meaning in relevant Islamic institutions and thought through the pre-modern period (within the doctrinal, geographic and historic limits outlined above) to establish the thesis.

Part Two will review the understanding of *jihad* in Modern Islamic Political Theory in light of this thesis.

Part Three — the Case Study of the Life and Thought of Sheikh 'Izz-id-Din al-Qassam — will illustrate the relevance of the thesis to our comprehension of Sheikh 'Izz-id-Din's own understanding and actual undertaking of *jihad* and the reason and manner in which both his understanding and his undertaking has been so misconceived by his contemporaries.\*

## Part I

### Jihad and Traditional Islamic Consciousness

#### Definitions

According to the classical lexicons the *jihad* is of three kinds — struggling against a visible enemy, against the devil, and against the *nafs* (the lower or passionate soul or self), which are all included in the term as used in the following two versions from the Qur'an.<sup>24</sup>

\*See Islamic Quarterly: Volume XXIII (Number 2).

And strive for Allah with the striving which is His right.

Go forth, light armed and heavy armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah.

The movement in this definition is from the outward and most visible and occasional in time and space back to the inward and continuous which is the movement of all things Islamic.<sup>25</sup> As an example, worship of Allah is an outward and obligatory duty performed at fixed times and in a defined and visible manner (but even here requiring for efficacy an inward attitude) and simultaneously the very purpose of Man's existence in this world, acknowledged in the practice of *dhikr'illah* — the invocation of His Names at all legitimate times, places and events.<sup>26</sup>

This may outwardly be understood only as recommended formulae in conformity with pious convention and good manners to be rewarded in the hereafter; inwardly the Invocation sacralizes phenomena, as noted earlier, and with proper intention serves as a method for the attainment in this life of *ma'rifa* (intuitive knowledge) of God.

What this suggests is that the outward (and occasional) and the inward (and continuous) are not isolated levels or rigidly defined relationships but multiplicities of related and re-relating meanings, of which the Arabesque and the geometric method of Islamic design may be considered as visible metaphors, and which is expressed in the very complexity with which Allah defines His own Unity:

He is the First and the Last and the Outwardly Manifest and the Inwardly Hidden; and He is Knower of all things.<sup>27</sup>

It is in its most outward (and thus most apparent) and in its most obligatory (and thus, invariably, most occasional) *form* that *jihad* came to be used by the Muslims to generally signify the sacralization of combat — the *holy war* — particularly as understood in the use of the expression: *jihad fi sabil Allah* — fighting in the way of God, or for His sake, in the cause of Religion.<sup>28</sup>

And it is in this sense that *jihad* is most commonly used throughout the *Qur'an* and *hadith* — reports of the sayings and behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad, preserved by his Companions, transmitted in the collections and understood by Muslims as a sacred commentary upon the *Qur'an* itself. The customary practices of the Prophet and his Companions contained in the *hadith* constitute the *sunna* of the Prophet and his community — which, with the *Qur'an*, is the Sunni criterion for orthodoxy.

In the chronology of the *Qur'an*, divine permission to fight (*qital*) is first given to the Muslims in response to persecution:

Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged: and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory.<sup>29</sup>

and as a means to end discord and preserve the moral order threatened by the sedition of the unbelievers:

And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for the sedition [of the unbelievers] is worse than slaughter<sup>30</sup>

But there are limits in sacred combat, set by God and His Prophet and the Muslims are commanded not to transgress those limits:

Fight in Allah's path against those who fight you, but do not transgress, for Allah does not love transgressors.<sup>31</sup>

The limits included a strictly defensive posture in the vicinity of the Kaaba, where the Muslims could fight only if attacked, similar reservations about fighting during the sacred months, and precise conditions for allowing temporary safe conduct to certain classes of unbelievers, as well as more general, ethical limits to combat. But recourse to fighting for men at all times is acknowledged and commanded throughout the *Qur'an* in accounts of the earlier prophets as a barrier to the forces of corruption and to affirm the Truth:

And if Allah had not repelled some men by others the earth would have been corrupted. But Allah is the Lord of Kindness to (His) creatures.

For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the Name of Allah is oft mentioned, would surely have been pulled down . . .<sup>32</sup>

In this context the *jihad* is declared as an instrument for the establishment of an Islamic social order that differentiates between the popular idolatry of Arabia and a position within that social order for peoples possessing sacred scripture:

Fight them until there is no more seditious unbelief and religion is for Allah. If they desist in their unbelief there is no enmity, save against the wrong-doers.

That when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low.<sup>33</sup>

In these circumstances fighting is a binding, sacred duty on the Muslim though he dislike it, and the Prophet is commanded to exhort the Believers to fight,<sup>34</sup> which he does in declarations that leave little room for ambiguity as to the uses of *jihad* as the instrument for an Islamic social order.<sup>35</sup>

This sense of *jihad* as armed struggle for the sake of God also incorporates within the range of its meaning the concept of *shahid* — the Believer who dies

fighting in the way of God. Commonly translated as “martyr”, the word carries with it the original sense of *witness* — the *shahid* has testified (*shahada*) to his faith upon the battlefield; God, Who is, in His attributes, the source of all Witnessing (*Ash-Shahid* — The Witness), and His Angels bear witness to the *shahid's* extraordinary spiritual rewards; the *shahid* is promised he will witness God.<sup>36</sup>

The Believers are assured in the *Qur'an* that the *shahid* is among those to whom Allah has shown special favour; that those who are slain in the way of God live on in His care, and His Pardon and Mercy are far better for the *shahid* than all of the spiritual and material blessings to be acquired in this life.

The prerequisites and spiritual rewards of both *jihad* and martyrdom are elaborated upon in *hadith*. The *shahid* is he whose intention is pure — he fights and dies solely in Allah's way, not for pride or worldly profit. The *shahid* is the best among the Believers; he will not be touched by the fire. A day and a night engaged in *jihad* is better for the Believer than a month of fasting and prayer, for *jihad* (as a mode of exceptional worship) is more excellent than obligatory prayer.<sup>37</sup>

The *shahid* is spared both the punishment and the trial of the grave; he is the first to enter paradise where he is stationed closest to God. His good deeds continue to increase until the Day of Judgement. So honored is the *shahid* in Paradise that he alone of all men wishes to return to this world and be killed ten times more for the sake of the ecstatic Divine Illumination — the Beatific Vision that is his to witness — or, at another level, of comprehension, for a mankind that in its generality has rarely experienced or considered ecstasy except in its most directly physical mode — for the seventy-two dark-eyes maidens who will be his wives.<sup>38</sup>

In the limits to holy war mentioned earlier that were set either by God in the *Qur'an* or His Prophet in *hadith* are to be found the many elements — such as the requirement of a declaration of war and offer of terms, the prohibition of mutilation, avoidable destruction of civilian property and the killing of non-combatants or the slaying of enemy fighters who embrace Islam on the field of battle — that would be combined with conditions derived from the *Qur'an* and *hadith* that permit fighting, into a juridical doctrine of the *jihad*.

The formulation of this juridical doctrine would be the task of the *'ulama* in the earliest generations that followed the Prophet and his Companions, as part of their overall task to elaborate the *shari'a* — the comprehensive, eternal, divinely revealed Law, that (as we noted earlier) determines in Islam man's duties to God and to fellow man.

The sense of combat, of warfare, also adheres to the multiplicity of meaning within *jihad* in its more-than-occasional and generally non-violent

forms of struggle. This combative identity is particularly so in that dimension of *jihad* that is most distant from physical, armed struggle, which is most continuous and which is in effect a contemplative mode: *jihad* as spiritual warfare.

Thus the classic lexicons classify *mujahada* (fighting with the enemy) as an expression of both armed struggle against the unbelievers and waging war against the *nafs*, the carnal soul.<sup>39</sup> It is understood as such by the Companions who report the Prophet saying:

The *mujahid* is one who tries to struggle against his self (carnal soul).<sup>40</sup>

The relationship between these two dimensions of *jihad* is defined by the famous *hadith* which directly alludes to the movement from the outward and occasional to the inward and continuous when the Prophet, returning from a military expedition, declares: “We have come back from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*.”

The greater *jihad* is greater because it is more difficult, for according to *hadith*, “Your most hostile enemy is your *nafs*, enclosed between your two sides,”<sup>41</sup> and because as a continuous struggle it encompasses and affects the efficacy (which is always determined by intention and sincerity, a quality of the perfected soul) of the lesser *jihad*. Ibn Qaiyim al-Djawziya, the noted 13th century theologian, observed:

The *jihad* against the enemies of Allah with one's life is only a part of the struggle which a true servant of Allah carries on against his own self [*nafs*] for the sake of the Lord. This striving against the evil tendencies which have dominated his mind and heart is more important than fighting against the enemies in the outside world. It is in fact the basis on which the struggle in the path of Allah can be successfully launched.<sup>42</sup>

Just as the goal of the lesser *jihad* is to purify the social order of disbelief so the immediate objective of the greater *jihad* is to purify the spiritual heart, by struggle against those turbulent aspects of the soul which the 13th century mystic Najm ad-Din Razi defines as passion and anger. Not by annihilating what is present in the soul for a purpose, but by disciplining and transforming these attributes into a state of equilibrium, to be exercised only in accordance with the Divine Law.<sup>43</sup>

The method or “weapon” of the greater *jihad* is *dhikr* — simultaneously understood as the Remembrance of God and the Invocation of His Name. Qushayri, author of one of the classical manuals of *tasawwuf* describes the *dhikr* as a sword with which the *mujahid* — who has set out on the spiritual path and encountered difficulties — threatens his enemies, for God, Qushayri notes (in a paraphrase of a number of *ayat* from the *Qur'an*), “will protect him who remembers Him constantly in the moment of affliction and danger.”<sup>44</sup>

The same theme is echoed in the *Ihya ulum al-Din* by al-Ghazali, who



frequently compares *dhikr* to *jihad* and provides an extensive commentary on the Prophet's saying that whoever dies waging the greater *jihad* will share the rank of *shahid* with the martyrs of the lesser *jihad*. Both, according to al-Ghazali, have sealed their belief, severing all ties except to Allah by dying at the moment of sacred combat, and it is this blessed sealing state that assures them Paradise.<sup>45</sup>

Jalal al-Din Rumi and numerous other writers compare the first *shahada*, *la ilaha illa'Llah* which is also one of the formulas of *dhikr* most frequently recommended by the Prophet — to a sword, for it is this invocation which “slays the idol”, denying worldliness by denying any other object worthy of worship, and in its most profound sense denying the ultimate reality of anything apart from God.<sup>46</sup>

The great *jihad* is the first step on the Way to the intuitive knowledge of God; a Way that is based upon the promise made by God and reported by the Prophet:

My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have imposed upon him, and my servant continues to draw near to Me with freely given works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.

My earth hath not room for Me, neither hath my Heaven, but the Heart of My believing servant hath room for Me.<sup>47</sup>

When the sword of *dhikr* has disciplined the rebellious *nafs* and cleansed the spiritual heart at the center of the soul, then the heart will mirror the Divine aspect that resides within:

There is a polish for everything that takes away rust; and the polish of the Heart is the invocation of Allah.<sup>48</sup>

Thus the greater *jihad* removes “all obstacles which veil the Truth, and make it inaccessible.”<sup>49</sup>

Between armed struggle and the greater *jihad* is an intermediate zone of behaviour contributing definition to the meaning of *jihad*.

To approach that zone requires first reconsidering the fundamental encounter in Islam, which is between man and his Creator — the priority for consciousness of the meaning, duties and rewards of *jihad*, as in all other things Islamic, is personal or individual rather than collective. But the “rights” of the individual Believer in Islamic society are acquired by submitting to the obligatory practices and ethical norms contained in *shari'a* — in other words, acquired by the individual by entering into a divinely governed community, where the performance of divinely ordained duties by men within that community create those “spaces”, so to speak, which may be described as rights.<sup>50</sup>

The struggle to create a social and spiritual environment that will allow the individual Believer to fulfill the practices of *shari'a* and conform to its ethical norms is still another dimension to *jihad* based upon the Qur'anic imperative, *al-amru bil mar'uf wa'nahyu anil munkar* (“to enjoin the doing of what is right and to forbid the doing of what is wrong”) and when the *Qur'an* most directly expresses this imperative for the individual, it does so by addressing the community:

You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for (the good of) mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God.<sup>51</sup>

This appeal from individual to collective consciousness is stressed and elaborated upon in *hadith*:

By Him in Whose hand I repose! You must enjoin right and forbid wrong or else God will certainly send down chastisement upon you; then you will call to Him, but He will not respond to you.

If people see a wrongdoer but do not stay his hand, it is most likely that God will encompass them all with His punishment.

