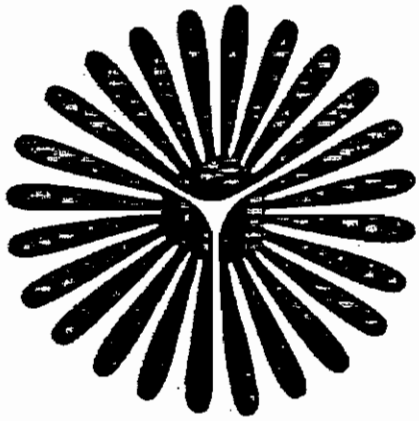

دانشگاه پیام نور

زبان تخصصی (۱)

کارشناسی ارشد

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تهیه و گردآوری : دکتر علیرضا جلالی

۱۳۹۱

5

The rise of Islam, 600 705

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The first Islamic century began in 622 of the Common Era with the *hijra* (Hegira), Muḥammad's 'emigration' from Mecca to the town of Yathrib, which lies about 275 miles to the north. As we shall see, the event was a turning point in Muḥammad's life: delivered from the pagan opposition of the city of his birth, he was free to preach, teach and lead in Yathrib so successfully that he remained there until his death in 632. In time it would even come to be called 'the Prophet's city' or 'the city' (Medina) *tout court*. The *hijra* thus marked a new beginning for Muḥammad and his followers. It also illustrates a striking feature of Islamic history. For Muḥammad's decision to leave Mecca was in purpose both deeply religious and deeply political.

On the one hand, he and those who believed in his prophecy were escaping polytheist intolerance towards his uncompromising monotheism. They were making their way to a town where, as the Qur'an seems to show, Muḥammad's ideas about God, man, this World and the Next, would evolve and sharpen, in part because he came into contact with the town's Jews, and in part because as Muslim numbers grew, so, too, did their demands upon him. Far more than in hostile Mecca, it was in Muḥammad's experience in Medina, as it is reflected in the Qur'an (the great bulk of which was apparently revealed there) and Prophetic tradition, that so much of Islamic belief and law came to be anchored. At the same time, the emigration to Yathrib was not *merely* religious; for Muḥammad and his contemporaries lived in a pocket of western Arabia where institutionalised forms of governance were as underdeveloped as ties of real, imagined and adopted kinship were strong. (Even in the very different settled culture of South Arabia, kingship was relatively weak.[1]) In a society where social differentiation was relatively modest, it was as kinsmen (or confederates and the like) that the tribesmen married, shared and wor shipped idols, herded, raided, defended and attacked, their skills often

1 A. F. L. Beeston, 'Kingship in ancient South Arabia', *JESHO*, 15 (1972).

overlapping. It was according to these ties, supplemented by traditional practices of cooperation, alliance and negotiation, that corporate action took place: they were the social ligature that organised society, constraining and conditioning the violence inherent in the fierce competition over scarce resources (especially water, pasture and animals) that characterised life in northern and central Arabian oasis settlements. There being no separate state agency, and religion being embedded as part of social life and identity, there was, then, no effective distinction between what we would regard as the 'religious' and 'political' spheres. Had he been inclined towards quietist introversion, Muḥammad might have satisfied his ambitions by making his *hijra* into desert solitude, as did many holy men of Late Antiquity. Instead, responding to an invitation to arbitrate between two tribes in Yathrib, he chose to take his message to a town where he could lead and organise men so as to organise a religious movement of radical reform. (Successful arbitration, like other forms of public diplomacy and martial valour, was an avenue towards higher social standing.)

So confessing belief in God and swearing loyalty to His Prophet meant working to effect a political order. As Muḥammad saw things, this order was willed by a God who, while promising Hellfire for polytheists, tolerated a variety of monotheist practices, on the condition that the monotheists and indeed all creation acknowledge His authority as delegated by Him to His Prophet Muḥammad, who was charged with the task of re establishing this order on earth. It would thus be in Medina that Muslims embarked on the project, first by founding a simple but highly effective polity within the town, and second by launching a series of small but equally highly effective military campaigns outside it. In the short term, these brought the modest settlements of Arabia under the Prophet's control, each paying a tax or a tribute to symbolise their acknowledgement of God's authority, payable to His Prophet. In the long term, the campaigns grew into the conquest armies of the 640s and 650s (and beyond), which would overrun much of the Byzantine and all of the Sasanian Near East. Because the Prophet's and the caliphs' authority over these lands were understood to derive from God, it was as indivisible as His. It followed that prescribing and interpreting articles of Muslim belief, legislating, and ruling a multi ethnic and religiously pluralistic empire all these and other functions fell to the Prophet and the caliphs to carry out. The historical tradition preserves a letter purportedly written by the Prophet to a tribesman named 'Amr ibn Ḥazm, whom Muḥammad had sent to govern south Arabian tribes; whatever its exact provenance the authenticity of this document, like that of nearly all documents from the early period,

is impossible to verify it neatly expresses seventh and eighth century attitudes. We read that the Prophet instructs 'Amr to fear God, to give instruction in the Qur'an, in the attractions of Heaven and fears of Hell and in various rituals and rites (including prayer) and also to tax and distribute booty according to a regime that distinguishes between rain and spring fed lands, on the one hand, and artificially irrigated land, on the other, between cows and bulls and calves and sheep, between Muslim and non Muslim, male and female, free and slave.[2] Taxing was no less a religious activity than was praying.

The history made by seventh century Muslims is thus at once religious, military and political history, and it is dominated by a prophet and then caliphs who, delegated by God, enjoyed His indivisible authority. In fact, we shall see that a great deal of the century's religious and political change was effected by three men: the Prophet Muḥammad and two long ruling caliphs: Mu'awiya ibn Abī Sufyan (r. 661 80) and 'Abd al Malik ibn Marwan (r. 685 705). Under their leadership the Near East would witness the last great religious movement of Antiquity. It almost goes without saying that in subsequent periods much in the Islamic religious tradition would evolve and transform; even so important a discipline as the study of Prophetic traditions only crystallised in the ninth century. Still, already by the end of the seventh century, what could be described as the core of Islamic belief had taken form: that the One God had made Himself known definitively and clearly in the Qur'an and the experience of the Prophet Muḥammad and his community. Meanwhile, the century would also witness the founding of the last great empire of Antiquity, which, at its height in the decades following the death of 'Abd al Malik, would stretch from the Atlantic to the Oxus. In the space of three generations Arabs had moved from the periphery of the civilised world to the courts that ruled much of it, imprinting their language, culture and nascent religion upon millions. Recorded history has scarcely seen a more powerful fusion of belief and action than that effected by early Muslims.

How this happened can be answered theologically or historically. The theological answer because God willed it so generally lies behind all accounts provided by the pre modern tradition, whether apologetic (Islamic) or polemic (usually Christian). According to these traditions, men may receive punishment or reward, but they always remain instruments of God's design. In the Islamic version, this design unfolds cyclically through history, as God, acting either

2 Abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al rusul wa'l muluk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.*, 15 vols. in 3 series (Leiden, 1879 1901), series I, pp. 1727ff.; trans. I. K. Poonawala as *The history of al Ṭabarī*, vol. IX: *The last years of the Prophet* (Albany, 1990), pp. 85ff.

mercifully or wrathfully, makes good on His promise to Man by sending prophets or other holy men, whom men then usually ignore; He also sends down chastisements of various kinds (evil men, plagues, earthquakes), which they cannot. (God's participation in human affairs is occasionally very direct, such as when He dispatches angels to fight alongside Muslims in an early battle against polytheists.) A rather more transcendent God stands behind some modern accounts, which typically replace God's miracles with His invisible hand, but the result is much the same – an Islamic 'exceptionalism', in which the laws of history are temporarily suspended.[3] Of course, God's agency is not something that we, as historians, should try to measure or describe; and even if we dismiss soldier angels and similar miracles, such modern answers are by definition as persuasive to most historians as arguments for Intelligent Design are to most palaeontologists. We must therefore content ourselves with describing and explaining the conduct of men – that is, writing history without the benefit of divine intervention.

This said, when set out with any real precision, historical reconstructions – typically those that hold that Muḥammad was at once visionary, principled and pragmatic, and Ḥijāzī society was in a social or environmental crisis to which he offered answers,[4] that the Byzantine and Sasanian provinces of the metropolitan Near East were poorly defended, and thus relatively easily overrun by Muslims energised by a new faith – are vulnerable to near lethal historiographic criticisms. As we shall see all too frequently throughout this chapter, the historiographic ground cannot bear interpretations that carry the freight of much real detail. For reasons made clear in chapter 15, the study of early Islam is plagued by a wide range of historiographic problems: the sources internal to the tradition purport to preserve a great deal of detailed history, but with very few exceptions they are late and polemically inclined; meanwhile, the sources external to the tradition are in many instances much earlier, but they know so little of what was happening in Arabia and Iraq that they are inadequate for detailed reconstruction.[5] What is abundant is in general unreliable; what is relatively reliable is invariably too little; meanwhile, the painstaking work

3 C. F. Robinson, 'Reconstructing early Islam: Truth and consequences', in H. Berg (ed.), *Method and theory in the study of Islamic origins* (Leiden, 2003).

4 For the most recent attempt at an environmental explanation, see A Korotayev, V. Klimenko and D. Proussakov, 'Origins of Islam: Political anthropological and environmental context', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 52 (1999).

5 On the Prophet, see F. E. Peters, 'The quest for the historical Muhammad', *IJMES*, 23 (1991); Ibn Warraq (ed.), *The quest for the historical Muhammad* (Amherst, NY, 2000); but cf. R. Hoyland, 'Writing the biography of the Prophet Muhammad: Problems and solutions', *History Compass*, 5 (2007).

required to identify and isolate reliable accounts has only relatively recently begun.[6] Attempts to link Muḥammad's preaching to economic change or commercial dynamism in Arabia have been especially common; and not only are they typically based on unreliable sources, but they also very often reflect quaintly anachronistic models of economy, society and belief. There is nothing wrong in principle with proposing materialist interpretations of Islamic history, provided that the model is appropriate and the evidence sufficient.[7] So far neither condition is present.

Given the state of the evidence, the most one can do is to set out some historical answers very schematically. In what follows I endeavour to do precisely that, drawing upon the Islamic and non Islamic literary evidence, in addition to the material evidence, as and when it is relevant. Alongside this historiographic prudence sits – perhaps uneasily – the conviction that, despite all the difficulties, early Islam is explicable, provided that it is explicated within the geographic, religious and political terms that are characteristic of the Late Antique Near East.

Ḥijazī monotheism?

The Islamic tradition generally came to describe pre Islamic Arabian history as the *jahiliyya* – a period of 'ignorance' during which the pure monotheism that had been implanted in Arabia by Abraham was perverted by idol worshipping polytheists, leaving only minority communities of Jews, the stray Christian and *ḥanīf*s (indigenous monotheists) to worship God.[8] Whatever its historicity, the construction of a naive *jahiliyya* clearly formed part of a broader cultural re orientation that took place during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods, when ethnic and religious identities took new shapes: as tribesmen settled in garrisons and towns of the Fertile Crescent during the seventh and

6 See, for some examples, M. Lecker, 'Did Muḥammad conclude treaties with the Jewish tribes Naḍīr, Qurayẓa and Qaynuqa'?', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 17 (1997); M. Lecker, 'The death of the Prophet Muḥammad: Did Waqidī invent some of the evidence?', *ZDMG*, 145 (1995); G. Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996); and H. Motzki (ed.), *The biography of Muḥammad: The issue of the sources* (Leiden, 2000).

7 See P. Gran, 'Political economy as a paradigm for the study of Islamic history', *IJMES*, 11 (1980); M. Ibrahim, *Merchant capital and Islam* (Austin, 1990); and, for materialist based sociology, M. Bamyeh, *The social origins of Islam: Mind, economy, discourse* (Minneapolis, 1999).

8 On the *ḥanīf*s, especially in terms of the epigraphic evidence (some of which is discussed below), see A. Rippin, 'RḤMNN and the Ḥanīfs', in W. B. Hallaq and D. P. Little (eds.), *Islamic studies presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden, 1991).

eighth centuries, what it meant to be an Arab and a Muslim came into sharper focus,[9] and this refocusing involved the elaboration of an Arabian past consistent with the Qur'anic history. At least some of the traditional view of a pre Islamic Ḥijaz dominated by paganism also seems to reflect generic monotheist polemic as much as it does authentic history; Arabian 'pagans', on this reading, were monotheists who came up short. It is certainly the case that in the middle of the eighth century Muslims would accuse Christians of being idolaters because they worshipped the Cross, and this can scarcely be taken to mean that eighth century Syria was dominated by idolatry.[10] Unfortunately, there is relatively little evidence with which we might test the traditional views of things, but although there is little doubt that the worship of multiple gods through idols was the prestige form of religiosity,[11] what we happen to have does throw some doubt upon it. Strains of mono theism (rabbinic and non rabbinic Judaism, varieties of Christianity and Jewish Christianity being its principal forms) may not have been as strong among the Arabs of the mid Peninsula as they were among those in the south or in Iraq and especially Syria, where a Ghassanid Christianity has been voluminously documented,[12] but they seem to have been stronger than the Islamic tradition describes them.

Things are less clear in Arabia than we would wish them to be, but monotheism had certainly gained a solid foothold well before Muḥammad. The clearest example of this comes in the Yemeni town of Najran, which was the centre of South Arabian Christianity from the fifth century.[13] Tradition

9 See S. Agha and T. Khalidi, 'Poetry and identity in the Umayyad age', *al Abhath*, 50 1 (2002 3).

10 See, for example, G. R. Hawting, *The idea of idolatry and the emergence of Islam: From polemic to history* (Cambridge, 1999).

11 In general, see J. Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their history from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London, 2003), pp. 600f.; R. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs from the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 139ff.; on Mecca in particular, C. Robin, 'Les "filles de Dieu" de Saba' à La Mecque: Réflexions sur l'agencement des panthéons dans l'Arabie ancienne', *Semitica*, 50 (2000).

12 I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the fifth century* (Washington, DC, 1989); I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the sixth century*, vol. I, parts 1 and 2 (Washington, DC, 1995 and 2002).

13 See J. S. Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in pre Islamic times* (London, 1979); Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, pp. 146 50; C. Robin, 'Judaisme et christianisme en Arabie du sud d'après les sources épigraphiques et archéologiques', *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 10 (1980); J. Beauchamp and C. Robin, 'Le Christianisme dans le péninsule arabique dans l'épigraphie et l'archéologie', *Hommage à Paul Lemerle, Travaux et mémoires*, 8 (Paris, 1981); on Najran and Arab Christianity in general, there remain useful comments in T. Andrae, 'Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum', *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift*, 23 (1923), pp. 149 80.

explains one verse of the Qur'an (Q 2:61) by adducing a visit to the Prophet by a delegation of Christians from the town, and some reports have the town's Jews join this delegation. As noted in chapter 4, Judaism was powerfully attractive to the Ḥimyarite kings that ruled in the south, who extended their authority during the fifth century towards the west and north, until the Christian Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia reduced them to vassal status in the early sixth. This triggered the infamous massacre of the Christians of Najran by Dhu Nuwas in 522 3,[14] an event that in turn led to an Ethiopian invasion of Arabia led by Abraha that avenged their martyrdom and brought Christian imperialism into the heart of the Peninsula. Abraha's ill fated exped ition to the Ḥijaz is known only to the Qur'an, but it conforms to the pattern of his Arabian expansion, which is partially documented in a number of inscriptions.[15] In the east, the Nestorian Church, which is otherwise and less misleadingly known as the 'Church of the East',[16] was often tolerated and less often persecuted by the Sasanians; it had earlier penetrated the Gulf and eastern Arabia, and there it established an ecclesiastical organisation and claimed adherents well down the coast as well as among the Lakhmids, the Sasanians' client kingdom centred in al Ḥīra. Several churches and monas teries survive in eastern Arabia, and although at least some were once thought to date from the Sasanian period, it seems that they actually belong to the eighth and ninth centuries,[17] a fact that says something about the tenacity of Christian belief even within the Peninsula.

Ringing the Peninsula's Byzantine, Sasanian and Aksumite periphery, monotheism was thus becoming an increasingly compelling language of political expression. How did these beliefs monotheistic and quasi monotheistic (in the eyes of many, Trinitarian Christianity might sit some where between monotheism and polytheism) affect Arabian polytheism? Can we detect some faint signals for either parallel or related movements towards some variety of monotheism? The evidence of pre Islamic inscrip tions, though currently limited to southern Arabia, is particularly important in

14 See, in general, C. Robin 'Le judaïsme de Himyar', *Arabia*, 1 (2003); J. Beauchamp, F. Briquel Chatonnet, and C. Robin, 'La persécution des chrétiens de Nagran et la chronologie Himyarite', *Aram*, 11 12 (1999 2000); and M. Lecker, 'Judaism among Kinda and the *ridda* of Kinda', *JAOS*, 115 (1995).

15 See below, note 19.

16 A recent summary can be found in J. F. Healey, 'The Christians of Qatar in the 7th century AD', in I. R. Netton (ed.), *Studies in honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. I: *Hunter of the East: Arabic and Semitic studies* (Leiden, 2000).

17 See now D. Kennet, 'The decline of eastern Arabia in the Sasanian period', *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, 18 (2007), pp. 86 122.

this regard: for there we can see how pagan formulae begin to be eclipsed by what appears to be the monotheistic marker of *al raḥman*, 'the merciful', which would come to be one of the principal epithets with which Muslims would describe Allah, the one God. Dating these inscriptions is very difficult, but it has been argued that the eclipse begins in the fourth century.[18] One early sixth century inscription, which glorifies Abraha, reads: 'By the might and aid and mercy of the Merciful and His Messiah and of the Holy Spirit. They have written this inscription: Behold Abraha ... king of Saba' ... and Dhu Raydan and Ḥaḍṛamawt and Yamanat and of "their" Arabs on the plateau and the Tihamat.'[19] With a dense fringe of Christians and Jews on the eastern and southern periphery, and some signs for the emergence of a supreme God in the inscriptions currently available from the south, one might expect to find similar developments at work in the Ḥijaz. In fact, the South Arabian inscrip tions have sometimes been taken to demonstrate the presence of a religious movement (or community), which the sources describe as the Ḥanafiyya, and which began in the south and moved into the Ḥijaz.[20]

There is much to be said for this argument, not least of which is that it makes some sense of what the tradition itself says: pre Islamic poetry and the language of early Islamic ritual hint at an earlier belief in a supreme God, one frequently known by the same name (*al raḥman*). From this perspective, Muḥammad's charge that his contemporaries were committing *shirk* ('associ ation' and, by extension, polytheism) can be construed as a charge that they were associating other deities with the supreme God whom they already acknowledged, rather than as a blanket condemnation of polytheism.[21] Very telling is the testimony of the Qur'an itself, which, whatever the precise course of its assembly and transmission, clearly has its origins in seventh century Arabia. It is telling in two respects. The first is that it can be read to suggest a geography of belief in which the supreme God (Allah) was acknowledged as the creator, and where lesser deities are called upon principally to intercede with Allah. According to this view (or a version of it), the old gods were in

18 A. Beeston, 'Himyarite monotheism', in A. M. Abdulla *et al.* (eds.), *Studies in the history of Arabia*, vol. II: *Pre Islamic Arabia* (Riyadh, 1984); C. Robin, 'Du paganisme au monothéisme', in C. Robin (ed.), *L'Arabie antique de Karib'īl à Mahomet: Nouvelles données sur l'histoire des arabes grâces aux inscriptions* (Aix en Provence, 1991).

19 For the inscription and the events, see S. Smith, 'Events in Arabia in the 6th century AD', *BSOAS*, 16 (1954), p. 437.

20 For criticisms, see above, note 8.

21 See, for example, K. Athamina, 'Abraham in Islamic perspective: Reflections on the development of monotheism in pre Islamic Arabia', *Der Islam*, 81 (2004); M. J. Kister, 'Labbayka, allahuma, labbayka: On a monotheistic aspect of a Jahiliyya practice', *JSAI*, 2 (1980).

decline and the power of the supreme God was in the ascendant; Muḥammad's movement, it follows, accelerated a progress already in train.[22] Here it should be noted that tradition acknowledges the presence in other parts of Arabia, including the Najd and al Yamama, of prophetic figures whom it discredits as pseudo and copy cat prophets. The most notorious of these was named Musaylima ibn Ḥabīb, who preached in al Yamama with a book written in rhymed prose the very prophetic portfolio that Muḥammad himself carried. Might it be that the sixth and seventh centuries, which produced messianic and prophetic figures among the Christians and Jews, produced among the incipient monotheists of Arabia a number of legislating prophets? If so, what we have in early Islam may be the culmination of a gradual process, in which the old gods grew gradually weaker and the supreme God gradually more powerful, one pushed along by several charismatic religious figures.

The Qur'an is telling in another respect. It claims to express a 'clear Arabic', but it is an Arabic that may have been clearer to its contemporaries than it was to scholars of subsequent periods. In fact, a very conservative seventh and eighth century tradition of textual transmission has ironically conserved the text's polyglot origins: Qur'anic language actually accommodates not only a wide range of non Arabic loanwords, but also, perhaps, a Syriac Christian substrate of language and belief, which, though hardly detectable elsewhere, is what we might expect to find, given that Arabia was geographically and culturally contiguous to the heartland of Syriac Christianity. The argument for this substrate can be taken much too far, but to acknowledge it is in no sense to discredit Muḥammad or challenge the originality of his vision at least any more than identifying the Jewish and Graeco Roman context in which Jesus operated is to challenge his. It is merely to identify some of the ingredients with which Muḥammad forged his enormously powerful ideas. The fact is that terms as crucial as *Qur'an* and *sura* are Aramaic in origin, and postulating a Syriac substrate can unlock several obscure passages, while others are resolved by positing referents in the biblical, exegetical and liturgical traditions of eastern Christianity. An example can be found in Q 108, which, read as 'pure' Arabic, is scarcely meaningful either to medieval Muslim exegetes or modern critics:

> Surely we have given you abundance
> So pray to your Lord and make sacrifice
> Surely he who hates you will be disinherited/without posterity/cut off.

22 W. M. Watt, 'Belief in a "High God" in pre Islamic Mecca', *JSS*, 16 (1971).

Read as an Arabic Syriac hybrid, the text improves considerably:

> Surely we have given you [the virtue] of patience
> So pray to your Lord and persist [in your prayer]
> Your enemy [Satan] is thus vanquished.

Muḥammad was no crypto Christian, and there is no good evidence for an Arabic bible in this period, but the dogma of his illiteracy obscures the presence of monotheistic ideas and practices with which he apparently had some real familiarity.[23]

Such, in very schematic form, is the evidence for movements of (or towards) monotheism in western Arabia. Though currently inadequate, it may improve in time. But it may also be that the Ḥijaz was not merely sluggish in following developments taking place in the south and east, but required nothing less than revolution. This should not necessarily surprise. For one thing, the area was not tightly stitched into the regional fabric by trade patterns. When the evidence is scrutinised carefully, the argument collapses for the movement of luxury goods (especially textiles and spices) through a Meccan entrepôt, leaving local trade in heavier (and thus lower profit) animal products, perhaps especially skins.[24] Again, the action was on the periphery: Sasanian pressure in the Gulf and north eastern Arabia seems to have started by the middle of the third century, when cities were founded on both of its sides; by the latter half of the sixth century there seem to have been both military and trading colonies in the area.[25] For another and again in contrast to the more promising south and east a very forbidding environment and climate, combined with relatively modest natural resources,[26] meant that settlement in inner and western Arabia was sparse, levels of consumption and investment low, and the interest of Arabia's imperial neighbours

23 C. Luxenberg, *Die syro aramäische Lesart des Koran*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 2004), trans. as *The Syro Aramaic reading of the Koran* (Berlin, 2007), where this substrate becomes an 'original' version of a mixed language text; the argument is occasionally forced and its readings often arbitrary; cf. C. Gilliot, 'Le Coran, fruit d'un travail collectif?', in D. De Smet *et al.* (eds.), *al Kitab: La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam* (Brussels, 2004). I draw the example from Gilliot, 'Le Coran', pp. 220 1.

24 P. Crone, *Meccan trade and the rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987; repr. Piscataway, NJ, 2004); P. Crone, 'Quraysh and the Roman army: Making sense of the Meccan leather trade', *BSOAS*, 70 (2007).

25 See, for example, D. Whitehouse and A. Williamson, 'Sasanian maritime trade', *Iran*, 11 (1973); D. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1990).

26 See G. W. Heck, '"Arabia without spices": An alternate hypothesis', *JAOS*, 123 (2003), where the argument for a 'vibrant and productive' macroeconomy, turning especially on silver mining, is put very robustly.

accordingly limited to its borders. Inscriptional evidence suggests that Rome had brought parts of the northern Ḥijaz under its direct control in the second century, but sustained and direct control ended well before Islam began to take root. There are accounts that have the Sasanians levy the occasional tax or tribute, but the Ḥijaz itself was unattractive to the Byzantine and Sasanian states in the long term: projecting power into inner and western Arabia was costly in many respects, and the benefits would not have repaid those costs.