A community in the midst of which sins are being committed which could be, but are not corrected by it is most likely to be encompassed in its entirety by God's punishment.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast to the most apparent dimensions of *jihad* as the practice of armed struggle or the contemplative practice of spiritual struggle, the imperative of *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf* deploys *jihad* in an almost ambiguous middle ground. This less defined dimensions of struggle occupies a domain — the socio-political order of Islam itself — in which divergence between the effective and the ideal became so apparent not long after the Prophet's death that there was a bitter, violent contention among the Muslims over the content of *jihad* in this context. The understanding that emerges is a factor in defining Sunni orthodoxy.

In the same social domain as *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf* but without its potential for violent consequences, is the concept of vocation. This is suggested first by *jihad's* etymology, embracing painstaking and diligent labor as root on the one hand for the most demanding and restricted practice of legal scholarship: *ijtihad*, to form an independent opinion in *shari'a* law respecting a doubtful and difficult point by the method of analogy to the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*;<sup>53</sup> and on the other hand, to the broadest exertion of human energy and effort — *jahud* — working difficult or hard land.<sup>54</sup>

The vocational sense of *jihad* is also suggested in the phrase with which the Prophet turns away a man who volunteers for a military expedition, but whose parents rely on him as their sole support: “*fa-fihima fa-jahid*” (“exert yourself on their behalf”).<sup>55</sup> The performance of work for the support of God's creatures dependent upon the Believer constitutes *jihad*. The

traditionalists classify both this *hadith* and still another, that striving for perfecting in performing one's work is a form of worship, under the general heading of *jihad*, which is also expressed in the *hadith*: "God loves that when any one of you does a job, he does it perfectly."<sup>56</sup>

Thus al-Ghazali, in his commentary on the former *hadith*, can argue that those who follow the Qur'anic verse, "Every living creature's support comes from God," without comprehending its meaning in relation to the verse, "Man obtains nothing except by striving," place stress solely upon Allah's Beneficence and ignore His Justice, thereby approximating to Unbelief.<sup>57</sup> The aim here, as in the immediate objective of the greater *jihad*, is for man to discipline the soul as he engages the world and thereby achieve equilibrium.

This understanding of *jihad* as vocation is also derived from the Qur'anic concept of man's potential as *khalifa* (viceregent), God's deputy on earth by inheritance from Adam, with a spiritual capacity to mirror God's divine attributes or Names — in the sense that man's true idea of perfection in his work, or of beauty in his work, is a reflection of the Perfection and Beauty of God.<sup>58</sup> The exercise of vocation in all of these senses is a *jihad* to *sacralize* one's own portion of the world.

As the practice of *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf* occupies a middle ground — within what we will call the *social jihad* — between armed struggle and spiritual struggle but suggests for all its ambiguity a movement towards outward, occasional action that is highly combative in tone and intent if not necessarily in deed, so *jihad* as vocation points from its position within the social *jihad* towards the contemplative techniques and concerns of the continuous, inward spiritual *jihad*.

Yet it is in this very domain that the Prophet acknowledges his own combative mission: "Every prophet has his vocation and my vocation is *jihad*."<sup>59</sup> The earliest biographies of the Prophet, written but one generation removed, were called *kitab al-maghazi*, Book of Military Expeditions, and the enduring term, from the 8th century, for the Prophet's biography — *sira* — was adopted by scholars and jurists in its plural form — *siyar* — as a technical heading for the early collections of hadiths or *fikr* bearing on warfare.<sup>60</sup>

The image of combat penetrates all dimensions, from the most inward to the most outward: as *mujahada*, spiritual warfare against the turbulent soul; as *jahada*, the striving for perfection of one's soul by striving to perfect one's work; as *al-amr bi'l ma'ruf*, the discerning intellect as the sword of Islamic ethics; and as *qital fi sabil-illah*, fighting in the way of God, in a manner made known to the Believer by Revelation and the *sunna* of the Prophet.

These dimensions are somewhat approximated by the four different ways acknowledged by the jurists in which the Believer may fulfill the obligation to engage in *jihad*: by his heart, his tongue, his hands, and his sword.<sup>61</sup>

In each dimension *jihad* opposes disequilibrium and the combativeness of the Muslim (by example of the Prophet) engaged in *jihad* is transfigured into a state of repose by his certainty of divine determination and reward:

And those who fight for the cause of God, their works He will not suffer to miscarry. He will guide them and bring their hearts to peace and lead them into Paradise which He has made known to them.<sup>62</sup>

Thus Schuon, after Qushayri, suggests that "the practice of Islam at whatever level means to be at rest in effort," or, rephrased more pointedly, at peace in *jihad*.<sup>63</sup>

The two farther dimensions of *jihad* — the combative and the contemplative — are more than complementary; each dimension contains within itself an aspect of the other. The *mujahid* of the armed struggle seeks the promise of the Beatific Vision in the Hereafter by fulfilling his duties to the Law (*shari'a*) brought by the Prophet; the *mujahid* of the spiritual struggle seeks knowledge of the Divine Presence in this life by following the Way (*tariqa*) of the Prophet. Both are purified through combat in the sense required by their respective dimensions; both have contemplative goals. The equilibrium suggested by this model of *jihad* conforms to the central doctrine of Islam — *at-tawhid* — the Unity or Oneness of God.

The forces that *jihad* opposes are the forces of disequilibrium, be they at the frontiers or beyond the boundaries of the Islamic community, within the community in the form of tyranny, crime, vice, corruption (in the broadest sense), heresy, or rebellion, or within the soul. All of these combat zones, so to speak, are suggested in the canonic texts — the *Qur'an*, *hadith*, *tafsir*, and the four *madhahib* of orthodox Sunni Islam.<sup>64</sup>

Since *jihad* is a reactive mode, it is disequilibrium and crisis that has determined the reference points wherein definitions of *jihad* were elaborated upon within traditional Islamic Consciousness.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. For the most comprehensive sense of the verb: "He strove, labored, toiled; exerted himself; or his power, efforts, endeavours, ability; employed himself vigorously, strenuously, laboriously, diligently, studiously, secularly, earnestly, with energy; was diligent, studious, took extraordinary pains." *Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon*, Vol. II (1865), p. 473.

2. E. Tyan, "djihad", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., Vol. II (1965), pp. 538-540; Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1955), pp. 51-54.

3. See as recent an example as Samuel M. Zwerner, "The Sword of Muhammad and Ali," *Moslem World*, XXI (April, 1931), pp. 109-121. See Moulavi Cheragh Ali, *A Critical Exposition of the Popular Jihad* (Karachi: Karimsons, 1977, reprint of the original 1885 Calcutta edition), for an anthology-like collection of extracts from the work of Orientalists and/or missionaries hostile to Islam.

4. In addition to the above cited work of Cheragh Ali, see also the chapter on *jihad* in Muhammed Ali, *The Religion of Islam* (Cairo: The Arab Writer Publishers and Printers, n.d.), pp. 545-599; Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam* (London: Methuen, 1965), reprint of the 1922 edition.

As for Islam as revolutionary ideology, see Ali Shari'ati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar, trans. (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979). Shari'ati's work is not surveyed in this study since his references are almost entirely Shia, but

- his treatment of Islam as revolutionary ideology is the most thought out, transformational effort available in English to date. Given Shari'ati's popularity with Iran's "revolutionary Islamic youth" in the decade preceding the Iranian Revolution, his work is of exceptional historic significance. On the other hand it could also be argued that Shari'ati's uses of an Islamic technical vocabulary and Islamic subject material does not justify classifying his Fanonist neo-Marxist thought as Islamic.
5. Yusuf Ibhish lectures on Islamic Political Thought, American University of Beirut. Syeed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), pp. 29-33, 36-38 [hereafter referred to as *Ideals*].
  6. Ross E. Dunn, *Resistance in the Desert* (London: Crown Helm Ltd., 1977); John S. Habib, *Ibn Sa'ud's Warriors of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978); B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in 19th century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
  7. Muhsin Mahdi, "Alfarabi", in L. Strauss and J. Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1972), pp. 196-197.
  8. Leo Strauss, "Introduction", in L. Strauss and J. Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy*, p. 1.
  9. Ernest L. Fortin, "St. Thomas Aquinas", *ibid.*, p. 226.
  10. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1976), reprint of 1964 Harvard University Press edition, pp. 49-51.
  11. Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1966); "International Law", in M. Khadduri and H. J. Liebesny, eds., *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 1955), I, pp. 349-372; Muhammed Hamidullah, *Muslim Conduct of State* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1945).
  12. Rudolf Peters, ed. and trans., *Jihad in Medieval and Modern Islam*, "Nisaba Series" (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).
  13. H. A. R. Gibb, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of the Caliphate", in S. J. Shaw and W. R. Polk, eds., *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 151-165; Yusuf Ibhish, *The Political Doctrine of al-Baqillani* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1966), pp. 42-53.
  14. Muhammad Aziz Ahmed, "The Nature of Islamic Political Theory", *Islamic Culture*, XVII (January, 1943), p. 39.
  15. Maurice Natanson, *The Journeying Self: A Study in Philosophy and Social Role* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1970), p. 39.
  16. Donald M. Lowe, "Intentionality and the Method of History" in M. Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences*, II (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 103.
  17. H. A. R. Gibb, "Structure of Religious Thought", in Shaw and Polk, eds., *Studies...*, pp. 208-218; "An Interpretation of Islamic History", *ibid.*, pp. 27-32.
  18. Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 2-3.
  19. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longmans, 1975), p. 21 [italics mine].
  20. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, W. R. Trask, trans. (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1959), pp. 202, 168. For additional uses of the concept of sacralization (and desacralization) by Eliades, see pp. 13-14, 23, 167, 193, and 203. Equally applicable in the analysis of religious-political thought and institutions is Jacob Neusner, "From Theology to Ideology: the Transmutation of Judaism in Modern Terms," in Kalman H. Silvert, ed., *Churches and States: the Religious Institution and Modernization* (New York: American University Field Service, Inc., 1967), pp. 13-48. Less applicable is Gustav Von Grunbaum's use of sacralization in his discussion of the "desacralized period of Fatimid rule", in "The Nature of the Fatimid Achievement", *Colloque international sur l'Histoire du Caire* (Cairo: Ministry of Culture, 1972), p. 210.
  21. Frithjof Schuon, "Aspects of the Theophanic Phenomenon of Consciousness", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, XII (Winter/Spring, 1978), p. 3.
  22. Arthur Jellery, ed., and trans., *A Reader on Islam* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), p. 497.
  23. *Ibid.*, p. 556. The *basmala* is the phrase, *bismillah-in-rahman-in-rahim*, "In the Name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Compassionate." The use of this phrase as an act of piety before proceeding with any act is called *tasbeeh*.
  24. Lane's *Lexicon*, II, p. 473; Imam Abu-l-Qasim al-Raghib al-Ishani, *al-Mufradat fi gharib al-Qur'an*, quoted in Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zahra, "The Jihad (Striving)", *The Fourth Conference of the Academies of Islamic Research* (Cairo: al-Azhar, 1970), p. 49. Qur'an XXII:78; IX:42. Translations of the meaning of the Qur'an are based upon English language interpretations by Pickthall, Ali, Asad, Arberry and Lewis with reference to Lane's *Lexicon* and the *tafsir* of al-Qurtobi who reports the opinions of the earliest *tafsir* (al-Tabari, Ibn Abbas, etc.) along with his own.
  25. Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 58-65.
  26. Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 62-65.
  27. Qur'an, LVII:3.
  28. Lane's *Lexicon*, II, pp. 473-474.
  29. *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1961 ed., s.v. "Hadith", "al-Kuran", "Sunna". [Hereafter referred to as *SEI*].
  30. Qur'an, II:19.
  31. Qur'an, II:190.
  32. Qur'an II:251. (The reference is to Nabi Dawud (David) slaying Goliath and the hesitation of the Banu Israel, after Nabi Musa (Moses), to fight *sabulillah*; Qur'an XII:40.