Muḥammad in Mecca

According to the Islamic tradition of the late eighth and ninth centuries, it was within the relatively insulated and polytheist society of Mecca that Muḥammad was born in what it calls 'the year of the elephant'. The year is typically calculated to 570, when Mecca is said to have been threatened by an army sent by Abraha, the Ethiopian who had conquered South Arabia and was now moving into the west, his army outfitted with impressive African elephants that were presumably unfamiliar to the Ḥijazīs. The events are vaguely known to the Qur'an (105), but tradition attaches all manner of speculation, legend and polemic to the obscure verses. This generating 'history' by assigning historical circumstances to verses that had become increasingly obscure is a prominent feature of the early biographical tradition,[27] and it places near insuperable obstacles in the path of writing detailed Prophetic history. Indeed, of Muḥammad's birth, childhood and early adulthood we know almost nothing that can properly be called knowledge.[28] In this period the general problem of writing Prophetic history (the great bulk of what is transmitted as Prophetic history was actually generated during the eighth and ninth centuries by exegetes attempting to make sense of those increasingly obscure Qur'anic terms) is compounded by the indifference of early Muslims. For Muḥammad's experience before the Angel Gabriel first spoke to him appears to have been of little interest to the initial generations of Muslims, who focused on what he became rather than who he had been. Neither the non Islamic sources nor material evidence can shed any real light.

When was Muḥammad born? According to fairly reliable literary and inscriptional evidence, the date of 570 is altogether too late for the tradition's invasion to have taken place, and if one is determined to retain the association

27 Crone, *Meccan trade*, pp. 203ff.

28 For a discussion of this and related problems, see chapter 15; on Muḥammad's date of birth, L. I. Conrad, 'Abraha and Muḥammad: Some observations apropos of chronology and literary topoi in the early Arabic historical tradition', *BSOAS*, 50 (1987).

between birth date and elephant army, it may be that he was born in the 550s instead. Muḥammad's name, which means 'the praised one', is an epithet that probably post dates his prophetic claims. The legends proliferate. In some instances inspired by Qur'anic obscurities, the tradition describes in striking detail an orphaned child who would be cared for by an uncle named Abu Ṭalib, the father of the fourth caliph to be, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, and who would travel to the north on trade. These journeys are often connected with his employment by a wealthy widow named Khadīja, whom he would marry, and who would bear him many children, although no sons who survived beyond childhood. As legends, these say more about how later Muslims understood prophecy than they do the circumstances of his life.[29] Thus when a monk (or holy man or Jew the specifics are fluid) realises (such as by recognising a mark between the shoulder blades) that the youthful Muḥammad will be called to prophethood, the reader is to understand that other monotheists acknowledge one of the tradition's essential claims: this prophet belongs in a long chain of monotheist prophets sent by God. Other initiation accounts have a young Muḥammad's chest opened and miraculously closed; according to one version of this story, the surgery is performed by two eagle like birds, who remove two black clots of blood, wash, and reseal the chest with 'the seal of prophethood'.[30] Other accounts have him participate in the purifying and rebuilding of the Ka'ba (the centre of the pagan sanctuary that would be converted into the centre of Islamic ritual). Still others describe an inchoate or incipient monotheist sensibility: we read that Muḥammad took to wandering in local hills, given over to quiet contemplation. If any of these accounts contain any kernel of truth, we cannot separate it from myth; because the non Islamic sources that know of such accounts seem to rely upon the Islamic tradition, they cannot be called in as a control. That Muḥammad belonged to the clan of the Banu Hashim of the tribe of the Quraysh, which was the leading tribe of Mecca, is probable, however.

Muḥammad only walks onto the set of history when God begins to speak to him through the Angel Gabriel. But the stage lights are very dim virtually all we have that is early is the little that the Qur'an tells us, and both the sequence and chronology of its chapters remain unclear. (In what follows, I accept that at least some Meccan and Medinan chapters can be disentangled from each

29 See J. Wansbrough, *The Sectarian milieu: Content and composition of Islamic salvation history* (Oxford, 1978).

30 For discussions, see U. Rubin, *The eye of the beholder: The life of Muḥammad as viewed by the early Muslims* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 59ff.; see also U. Rubin, *Between Bible and Qur'an: The Children of Israel and the Islamic self image* (Princeton, 1999).

other.) Tradition associates the turning point with two Qur'anic passages. The first (96:1 5) reads as follows:

> Recite in the name of your Lord who created
> Created man from a blood clot.
> Recite your Lord is the most generous
> Who taught by the pen
> Taught man what he did not know.

The second (Q 74:1 5) reads as follows:

> O you who are wrapped in your cloak
> Arise and warn
> And magnify your Lord
> Purify your clothes
> And shun pollution.

The tradition frequently holds that the first revelations were followed by a pause of three years, whereupon they came regularly for the next ten years or so. Traditional dating schemes, which generally turn on changes in style, associate short verses of striking imagery with the Meccan period. 'Arise and warn' (72:2), which is one of these, marks out Muḥammad as a 'warner', as does Q 26:214 ('And warn your nearest relatives'), a verse that is usually taken to signal the beginning of Muḥammad's public preaching. The Prophet thus follows in the footsteps of early monotheist warner prophets some 124,000 of them, according to one count, although only 135 are said to have combined prophecy with politics.[31] But whereas earlier prophets had typically warned their own communities of catastrophe (e.g. the 'painful chastisement' predicted by Noah), Muḥammad warned all mankind of nothing less than the Last Day (34:28 and 40:15). Thus the first verse of Q 81, which is usually said to be early: 'When the sun will be darkened, when the stars will be thrown down, when the mountains will be set moving ... then will a soul know what it has produced.'

How did God make Himself understood through Muḥammad? According to tradition, God's messages were delivered orally by Gabriel to the Prophet, who subsequently dictated them from memory to a scribe for recording on the writing material that was available, such as bones, bark and stones; after the Prophet's death, contemporaries are said to have had what amounts to personal versions of the Qur'an, but the task of establishing and distributing a single, authorised version was left to the third caliph, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan (r. 644 656).

31 The numbers come from P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic political thought* (Edinburgh, 2004), p. 10.

How well Muḥammad could read and write if he could do either at all is left unanswered by the Qur'an. Tradition would answer the question by asserting the dogma of his illiteracy, which functioned to insulate the Prophet from claims that his knowledge of monotheist history came from familiarity with the Torah or Gospels, as other monotheists had alleged. (For what they are worth, a late seventh century Armenian chronicler has it that Muḥammad was 'learned and informed in the history of Moses' (that is, the Pentateuch), while John of Damascus (d. *c.* 750) held that Muḥammad knew the Old and New Testaments, and had met an Arian monk.[32]) The dogma also functioned to emphasise the 'miraculous inimitability' (*i'jaz*) of the Qur'an: Moses could transform walking sticks into snakes, and Jesus could heal and resurrect, but Muḥammad spoke directly for God in God's perfect speech. Dogmas aside, what is clear from the text itself is that many Qur'anic passages directly responded to problems that Muḥammad faced, both personal and communal. This is a pattern that becomes especially clear in Medina, such as when Muḥammad contravened social norms by marrying Zaynab, the divorced wife of his foster son, Zayd, a matter that was controversial enough not only to generate a Qur'anic dispensation, but also to pass into the Christian tradition;[33] other examples include the raid at Nakhla (see below).

Exactly how the revelations were received cannot be known in any detail either. The lists and accounts of early converts more clearly reflect controversies about post Prophetic politics than they do Prophetic history. Among the men, Abu Bakr (the first caliph) and 'Alī (Muḥammad's son in law and later recognised as the fourth caliph) are the favoured candidates for pride of place; among the women, Khadīja is unrivalled. Nor can much be said about how the polytheist establishment responded to Muḥammad's prophetic claims. In the moments of revelation Muḥammad was given to shaking or even seizures of one sort or another, and according to one set of traditions, even Khadīja reacted to Q 96:1 5 by summoning a local monotheist, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who reassured' her that Muḥammad was indeed a genuine prophet. 'There has come to him the greatest law that came to Moses' (law (*namus*)being glossed as 'Gabriel').[34] The Qur'an itself makes plain that many Meccans quite naturally

32 Sebeos, *The Armenian history attributed to Sebeos*, trans. R. W. Thomson with commentary by J. Howard Johnston, Translated Texts for Historians 31, 2 vols. (Liverpool, 1999), vol. I, p. 95; John of Damascus, *Écrits sur l'Islam*, ed. and trans. R. Le Coz (Paris, 1992), pp. 211 12; cf. A. Palmer, S. Brock and R. Hoyland, *The seventh century in the West Syrian chronicles* (Liverpool, 1993), p. 130, note 293.

33 John of Damascus, *Écrits*, pp. 221 3.

34 Ibn Hisham, *al Sīra al nabawiyya*, ed. M. al Ṣaqqa *et al.*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1936), vol. I, p. 167.

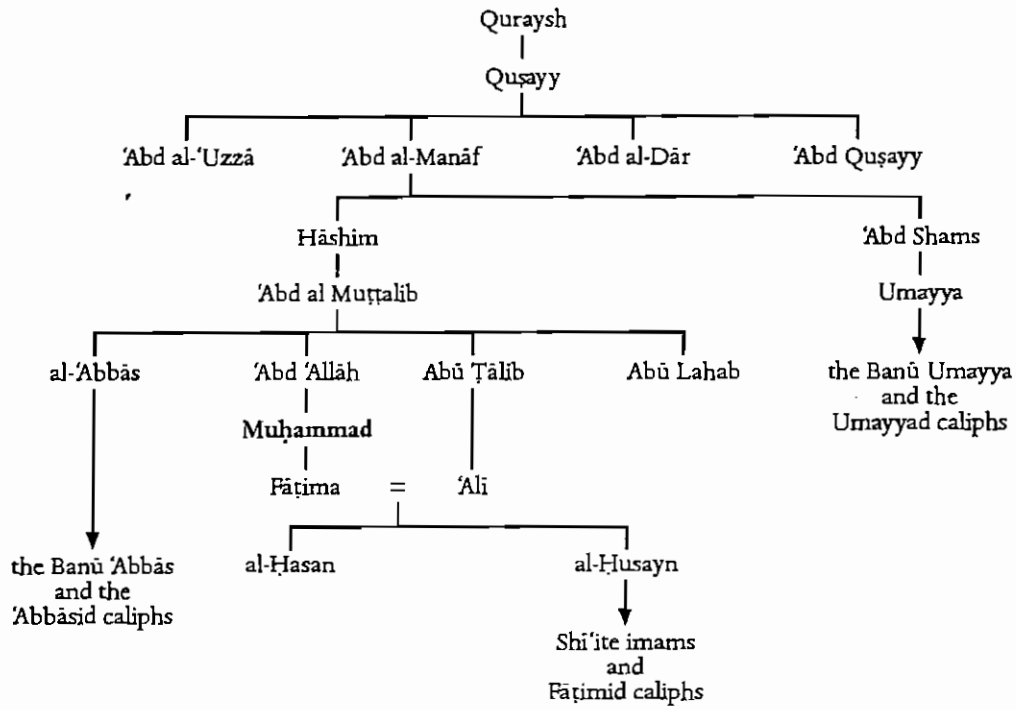
took him to be a magician, soothsayer or otherwise possessed. There were other reasons to find Muḥammad objectionable. As a 'warner' in the tradition of early prophets, he emphasised man's accountability to God, His power, the rewards of Heaven and the punishment of Hell. He also levelled criticism against the prevailing social norms, railing against female infanticide and the abuses of wealth. None of this apparently sat well with the polytheist establish ment, especially because he came to attack its gods and claim the Ka'ba for the One God. As his followers grew in number and Muḥammad grew in stature, the opposition to his movement stiffened. And when his uncle and guardian Abu Ṭalib died, Muḥammad became vulnerable; some measure of persecution then followed; a flight to Abyssinia was aborted; the *hijra* to Yathrib took place.[35] Muḥammad lived in a society where kinship ties provided such protec tion and safety as were possible, and, with the death of Abu Ṭalib, these ties, long stretched by Muḥammad's preaching, now snapped. He had to flee.

Muḥammad and his community after the *hijra*

That the *hijra* came to mark a watershed in the history of the Prophet and his community is made clear by several things, including the very frequent appearance and special significance in the Qur'an of the derived Arabic word *muhajir* (pl. *muhajirun*, *'hijra* makers', 'Emigrants'), and the *anṣar* ('Helpers' those in Medina who would follow Muḥammad). Borrowings of *muhajir* are used by Greek and Syriac writers as early as the 640s; there it is used to describe Muslims in general, a usage that is sometimes echoed in the Islamic tradition too. Early in the same decade, a bilingual papyrus receipt (in Arabic and Greek) refers to the 'month of Jumada I of the year 22' (643), which signals the use (at least in Egypt) of the new Muslim calendar based on the *hijra*; and an epitaph written as far away from Arabia as Cyprus may provide an exceptionally early attestation (AH 29) for the term *hijra* itself.[36] Centuries later families would crow about their descent from the 'Emigrants'.