33. Qur'an, II:193; IX:5; IX:29.
34. Qur'an, II:126; VIII:65-66.
35. *Sahih al-Bukhari*, M. M. Khan, trans., 10 vols. (Medina: Islamic University, 1971), Book IV, Chapters 93-102.
36. Lane's *Lexicon*, IV, p. 1610; *SEI*, s.v. "Shahid". See also Qur'an IV:69; 46:4-6; 3:161.
37. At-Tabrizi, ed., *Mishkat al-masabih*, J. Robson, trans., 4 vols. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), Bk. XXIX, Ch. I.
38. *Mishkat*, XVIII, Ch. I. For an Islamic perspective on the relationship between conjugal love and contemplation see Ibn 'Arabi, T. Burckhardt and A. Culme-Syemour, translators, *The Wisdom of the Prophets, Fusus al-Hikam* (Gloucestershire, England: Beshara Publications, 1975), pp. 116-125.
39. Lane's *Lexicon*, II, p. 473.
40. Tirmidhi cited in A. H. Silfiqi, "Jihad in Islam: a Comprehensive View", *Criterion*, Part I, III (November-December, 1968), p. 28.
41. *Hadith* cited by the 13th century mystic Najam ad-Din Razi in *Mitsad al-'ibad* and translated in "From the Heritage of Islamic Literature: 'Jihad'", *Al-Bayan* (June, 1976), p. 15.
42. Ibn Qayyim, cited in Siddiqi, "Jihad in Islam", pp. 28-29.
43. Razi, "Heritage", pp. 15-16. For full re-statement of the traditional view, also see Sheikh Abdul Wahab Yahya's discussion, published as René Guénon, *Symbolism of the Cross*, A. MacNab, trans. (London: Luzac & Co., 1975), pp. 40-45.
44. Qur'an VII:56; VII:45; XIII:28; Qushayri cited in Anne-marie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 167.
45. Al-Ghazali, "The Book of Invocation", *Ihya ulum al-Din*, translated by Kojiro Nakamura as *Ghazali on Prayer* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1973), pp. 55-59.
46. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 136-138; 168.
47. These are *hadith qudsi* — the speech of God reported by the Prophet in the manner of these "holy traditions". Al-Bukhari, *Mishkat*, IX, Ch. II. Both hadiths also appear in Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 59, 49.
48. Al-Bayhaqi, *Mishkat*, IX, Ch. II.
49. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: Longmans, 1975), p. 73. For further discussion of the method see Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, D. M. Matheson, trans., (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), Ch. 4, and Nasr, *Ideals*, Ch. 5.
50. F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, pp. 13-18; H. A. R. Gibb, "Islam", *Concise Encyclopaedia of World Religions*.
51. Qur'an, III:110.
52. Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud, *Mishkat*, XXVII, Ch. XXII.
53. Lane's *Lexicon*, II, p. 473.
54. Lane's *Lexicon*, II, p. 474.
55. Al-Bukhari and Muslim, *Mishkat*, XVIII, Ch. I.
56. Al-Bayhaqi cited by Muhammed Umar Chapra in "Objectives of the Islamic Economic Order", in *Islam: Its Meanings and Message*, K. Ahmed and S. Azzam, eds. (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1975), p. 185.
57. Al-Ghazali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, C. Field, trans. (Lahore: Sh. Muhammed Ashraf, 1964), p. 45.
58. Qur'an, II:29-35; Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 18-19.
59. Which is also a portion of the *hadith*: "My fortune is under the shadow of my spear." Al-Bukhari cited in Elie Adib Salem, *Political Theory and Institutions of the Khawarij* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 82.
60. Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations*, pp. 38-41; *SEI*, s.v., "Sira".
61. Hamidullah, *Conduct*, p. 169.
62. Qur'an, XLVII:4-6.
63. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, p. 53.
64. The four Sunni schools of Jurisprudence; see *SEI*, s.v., "fikh".

## ISLAMIC TRADITIONS AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT: CONFRONTATION OR COOPERATION?

LOIS LAMYA' AL FARUQI\*

**W**HETHER living in the Middle East or Africa, in Central Asia, in the Indian subcontinent, in Southeast Asia, or in Europe and the Americas, Muslim women tend to view the feminist movement with some apprehension. Although there are some features of the feminist cause with which we as Muslims would wish to join hands, other features generate our disappointment and even opposition. There is therefore no simple or "pat" answer to the question of the future cooperation or competition which feminism may meet in an Islamic environment.

There are however a number of social, psychological and economic traditions which govern the thinking of most Muslims and which are particularly affective of woman's status and role in Islamic society. Understanding these can help us understand the issues which affect male/female status and roles, and how we should react to movements which seek to improve the situation of women in any of the countries where Muslims live.

### PART I ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

#### a. *The Extended Family System*

One of the Islamic traditions which will affect the way in which Muslim women respond to feminist ideas is the advocacy in Islamic culture of an extended rather than a nuclear family system. Some Muslim families are "residentially extended"; that is, their members live communally with three or more generations of relatives (grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts and their offspring) in a single building or compound. Even where this residential version of the extended family is not possible or adhered to, family connections reaching far beyond the nuclear unit are evident in strong psychological, social, economic and even political ties. Mutual supports and responsibilities affecting these larger consanguine groups are not just considered desirable, but they are made legally incumbent on members of the society by Islamic law. The Holy Qur'an itself exhorts to

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extended family solidarity; in addition it specifies the extent of such responsibilities and contains prescriptive measures for inheritance, support and other close interdependencies within the extended family.<sup>1</sup>

Our Islamic traditions also prescribe a much stronger participation of the family in the contracting and preservation of marriages. While most Western feminists would decry family participation or arranged marriage as a negative influence because of its apparent restriction of individualistic freedom and responsibility, as Muslims we would argue that such participation is advantageous for both individuals and groups within the society. Not only does it ensure marriages based on sounder principles than physical attraction and sexual infatuation, but it provides other safeguards for successful marital continuity. Members of the family provide diverse companionship as well as ready sources of advice and sympathy for the newly married as they adjust to each others' ways. One party of the marriage cannot easily pursue an eccentric course at the expense of the spouse since such behaviour would rally opposition from the larger group. Quarrels are never so devastating to the marriage bond since other adult family members act as mediators and provide alternative sources of companionship and counsel following disagreements. The problems of parenting and generational incompatibility are also alleviated, and singles clubs and dating bureaus would be unnecessary props for social interaction. There is no need in the extended family for children of working parents to be unguarded, unattended or inadequately loved and socialized; for the extended family home is never empty. There is therefore no feeling of guilt which the working parent often feels in a nuclear or single-parent organization. Tragedy, even divorce, is not so debilitating to either adults or children; for the larger social unit absorbs the residual numbers with much greater ease than a nuclear family organization can ever provide.

The move away from the cohesiveness which the family formerly enjoyed in Western society, the rise of usually smaller alternative family styles, and the accompanying rise in individualism which many feminists advocate or at least practice, are at odds with these deep-rooted Islamic customs and traditions. If feminism in the Muslim world chooses to espouse the Western family models, it should and would certainly be strongly challenged by Muslim women's groups and by Islamic society as a whole.

#### b. *Individualism vs. the Larger Organization*

The traditional support of the large and intricately interrelated family organization is correlative to another Islamic tradition which seems to run counter to recent Western trends and to feminist ideology. Islam and Muslim women generally advocate moulding of individual goals and interests to accord with the welfare of the larger group and its members.

Instead of holding the goals of the individual supreme, Islam instills in the adherent a sense of his/her place within the family and of a responsibility to that group. This is not perceived or experienced by Muslims as repression of the individual. Other traditions which will be discussed later guarantee his/her legal personality, and the family member is constantly experiencing reciprocal benefits from those ties which bind to the group. Feminism, therefore, would not be espoused by Muslim women as a goal to be pursued without regard for the relation of the female to the other members of her family. The Muslim woman regards her goals as necessitating a balance with, or even subordination to, those of the family group. The rampant individualism often experienced in contemporary life, that which treats the goals of the individual in isolation from other factors, or as utterly supreme, runs against a deep Islamic commitment to social interdependence.

*c. Differentiation of Sex Roles*

A third Islamic tradition which affects the future of any feminist movement in an Islamic environment is that specifying a differentiation of male and female roles and responsibilities in society. Feminism, as represented in Western society, has generally denied any such differentiation and has demanded a move toward a unisex society in order to achieve equal rights for women. By "unisex society", I mean one in which a single set of sex roles and concerns are given preference and esteem by both sexes, and are pursued by all members of the society regardless of sex and age differentials. In the case of Western feminism, the preferred goals have been those traditionally fulfilled by the male members of society. The roles of providing financial support, of success in career, and of decision making have been given overwhelming respect and concern while those dealing with domestic matters, with child care, with aesthetic and psychological refreshment, with social interrelationships, were devalued and even despised. Both men and women have been forced into a single mould which is perhaps more restrictive, rigid and coercive than that which formerly assigned men to one type of role and women to another.

This is a new brand of male chauvinism with which Islamic traditions cannot conform. Islam instead maintains that both types of roles are equally deserving of pursuit and respect, and has judged that, when accompanied by the equity demanded by the religion, a division of labour along sex lines is generally beneficial to all members of the society.

This might be regarded by the feminist as opening the door to discrimination, but as Muslims we regard Islamic traditions as standing clearly and unequivocally for the support of male-female equity. In the Qur'an, no difference whatever is made between the sexes in relation to God. "For men

who submit (to God) and for women who submit (to God), for believing men and believing women, for devout men and devout women, for truthful men and truthful women, for steadfast men and steadfast women, for humble men and humble women, for charitable men and charitable women, for men who fast and women who fast, for men who guard their chastity and women who guard, for men who remember God much and for women who remember — for them God has prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward" (Qur'an 33:35). "Whosoever performs good deeds, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall surely make him live a good life and We will certainly reward them for the best of what they did" (Qur'an 16:97).<sup>2</sup>

It is only in relation to each other and society that a difference is made — a difference of role or function. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man, but they are not necessarily identical with them. Equality and identity are two different things, Islamic traditions maintain — the former desirable, the latter not. Men and women should therefore be complementary to each other in a multi-function organization rather than competitive with each other in a uni-function society.

The equality demanded by Islamic traditions must, however, be seen in its larger context if it is to be understood properly. Since Muslims regard a differentiation of sexual roles to be natural and desirable in the majority of cases, the economic responsibilities of male and female members differ to provide a balance for the physical differences between men and women and for the greater responsibility which women carry in the reproductive and rearing activities so necessary to the well-being of the society. To maintain, therefore, that the men of the family are responsible for providing economically for the women or that women are not equally responsible, is not a dislocation or denial of sexual equity. It is instead a duty to be fulfilled by men as compensation for another responsibility which involves the special ability of women. Likewise the different inheritance rate for males and females,<sup>3</sup> which is so often cited as an example of discrimination against women, must not be seen as an isolated prescription. It is but one part of a comprehensive system in which women carry no legal responsibility to support other members of the family, but in which men are bound by law as well as custom to provide for all their female relatives.

Does this mean that Islamic traditions necessarily prescribe maintaining the *status quo* in the Islamic societies that exist today? The answer is a definite "No." Many thinking Muslims — both men and women — would agree that their societies do not fulfill the Islamic ideals and traditions laid down in the Qur'an and reinforced by the example and directives of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). It is reported in the Qur'an and from history that women not only expressed their opinions freely in the Prophet's presence, but also argued and participated in serious discussions with the Prophet

himself and with other Muslim leaders of the time (Qur'an 58:1); Muslim women are known to have even stood in opposition to certain caliphs, who later accepted the sound arguments of those women. A specific example took place during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al Khattab.<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an reproached those who believed woman to be inferior to men (16:57-59) and repeatedly gives expression to the need for treating men and women with equity (2:228, 231; 4:19, etc.). Therefore, if Muslim women experience discrimination in any place or time, they do not and should not lay the blame on Islam, but on the un-Islamic nature of their societies and the failure of Muslims to fulfill its directives.

*d. Separate Legal Status for Women*

A fourth Islamic tradition affecting the future of feminism in Muslim societies is the separate legal status for women which is demanded by the Qur'an and the *shari'ah*. Every Muslim individual, whether male or female, retains a separate identity from cradle to grave. This separate legal personality prescribes for every woman the right to contract, to conduct business, to earn and possess property independently. Marriage has no effect on her legal status, her property, her earnings — or even on her name. If she commits any civil offense, her penalty is no less or no more than a man's in a similar case (Qur'an 5:38; 24:2). If she is wronged or harmed, she is entitled to compensation just like a man (4:92-93; see also Mustafa al Siba'i 1976:38; Darwazah n.d.:78). The feminist demand for separate legal status for women is therefore one that is equally espoused by Islamic traditions.

*e. Polygyny*

Although the taking of plural wives by a man is commonly called polygamy, the more correct sociological designation is polygyny. This institution is probably the Islamic tradition most misunderstood and vehemently condemned by non-Muslims. It is one which the Hollywood stereotypes "play upon" in their ridicule of Islamic society. The first image conjured up in the mind of the Westerner when the subject of Islam and marriage is approached is that of a religion which advocates the sexual indulgence of the male members of the society and the subjugation of its females through this institution.

Islamic tradition does indeed allow a man to marry more than one woman at a time. This leniency is even established by the Qur'an (4:3).<sup>5</sup> But the use and perception of that institution is far from the Hollywood stereotype. Polygyny is certainly not imposed by Islam; nor is it a universal practice. It is instead regarded as the exception to the norm of monogamy, and its exercise is strongly controlled by social pressures.<sup>6</sup> If utilized by

Muslim men to facilitate or condone sexual promiscuity, it is no less Islamically condemnable than serial polygyny and adultery, and no less detrimental to the society. Muslims view polygyny as an institution which is to be called into use only under extraordinary circumstances. As such, it has not been generally regarded by Muslim women as a threat. Attempts by the feminist movement to focus on eradication of this institution in order to improve the status of women would therefore meet with little sympathy or support.

## II DIRECTIVES FOR THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN AN ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENT

What can be learned about the future compatibility or incongruity of feminism in a Muslim environment from these facts about Islamic traditions? Are there any general principles to be gained, any directives to be taken, by those who work for women's rights and human rights in the world?

*a. Intercultural Incompatibility of Western Feminism*

The first and foremost principle would seem to be that many of the goals of feminism as conceived in Western society are not necessarily relevant or exportable across cultural boundaries. Feminism as a Western movement originated in England during the 18th century and had as one of its main goals the eradication of legal disabilities imposed upon women by English common law. These laws were especially discriminatory of married women. They derived in part from Biblical sources (e.g., the idea of man and woman becoming "one flesh", and the attribution of an inferior and even evil nature to Eve and all her female descendants) and in part from feudal customs (e.g., the importance of carrying and supplying arms for battle and the concomitant devaluation of the female contributions to society). The Industrial Revolution and its need for women's contribution to the work force brought strength to the feminist movement and helped its advocates gradually break down most of those discriminatory laws.

Since the history and heritage of the Muslim peoples has been radically different from that of Western Europe and America, the feminism which would appeal to Muslim women and to the society generally must be correspondingly different. Those legal rights which Western women sought in reform of English common law were already granted to Muslim women in the 7th century. Such a struggle therefore holds little interest for the Muslim woman. In addition, it would be useless to try to interest us in ideas or reforms that run in diametrical opposition to those traditions which form an important part of our cultural and religious heritage. There has been a

good deal of opposition to any changes in Muslim personal status laws since these embody and reinforce the very traditions which we have been discussing. In other words, if feminism is to succeed in an Islamic environment, it must be an indigenous form of feminism, rather than one conceived and nurtured in an alien environment with different problems and different solutions and goals.

*b. The Form of an Islamic Feminism*

If the goals of Western feminism are not viable for Muslim women, what form should a feminist movement take to ensure success?

Above all, the movement must recognize that, whereas in the West, the mainstream of the women's movement has viewed religion as one of the chief enemies of its progress and well-being, Muslim women view the teachings of Islam as their best friend and supporter. The prescriptions that are found in the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) are regarded as the ideal to which contemporary women wish to return. As far as Muslim women are concerned, the source of any difficulties experienced today is not Islam and its traditions, but certain alien ideological intrusions on our societies, ignorance and distortion of the true Islam, or exploitation by individuals within the society. It is a lack of an appreciation for this fact that caused such misunderstanding and mutual distress when women's movement representatives from the West visited Iran both before and after the Islamic Revolution.

Secondly, any feminism which is to succeed in an Islamic environment must be one which does not work chauvinistically for women's interests alone. Islamic traditions would dictate that women's progress be achieved in tandem with the wider struggle to benefit all members of the society. The good of the group or totality is always more crucial than the good of any one sector of the society. In fact, the society is seen as an organic whole in which the welfare of each member or organ is necessary for the health and well being of every other part. Disadvantageous circumstances of women therefore should always be countered in conjunction with attempts to alleviate those factors which adversely affect men and other segments of the society.

Thirdly, Islam is an ideology which influences much more than the ritual life of a people. It is equally affective of their social, political, economic, psychological and aesthetic life. "Din," which is usually regarded as an equivalent for the English term "religion," is a concept which includes, in addition to those ideas and practices customarily associated in our minds with religion, a wide spectrum of practices and ideas which affect almost every aspect of the daily life of the Muslim individual. Islam and Islamic traditions therefore are seen today by many Muslims as the main source of

cohesiveness for nurturing an identity and stability to confront intruding alien influences and the cooperation needed to solve their numerous contemporary problems. To fail to note this fact, or to fail to be fully appreciative of its importance for the average Muslim — whether male or female — would be to commit any movement advocating improvement of women's position in Islamic lands to certain failure. It is only through establishing that identity and stability that self-respect can be achieved and a more healthy climate for both Muslim men and Muslim women will emerge.

NOTES

1. For example, see Qur'an 2:177; 4:7-12, 176; 8:41; 16:90; 17:26; 24:22.
2. See also Qur'an 2:195; 4:124, 32; 9:71-71.
3. "God (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a proportion equal to that of two females. . ." (Qur'an 4:11).
4. Kamal 'Awn 1955:129.
5. "... Marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice."
6. It should be remembered that any woman who wants her marriage to remain monogamous can provide for this condition under Islamic law.

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## ISLAM AND EDUCATION

MIKAIL OLASUPO ADELEYE\*

ACCORDING to Michael West's Dictionary, to educate means to teach; to cause to have knowledge, good character and manners, and the capacity to make a living.<sup>1</sup> Islam encourages and places importance on both education (*Ta'lim*) and knowledge, which is known as *Ilm* in Arabic. Both are integral parts of the religion of Islam. Islam does not only encourage believers to acquire a deep knowledge of their religion and general intelligence; it teaches them also to have good behaviour (*'Ibadat*) towards God and to their fellow men. These principles are established in the Holy Qur'an and in the Traditions (*Ahadith*) of the Prophet, which supplement the Holy Qur'an.

The importance that is attached to learning and education or the acquisition of knowledge in Islam will become apparent when we examine the call of the Prophet Muhammad to the prophethood. The very first verse of the revelation begins with the vital word, *Iqra*, meaning read or recite:

"Read in the name of thy Lord,  
Who created man from a clot of blood,  
Read and thy Lord is the most bounteous,  
He taught by the pen,  
He taught man that which he knew not". (Qur'an 9 1-5)

It is clear that the emphasis on learning and knowledge in Islam is great. The Holy Qur'an states clearly that the Prophet Muhammad was urged to pray for the increase of knowledge: ". . . . . and say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge" — Qur'an 20: 114, (Surat Taha). The advancement of this knowledge was expanded by the Holy Qur'an, the contents of which are God's own words, which are uncreated.<sup>2</sup> Among those to whom the Prophet recited the revelations were special memorisers, *Huffaz*, who committed them to memory, while others recorded them on leaves, parchment, palm stems, leather or the skins of animals and tablets of clean white stone.

Both learning and knowledge are of great importance in Islam. This was fully demonstrated by the early Muslims at the end of the battle of Badr,

when the Meccan captives of the battle who could not pay the ransom were offered a conditional release.<sup>3</sup> Each of them who was able to read and write was to teach ten believers how to read and write.

The Prophet himself said much about knowledge: "The prophets leave knowledge as their inheritance. The learned ones inherit this great fortune", (transmitted by Bukhari).

In order to stir the Muslims to fill themselves with the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet had the following to say: "Anyone who has nothing of the Qur'an within him is like a ruined house" (reported by Ibn Abbas and transmitted by Tirmidhi).

In order to persuade Muslims to search for intellectual progress, and to encourage learning and the acquisition of knowledge, the Prophet said: "Search for knowledge though it be in China"<sup>4</sup> (reported by Anas and transmitted by Ahmad).

God wants every believer to be knowledgeable in the religion, to have wisdom and to possess deep intellectual knowledge. This is why He sent the Prophet to mankind: "Even as we have sent among you an apostle from among you to recite unto you Our revelations and cause you to grow, and teach you the Scripture and wisdom, and teach you that which you know not" — (Qur'an 2:151). It is common knowledge that it is a duty of a Muslim to teach the elements of the religion to his children from early youth. The idea is based on the Qur'an (2:151) as stated in the above. The Prophet Muhammad was the best example of a teacher. He taught his followers how to observe and practise the tenets of Islam. His example became the *Sunnah*, to be meticulously followed by his followers.<sup>5</sup>

The Prophet Muhammad emphasised the vital importance of knowledge and learning by saying, "The men of knowledge, (*'Ulama*) are the inheritors of the Prophets", (transmitted by Bukhari). He added that, "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman." In order to encourage Muslim men and women to go in search of knowledge he also said: "He who goes forth in search of knowledge is in the way of Allah till he returns", (transmitted by Tirmidhi).

To show that an example is better than a thousand precepts, missionaries were sent out to the different parts of Arabia during the lifetime of the Prophet. These missionaries taught the doctrinal principles of Islam to the newly converted Muslims. The second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab encouraged the immediate companions of the Prophet to migrate to the newly founded centres of Kufah and Basrah, both in Iraq. These companions in turn acted as teachers and based their activities on the study of the Holy Qur'an and the Ahadith.

It is important to say here that the study of the Qur'an continued during his successors' time also. Their studies include subjects relating to the holy

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book, such as *Tafsir*, and discussions on particular verses or chapters of the Holy Qur'an as to when and where they were revealed. In addition the correct reading and pronunciation of the words was obligatory for a real understanding of the Qur'an. This was why it became expedient to have authorised reciters of the Holy Qur'an to teach the correct recitation (*al-Tajwid*) of the text.<sup>6</sup>

This led to the delivering of sermons on different religious matters in the holy mosque of the Prophet in Medina. At the same time, special sermons were delivered in Mecca by a well known exegetist, Abd Allah b. Abbas. Sermons were also delivered in both Kufah and Basrah during the time by Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and Hassan al-Basri respectively.<sup>7</sup>

It is vital to add here that with the conquest of regions such as Syria, Jordan and Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Eastern Persia, India, Central Asia, Spain and North Africa there was a real influx of non-Arabs into Islam. In order for them to understand the text of the Holy Qur'an, there was a need for them to study the language. This provided a reason to systemise Arabic Grammar. Al-Khalil b. Ahmad, who died in 170 A.H. or 786 A.D., became prominent because he compiled the first Arabic dictionary known as *Kitab-al-Ayn*. His own pupil, who was a Persian, also composed the first systematic book that deals carefully with the Arabic language and grammar. This in turn aided the study of philosophy and lexicography (*Jami'u al-Qawamis*).

It remains for me to add here that these two ancillary sciences led to a concept of knowledge (*Ilm*) which by then applied basically to the studies of the Holy Qur'an and the Ahadith of the Prophet. It later developed to include the study of the Muslim Law, *Fiqh*. Islamic education, which was basically concerned with religious tradition, developed gradually to include the sciences of the past times (*'Ulum al-Awa'il*). The earliest Muslims therefore did not only have a deep knowledge of Islam, but also of the sciences.

Islam is said to be a way of life. This is why it does not leave any aspect of life untouched. Every Muslim is taught to know:

What to eat and what not to eat — Qur'an 2:3-6

What to drink and how to drink — Qur'an 5:90-91

How a Muslim should dress — Qur'an 74:3-5

The general behaviour recommended for a Muslim — Qur'an 16:43, 23:1-11

How to bathe and the reasons for bathing — Qur'an 4:43

It is indeed apparent that a religion that teaches how to do all these things provides a basis for education and learning.

Among the early Muslims, learned men were given recognition, reputation and patronage by the state. Many scholars refused to be confined. They refused high posts such as in the Judicial service, because they were deeply interested in learning, teaching and in research work. For example, Caliph Harun al-Rashid asked Imam Malik b. Anas, a great

teacher, to come to his palace to teach *al-Mawatta*<sup>8</sup> to his children. He refused the offer on the grounds that: "It is people who go to seek knowledge, but knowledge does not go after the seekers". On this the Caliph realised his folly and ordered his children to go to him and study Hadith with other children.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the great teachers of that time gave their lectures in the mosques in the cities of Mecca, Medina, Kufah, Basrah and Damascus. These teachers would be surrounded by their willing and eager pupils. Although the mosques were the primary centres of learning, the *Halqas* (which were the study circles of every teacher) were also attended by eager students. Gradually, the use of the real schools, *Madaris*, became prominent in the dissemination of knowledge. A teacher in such a school is called either a *Mu'allim* or a *Mukattib*. At the same time there were *Majalis al-Adab*, special schools for children where *Adab*, (moral instruction, social and cultural disciplines) was the main subject taught. A teacher in this type of school is called *Muaddib*.

The Abbasid Caliphate of al-Ma'mun witnessed a great awakening of knowledge in Islam as from 813 A.D. Al-Ma'mun was a great scholar and he loved scholarship. He gave liberal patronage to men of learning and encouraged scholarly discussions in his court. His court later became the resort of philosophers, astronomers, physicians, scientists, poets and other men of letters. He created an academy which he named *Bayt al-Hikmah* in which there were various departments of learning. Their efforts were not confined only to the reproduction of Greek and ancient works, they also extended to original research. Students came from various parts of the world to this academy.