35 For details on this period, the standard work remains W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953), and, for the next, W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956). Both are historiographically obsolete.

36 A. Grohmann, *Arabische Chronologie* (Leiden, 1966), pp. 13 14; E. Combe, J. Sauvaget and G. Wiet, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe I* (Cairo, 1931), pp. 5 6; and L. Halevi, 'The paradox of Islamization: Tombstone inscriptions, Qur'anic recitations, and the problem of religious change', *History of Religions*, 44 (2004), p. 121.



3. Muḥammad's family.
After Ira M. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies*, 2nd edn, 2002, p. 19, fig. 1. Copyright Cambridge University Press, reproduced with permission.

On this the question of the *hijra* and associated terms we can even do better than these relatively early attestations. The earliest use of the term 'Emigrants' comes in a contemporaneous set of documents, which are unfa miliar to the Qur'an, but preserved in several versions in the eighth and ninth century Islamic tradition; they have come to be known as the Constitution of Medina. One version begins as follows:

> The Prophet, God's blessings and peace be upon him, wrote a document [governing relations] between the Emigrants and Helpers, in which he entered into a friendly compact with the Jews, confirmed their [claims] upon their religions and properties, and stipulated terms as follows:
>
> *In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate. This is a document from Muḥammad, God's prayers and peace be upon him, between the believers and Muslims of the Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them, joined them and struggled with them. They are a single community* (umma) *to the exclusion of [other] people.*[37]

37 Ibn Hisham, *al Sīra al nabawiyya*, vol. I, p. 501; for different translations, see A. Guillaume, *The life of Muhammad* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 231 2, and now M. Lecker, *'The Constitution of Medina': Muḥammad's first legal document* (Princeton, 2004).

A series of stipulations about paying bloodwit, mutual aid and support, the conditions of just retaliation and practices of warfare are then enumerated. As the only documentary material to survive from Muḥammad's time, the Constitution of Medina is of immense historiographic significance. (Precisely how soon after the *hijra* these documents were drawn up is impossible to know, but none can date much beyond the battle of Badr in AH 2.) What the Constitution shows us is two interrelated processes.

The first was how Muḥammad assembled a community (*umma*) that he would lead. In other words, he was engaged in politics. Unlike the model of community upon which classical Islam would settle a community of Muslims who, by professing a more or less settled creed and carrying out a more or less fixed set of rituals, were distinct both from polytheists and other monotheists the *umma* of the Constitution appears to accommodate the Jews of Medina, although they occupy a subordinate status. This inclusive sense of community reflects the relatively catholic nature of early Islamic belief: we have already seen that Muḥammad had followed in the footsteps of earlier prophets (Moses and Abraham are especially prominent in the Qur'an), and his call for monotheism was initially compatible with those made by his predecessors. In fact, the lines between Muslim and Jew were not yet firmly drawn,[38] evolving Muslim ritual (such as the fast of the tenth of Muharram and 'the middle prayer ritual') being still closely patterned upon Jewish traditions (such as the fast of the tenth of Tishri and the second of the three ritual prayers).[39] Even a matter as important as the direction of prayer (*qibla*) was not yet settled: it seems that Muslims directed their prayers to Jerusalem until what the Qur'an (see Q 2:142 150) and tradition describe as a decisive break with the Jews of Medina, which involved establishing Mecca once and for all as the normative *qibla*. The break would also involve expelling the Jewish tribes of the Banu Qaynuqa' and Banu al Naḍīr and executing all of the men of a third, the Banu Qurayẓa.[40]

The fate of the Jewish tribes of Medina is closely related in our sources to the second process that the Constitution shows at work: Muḥammad putting his nascent community into shape for war making against his polytheist opponents. In this, the Constitution conforms to the great stress laid in the

38 For a radical proposal along these lines, see F. M. Donner, 'From believers to Muslims: Confessional self identity in the early Islamic community', *al Abhath*, 50 1 (2002 3).

39 See, for example, S. Bashear, *"Āshura*, an early Muslim fast', *ZDMG*, 141 (1991); repr. in S. Bashear, *Studies in early Islamic tradition* (Jerusalem, 2004).

40 M. J. Kister, 'The massacre of the Banu Qurayẓa: A re examination of a tradition', *JSAI*, 8 (1986), pp. 61 96.

Qur'an upon fighting on behalf of God in general, and upon the connection between emigration or 'going out' (*khuruj*, as opposed to 'sitting', *qu'ud*) and this fighting, as Q 2:218 ('those who emigrate and fight on the path of God'), and other verses put it. The Muslim is 'one who believes in God and the last Day and fights on the path of God' (Q 9:19). We have seen that Muḥammad's thinking and preaching in Medina evolved, particularly as relations with the town's Jews evolved. But in so far as the historical tradition offers anything like an accurate record of his concerns, his attention was focused upon fighting outside it. The Medinan phase is thus dominated by his campaigns against passing caravans, settlements and Bedouin tribes. These skirmishes and battles culminated in the capitulation of Mecca itself. *Jihad* (the struggle on behalf of God, which in this context meant nothing more or less than fighting on His behalf) was at the centre of Muḥammad's programme.

Why did Muḥammad take up arms? Leaving aside the vexed question of the vulnerability of Medina to its powerful neighbour, we can be fairly sure that Muḥammad wished his followers to be able to worship in Mecca or its environs, perhaps especially on the hills of Marwa and al Ṣafa', which, as much as or even more than the Ka'ba itself, were integral to early Islamic ritual. Perhaps this wish, combined with the powerfully activist nature of his belief, led Muḥammad to begin hostilities soon after the *hijra*. His forces were typically small, but, with the exception of the battle of Uḥud, well managed and opportunistic.[41] The first skirmish, which is traditionally dated to AH 2, was a caravan raid at a settlement called Nakhla. Little blood was spilt, but what was spilt was spilt in Rajab, a 'forbidden' month, when fighting was proscribed by tribal convention; the event occasioned a revelation (Q 2:217) that allayed the resulting concerns.[42] The battle of Badr, a town that lay about 90 miles south west of Medina, soon followed; the humiliating defeat for the Meccans – some seventy of whom are said to have been killed – is celebrated in Q 8:9, 12, 17 and 42 as proof of God's providential direction of Muḥammad's forces: angels fought alongside them.

Fortunes were dramatically turned at Uḥud, which is conventionally dated to AH 3 or 4. There, a relatively large Meccan force of 3,000 horsemen, led in part

41 On these armies, see E. Landau Tasseron, 'Features of the pre conquest Muslim army in the time of Muḥammad', in A. Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vol. III: *States, resources and armies*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1 (Princeton, 1995), pp. 299 336. The material evidence for military technology only begins with the Marwanids; see D. Nicolle, 'Arms of the Umayyad era: Military technology in a time of change', in Y. Lev (ed.), *War and society in the eastern Mediterranean, 7th 15th centuries* (Leiden, 1997).

42 See M. J. Kister, '"Rajab is the month of God": A study in the persistence of an early tradition', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 1 (1971).

by Khalid ibn al Walīd, who would later command spectacularly successful conquest armies, avenged the defeat of Badr by killing sixty five or seventy Muslims. (The numbers are stereotypical and probably unreliable.) We read that the Prophet himself was wounded. Jewish *Schadenfreude* about the events of Uḥud is traditionally adduced to explain Muḥammad's growing hostility towards them in this period. The Meccans were dilatory in following up the advantage they had gained at Uḥud, giving Muḥammad something like two years to dig a defensive ditch around Medina, which would give its name to the battle of the Ditch in about AH 5. With their cavalry unable to negotiate this obstacle, the Meccans were forced to break off their siege of the town. The Prophet's fortunes had been reversed again. In the meantime, and continuing thereafter, Muḥammad led or sent several successful expeditions against Ḥijazī tribes. We can attach names to those who fought here and elsewhere because Prophetic biography (*sīra*) includes what appear to be some relatively early lists of expedition participants. What we cannot say is how they conducted themselves on the battlefield: just as conversion narratives reflect subsequent history, so, too, do battle narratives such as these. We shall never know what 'Alī, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman did (or failed to do) at Uḥud; what we can know is how claims about status were made in historical narrative.

At this point the fifth and sixth year of the *hijra* the traditional chronology leads in two directions. The first is towards Mecca. In AH 6 Muḥammad, confident in the aftermath of the battle of the Ditch, led a group of Muslims on pilgrimage to Mecca, and although he had to abort it, he nonetheless came away from the settlement of al Ḥudaybiya with an agreement that a pilgrimage could be conducted the following year; a ten year truce was also signed with the Meccans. The following year the oasis town of al Khaybar fell, delivering such large amounts of booty and spoils into Muslim hands that it merits mention in Q 48:18 21. Meanwhile, Muḥammad carried out the pilgrimage that had been agreed the previous year. Medina's strength had thus grown at the expense of Mecca's, and the almost bloodless capitulation of Mecca in AH 8 may have come as something of an anti climax: the Prophet had been carrying on what amounted to a charm offensive against influential Meccans. Most of those notable Qurashīs who had failed to acknowledge Muḥammad during the previous year did so now, although there were apparently some spectacular exceptions, such as Abu Sufyan, the *de facto* leader of the Meccan establishment and father of the second Umayyad caliph, Mu'awiya. Although Muḥammad had apparently been clement towards his Meccan adversaries tradition generally has him spare everyone save a few exceptionally offensive poets one imagines that Mecca remained

inhospitable (and in some respects hostile) to the Muslims. The Prophet would return to Medina for the final two years of his life.

From AH 5 and 6, the traditional chronology also leads in a second direction towards the conquests in general and Syria in particular. The oasis town of Dumat al Jandal lay about fifteen days' march north from Medina; it also lay about half that distance from Damascus. Its strategic position perhaps explains why it was the object of no fewer than three raids, the first of which was led by the Prophet himself in AH 5. It fell for good in AH 9 to Khalid ibn al Walīd, who had been dispatched by Muḥammad, who had himself taken another town in north western Arabia, Tabuk, in the summer of that year, having heard that a coalition of Byzantine and Arab forces had amassed there. In fact, as early as AH 6 or 7, the tradition has Muḥammad dispatch letters to Heraclius, the Negus of Abyssinia and the Sasanian Shah, among others, inviting them to acknowledge his prophecy and convert to Islam. (They all declined.) The terms of capitulation for Dumat al Jandal and Tabuk, as they had been for al Khaybar, called for a tribute payable to Muḥammad. At least in part because the Qur'anic injunction that the People of the Book (that is, monotheists who acknowledge scripture) pay a tribute (*jizya*) is so vague, these capitulation accounts would function as partial models for conquest arrangements.[43] After the conquest of Mecca, Muḥammad is also said to have extended his influence in eastern and southern Arabia, chiefly by treaty rather than conquest. At least one non Islamic source has Muḥammad lead a conquest army into Palestine, but this must be mistaken.[44]

Whatever the accuracy of the sequence and chronology of the Prophet's campaigns, not to mention the authenticity of the texts of letters and treaties ascribed to him, the tradition and, following it, much modern scholarship have seen in these events the origins of the great conquest movements that post dated Muḥammad's death. In broad strokes, this must be true. The dynamic that Muḥammad had set into motion in the 620s did not go still in the 630s: manifesting and exemplifying belief by fighting on behalf of God, and reaping the rewards of this world and the next as a result, continued to exert a powerful and widespread influence long after 632. Put another way, after Muḥammad's death, God would continue to effect His will through the

43 On these and related problems, see W. Schmucker, *Untersuchungen zu einigen wichtigen bodenrechtlichen Konsequenzen der islamischen Eroberungsbewegung* (Bonn, 1972).

44 P. Crone and M. Cook, *Hagarism: The making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 4; R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: A survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam* (Princeton, 1997), p. 555.

agency of tribesmen campaigning on the order of caliphs who had inherited the Prophet's authority. Only gradually and incompletely, as subsequent Islamic history would show was taking up arms disengaged from belief, as armies were professionalised and the state claimed the exclusive right to carry out legitimate violence. 'There shall be no *hijra* after the conquest [of Mecca]' is a widespread tradition that was circulated to discourage eighth and ninth century Muslims from doing exactly what Muḥammad had urged them to do to emigrate and fight in order to prove and manifest their belief.[45]

That Muḥammad had set that dynamic into motion within Arabia is not to say it was an exclusively Arabian phenomenon. The seventh century was a time of Holy War. When Muḥammad was campaigning within the Ḥijaz on behalf of God, the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, having broken from the emperors' tradition by leading armies in person, was campaigning in Armenia and Iraq on behalf of Christ and God.[46] It may even be that in the very year that the Prophet entered into the treaty at al Ḥudaybiya, thus ensuring a peaceful pilgrimage to Mecca, Heraclius' army was storming into Sasanian Iraq, thus ensuring the return of fragments of the Cross to Jerusalem. Events in and outside Arabia had been running in parallel, but they would now intersect.

The death of Muḥammad and its aftermath

Muḥammad died in early June 632 (AH 11) after a short illness. According to what emerged as the prevailing tradition, he left behind devoted followers, revelations that would subsequently be assembled into the Qur'an, clear views on matters of belief and action, and several wives and daughters; but no sons, successors or clear plan of succession. If this, the Sunnī tradition, is correct, one way to square Muḥammad's careful coalition building and prudent politics with the absence of any succession arrangement is to imagine that ensuring the success of his radical monotheism required holding to traditional tribal practices, which gave short shrift to authority that was purely inherited or transferred (rather than also earned). It may also be that, the community being so fragile, Muḥammad thought it unwise to make his wishes clear. Another is to posit on his part an impending sense of the End. There are other possibilities, but there is no way of choosing between them.

45 P. Crone, 'The first century concept of *Hiğra*', *Arabica*, 41 (1994).

46 J. Howard Johnston, 'The official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns', in E. Dabrowa (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine army in the east: Proceedings of a colloquium held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* (Crakow, 1994).

This is not to say that there is little to choose from: the sources of the eighth and ninth centuries have a great deal to say about the events that followed the Prophet's death. They do so not because Muslims shared a Christian fascination with death, but because it was in the events of 632 that the Sunnī Shī'ite divide would be anchored. Might it be that Muḥammad *had* appointed a successor? If not, who was present at the crucial moments after he died, when the fateful decisions were taken? Sunnīs answered the first question in the negative, holding that the community rallied around Abu Bakr, who, as both the first to convert and the most senior, was the natural choice. He would reign only briefly, from 632 to 634; unlike Muḥammad, however, he did appoint a successor, 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭab, during whose ten year reign (634 44) the conquests exploded into the Fertile Crescent. Shī'a came to answer this question of succession in the affirmative, adducing a number of arguments that Muḥammad *had* appointed 'Alī as his successor: to the Shī'ite way of thinking, kinship ('Alī was Muḥammad's son in law and cousin) dictated it, and the facts were recorded not only by the historical record (Muḥammad presented 'Alī as his successor to assemblies of Muslims), but also scripture (where indications of Muḥammad's wish to appoint 'Alī are either read into the text or said to have been read out of it that is, suppressed by the Sunnī tradition). For Sunnīs the succession arrangements were legitimate, if a bit chaotic, and the arrangements *ad hoc* and this as late as 644, when an electoral conclave (*shura*) of six notables was chosen to elect 'Umar's successor. For Shī'a of the so called Rafiḍī variety, the succession amounted to a *coup d'état*: Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Umar's successor, 'Uthman, were all usurpers.[47]

The tradition thus gave answers about who legitimately succeeded Muḥammad (or who did not). Written as it was by authors who lived under the direct or indirect patronage of eighth and ninth century caliphs, governors and rulers of various sorts, it takes for granted that the earliest Muslims should wish to fall behind a ruler. But since there was no tradition of stable rulership in either Mecca or Medina had there been one, one imagines the succession to Muḥammad would have gone altogether more smoothly we might wonder why so many of the tribesmen would have chosen to do so. (In describing the 'wars of apostasy', the *ridda* wars, when Arab tribes outside the Ḥijaz dissolved the treaties they had entered into with Muḥammad, the tradition concedes that many tribesmen did not.) The answer must be that

47 For a version of the Shī'ite case, see W. Madelung, *The succession to Muḥammad* (Cambridge, 1997).

belief was a strong compound, strengthened by the deep conviction that Muḥammad was a prophet acting for God, and that God rewarded those who held such a conviction in this world and the next. Worldly success was distinct from (and, according to some, inferior to) the Heavenly rewards of faith, but faith brought its rewards in the here and now as well. When the Umayyad commander and governor to be 'Amr ibn al 'Āṣ volunteered that he had converted, not out of any desire for wealth and possessions, but rather because of his devotion to Islam and Muḥammad, the Prophet responded: 'How good is wealth righteously gained for a righteous man!'[48] From this perspective, we can see that believers had organised themselves into a polity that had enjoyed such miraculous success and generated such extraordinary resources that belief in its corporate survival survived Muḥammad's death. What held the polity together was thus both belief in the next world and confidence in this one because of the rewards God offered through the spread of His dominion that is, conquest. 'The earth belongs to God, Who bequeaths it to whom He wishes amongst His servants', as Q 7:128 puts it. The early Islamic polity survived in large part because it conquered.

If the conquest movement was an important ingredient in the success of early Islam, it is also very hard to describe. Neither their precise course nor their chronology can be established in any detail. In some instances, there is no prospect for recovering any authentic history; in others, a careful examination of the Arabic sources, combined with the judicious use of non Islamic sources when they are available, can lead to a reliable sequence, an outline chronology and a small handful of solid facts.[49] What follows is appropriately schematic.

As we have seen, Muḥammad's *jihad* in the Ḥijaz was the ultimate inspira tion for the conquests that would follow his death; but at least as far as Syria is concerned, their actual trigger seems to have been the small battles and skirmishes that are said to have broken out upon the Prophet's death, when tribesmen repudiated treaties negotiated by Muḥammad.

> The Islamic conquest of the Near East cannot be viewed, then, as something separate from the career of Muḥammad the Apostle or from the conquest of

48 M. J. Kister, 'On the papyrus of Wahb b. Munabbih', *BSOAS*, 37 (1974), p. 559.

49 See L. I. Conrad, 'The Conquest of Arwad: A source critical study in the historiography of the early medieval Near East', in A. Cameron and L. I. Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vol. I: *Problems in the literary source material* (Princeton, 1992); M. Hinds, 'The first Arab conquests of Fars', *Iran*, 22 (1984); C. F. Robinson, 'The conquest of Khuzistan: A historiographic reassessment', *BSOAS*, 67 (2004); C. F. Robinson, *Empire and elites after the Muslim conquest: The transformation of northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge, 2000), chapter 1; the standard account remains F. M. Donner, *The early Islamic conquests* (Princeton, 1981).

> Arabia during the *ridda* wars. It must be seen as an organic outgrowth of Muḥammad's teachings and their impact upon Arabian society, of Muḥammad's political consolidation, pursued by traditional and novel means, and especially of his efforts to bring nomadic groups firmly under state control, and of the extension of that process of consolidation by the Islamic state and its emerging élite under the leadership of Abū Bakr.[50]

Commanders such as Khalid ibn al Walīd, Shurahbīl ibn Ḥasana and 'Arfaja ibn Harthama were accordingly sent out to Najd and beyond to the west and north, where the desert stretches into the Syrian steppe and southern Iraq. Extending power over Arab tribal groups thus brought Muslim armies within hailing distance of the two great powers of the day. And once in contact with imperial armies, the Muslims were extraordinarily successful. In three decisive battles in Syria (Ajnadayn, Fiḥl and, most important, Yarmuk), the back of the Byzantine defence was broken. The provincial city of Damascus fell around 636; within twenty five years, it would be the capital of the caliphate. The principal cities of northern Syria (Ḥimṣ, Aleppo, Qinnasrīn) followed suit soon after 636, as did Jerusalem, which 'Umar himself apparently visited; there, according to some accounts, he led prayers and began the construction of a mosque.[51] From the occupation of Palestine that followed sprang a separate conquest movement to Egypt led by 'Amr ibn al 'Āṣ, in the course of which Alexandria fell in 642; Muslims would establish their main garrison in Fusṭaṭ, towards the southern edge of current day Cairo.

Alongside the conquest of Syria took place the conquest of Iraq, which was apparently opened from the south. After a disastrous defeat at the battle of the Bridge in late 634, the Muslims sent Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqaṣ in command of a relatively large army, which he led to al Qadisiyya, a small settlement lying south west of al Ḥīra. There, in Muḥarram (February or March) of either 636 or 637, the Sasanian commander Rustam was routed. Soon thereafter came the defeat of the Sasanians at Jalula', and then, also in 637, fell al Mada'in (Ctesiphon), the Sasanian capital. With the fall of Nihawand (641), the Sasanian defence collapsed entirely, forcing the Sasanian shah, Yazdegerd, to flee to Khurasan, where he was murdered in 651. By the late 630s or very soon after, the two garrisons of Baṣra and Kufa had been founded; both would grow into major cities. Meanwhile, northern Mesopotamia had by around 640 fallen

50 Donner, *Early Islamic conquests*, p. 90. On the matter of the Islamic 'state', see below.
51 See H. Busse, 'Omar b. al Haṭṭab in Jerusalem', *JSAI*, 5 (1984).

to armies marching from the Syrian steppe in the west and armies marching up the Tigris from the south. The conquest movement did not end in the early 640s it seems that it was not until well into the 650s that a measure of control over the Mediterranean islands of Cyprus, Rhodes and Crete was extended, and 'Uqba ibn Nafī' projected Islamic rule further west in north Africa in the 660s and 670s but the first great push had ended. The Sasanian empire had collapsed, and the frontiers with Byzantium would remain relatively stable for centuries.

What explains the success of the early conquests? The size of the armies is impossible to measure with any accuracy. Some Christian sources, which are generally keen to exaggerate the catastrophe of the defeat, speak of extraordinary casualties: a contemporaneous Syriac account has 50,000 killed in a single battle in Syria; another early source, which was probably written some time in the 670s, has the Arabs kill no fewer than 100,000 Byzantines in Egypt.[52] The figures given by the Islamic sources for the numbers of combatants are generally much more reasonable, often in the hundreds or low thousands; even a large army, such as the one that fought at al Qadisiyya, probably numbered no more than 10,000 or 12,000 men.[53] These more modest armies, which would be much easier to provision and manage, make considerably more sense. Since there is no good evidence for any substantial reduction in Byzantine manpower (and virtually no evidence at all for Sasanian numbers, reduced or otherwise),[54] it is probably safe to assume that Muslims were often outnumbered. Unlike their adversaries, however, Muslim armies were fast, agile, well coordinated and highly motivated. The speed of the conquests on both fronts as we have seen, the decisive battles took place in the space of four or five years also suggest that, whatever their numbers, both the Byzantine and Sasanian defences were brittle. In contrast to the large scale, resource intensive and protracted campaigns that were so typical of Byzantine Sasanian warfare of the sixth and early seventh centuries, and which in at least some places resulted in widespread violence and social dislocation,[55] the Islamic conquests of the mid seventh century read like a series of relatively short engagements (the great battle of al Qadisiyya is

52 Robinson, 'Khuzistan', p. 39.

53 Donner, *Early Islamic conquests*, p. 221.

54 C. Whitby, 'Recruitment in Roman armies from Justinian to Heraclius (*ca.* 565 615)' in A. Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East*, vol. III: *States, resources and armies* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 120 2.

55 For Asia Minor, see C. Foss, 'The Persians in Asia Minor and the end of Antiquity', *The English Historical Review*, 90 (1975); for Syria, see below, note 58.

said to have lasted three days), which were made by relatively small and hit and run armies that rarely laid sieges of any length or produced casualties in large numbers. In many and perhaps most cases in the Byzantine provinces, local elites cut deals that avoided large scale violence. Modern descriptions of systematic conquest era violence targeted at non Muslims, in addition to those of post conquest persecution before the Marwanids, are usually nothing more than poorly disguised polemics.[56]

If the historical tradition would have us infer that large scale mortality and dislocation were very occasionally the exception to a general rule, the archaeological evidence clinches this inference. Unlike the barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth century western Mediterranean,[57] the effects of the Islamic conquests were in many respects modest. There is a fair amount of regional variation, but there is no sure archaeological evidence for destruction or abrupt change in settlement patterns that we can directly associate with the events of the 640s and 650s. In Palestine and Syria, where rural settlement seems to have reached a peak in the middle or late sixth century, the conquests bore no impact upon a decline that had apparently begun before they took place.[58] In Syria, we also know that transformations in urban space that earlier generations of historians had attributed to Muslim rule may have actually been under way before the Muslims arrived.[59] Patterns of occupation and use in the towns of the northern Negev, to take an example that is particularly striking, seem to carry on through the seventh century with little appreciable change; the story changes in the course of the eighth and ninth centuries, when decline sets in, presumably accelerated by the shift of the caliphate to Iraq, although the earthquake of 747 had deleterious effects elsewhere.[60] The evidence is very poor for Iraq, but there, too, archaeology suggests that

56 See B. Ye'or, *The decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From jihad to dhimmitude* (Cranbury, NJ, 1996); cf. D. J. Constantelos, 'The Moslem conquests of the Near East as revealed in the Greek sources of the seventh and eighth centuries', *Byzantion*, 42 (1972).