The academy was not only useful to the Muslim world alone. On this point William Muir writes:

"It was through the labours of these learned men that the nations of Europe, then shrouded in darkness of the Middle Ages, became acquainted with their own proper but forgotten ancient knowledge, developed it considerably and laid down the basis of the great cultural heritage of the Muslims to the world."<sup>12</sup>

It is worth nothing that al-Ma'mun's reign was also the age in which the full impact of the new ideas and foreign ways, which had long been finding a way into Islamic society, became fully apparent. It is also important to note that it was also the age of the collectors of *hadith*. Important among them were the great traditionist, al-Bukhari, the famous historian, Waqidi, and the well known doctors of the law, Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal.<sup>13</sup>

This period witnessed the growth of Islamic schools of Law where the founders taught Law to their eager students. These four great founders of the schools or systems of Islamic Law (Malik Ibn Anas, Abu Hanifah, al-Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal) taught their students in their circles. It was a

common practice either to teach them orally or to dictate notes (*Imla* or dictation) to their students. For revisional and correction purposes the students would have to re-read the notes to their teachers. This type of memory work aided the students immensely in their future studies. The traditionist, al-Bukhari, who was born in 194/810 and died 256/870, travelled to distant places to collect traditions which numbered about 600,000 and he could remember over 4,000 when those repeated are excluded. Muslim b. Hijjaj 209 A.H. to 273 A.H. could remember thousands from his collection, which numbered about 300,000. Al-Shafi'i (150 A.H. to 204 A.H.) was said to have memorised the Holy Qur'an at the tender age of seven. He was the first to render Islamic Jurisprudence into a regular system and he memorised *al-Mawatta* when he was only ten. He became a *Mufit*, a giver of legal decisions, at the age of fifteen. Abu Hurayrah, too, was specially noted for his zeal in committing the sayings of the Prophet to memory.

Learning and knowledge were both considered vital in Islam. Al-Shafi'i, the famous jurist, constantly gave his lectures in the Holy Mosque in Mecca where Ibn Hanbal used to attend his lectures as a student. Al-Shafi'i continued with this vocation, teaching or lecturing even when he left for Egypt. It was his practice to teach the Holy Qur'an after the morning prayer and discuss *Hadith* at Sunrise. Before *Zuhr* prayer he would lecture on Arabic grammar. He would continue with the teaching of poetry until noon, when he would leave for home. These devoted teachers made provision for those resident in cities and for travellers alike. Any traveller could attend the learned assemblies which were held in every part of the Muslim world without any obstruction. These assemblies served as the extension-schools of Islam. These voluntary teachers travelled from one learned assembly to another. Often many scholars could come with different views which could lead to healthy academic debates which could, as such, promote learning. Of course, many of these academic disputations on both the religious and the philosophical studies took place in the academy of Al-Ma'mun or in the Caliph's palace.

The early Muslims too yearned for knowledge. It is on record that Abu Hurayrah would leave his secular duties during the day to follow the Prophet Muhammad in order to hear his words and see what he did — all in the interest of his search for the knowledge of Islam in general and that of the Holy Qur'an in particular.

This continued up to the 4th century of Islam, when the establishment of higher institutions of learning in the Muslim world became more desirable. The first of these was the foundation of the University of Cordova in Muslim Spain by Caliph Hakim II (366/976) of the Umayyad Dynasty. Other cities that witnessed the establishment of such higher institutions were Servile,

Malaga and Granada. It is interesting to know that various subjects studied in these universities included astronomy, mathematics, medicine, theology and law, particularly in the University of Cordova. Chemistry and Philosophy and other subjects were taught in Granada University.<sup>14</sup>

This was a period when people yearned for the establishment of Universities all over the Muslim world. It was during this time that Al-Aziz (380/996), the Fatimid Caliph, converted the al-Azhar mosque in Cairo into an Academy. It later became the University of Al-Azhar. It is not only the oldest University in Africa but one of the surviving Universities of the world which is comparable with the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Another very important feature of Islamic education was the springing up of *Madrasahs* or colleges in Baghdad and Damascus between the 7th and 8th centuries of Islam. In Baghdad alone there were thirty *Madrasahs* or Colleges, while there were twenty in Damascus. There were six of such Colleges in Mawsil and one in Hims. It is also of importance to note here that libraries known as *Khizanat al-Kutub* were established as an adjunct to the institutions of higher learning. Al-Hakam II was a lover of knowledge and a collector of books. He had as many as 400,000 books in his library and his catalogue of books consisted of forty-four volumes. It is also of importance to note that this ruler of Spain used to read these numerous books and write commentaries in their margins. In the similar library attached to Dar-Hikmah in Cairo, the illuminated copies of the Holy Qur'an numbered as many as 24,000.

The books were not only kept in the libraries; they were widely read. Reference can be made to the famous traditionist of the Umayyad period, Ibn Shihad al-Zuhri (d. 125/742); his wife once complained to him that his many books were worse to her than three rival wives could possibly be.<sup>15</sup> Scholars used to stay long in their libraries and occupied themselves only with reading and studying. An example can be cited here of al-Jahiz of Basrah 166-255/766-869. He was a pioneer in zoological and anthropological sciences. He piled up a huge number of books around him. He was killed by these books when they fell on him while he was deeply absorbed in his studies, sitting on the floor in his library.

Things were no different in West Africa. As early as in the 10th Century the activities of the itinerant teachers who taught Muslims from place to place to have a sound knowledge of Islam cannot be over-emphasised. Along with the itinerant teachers were the Qur'anic commentators (*Mufasssirun*) who, up to the present, continue in the teaching and explanation of the Holy Qur'an. Often they also explain the *al-sarf*, the grammatical inflection of the Arabic language in order to aid Muslims in the understanding of the text. Preachers also usually give *tafsir*, the exegesis

of the Qur'an, when they deliver their sermon on Fridays or 'Id days<sup>16</sup> or during the *Ramadhan* period.

Famous among these itinerant teachers and preachers was a certain Muhammad, a Sheriff who was a missionary. He was from Seid Okuba in Shams (Damascus). His activities warranted the attention of Simpson, the administrator for Lagos in 1870. Another was one Abdallah Quillam who came from Liverpool for the purpose of teaching Islam and Arabic to the Muslims. Mention was also made of Sierra Leonian Muslims such as 'Umar, an Islamic teacher, and al-Hajj Harun al-Rashid. He was a distinguished Muslim who later influenced the educational development of Muslim communities in Lagos and Oyo areas like Epe and Badagry in Nigeria.

Al-Hajj al-Rashid is described as a young man hardly over thirty years. He spent three years in the University of Fez in Morocco, and was later a tutor of Arabic in Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone.

Among the Arab itinerant teachers who helped in inculcating Islamic knowledge and the teaching of Arabic are Khalid Shaykhrake Effendi, Shaykh Ali b. Muhammad al-Mekkwawi. He travelled through Tripoli to Epe, in Nigeria, and later became prominent in Lagos as a preacher and teacher.<sup>18</sup>

In the Songhai Empire Muhammad Asikia the Great's reign was memorable and successful because of his encouragement of higher education. The peace and order of the empire attracted scholars and professors to his capital in Timbuktu which became a great educational metropolis. There were as many as 150 Qur'anic schools in that city alone. At this time University education was provided in the mosque of Sankore. The University attracted many students from far and wide and produced a great number of distinguished jurists, historians and theologians. Among them are two outstanding historians, Muhammad Kati and Abderahman al-Sadi. Their history books, — the *Tarikh al-Fattash* and *Tarikh al-Sudan* are still in existence, and we have relied on them for the reconstruction of the history of Songhai.

Leo Africanus gave an eye-witness account of the products of the University and the intellectual life of the city of Timbuktu: "Here are the great stores of doctors, judges, priests and other learned men that are bountifully maintained at the King's cost and Charges".<sup>19</sup> In turns later local scholars such as Muhammad Toure, Uthman dan Fodio and others emerged to teach basic knowledge of Islam to their followers in West Africa.<sup>20</sup>

'Uthman dan Fodio in particular had a very thorough knowledge of both Islam and Arabic before he began the propagation of Islam in the northern part of Nigeria in the early 19th century. He set up many local Islamic schools, and he himself was a great Islamic teacher.<sup>21</sup>

In order to aid the Muslims, old and young, in the basic knowledge of Islam, Islamic schools in West African countries usually began in the religious leader's residence. The *Mu'allim* would teach in his parlour or verandah, or under a tree surrounded by volumes of the Qur'an and other Islamic works such as books on *ahadith* (especially those of al-Bukhari and al-Muslim). The teacher would also be surrounded by a group of ten to forty pupils with their special wooden slates.

Gradually the centre of learning moved to the mosque. The method chiefly employed by the teacher here was the same everywhere — the teacher would recite from the Holy Qur'an and lead the pupils to read after him. Today the centre of learning has moved to formal schools where competent and qualified teachers instruct the pupils. Modern methods and the use of sophisticated aids are used. In addition the students still learn more at home about Islam under the local Islamic teacher, where they will have more time to memorise the text of the Holy Qur'an.<sup>22</sup>

From all this it is quite apparent that Islam provides a basis for both education and knowledge. Islam is primarily based on learning and the acquisition of knowledge, which are essential virtues in the Muslim.

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## AL-JAHIZ AND THE RISE OF BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTIONISM

MEHMET BAYRAKDAR

**A**LTHOUGH al-Nazzam made the first steps in the field of biological evolutionary thought in the history of science, for the first time the theory of biological evolution in its complete form was presented by a great early zoologist, al-Jahiz in the ninth century. He was the first to originate it. Al-Jahiz's theory is an example of scientific revolution and innovation that has had reverberations into the farthest reaches of human thought. It is fair to say that many problems of the philosophy of Nature appeared in a new light after the revolution of al-Jahiz and his successors. Before describing al-Jahiz's own views and his influence upon Muslim and European thinkers, especially upon Lamarck and Darwin, I want to give some biographical and bibliographical accounts.

### *a. Biographical and Bibliographical Notices*

Al-Jahiz's complete name is Abu 'Uthman Amr bin Bahr al-Fukaymi al-Basri. He owes his sobriquet (al-Jahiz = the goggle-eyed) to a malformation of his eyes. He was born at Basra about 776. Little is known of his childhood, except that, from an early age, an invincible desire for learning and a remarkably inquisitive mind urged him towards a life of independence and, much to his family's despair, idleness. Mixing with groups which gathered at different mosques to learn, attending as a spectator the philological enquiries conducted on the Mirbad and following lectures by the most learned men and scholars of his time on philology, lexicography and poetry, namely al-Asma'i, Abu 'Ubayda, Abu Zayd, he soon acquired real mastery of the Arabic language along with the usual and traditional culture.<sup>2</sup>

And later his precious intelligence won him admittance to Mu'tazili circles and bourgeois salons, where conversation, often light, was also animated by philosophical, theological, scientific problems. His penetrating observation of the various elements in a mixed population increased his knowledge of human nature, whilst reading books of all kinds which were beginning to circulate in Basra gave him some outlook onto the outside world.

His early literary activity won him the compliments of al-Ma'mun and

thereby that consecration by the capital coveted by so many provincials eager to have their talent recognized and so reach the court and establish themselves. From then on, without completely abandoning Basra, al-Jahiz frequently stayed for long periods in Baghdad and later in Samarra, devoting himself to literary and scientific works. For some time he was the teacher of al-Mutawakkil's children. Although information about his private and public life is not readily forthcoming from either his biographer or himself, it appears from what knowledge we have that al-Jahiz held no official post and took on no regular employment. He admits, however, that he received considerable sums for the dedications of his books and we know that for a time at least, he was made an allowance by the diwan. In Baghdad, later on, he found a rich store of learning which enabled him to broaden his outlook and perfect his own philosophical and theological doctrine, which he had begun to elaborate under the supervision of the great mu'tazalis of the day, of whom al-Nazzam and Thumana b. Ashras, who seems to have had a strong influence on him, should be placed in the first rank.

Towards the end of his life, suffering from hemiplegia, he retired to his hometown, where he died in 869 (225)<sup>2</sup>.

As in politics, so in theology al-Jahiz was a mu'tazili. He was also a famous Muslim prose writer. His place in the development of Muslim thought is far from negligible. He was the founder of a sect named after him, al-Jahiziyya<sup>3</sup>. He was a genius in the science of zoology. And he knew how to obtain ammonia and salmiac from animal offals by dry distillation<sup>4</sup>.

Being a polyhistor and man of letters, al-Jahiz had a very great output like many Muslim writers. A catalogue of his works lists nearly 200 titles of which only about a third have been preserved in their entirety; about fifty others have been partially preserved, whilst the rest seem irremediably lost<sup>5</sup>.

His most important book is *The Book of Animals (Kitab al-Hayawan)*<sup>6</sup>. Jahiz's method was empirical and scientific, not only discursive, as Sarton believes<sup>7</sup>. That is why Asin Palacios says, "Como el mismo lo insinua en el prologo (I, 6), puso a contribucion para redactarlo los libros de los filosofos, los relatos y noticias de viajeros, marinos, etc. Y la observacion o experiencia directa."<sup>8</sup> The scientific value of this book is great; and it is, as Asin Palacios says, a real contribution to the history of science, namely to zoology.