57 For a provocative discussion of the west, see B. Ward Perkins, *The fall of Rome and the end of civilization* (Oxford, 2005).

58 See C. Foss, 'Syria in transition, AD 550 750: An archaeological approach', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 51 (1997); C. Foss, 'The Near Eastern countryside in Late Antiquity: A review article', *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Journal of Roman Archaeology*, supplementary series 14 (1995); A. Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria: An archaeological assessment* (Bath, 2007), esp. pp. 44ff.

59 H. Kennedy, 'From polis to madina: Urban change in Late Antique and early Islamic Syria', *Past and Present*, 106 (1985); but cf. J. Magness, *The archaeology of the early Islamic settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, IN, 2003), and Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*, pp. 37f.

60 Such as in parts of Palestine, on which see Magness, *Early Islamic settlement*; cf. Fihl (Pella) in A. Walmsley, 'The social and economic regime at Fihl (Pella)', in P. Canivet and J. P. Rey Coquais (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam* (Damascus, 1992), p. 255.

conquest effects were far from catastrophic.[61] Of course the shift of the caliphate from Syria to Iraq may have resulted at least in part from underlying economic changes, but precisely how the political history of the early caliph ate relates to the economic history of the Near East remains unclear. It is certainly the case that locating the centre of the caliphate in Syria, which was enjoying an Indian summer of a flourishing eastern Mediterranean economy, initially made much more sense than doing so in or around the Gulf, which had apparently suffered several centuries of economic decline.[62] In this con nection it is noteworthy that the political frontier in northern Syria that would long separate Byzantium from the caliphate, unlike the political frontier that had separated Byzantium from the Sasanian empire, appears to coincide with an economic (and geographic) frontier that had separated Anatolia from Syria on the eve of the Islamic period. If the waves of conquest only reached as far as the highest tide of economy had reached earlier, one might think that economy and conquest *were* fairly closely related.[63]

Whatever the precise course of victory, to the victors went the spoils. How much wealth came into the hands of the Muslim conquerors? We know that churches and monasteries possessed objects of great value, and major Byzantine cities such as Damascus, Antioch, Edessa, even more so the Sasanian capital, Ctesiphon, must have had very considerable wealth, perhaps especially in the form of silver.[64] Although we read that Byzantine elites moved north in advance of Muslim armies, and that the conquering Muslims found al Mada'in empty of Sasanian royalty and their retainers, not everyone with movable wealth had the time or the inclination to take it with them. Indeed, it must be that many more stayed behind; and many who did leave would have left their wealth behind, as some of the hoards of coins deposited during the seventh century suggest.[65] That all the wealth added up is made clear if we consider that the first step in the direction of a rudimentary administrative system was taken in 'Umar ibn al Khaṭab's establishment of a

61 M. Morony, 'The effects of the Muslim conquest on the Persian population of Iraq', *Iran*, 14 (1976).

62 On the archaeological evidence from the western Gulf, see D. Kennet, 'On the eve of Islam: Archaeological evidence from eastern Arabia', *Antiquity*, 79 (2005).

63 M. Morony, 'Economic boundaries? Late Antiquity and early Islam', *JESHO*, 47 (2004), p. 180.

64 See, for example, S. Boyd and M. Mango (eds.), *Ecclesiastical silver plate in sixth century Byzantium* (Washington, DC, 1992).

65 On some early seventh century hoards, see S. Heidemann, 'The merger of two currency zones in early Islam: The Byzantine and Sasanian impact on the circulation in former Byzantine Syria and northern Mesopotamia', *Iran*, 36 (1998), p. 96; cf. R. Gyselen and L. Kalus, *Deux trésors monétaires des premiers temps de l'Islam* (Paris, 1983).

bureau (*dīwan*) to measure and redistribute conquest booty among the tribesmen.[66] The principle of distribution described to us by our sources is called 'precedence' (*sabiqa*), according to which the earlier in the conquest movements a given tribesman enrolled, the higher his annual stipend ('*aṭa*'). We read that a stipend of 3,000 *dirhams* was awarded to soldiers who had participated in the earliest raids into Iraq, while those who took part in the campaigns leading up to the crucial battle of al Qadisiyya in Iraq, which was the turning point in the war against the Sasanians, received 2,000.[67] Whatever the accuracy of these figures, it is clear that the wealth of many early Islamic families was rooted in conquest era spoils and booty.

Of course, most of the wealth available to the conquerors was immovable because it came in the form of land. Much of the most productive land was Crown Land, and this, in addition to the land owned by local elites (including bishops and monks), became available to conquering Muslims through abandonment and confiscation. In the Sawad the 'black' area of alluvial soil in central and southern Iraq, where information is fullest Crown Lands included not only all the properties of the Sasanian royal house, but also those attached to fire temples, post houses and the like; 'Umar is said to have distributed four fifths to the soldiers and kept one fifth as his share as caliph, which was to be used for the benefit of the community. As far as labour was concerned, 'Umar's policy was conservative: the peasants were left to work the land, this being part of a more general *laissez faire* style of ruling, in which non Muslims who in the first decades of Islamic rule were generally lumped together with non Arabs enjoyed wide ranging autonomy. Elsewhere abandoned lands were snatched up, and lands owned by those who had resisted (or could be said to have resisted) the conquests were confiscated. It may be that redistribution to conquering tribesmen was left to the discretion of local authorities; in some cases (such as well irrigated and thus valuable land in the northern Mesopotamian city of Mosul), it is clear that 'precedence' was in operation, as we would imagine it to be: first come, first served; the best lands often went to the earliest settlers, although there was no land grab, it appears.

Whatever the value of the booty and confiscated land, conquerors and conquered alike had to make sense of the momentous events. For Muslims, the conquests demonstrated God's continued participation in human affairs (the Islamic sources typically have it that God 'conquered by the hands of the

66 See G. Puin, *Der Dīwan von 'Umar ibn al Haṭṭab: Ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte* (Bonn, 1970).

67 For an overview of this system, see Donner, *Early Islamic conquests*, pp. 231 2, 261 2.

Muslims'). The conquests were compelling proof that Muslims enjoyed God's favour and generosity. What could be more persuasive than the enormous bounty of booty taken from Ctesiphon, where the Shah's storehouses were thrown open and all manner of treasure precious metals, vessels, garments, regalia, even foodstuffs carried off? Arabian tribesmen were inheriting the riches of empire:

> We marched into al Madā'in and came upon Turkish tents filled with baskets sealed with leaden seals. At first, we did not think they would contain any thing but food, but later they were found to contain vessels of gold and silver. These were later distributed among the men. At the time ... I saw a man running and shouting, 'Who has silver or gold in his possession?' We also came upon large quantities of camphor which we mistook for salt. So we began to knead it (in our dough) until we discovered that it made our bread taste bitter.[68]

The Qur'an had made clear that God delivered bounties in this world and the next. Delivering dominion was one of these bounties. Accounts that enumer ate the great treasure and booty that fell into Muslim hands thus functioned to illustrate the rewards that God delivered to His believers, and also to contrast the piety and *naïveté* of early Muslims with the wealth induced arrogance and complaisance of the empires that they had conquered.

Of course things were very different for non Muslims. Here the events of the conquests were typically assimilated into pre existing patterns of mono theistic history, and the agents of those conquests, the 'Arabs', 'Saracens' or 'Hagarenes', were assimilated into ready categories of monotheistic belief. In other words, the conquests were proof of God's wrath, and Muslims were heretical monotheists. Put another way, although the deep syntax of historical explanation history is made as God operates through men was shared by all monotheist historians, whether Muslim or Christian, for non Muslim mono theists the events signalled a wrathful rather than a merciful God. As early as about 634, the patriarch of Jerusalem wrote of the 'Saracens who, on account of our sins, have now risen up against us unexpectedly and ravage all with cruel and feral designs, with impious and godless audacity'.[69] Twenty or thirty years later, a chronicler in northern Mesopotamia asked: 'How, otherwise, could naked men, riding without armour or shield, have been able to win, apart from divine aid, God having called them from the ends of the earth so as to destroy, by them, "a sinful kingdom" [i.e. Byzantium] and to bring

68 Al Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, series II, pp. 244f. trans. G. H. A. Juynboll as *The history of al Ṭabarī*, vol. XIII: *The conquest of Iraq, southwestern Persia, and Egypt* (Albany, 1989), p. 24.

69 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, p. 69.

low, through them, the proud spirit of the Persians?'[70] Daniel's apocalyptic vision proved especially accommodating to Christians struggling with the significance of the conquests and early Islamic rule. Thus Daniel conditions the words of an Armenian chronicler writing some time in the early 660s: 'I shall describe the calamity which beset our time, the rupture of the vein of the old south and the blowing on us of the mortal hot wind which burned the great, leafy, beautiful, newly planted trees of the orchards. This [happened] rightly, because we sinned against the Lord and we angered the Holy One of Israel.'[71]

Muslims thus drew very different lessons from the spectacular success of the conquests; for them, it was in post conquest events the first, great civil war (*fitna*) of the 650s that God came to express His disfavour. Disunity among Muḥammad's successors imperilled the successes that his unifying vision had produced.

The early caliphate: succession, civil war and opposition movements

In Islamic historiography of the eighth and ninth centuries, the civil war between 'Alī and Mu'awiya is a topic of enormous interest, Shī'a and Sunnīs taking their respective sides and narrating contrasting accounts. For many Muslims of this and later periods, the *fitna* marked a decisive break: before it, the short but inspired moment of the time of the Prophet, the conquests, just rule and political unity; after it came the altogether more ambivalent and controversial periods of Umayyad and 'Abbasid rule. Because the events of the *fitna* were accordingly shaped and re shaped in historical narrative,[72] knowing exactly what happened is out of the question, even if names can be identified and alignments sketched out.[73] Still, there can be little doubt that the

70 S. P. Brock, 'North Mesopotamia in the late seventh century: Book xv of John Bar Penkaye's *Rīš Melle*', *JSAI*, 9 (1987), pp. 57 8.

71 Sebeos, *Armenian history*, vol. I, p. 132; in general, H. Suermann, *Die geschichtstheologi schen Reaktion auf die einfallenden muslime in der edessenischen Apokalyptik des 7. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, 1985).

72 E. L. Petersen, *'Alī and Mu'awiya in early Arabic tradition: Studies on the genesis and growth of Islamic historical writing until the end of the ninth century*, 2nd edn (Odense, 1974 [Copenhagen, 1964]); R. S. Humphreys, 'Qur'anic myth and narrative structure in early Islamic historiography', in F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys (eds.), *Tradition and innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1989); B. Shoshan, *Poetics of Islamic historiog raphy: Deconstructing Ṭabarī's* History (Leiden, 2004), pp. 173ff.

73 M. Hinds, 'Kufan political alignments and their background in the mid seventh century AD', *IJMES*, 2 (1971); for a very different view, see Madelung, *Succession*.

significance of the dreadful events murder, Muslim set against Muslim, a divided caliphate was recognised in its day. As an Armenian chronicler, writing within a generation of the events, put things: 'Now God sent a disturbance amongst the armies of the sons of Ishmael, and their unity was split. They fell into mutual conflict and divided into four sections ... They began to fight with each other and to kill each other with enormous slaughter.'[74] Seventh and early eighth century Syriac historians were equally impressed, borrowing the Arabic term, *fitna*, a term which presumably was in broad circulation among Muslims of the period. In sum, the significance of the *fitna* is hard to overstate.[75]

What does *not* seem to have been at issue at least for those who took their principles seriously enough to try to apply them was how God's authority was to be effected after the Prophet had died.

Our relatively late sources generally reflect ninth and tenth century realities, when caliphs functioned for the most part as guardians of a society with a more or less independent religious elite. The earlier evidence shows, however, that virtually all shared the view that the office of the caliphate combined religious and political authority, and that the caliph provided salvation to those who paid him allegiance. For most, the age of prophets had come to an end, succeeded by the age of caliphs, whose status was equal (and, according to some, superior) to that of the prophets. The caliph led the community in this world towards the next one: he was 'the *imam al huda*, an imam of guidance who could be trusted to show his followers the right paths. He was compared to way marks, lodestars, the sun, and the moon for his ability to show the direction in which one should travel.'[76] Early disagreement, then, lay not in the powers that the caliph was to exercise, but in the person (or family) who was to exercise those powers.

Civil war was thus about succession to the office of caliphate, which all Muslims acknowledged should be the ruling institution of the nascent state. We have seen that amidst the chaotic atmosphere of Muḥammad's death, Abu Bakr had been acclaimed as caliph, and he, in turn, had designated 'Umar as his successor. This engendered very little debate, since, according to tradition, 'Umar had been so close to the Prophet: his name had even been mooted directly after Muḥammad's death. For his part, 'Umar nominated a group of six men who were to choose his successor: this group included 'Alī, 'Uthman and

74 Sebeos, *Armenian history*, vol. I, p. 154.

75 See H. Djait, *La grande discorde: Religion et politique dans l'Islam des origines* (Paris, 1989).

76 Crone, *Political thought*, p. 22; P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's caliph: Religious authority in the first centuries of Islam* (Cambridge, 1986).

(usually) four other figures, two of whom were al Zubayr ibn al 'Awwam and Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubayd Allah, both revered as close Companions of the Prophet himself. This electoral conclave (*shura*) produced 'Uthman, a Qurashī who belonged to the Umayyad clan that had earlier been so resistant to Muḥammad's preaching in Mecca. 'Uthman did not prove to be a popular choice: initial resentment was fuelled by his family's chequered past and the disappointment felt by those who supported the claims of 'Alī. This resentment was compounded by his uninspiring character and conduct: according to our sources, he accepted gifts, which were called bribes, and appointed kinsmen to important (and lucrative) posts, a practice that was branded nepotism. All this emboldened his opponents, and in June 656, while reading the Qur'an, 'Uthman was murdered. 'Alī's supporters immediately acclaimed him as the caliph in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

The problem for 'Alī was that he never enjoyed much support outside Medina and Kufa. Almost immediately upon his accession he was challenged by Ṭalḥa and al Zubayr, who were joined by 'Ā'isha, the most influential of the Prophet's surviving wives. The three gathered an army and engaged 'Alī in what history would come to call 'the battle of the Camel', after the memory of 'Ā'isha, posed as she purportedly was upon a camel; this battle took place in December 656 in Iraq. 'Alī was victorious, but it was a Pyrrhic victory, the principal cost being to his reputation. More pious and gentle than he was shrewd, 'Alī was quickly outmanoeuvred by Mu'awiya, 'Uthman's governor of Syria, who argued that the murderers of 'Uthman had gone unpunished. He is said to have displayed to a Damascus crowd 'Uthman's bloody shirt and the fingers of a wife, which were severed as she tried to defend her husband. Mu'awiya's challenge to 'Alī soon led to the battle of Ṣiffin, which lay on the Euphrates south of al Raqqa, in 657. The two armies hesitated to fight, and when they finally did, tradition tells us that 'Alī, though on the verge of victory, agreed to a truce. Arbitrators were chosen, and although the events are unclear, it seems that they agreed that neither 'Alī nor Mu'awiya was fit to rule. As caliph, 'Alī had everything to lose from this decision, which was taken in 659, while Mu'awiya had everything to gain from it. In its wake 'Alī was hopelessly weak; within two years he had been murdered, and Mu'awiya was proclaimed caliph in Jerusalem (or Damascus) in 660 1. The civil war had ended. Mu'awiya would rule for nearly twenty years.

If the trigger for civil war was a dispute about succession and the killing of a just (or unjust) caliph, the underlying causes were rooted in patterns of post conquest settlement and competing models of status and privilege. It seems that the conquest polity had growth pains. In crude terms, 'Umar's policy of

'first come, first served' had meant a system that favoured the *muhajirun* those who had joined Muḥammad early on at the expense of those who had enjoyed high prestige in the clan based social order of the pre Islamic period. As the initial surge of the conquests ebbed, tensions rose, particularly over the terms on which tribesmen believers would negotiate their status. We can see this most clearly in Kufa, where the status of older settlers, who possessed 'precedence', began to be challenged by more recent settlers, who in some cases were being paid higher and higher stipends. As a result, the older settlers came to oppose not only these parvenus, but also the Umayyad governors who had permitted them to settle. In the long term, the effective bonds of kinship symbolised most clearly by the *ashraf* (tribal chiefs), who emerged victorious would dissolve, as tribesmen settled in far flung towns and cities, and took up a variety of professions and vocations. But this took some time, and a modified kinship politics of the old style was carried out by these *ashraf*, who, either chosen or acclaimed because they could wield influence among fellow kinsmen, received the salaries, favours and gifts of the caliph, in return for which they offered their loyalty and ability to muster tribal units on his behalf.[77] It took the death of Mu'awiya and a second civil war that broke out in 683 to demonstrate that the *ashraf* had outlived their usefulness.

Kinship politics of this variety was thus cultivated by Mu'awiya, and it had a relatively short shelf life. Of much more enduring significance were two religio political movements that issued from these early disputes about succession and the events of the first *fitna*, and that would mature during the second *fitna*. Shī'ism and Kharijism flourished as powerful movements of opposition to the Umayyad clan, which staked its claim to the caliphate, first with 'Uthman in 644, and second and considerably more successfully with Mu'awiya, who began to rule in 661, and who would name his son Yazīd ibn Mu'awiya as heir apparent shortly before he died in 680. Several things distinguished the Shī'a and Kharijites, but we can start with what they had in common.

Although Shī'a and Kharijites alike shared with the Umayyads the emerging conception of the caliphate, as opposition movements concentrated in the garrison towns of southern Iraq they both fed off resentment towards the Umayyads, whose late conversion had made them appear opportunistic and cynical in the past, and whose heavy handed and iniquitous policies, on the one hand, and alleged impiety, on the other, made the present intolerable too. They accordingly held that the Umayyads were entirely unqualified to occupy the

77 Hinds, 'Kufan political alignments'; P. Crone, *Slaves on horses: The evolution of the Islamic polity* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 30 2.

office. To most Shī'a and all Kharijites, then, Abu Bakr and 'Umar had ruled legitimately, but things went very wrong with the first Umayyad, 'Uthman (some Shī'a came to hold that the Prophet had designated 'Alī, which meant that even Abu Bakr and 'Umar were usurpers). Although the Umayyads would eventually fall to an 'Abbasid movement that was in some measure Shī'ite in inspiration, neither movement had any success in replacing Umayyad imams with imams of their own, and they survived into classical Islam only in so far as they were able to reconcile themselves to what became, during the course of the eighth and ninth centuries, Sunnī rule. In practice this eventually meant exchanging revolution for secession and political activism for sectarian quietism, a process that was nearly complete by the end of the ninth century.

If the Shī'a and Kharijites shared some common concerns, they differed in others. The chief difference lay in the qualifications they attached to the office of the caliphate. The Shī'a, who were numerous in Kufa, insisted on kinship, holding that their imams had to be drawn from the Prophet's family. Since Muḥammad had left no male heirs, in practice this meant candidates from the clan of Hashim, which included descendants of al 'Abbas (the Prophet's uncle) and the relatives and descendants of 'Alī (Muḥammad's cousin and son in law). Throughout the Umayyad period, candidates for the imamate came from several different branches of the Hashim clan, and the 'Abbasid revolution of 750 was successful in no small part because it capitalised upon the view that the 'Abbasid family might offer such candidates. But for some Shī'a the field would by the end of the seventh century begin to narrow towards the line that issued from 'Alī himself, and what would turn out to be the most important lines ran through al Ḥusayn (a son of his marriage with the Prophet's daughter Fatima), who led a spectacularly unsuccessful rebellion near Kufa in 680, and through Muḥammad ibn al Ḥanafiyya (a son from a concubine), in whose name a nebulous figure named al Mukhtar led an altogether more successful rebellion seven years later. (There were some exceptions, most notably a mid eighth century rebellion led by a descendant of 'Alī's brother, but most Shī'ite rebel lions were no more successful than these.) The line that ran from al Ḥusayn through Musa al Kaẓim (d. 799) would in the long term emerge as the single most important of three main Shī'ite branches (the Twelvers or Imamīs, Zaydīs and Isma'īlīs); it would come to an end only in the late ninth century, when, allegedly, the twelfth and last of these imams disappeared into occultation. But it was from Muḥammad ibn al Ḥanafiyya that the most successful of all Shī'ite movements the 'Abbasids would claim to have inherited the imamate. By the time of the 'Abbasid revolution (750), genealogical claims had come to be buttressed by historical claims: not only was 'Alī said to have been designated by

the Prophet, but successive imams were said to be designating their successors. Thus the 'Abbasids claimed that they inherited the imamate from a descendant of Muḥammad ibn al Ḥanafiyya, according to his last will and testament.[78]

The Shī'a were thus devoted to a family in general (the Hashimīs) and a person in particular ('Alī), and this devotion is neatly expressed by their appellation: *shī'ī* ('partisan of 'Alī'; 'Shī'ite') derives from *shī'at 'Alī*, 'the party of 'Alī'. The Shī'a's 'Alid imams came to be endowed not only with religious authority, but also characteristics that others associated with proph ets and holy men, such as inerrancy and foresight. In so far as early Shī'a had a political programme, it lay in rebellion for the sake of restoring effective political rule to the family of the Prophet the rest would take care of itself. By contrast, the Kharijites were committed not to a family, but to an idea, and this is neatly expressed by their most common appellation: a *kharijī* is 'one who goes out [to fight on behalf of God]', just as a *muḥakkim* (a rarer Kharijite label) is one who proclaims that 'there is no judgement but God's', a slogan associated with the battle of Ṣiffin, where the Kharijites, pinning Qur'ans to their lances, abandoned 'Alī. According to the Kharijite way of looking at things, 'Alī had fatefully agreed to respect the 'judgement' of men by agreeing to enter into arbitration. If the slogan was clearly potent, we cannot say why, although it may constitute very early evidence for scripturalist attitudes that characterised Kharijite thought of a later period, especially as it is reflected in the Ibaḍī literature, which is the only Kharijite tradition to survive.[79] In any event, within a year (658) 'Alī had defeated his Kharijite opponents at the battle of Nahrawan, but far from ending the Kharijite threat, the defeat inspired more tribesmen to rebel. As we shall see, in the second *fitna* and the early Marwanid period that would follow it, Kharijites would challenge Umayyad authority and effective power.

Under whose leadership did the Kharijites 'go out' to fight on behalf of God's 'judgement'? For those who made the case for the Umayyads, Qurashī blood was sufficient, while those who made the Shī'ite case insisted upon Hashimī blood; the Kharijites imposed no genealogical restrictions whatsoever on their imams, insisting for the most part that merit and merit alone was determinant. This

78 For an overview, Crone, *Political thought*, pp. 87 94; more generally, H. Halm, *Shiism* (Edinburgh, 1991).

79 G. R. Hawting, 'The significance of the slogan *la ḥukma illa lillah* and the references to the *ḥudud* in the traditions about the *fitna* and the murder of 'Uthman', *BSOAS*, 41 (1978); M. Cook, "Anan and Islam: The origins of Karaite scripturalism', *JSAI*, 9 (1987), pp. 169 72. On the Kharijites more generally, see P. Crone and F. Zimmermann, *The epistle of Salim ibn Dhakwan* (Oxford, 2001); K. H. Pampus, *Über die Rolle der Ḥariǧīya im frühen Islam* (Wiesbaden, 1980).

repudiation of kinship is striking, and must reflect the egalitarian thinking of those living in Baṣra and Kufa more than that of the Kharijite tribesmen who had broken off from 'Alī and who, often operating in kinship groups (the Shayban and Tamīm tribes produced many Kharijites), rebelled against Umayyad and early 'Abbasid rule. Just how committed these tribesmen were to Kharijite ideals of merit is hard to know; what is clearer is that Kharijite bands were committed to violent rebellion according to a fairly consistent pattern: secession through emigration (*hijra*) and *jihad* against those whom they considered unbelievers. (In some exceptional cases, the Kharijite commitment to violence extended to non combatant women and children.) In practising emigration and *jihad*, the Kharijites were falling foul of the Umayyads, but they were holding fast to ideas that had powered Muḥammad and his contemporaries out of Arabia.[80] That they had so little success says something about how quickly things had changed in the space of a couple of generations.

The early Islamic polity: instruments and traditions of rule in the Sufyanid period

We saw earlier that 'Umar (r. 634 44) is credited with establishing the first *dīwan*, which distributed stipends to conquering soldiers. Several other administrative innovations are similarly ascribed to the second caliph, such as the introduction of the Muslim calendar and the office of the *qaḍī* (judge). So, too, is an indulgent and conservative fiscal policy towards indigenous cultivators: taxes were kept reasonable, the peasants left undisturbed, and the remnants of the Byzantine and Sasanian bureaucracies left intact. Fewer such innovations are attributed to the altogether more controversial 'Uthman and 'Alī. With the longer and more stable reigns of Mu'awiya (r. 661 80) and 'Abd al Malik (r. 685 705), the innovations appear with greater frequency: the former is commonly credited with establishing a number of other *dīwans*, and the latter with a wide range of administrative and bureaucratic measures. These include translating the tax documents from Greek and Persian into Arabic, and reforming weights, measures and coins, as we shall presently see.