The main source of al-Jahiz's *Book of Animals* is the book on zoology of his precursors and contemporary, 'Abd al-Malik bin Qurayb al-Asma'i (739-831)<sup>9</sup>. As far as I know this book is the first zoological book in the history of Islamic thought. The *Kitab al-Hayawan* was the object of many studies, and had great influence upon later Muslim scientists, and via them upon European thinkers as well. And it became the source for later books on zoology. Al-Jahiz's many sentences are quoted by Ikhwan al-Safa' and Ibn

Miskawayh, and many passages are quoted by Zakariyya' al-Qazwini (1203-1282) in his *'Aja' ib al-Makhluqat*, and by Mustawfi al-Qazwini (1281-?) in his *Nuzhat al-Qulub*; and al-Damiri in his *Hayat al-Hayawan*<sup>10</sup>.

#### b. *Al-Jahiz's View on Biological Evolution*

After a long study of animals, Al-Jahiz was the first to put forward his view of biological evolution in his *Book of Animals*, which contains the germs of many later evolutionary theories (animal embryology, evolution, adaptation, animal psychology and sociology)<sup>11</sup>.

First of all, al-Jahiz's attempts were made in a truly scientific spirit to classify animals in a linear series, beginning with the simplest and continuing to the most complex; and at the same time, he arranged them into groups having marked similarities; and these groups were divided into sub-groups to trace the ultimate unit in the species<sup>12</sup>.

An early exponent of the zoological and anthropological sciences, al-Jahiz discovered and recognized the effect of environmental factors on animal life; and he also observed the transformation of animal species under different factors. And in many remarkable passages of his book, he also described for us the struggle of existences for survival, its aim and mechanisms and value in a scientific way, as well as in a folkloric way.

As to know the mechanisms of evolution, al-Jahiz described three mechanisms. These are Struggle for Existence, Transformation of species into each other, and Environmental Factors.

Let us now see the mechanisms, as briefly as possible.

Struggle for Existence: al-Jahiz placed the greatest weight on evolution by the struggle for existence, or, in a larger sense, by natural selection. It operates in conjunction with the innate desire for conservation and permanence of the ego. According to al-Jahiz, between every individual existence, there is a natural war for life. The existence are in struggle with each other. Al-Jahiz's theory of struggle for existence may accordingly be defined as a differential death rate between two variant class of existence, the lesser death rate characterizing the better adapted and stronger class. And for al-Jahiz, the struggle for existence is a divine law; God makes food for some bodies out of some other bodies' death. He says, "The rat goes out for collecting his food, and it searches and seizes them. It eats some other inferior animals, like small animals and small birds . . . it hides its babies in disguised underground tunnels for protecting them and himself against the attack of the snakes and of the birds. Snakes like eating rats very much. As for the snakes, they defend themselves from the danger of the beavers and hyenas; which are more powerful than themselves. The hyena can frighten the fox, and the latter frightens all the animals which are inferior to it. . . .

this is the law that some existences are the food for others. . . . All small animals eat smaller ones; and all big animals cannot eat bigger ones. Men with each other are like animals . . . God makes cause of some bodies life, from some bodies death and vice versa. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

And according to al-Jahiz, the struggle does not exist only between the members of different species, but also between the members of the same species<sup>14</sup>.

From what al-Jahiz has said, we can make an assertion that God has created Nature in a prodigal reproductive character and He has also established a law, which is the biological struggle for existence in order to keep it within a limited ratio. Otherwise, the disorder could appear in Nature and it could lose some of its riches and species. We can see the germs of Darwin's and the Neo-Darwinian's theory of Natural Selection in this remarkable passage which we have mentioned above.

Transformation of Species: Al-Jahiz, as later Lamarck and Darwin, for example, believes that the transformation of species and mutation is possible. The transformation operates in conjunction with the effect of environmental factors. And he asserted that the original forms branched out into new forms of species by gradually developing new characteristics which helped them to survive environmental conditions.

He says, "People said different things about the existence of *al-miskh* (the original form of quadrupeds)<sup>15</sup>. Some accepted its evolution and said that it gave existence to dog, wolf, fox and their similars. The members of this family came from this form (*al-miskh*)."<sup>16</sup>

And, he adds that God's will and power is the main causal factor in the transformation, and God can transform any species into another at any time He wants. So al-Jahiz defends the transformation of species and mutation, due to different factors, including God's will<sup>17</sup>, as we have said above. Here al-Jahiz got some of his material from the sayings of different learned men.

As for the effect of environmental factors on species, al-Jahiz believes that the food, climate, shelter and other factors have some biological and psychological effects on species. And for him, these factors also lead the species to a hard struggle for survival. In a changed environment, there is also a change in some characters having survival value. The process of changing characters in succeeding generations makes the organisms better adapted to their environment. They thus survive and get a chance to breed and transmit their characteristics to their offspring. So, al-Jahiz based his theory upon the notion of the use and disuse of organs in the adaptation of animals to their environment.

Al-Jahiz says, "Without doubt, we have seen that some Nabatheen navigators resembled the ape in some geographical environment, likely we have also seen some people from Morocco and have found them as like as *al-*

*maskh*<sup>18</sup>, except for a little difference. . . . And it is possible that the polluted air and water, and dust made this change in the character of these Moroccans. . . . If this effect goes on more and more in them, those changes in their bristles, ears, colours, and form (similar to the ape) increase more. . . ."<sup>19</sup>

Such are the main mechanisms of al-Jahiz's biological evolution. Now, I will speak about al-Jahiz's great influence upon Muslim and European scientists. Al-Jahiz's zoology and theory of biological evolution have profoundly affected the development of zoology and biology. As we have said before, al-Jahiz's biological evolution had some direct influences upon Ikhwan al-Safa, and other illustrious philosophers, such as Ibn Miskawayh, al-Biruni, Ibn Tufayl, with whom al-Jahiz's theory acquired a new sense, in that they made of it two new doctrines: a cosmological one, because it was applied to the phenomena of the whole universe; and a sociological one, because it was applied to social phenomena. Moreover, Ibn Miskawayh and Ibn Khaldun explain the true meaning of Prophecy and prove it by such a theory. Thus, Jahiz's pure biological evolution became the source of different doctrines in later Islamic thought, such as sociological, metaphysical and cosmological evolutionisms.

On the other hand, al-Jahiz's theory has been repeated by Muslim zoologists and naturalists, especially by al-Zakariyya' al-Qazwini, in his '*Aja' ib al-Makhluqat*, Mustawfi al-Qazwini in his *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, and al-Damiri in his *Hayat al-Hayawan*, without mentioning other literary persons, such as al-Masudi and Ibn Qutayba.

As for the influence of al-Jahiz on European thinkers, it has become the subject of two main studies: "Der Darwinismus im X und XIX Jahrhundert" of Fr. Dieterici (Leipzig, 1878) and "Darwinistisches bei Gahiz" of E. Wiedemann (sitzungsbericht der physikalisch-medizinischen Sozietat in Erlangen, 47, 1915). Previous to me, they found a great similarity between al-Jahiz and Darwin. Indeed, Darwin and his precursors took up the theory of al-Jahiz as the base for the essentiality of their evolutionary theories, and they formulated it in a more scientific way in the context of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries development of science. Perhaps the only main difference between al-Jahiz's theory and modern theory is in ideology: al-Jahiz's theory is theologic and more transcendental in this sense that he accepts that the first cause of evolution in living organisms is God and that the other factors are secondary; while Lamarck, Darwin and others' evolution is more immanent and materialistic. Although the mechanistic explanations of the theories are more or less the same, Darwin and other modern scientists differ from al-Jahiz and other Muslim writers in ideological interpretation of the theory.

How has Jahiz's idea been transmitted to the Europeans? Al-Jahiz and

other evolutionist Muslim thinkers influenced Darwin and his predecessors in several ways. Before the flourishing of C. Linnaeus (1707-1778), Buffon (1707-1788), E. Darwin (1731-1802), J. B. Lamarck (1744-1829), and Ch. Darwin (1809-1882), and long before the rise of the school of Natural Philosophy in Germany, al-Jahiz and others were known to Europeans through the translation of their own works and studies on them by Europeans. For example, al-Damiri's book *Hayat al-Hayawan* was partially translated into Latin by a Jew, called Abraham Echellensis (d. Italy 1664) and published in Paris in 1617. This book contains many passages taken from al-Jahiz's *Kitab al-Hayawan*. Al-Nuwayri's *Nihaya* was studied by D'Herbelot (1625-1695) in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, and later by J. Heyman (?-1737). Ibn Tufayl's *Hay Ibn Yaqzan*, which contains the philosophy of evolution, was first published by Edward Pocockes, Sr. (1604-1690), together with a Latin translation published by Edward Pococke, Jr. (1648-1727) in Oxford in 1671 (second edition, Oxford, 1700)<sup>20</sup>. Zakariyya' al-Qazwini's cosmography, *'Aja' ib al-Makhlūqat* was published by F. Wustenfeld in 2 volumes in Gottingen in 1848-49; and *Kitab Talkhis al-Athar* of Bakuwi, a summary of al-Qazwini's book was translated into French and published by De Guignes in Paris, in 1789<sup>21</sup>. In fact, his book also contains many ideas from al-Jahiz. And A. L. de Chezy translated al-Qazwini's *'Aja' ib*, and his translation was published in 1806 (first publication) by S. de Sacy, in his *Chrestomathie Arabe*. There is no doubt that the great evolutionist sulfi, Mawlana, had already influenced Goethe, who called him "a Darwinian before Darwin"<sup>22</sup>; his theory of metamorphosis has profoundly affected the development of biology. In any case, Islamic zoology penetrated the West as early as the seventeenth century<sup>23</sup>. Some Europeans knew Arabic and they could read directly from the Muslim scientists' books; for example, Darwin was himself initiated into Islamic culture in Cambridge under a Jewish orientalist called Samuel Lee<sup>24</sup>. We think that what we have said can show Muslim influence upon Europeans. Some further comparative study can be undertaken in this subject, in order to bring to light the influence of Muslim evolutionist thinkers upon the Europeans and the transmission of their ideas to the West.

Al-Jahiz's theory of evolution was something very new in the history of science, and there was nothing written previous to it. Although Greek philosophers like Empedocles and Aristotle spoke of the change in Nature, in plants and animals, they never made the first steps on the field of the future theory of evolution of the Muslims. Their concept of change was only a concept of simple change and motion, nothing more than that. And by the concept of change, they never designed explicitly or implicitly a concept of evolution: "The World of Nature is thus for Aristotle, a world of self-moving thing, as it is for the Ionians and for Plato. . . . Nature as such is process,

growth, change. This process is a development, i.e. the changing takes successive forms, a, b, y, . . . in which each is the potentiality of its successor, but it is not what we call 'evolution', because for Aristotle, the kinds of change and of structure exhibited in the world of nature form an eternal repertory, and the items in the repertory are related logically, not temporally, among themselves<sup>25</sup>".

## NOTES

1. Pellat (Ch.), "Al-Djahiz", in *EF*, vol. II, p. 385.
2. Ibn 'Asakir, *MMI*, IX, pp. 203-217.
3. *Khatib Baghdadi*, XII, pp. 212-222.
4. Sarton (G.), *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. I, Washington, 1927, p. 597.
5. Pellat (Ch.), "Gahiziana", in *Arabica*, 1956/2; cf. Brockelmann (C.), *GAL*, S.I., 241ff.
6. *The Book of Animals* was published in 7 volumes, in Cairo, 1323-1324.
7. Sarton says: "His most important work is *The Book of Animals*, a very discursive compilation, the purpose of which is theological and folkloric, rather than scientific. . .", Sarton, *op. cit.*, p. 597. Sarton's judgement is not true; indeed, many of the knowledges given in the book are the result of his personal observation and his experiences, as al-Jahiz himself says in several chapters.
8. Asin Palacios (M.), "El 'Libro de los Animales' de Jahiz", in *ISIS*, vol. 14, 1930, p. 21.
9. Some parts of his book are published by R. Geyer in Wien, in 1887; and by A. Hallner in Wien, in 1895-1896; the book on the creation of man is still unpublished.
10. It is very interesting to notice that a summary of al-Damiri's and other Muslim scientists' books was translated into Latin by Abraham Echellensis (d. Italy 1664) and was published under the title "De Proprietatibus et Virtutibus Medicis Animalium" in Paris, in 1617. So, that is to say, sometime before the appearance of Darwin's precursors, such as F. Redi (1626-1698), C. Linnaeus (1707-1778), Buffon (1707-1788), Lamarck (1744-1829), the idea of evolution of Muslims was penetrated in West and this explains why the first evolutionists came from France. See Mieli (A.), *La Science Arabe et Son Role dans l'Evolution Scientifique Mondiale*, Leiden, Brill, 1938, pp. 263-264, n. 3; and extracts have been translated into French by A. J. Silvestre de Sacy, *Oppianos II*, Strasbourg, 1787; see Sarton (G.), Vol. III, Part II, p. 1641.
11. Pella (Ch.), "Al-Djahiz", *op. cit.*, p. 386; cf. Sarton, *op. cit.*, p. 597.
12. Al-Jahiz, *Kitab al-Hayawan*, Vol. I, Cairo, 1909, p. 13, and see also different chapters of the volumes.
13. *Idem.*, Vol. VI, pp. 133-34; and there are many passages in different volumes illustrating the struggle for existence. See VI, 139; VII, 47, 80.
14. *Idem.*, vol. VII, pp. 47-48.
15. According to some opinions, this original form of animal was lost because of earthquakes and floods. See al-Jahiz, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 24; cf. vol. VII, p. 77.
16. *Idem.*, vol. IV, p. 23.
17. *Idem.*, vol. IV, pp. 24-25; cf. vol. VI, pp. 24-26.
18. I think al-Maskh is a kind of ape; see Vol. IV, p. 24. And do not confuse al-Maskh with al-Miskh.
19. *Idem.*, Vol. IV, p. 24; and cf. vol. IV, pp. 25-27.
20. See Sarton (G.), *op. cit.*, vol. II, Part 2, pp. 354-355.
21. Mieli (A.), *op. cit.*, p. 152.
22. Cassirer (E.), *The Problem of Knowledge*, translated by W. H. Woglom and Ch. W. Hendel, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950, p. 137.
23. Sarton (G.), *op. cit.*, vol. III, part 2, p. 1641.
24. See Darwin (Sir F.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. I, London, 1887, p. 289. Samuel Lee (1783-1852), of Queen's, was professor of Arabic and Hebrew. In 1821, he issued a "Sylloge Librorum Orientalium". In 1829, he translated "The Travel of Ibn Battuta", see *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XI, London, 1917, pp. 819-820.
25. Collingwood (R. C.), *The Idea of Nature*, Oxford, 1945, p. 82.

**MODERNIZATION OF THE ARAB WORLD: INFLUENCES,  
URGINGS AND REFLECTIONS IN THE WORK OF SOME  
TWENTIETH CENTURY ARABIC POETS**

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**Introduction**

**S**INCE the nineteenth century, contact between the Arab World and the West has made for growing familiarity in the former one with Western modes of thought, especially in intellectual life. The West has long been admired for its technological and organizational achievements, and the Arab nations have sought to incorporate these elements they see as of value to the regeneration of their societies. Because of this trust in modernity, the traditional concerns of Arab literature, particularly poetry, became to be seen by the poets, themselves, as increasingly limited in a world widening its horizons and dealing with phenomena born of modernization.

In response to the beginnings of social change, an era of experiment in poetry gathered momentum in this century's first quarter as writers picked up forms and themes, hitherto largely foreign to Arabic traditions, and examined them for their usefulness in expressing the "new age" concerns. Thus, the genres of poetry experimented with both departed from and challenged the old schools and absolutes as new techniques meshed with awakening self-consciousness and the growing humanism of the time.

Soon, a polarization of approaches became apparent: traditionalists believed a renaissance could be achieved through revival of the glories of Pre-Islamic and Golden Age Poetry, while others such as Abdul Rahman Shukri advocated a more complete break with the past. Between the extremes, writers throughout the Arab World variously displayed aspects of both positions; Khalil Mutran, for instance, favoured classical forms, but was a master modernist in the variety of his thought and melodious expression. Such modernists are the primary concern of this paper. They ultimately triumphed in accordance with Mutran's enjoining.

The times in which those Arabs (earlier generations), lived are different from ours . . . their *needs and sciences* are not the same as ours. Our poetry therefore should represent our own modes of thinking and feeling and not theirs . . .

(Mutran: *al Majalla al Misriyya*, 1960)

**Influence of the Emigrés**

While poets such as Abdul Rahman Shukri and Ma'ruf Al-Rusafi were working with the Arab homeland in this century's earlier decades, others such as Gibran Gibran, Mika'il Nu'aima and Nasib 'Arida were writing in the New World. These and other emigres, pursuing lives less confined by tradition and less difficult politically, were able to exert significant influence on the directions writing took in their native lands (later, Gibran was of course to have considerable influence in turn on the West, itself).

The earlier 'moderns' were important, not only for reflecting what was happening in the Arab World at large, but also for the effects their thought had in moulding the course of future events of many kinds there. Their successors, for instance, inherited a deeper understanding of the West — and its literary and philosophical movements. The main efforts of these earlier poets were directed, in large part, towards an interpretation of the forces of change in the re-awakening Arab World of their period — efforts which led to a recognition of a need for a restatement of what constituted poetry. Thus, in the preamble to the establishment of *الرابطة ما بينية* (New York, 1920), the emigrés stated,

Not everything parading as literature is literature; nor is every rimester a poet. The literature we esteem as worth is that only which draws its nourishment from life's soil and light and air . . . This new movement, aimed at transporting our literature from stagnation to life, from imitation to creation is worthy of all encouragement; on the other hand, if our language and literature are kept within the narrow bounds of imitation to creation is worthy of all encouragement; on the other hand, if our language and literature are kept within the narrow bounds of imitating the ancients in form and substance, this tendency will lead to decay and disintegration.

Continuing late nineteenth century preoccupations, poets such as Gibran were clearly concerned with primary philosophical problems, and aimed at coming to an understanding of their changing world. They addressed themselves to speculative matters such as the nature of the universe and God — few were interested in ambling camels and ruins, except for occasional illustrative purposes. Their main interest was the problem of knowledge and an understanding of nature — as it had been for thinkers during the Renaissance in Europe.

The problem, however, in the Arab world was more acute because that world had been hurled into the twentieth century from a recent medieval past and was still maintaining traditions considered ossified by 'modernity-oriented' Arabs. For their world, the onset of the twentieth century brought the multidimensional shocks that the region is still dealing with today. In response, the poets have directed efforts to articulating a comprehension, making interpretations, and indicating new directions for their people.



### The Role of the Contemporary Poet

The principal role of the Arab poet has always been that of a spokesman for his people, and though still holding true, it has been expanded. Modern poets do more than merely reflect the joys and sorrows of life, they are also interpreters of it. Some observers such as the late Najm Bezirgan stress the poets' role as guides in mapping out courses of social action through their contributions to the stream of ideas. They may, for example, urge fresh interpretations of the messages in the Qur'an as do Nizar Al-Quabbani in "Bread, Hashish and Moonlight," or Badr Al-Sayyab in "The Blind Prostitute." Such work reflects people seeking directions through confusing alternatives.

Within the framework of social and economic revolution, poetry, inevitably, will reflect a diversity of approaches to innovation; although of course, responses and emphasis differ according to which particular aspects of life were engaging individual attention. Thus, for example, the work of Al-Sayyab has primarily mirrored the political scene while he continued to work on the means of effective expression — one of his major concerns,

. . . behold the defeat of heroism  
Death indeed has shattered every hope within you,  
And you have advanced with the wandering look  
And an empty fist . . .

Another, Abd al-Wahhab Al Bayati, is a socialist realist with similar kinds of concerns, while yet others such as Fadwa Tuqan and Harun Al-Rashid have focussed on the political and human tragedy of Palestine.

Contemporary poets have exhibited considerable courage in exercising their innovations because poetry, like the classical language, is a part of life affectively very dear to the Arab psyche. Luwis 'Awad's "Plutoland," for instance, was banned in Egypt because he stated, among other controversial things, that the old forms of poetry "were dead." "Tampering" with the themes and forms of poetry is regarded with suspicion, at very least, and as traitorous at worst. Certain poets, such as Adunis among the most influential, have incorporated political statements into their verse and earned exile. Their utterances have been construed as dangerous, or unrepresentative of the people's sentiments — although 'the people' may, in fact, be the particular elite ruling at the time.

. . . A dwarf whom they raised on high,  
They crawled before him and he grew in arrogance,  
They glorified him and extended his shadow . . .  
. . . Every nation creates its own Nero.

(Mutran: "Nero")

Since this century's mid decades, poets have continued to articulate the agonies suffered by their societies in their struggles to grow and reform themselves. Progress has been retarded by military defeat and preparation for further war in environments of economic under-development. Thus, the poets have addressed themselves to reasons and causes for their nations' continued suffering, as for example, Mutran in "Nero," by drawing attention to archaic or tyrannical systems of government and their empty rhetoric, or Al-Qabbani in his, "What Value has the People Whose Tongue is Tied?" In the sentiments of his poem, "Bread, Hashish, and Moonlight," he remarks,

Where we slowly chew on our unending songs,  
A form of consumption destroying the East  
Our East chewing on its history . . .  
Its lethargic dreams . . .  
Its empty legends . . .

Contemporary poets have articulated so many of the concerns of their people in their world; as a group, they have been, in general, fundamentally disenchanted with obsolete and ineffectual modes of thought and behaviour they see as continuing in their homelands. Thus, Al-Sayyab remarks that these mind sets are,

Clothing them in ancient banners  
That exude the swell of defeat.

(*"Before the Gate of God"*).

Frustration has been increased by the discrepancy between ideals and reality, and the resulting alienation furthered by the tension generated by the very rapid social change due to economic growth and modernization. Thus, Nazik Al-Mala'ika cries "Who am I?", and Al-Haydari bemoans,

. . . No, I shall not return  
For whom should I return (?)  
My village has become a city.  
. . . here there is nothing I know  
And nothing that knows me.

(*"A False Step"*).

### Some Reflections in Form and Imagery

In their efforts to find even more meaningful imagery and modes of expression, as well as some relief from pain and sadness, the poets have adopted from sources hitherto alien to the main traditions of Arabic poetry. Christian notions of crucifixion, death, and resurrection have, for instance, been used extensively by Al-Sayyab in work addressed to a primarily Moslem world,

I long to sink to the depths of my blood  
To bear my load with other men  
To resurrect life. Then is my death a victory.

(*"The River and Death"*).

Also in his *Book of Poverty and Revolution* (De Profundis)

From the depths I call out to you . . .  
and,

And the day was nailed down  
Where they nailed him  
Tomorrow, Christ will be crucified  
Nor has the Greek classical tradition been ignored,  
Before we set sail we slaughter sheep  
One for Astarte one for Adonis  
One for Daal . . .

(Yusuf Al-Khal: "The Voyager").

The influence mythology is also in evidence in 'Awad's "Love at St. Lazare,"

. . . It was the spindle of Odysseus . . .  
. . . that they might be bearing the Argosy.

The direct influence of European literature, particularly that of Britain and France, cannot be overemphasised because, in this century so many Arab intellectuals studied in these countries and absorbed much of their cultures and literary traditions. Poetry and prose of the various periods of European literary tradition were picked up and examined for their usefulness in expressing contemporary Arab concerns. Romantic poetry, for instance, formulated by Wordsworth, Blake, and others in eighteenth century England in a time of philosophical reaction to the age of rationalism and the early industrial revolution, espouses an intense love of nature. This was a result of the stress felt at the time, and mirrored much of a similar distress experienced in Arab confrontation with Western materialism — particularly by the emigrés.

Romanticism supplied a means for Arab poets to inject new life into their work (as did for the Apollo School in Egypt); however, the adaption of Romanticism in the Arab World did not occur in a vacuum in the 'twenties and 'thirties, but served as a useful tool to foment change further. At this time, also, Eliot's *Wasteland* with its theme of decay of civilisation, had a particularly strong impact on Arabs acutely aware of the breakdown of old ways of life in their own societies.

### Reaction

In a time of experimentation, poets cannot easily explain the direction their work is taking because the state of flux is very different to the predictability of well-known themes drawn on traditional lines, despite H. R. Gibb's stricture that some of the poets, "Seem content to live in their own private worlds" (Gibb, 1963:162). Thus, the work of Al-Jawahiri, a traditionalist, is more easily appreciated by a wider audience than that of some of his contemporaries. Critics of modern trends such as Al-Mala'ika see the

narrowed audience for the new poetry as the result of an "intellectual invasion," partly because poetry today is mainly read and pondered, and also because its ideas and implications demanded an acquaintance with events in a wider world. This is a very valid comment for areas with high rates of illiteracy because it disadvantages the less well-educated, and tends to isolate the intellectuals — which can have violent social consequences as has been seen in recent years.

Political events of the last forty years, particularly those associated with the issue of Palestine, have caused trends in Arabic poetry to move more powerfully in directions they may not, otherwise, have taken. In the 'forties, for instance, poets started to write 'prose poetry' — a form of blank verse employing colloquial Arabic words of foreign origin. Such directions invited intense criticism because, on the one hand, they offended most notions of what could be considered poetry in Arabic. More importantly on the other hand, however, they ran counter to the resurgence of the national pride in an Arab World shaking off the shackles of imperialism, and in which the revival of the classical language played a fundamental part. The events of nineteen forty-eight, and after, brought further impetus to escape the past as military defeat injected further sadness and bitterness *in tandem* with alienation and feelings of ineffectualness. (However, new strengths have come as Edward Said points out in his essay "Orientalism and the October War: the Shattered Myths" (1975))

### Conclusions

From the early stirring of the poets at the beginning of the twentieth century when they sought to break with tradition and its limitations, Arabic poetry has both reflected change and articulated the needs of the contemporary Arab World. Poets have encouraged change in lines such as,

The season of rebirth is your proudest time  
With its thousands of bright springs

(Salma Al-Jayyusi: "Elegy to the Martyrs").

Moods prevailing from time to time have been seen to grow pessimistic as poets have exhibited dismay at the slowness of the pace towards modernity and the many obstacles before it — as in Al-Qabbani's "Bread, Hashish and Moonlight," or in the works of Al-Sayyab. Military defeat has brought setbacks to aspiration, despair has gained ground for many, yet a fundamental optimism still shows through, as in Al-Jayyusi's lines.

The poets have been chastising their societies, and urging revolutions in thought, attitude, and action in order to dispel the lethargy retarding fuller entry to the modern world. They have been introspective in examining their own motives and positions, working for new modes of expression, borrowing where necessary, and indicating new directions for their people. Much of

this activity has been the result of the Arab World's contact with the Western Atlantic one: directions for its future are contained in Al-Qabbani's "What Value has the People whose Tongue is Tied?"

We need an angry generation  
 A generation to plough the horizons  
 To pluck up history from its roots  
 To wrench up our thoughts from its foundations  
 We need a generation of a different mein  
 That falters not, knows no hypocrisy  
 We need a whole generation of leaders and of giants.

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## Book Review

### "LA DOCTRINE INITIATIQUE DU PÈLERINAGE À LA MAISON D'ALLAH"

\* CHARLES-ANDRE GILIS

So far as Muslim readers are concerned, this very remarkable book is likely either to attract or repel, fascinate or infuriate, rather according to the opinion they have of the school of thought (and mystical speculation) associated with the name of Muhyiddin ibnu'l-'Arabi. Some may find it totally incomprehensible, as they would Ibnu'l-'Arabi himself.

The author, a French Muslim, follows in the footsteps of the late René Guénon (Sheikh Abdul'l-Wahed) who was without doubt the most outstanding interpreter of traditional symbolism known to us. Guénon, although a faithful adherent of the *Shari'ah*, was concerned primarily with what is variously described as the Primordial Tradition or Perennial Philosophy (in effect, the *Dinu'l-Fitrah*), and his encyclopaedic learning embraced not only Islam (particularly in its Sufi dimension), but also Hindu Vedanta, the mystical doctrines of Christianity and Judaism, and the myths and symbols associated with so-called "primitive" peoples as well as classical mythology. He drew these threads together into a unified structure which has profoundly influenced a number of contemporary thinkers.

The basic theses of Monsieur Gilis's book are drawn from the extensive passages regarding the Pilgrimage in Ibnu'l-'Arabi's monumental *Futuh al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations). In considering a book of this type it is as well to remember that no one is obliged either to accept or to reject everything in it, and no one has the right to dismiss the whole as unacceptable simply because certain passages may seem to him to press the search for symbolic significance beyond the bounds of common sense. Each reader is free to take from it what he finds useful and convincing, and to leave to one side whatever he finds excessive or improbable. Approached in this way, Monsieur Gilis's book offers enrichment for the pilgrim and for our understanding of the Pilgrimage as such.

It should perhaps be mentioned that the use of the term "initiativ" in the title is characteristic of the Guénonien school and is virtually equivalent to "esoteric", although it refers specifically to the spiritual way of those who have received initiation into a Sufi *tariqah* (or its equivalent in another

\* Published by Les Editions de l'Oeuvre, Paris, 1982.

tradition). The author himself acknowledges that the book may be "to a large extent unintelligible to those who do not have an adequate knowledge of the work of Guénon, so that we have no other choice but to assume that this is known to our readers". This assumption would limit its appeal to a somewhat restricted circle, but the very fact that a major publisher has seen fit to bring the work out suggests that its appeal may be wider than the author supposes. While those who are entirely unfamiliar with Guénon will find in the book much that is puzzling, there is no reason why they should not also find a good deal that is intellectually stimulating.

Rightly and, indeed, necessarily, the author reminds us that the spiritual value of the Pilgrimage is quite independent of the theoretic comprehension one may or may not have of its symbolism, and he quotes in this context Ibnu'l-'Arabi's remark that "in the Pilgrimage the slave-of-God is dominated by the Station of servitude (*Makam al-'ubudiyya*) because he is subject to restrictions the wisdom of which escapes rational understanding; what is in question . . . is a work of pure adoration which can be accomplished only with the qualifications of 'servitude'". This is the essential. What may be added by way of esoteric understanding — or comprehension of the underlying symbolism of the rites — is, so to speak, a pure bonus.

One of the most surprising elements in this interpretation is based upon the Prophetic *hadith*, "the Pilgrimage is Arafa (*al-Hajj 'Arafa*)". This *hadith* is emphasised because of the author's thesis (again based on Ibnu'l-'Arabi) that, whereas the Ka'ba is the goal of the Pilgrimage in terms of exoteric Islam, nonetheless it is Arafa that is the ultimate objective in terms of the Premordial Tradition or *Dinu'l-Fitrah*. The arguments advanced in support of this opinion, which include an examination of the distinction between *ism* and *masdar* in Arabic grammar, are too complex to summarise, but it is entirely in accordance with the Guénonien thesis (or, to be more precise, the traditional doctrine) that man's spiritual journey comprises two phases, comparable in a certain sense to the *isra* and *miraj* of the Prophet. The first takes place on the horizontal level, towards the centre of the individual being — a process of "integration", as contemporary psychology would describe it — and is represented by pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. Only when unified in this way, only when it has found "the centre", can the spirit embark on the journey of ascension, and this — for the author as for Ibnu'l-'Arabi — is what takes place at Arafa. The Ka'ba itself, he says, is orientated towards Arafa by virtue of the position of the Black Stone in its structure.

No less than five chapters of the book are devoted to a consideration of the Ka'ba, its history and its symbolism: "Mecca and the Ka'ba", "The Primordial Ka'ba", "The Ka'ba of Abraham and Ismail", "The Ka'ba of Muhammad", and "The Present Form of the Ka'ba". It is quite impossible

to summarise the complex argument — or series of interlocking arguments — making up this section of the book. There is however one particular rite of Pilgrimage which may to some extent be isolated from the rest, and this relates to the *Sa'y*. A brief consideration of the author's treatment of the "sextuple course" may serve to indicate the tone of the book as a whole.

Monsieur Gilis notes that the symbolism of the *Sa'y* suggests a certain predominance of the "feminine aspect" of the Principle, that is to say of the One — or of ultimate Reality as such — as is apparent from its association with the story of Hajar and her search for water. The two rocky hillocks, Safa and Marwah, correspond, he says, to the active and passive poles of universal manifestation (or Creation) and are therefore complementary aspects of One which is beyond all such polarities. He finds further evidence for this in another story which, in the Islamic tradition, relates to the *Sa'y*, the tale of Isaf and Na'ila. According to certain traditions, Mecca fell into the hands of the "Jorhum" after the death of Ismail, a people who had no respect for the sacred character of the Ka'ba and who adopted sacriligious practices. Isaf and Na'ila are said to have had intercourse within the sacred enclosure and God punished them by turning them into stones which were then erected respectively at Safa and Marwah so that remembrance of them might serve as an example throughout time.

The author draws attention to the universal mythology relating to the separation of active and passive principles following upon a "sacriligious union" in defiance of "the divine Will and the exigencies of the divine Presence". He adds that "separation" finally gives rise to "idolatry" and reminds his readers that, according to tradition, Adam and Eve were obliged, after their expulsion from Paradise, to stand — the one at Safa and the other at Marwah — throughout each night until Gabriel rescued them from this ordeal by teaching them the rites of the Pilgrimage. He notes also that the name Na'ila means "she who obtains", which translates the precise function of Hajar when she "obtained" water for her son.

The name Isaf, on the other hand, derives from a root which includes the notion of "regret". The author quotes, in this context, Ibnu'l-'Arabi's injunction that the Pilgrim, when he stands at Safa, should recall the "regret" of Isaf and repent his own sins. When he reaches Marwah, the "station of Na'ila", he "obtains" the recompense for his repentance.

Monsieur Gilis then draws attention to the fact that each course between the two hillocks consists first of a descent (*inhidar*), then a horizontal movement (*istiwa*), and finally a re-ascent (*taraqqa*). This, he says, represents the "synthesis of all possible tendencies", the "downward", the "horizontal" and the "upward", and he relates this to the Hindu doctrine of the three *gunas* or universal "tendencies" which, by their interaction, dominates the created world. From this he goes on to consider the particular

association of these rites with the principle of "Life" (*al-Hayat*).

The pilgrim who accomplishes the sextuple course "dies to himself" in the sense that his life no longer belongs to him as an individual being, so that he exists simply as "a receptacle disposed to receive the manifestation of the divine Life."

In ancient times the middle section of the *Sa'y*, indicated by the markings between which the pilgrim must run if he is able to do so, was a very small valley (which has now been filled in). Valleys are traditionally the "home of demons", as is attested by a *hadith* concerning the Prophet's refusal to establish prayer while camping in a valley. It is therefore understandable that the pilgrim should be required to hasten at this point, and this "running" also reminds us of the elements of "trial" and "purification" compromised in the *mas'a*, as also the element of "returning to his Lord". Each time the pilgrim reaches Marwa — according to Shibli — the *sakina* descends upon him.

The author deals at considerable length with the symbolism of the mineral realm and, in particular, of stones as images of total submission and humility (since they always seek the lowest place, in accordance with the law of gravity). He quotes Qur'an 2.74 to show that this characteristic of stones derives from the fear of God" which they symbolise, and he refers to Ibnu'l-'Arabi's contention that he who accomplishes the sextuple course between Safa and Marwah — which are, after all, stones — obtains that which has been conferred upon them by virtue of the "fear of God" characteristic of the mineral realm. He mentions also that Tirmidhi, in a short work on the Pilgrimage (*Al-Hajj wa asraruhu*), establishes a symbolic relationship between these two rocks which delimit the *mas'a* and the two aspects of divine Eternity designated by the terms *azal* ("pre-eternity"), which signifies that God *is* before all beginnings, and *abad* ("Post-eternity"), which signifies that He *subsists* after all is done. Tirmidhi advises the pilgrim to see both as lying beyond his own ephemeral, human state; and thus to express extreme "servitude" since it recalls his own "non-eternity", in other words his contingency, even his nothingness before God.

After making a sharp distinction between the two extremities — the two rocks — the author goes on, as one would expect, to stress their ultimate indistinction in terms of the unitarian doctrine of Islamic mysticism. Duality (and all multiplicity), having issued forth from the One, return to the One; and now the station of extreme "servitude", with its emphasis upon divine Transcendence, is taken as an image of the Supreme Identity, hence the saying: *Al-tawhid sirru'l-'ubudiyya*. At this point the argument takes us into still deeper waters, and it is with a certain relief that the reviewer turns to Monsieur Gilis's discussion of the symbolism of the letter *ba'*, the two extremities of the Arabic letter being taken to represent the two extremities

of the *mas'a*. Here a new perspective opens up as the author takes the *mas'a* as a figuration of the axis which both separates and relates or links the two centres of the Pilgrimage, Arafat and the Ka'ba. Having brought us to this point, he devotes the next chapter of his book to "The Place of the *Sa'y* in the Rites of Pilgrimage as a whole."

The danger of attempting to summarise such an author as this is that arguments which, even when fully expounded, require concentrated attention if the reader is to follow their sense, may lose all sense when summarised. The fact remains that, whatever reservations some readers may have regarding such an esoteric interpretation of one of the major rites of Islam, Monsieur Gilis does make sense. One cannot fail to be aware of a powerful intellect delving as deeply as any man dare go into the "secrets" of these rites.

Many people, however, will ask a simple and entirely reasonable question: What is the purpose of all these complications? Muslims are commanded to perform the Pilgrimage if they are able to do so and they are instructed in their duties. This should suffice, since no created being can pierce the veils and understand the secrets of God.

The answer to this question turns upon the universality of the religion of Islam, which must cater not only for every race and for every time but also for every type of human mind and human personality. In the disputes which have taken place between the Sufis and the opponents of Sufism this fairly obvious fact has often been overlooked. Nobody wishes to impose the complexities of esoteric doctrine upon any man or woman. Islam is complete without these complexities. But there have always been and always will be men and women who have been endowed with a certain type of mind and personality which requires such doctrines for their satisfaction and so that their hearts may be set at rest.

Islam contains within itself the means to satisfy this need, which is only to be expected since all true needs — so far as the Muslim is concerned — come from God and merit satisfaction. For those who have this particular need, this particular vocation, Monsieur Gilis's book provides a useful tool. This is its justification, the only justification it requires. His mastery of his subject and his exceptional gifts of exposition deserve the highest praise.

**Hasan (Gai) Eaton**