The tradition, in sum, lays the foundation of the Islamic state in the inspired rule of the second of the four 'rightly guided caliphs', and describes its growth as evolutionary.[81] Does it have things right? The material and documentary

80 Robinson, *Empire and elites*, pp. 109 26.

81 For a modern version, see A. Ibrahim, *Der Herausbildungsprozeß des arabisch islamischen Staates* (Berlin, 1994), esp. pp. 163ff.

evidence tells a story that is different from that of the tradition a story of deferred revolution, rather than gradual evolution.

The conquerors put in place a rudimentary system for the redistribution of conquest resources among the tribesmen, and tribal chieftains (*ashraf*) played a crucial role in the overlapping networks of indirect rule that characterised Mu'awiya's caliphate. Similarly rudimentary was the division of authority in the newly conquered territories: the caliph seems to have ruled northern Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Arabia directly, and the rest of the empire was divided into three huge governorships: North Africa and Egypt; Baṣra and those eastern provinces associated with it; and Kufa and associated provinces. By later Umayyad and 'Abbasid standards, administrative geography was thus undifferentiated and monolithic. So, too, were administration and bureauc racy. Governorships were awarded for a number of reasons, but kinship was always a criterion; and when genuine kinship was lacking, it was invented, as in the case of a famous governor of Baṣra, Ziyad ibn Abīhi ('Ziyad, the son of his father'), whose services were so valuable to Mu'awiya that the caliph made him a foster brother.[82] (Mu'awiya himself married into the Kalb tribe, thus consolidating his tribal support in Syria.) Sitting in small courts atop rump bureaucracies, his governors seem to have enjoyed broad and undifferentiated civil and military authority; the law remaining underdeveloped and authority undifferentiated, they played roles that would subsequently be played by judges, tax collectors and commanders of the later Marwanid and 'Abbasid periods. Moreover, such power as Mu'awiya and his governors possessed was mediated by tribal chiefs, upon whom they relied to raise armies, and non Muslim local elites, upon whom they relied to raise taxes.[83] Gifting and bestowing favours and privileges were the currency of these transactions. Similarly, non Muslim subject populations generally did not experience Islamic rule, or experienced it only indirectly: local authority was usually in the hands of non Muslim authorities, and Mu'awiya seems to have been considered a benevolent, hands off ruler.[84]

That Mu'awiya apparently handled the *ashraf* as in some measure as *primi inter pares* does not mean that he failed to develop a language of caliphal authority. As the seat of the caliphate moved from Medina to Kufa to

82 On Ziyad and his rule in the east, see M. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim conquest* (Princeton, 1984), *passim*.

83 Crone, *Slaves on horses*, pp. 30 3.

84 For northern Mesopotamia and Iraq, see Robinson, *Empire and elites*, pp. 33 62; Morony, *Iraq*; for Egypt, K. Morimoto, *The fiscal administration of Egypt in the early Islamic period* (Kyoto, 1981).

Damascus – that is, from a corner of Arabia to one of Late Antique Syria's major cities – ideas of authority and rule naturally transformed to some degree. Such as it is, the evidence does suggest that Mu'awiya innovated in ways that anticipate the later caliphate. According to the historical tradition, which is generally less than sympathetic to the caliph, Mu'awiya introduced, *inter alia*, the *maqṣura* (a private enclosure inside the mosque), a number of ceremonial practices, and a caliphal guard. Although the epigraphic record leads back to the 640s, it was Mu'awiya who appears to have been the first caliph to publicise his name and claim to rule: already in 662 or 663, his name and title appear in Greek in a monumental inscription in Palestine ('Mu'awiya, commander of the believers'), and other examples (from Egypt and Arabia) follow in graffiti, coins and papyrus protocols.[85] It is also with Mu'awiya that a record of correspondence begins – much spurious, but some at least partially authentic – between the caliph and his neighbouring sovereigns, Constans II (r. 641–68) and Constantine IV (r. 668–85).[86] Although nothing remains of it, Mu'awiya's palace in Damascus was apparently an impressive building complex, which announced itself clearly enough in the formerly Byzantine capital;[87] like other Syrian properties of his, it would be reoccupied by subsequent caliphs, including 'Abd al Malik. The evidence is very thin, but it may even be that the ingredients for what became the standard form of the mosque – a large courtyard enclosure with a hypostyle hall at one end – were first mixed in Iraq during Mu'awiya's reign.[88] In sum, he may have come to power through civil war, but his vision – of caliphal rule projected from Syria principally by Syrian tribesmen – was a powerful one, which survived nearly a century after his death.

Still, if ideas of authority and rulership were transforming during the reign of Mu'awiya, the instruments of power and persuasion remained relatively undeveloped. Mu'awiya's was a conquest polity in which regionalism was the rule;

85 J. Johns, 'Archaeology and the history of early Islam: The first seventy years', *JESHO*, 46 (2003), pp. 419–20; cf. R. Hoyland, 'New documentary texts and the early Islamic state', *BSOAS*, 69 (2006).

86 For a survey and discussion, see A. Kaplony, *Konstantinopel und Damaskus: Gesandtschaften und Verträge zwischen Kaisern und Kalifen 639–750* (Berlin, 1996).

87 For a description, see F. B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the makings of an Umayyad visual culture* (Leiden, 2001), pp. 147ff.

88 For reconstructions of the Kufan mosque, which was built, according to tradition, by Ziyad ibn Abīhi, see B. Finster, *Frühe iranische Moscheen* (Berlin, 1994), pp. 23f.; and J. Johns, 'The "House of the Prophet" and the concept of the mosque', in J. Johns (ed.), *Bayt al Maqdis: Jerusalem and early Islam*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 9, part 2 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 64f. The appearance of the *miḥrab* is less clearly datable to the Sufyanid period; see Finster, *Moscheen*, pp. 113ff.; and Flood, *Great Mosque of Damascus*, p. 194.

an ambitiously centralising state, one that patronised not only building projects on an unprecedented level, but also relatively stable institutions, emerged only during the reign of 'Abd al Malik. This the very modesty of very early Islamic rule is clearly reflected in the coinage.

Although circulation and minting patterns are clearer in the former Byzantine provinces than they are in the east, undated issues make sequences and chronologies difficult to establish and highly controversial, even in Syria and Palestine. Even so, some basic patterns are well established, and the most important of thése is an early conservatism. The pre conquest divide in precious metal (Byzantine gold and Sasanian silver) was preserved throughout most of the seventh century. Within greater Syria, where the evidence is fullest, we know that the coinage of vanquished adversaries continued to circulate, small handfuls of Sasanian issues left over from the Sasanian occupation of 612 30, and large fistfuls of Byzantine coinage, some having survived from Byzantine rule, others filtering in across a porous frontier: thus one finds large numbers of Byzantine issues struck during the reign of Constans II (641 68), and others struck as late as the reign of Constantine IV (r. 668 85). In design, too, Byzantine and Sasanian models were closely followed, the issues of Constans II and Khusrau II (r. 590 628) proving the most popular.[89] Mu'awiya appears on a silver coin in the fifty fourth or fifty fifth year of the *hijra* as the 'commander of the believers'; but the coin, which was minted in the southern Iranian town of Darabjird, retains strikingly pre Islamic elements: its dating is to the era of the Sasanian shah Yazdegerd, and its language is Pahlavi, or Middle Persian.[90] Within this broad conservatism there was thus a measure of innova tion in the coinage, but this innovation is clearest in Iraq and Iran that is, outside the metropolitan capital of Syria, where the caliph's influence was presumably strongest. An argument that Mu'awiya *did* have a hand in minting reform has been tentatively made, but it turns more on a single (and contro versial) line in an early Syriac chronicle than on the surviving numismatic record. Whether any minting took place under caliphal supervision before the 690s therefore remains unproven, although the regional coinages of Syria from the 660s and 670s apparently show some increased organisation.[91]

89 C. Foss, 'The coinage of Syria in the seventh century: The evidence of excavations', *Israel Numismatic Journal*, 13 (1994 9); C. Morrison, 'La monnaie en Syrie byzantine', in J. M. Dentzeí and W. Orthmann (eds.), *Archéologie et histoire de la Syrie II* (Saarbrücken, 1989); on this and the coinage more generally, see below, chapter 16.

90 For a description, see S. Album and T. Goodwin, *Sylloge of Islamic coins in the Ashmolean*, vol. I: *The pre reform coinage of the early Islamic period* (London, 2002), p. 15 and plates 17 and 18.

91 H. Bone, 'The administration of Umayyad Syria: The evidence of the copper coins', Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University (2000), esp. pp. 26ff.; C. Foss, 'A Syrian coinage of

What is indisputable is that clearly centralised and coordinated minting appears only in the last decade of the seventh century as and when state institutions were crystallising. For much of the seventh century a bewilder ing array of coins was in circulation in Syria, some genuine Byzantine issues, others imitations (particularly of Constans II), others imitations of imitations.

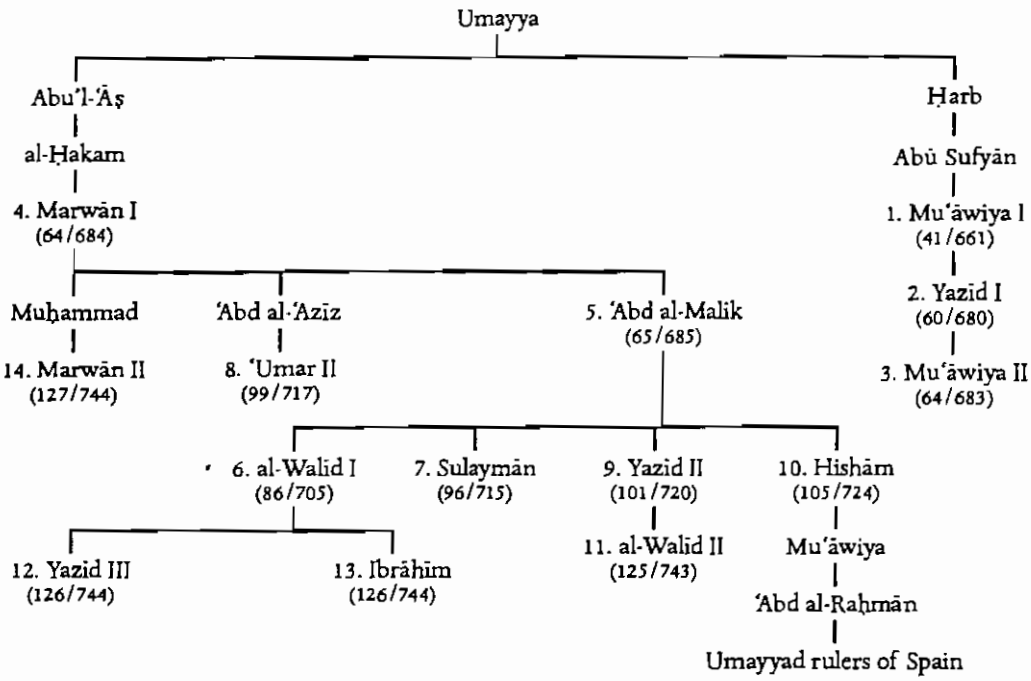
There is, then, no reliably early evidence for anything beyond very rudi mentary instruments of rule that we can attribute to the caliphs or their courts. There is compelling evidence for a fairly sophisticated state apparatus at work throughout the seventh century, however. We find it in Egypt, where a wealth of Greek papyri (receipts of various sorts, requisitions, entagia, proto cols) reflect the continuity and, as recent scholarship has shown, an apparent expansion of an early Islamic fiscal system rooted in Byzantine traditions. (Layers of the Sasanian administrative apparatus survived into the early Islamic period, too, but there is virtually no documentary or contempora neous evidence for it.) In what ways was the Byzantine system affected by Islamic rule? Arab Muslim officials of various sorts figure in the papyri from soon after the conquest, where they appear to have been both knowledgeable about, and assertive in, the management of the fisc. As a bilingual (Greek and Arabic) papyrus dated to AH 22 puts it (in the Greek): 'In the name of God, I, Abdellas ['Abd Allah], *amīr* [commander] to you, Christophoros and Theodorakios, pagarchs of Herakleopolis. I have taken over from you for the maintenance of the Saracens being with me in Herakleopolis, 65 sheep.'[92] In fact, the early Islamic papyri document some reorganising of Egypt's admin istrative geography, and perhaps also the introduction of the poll tax to Egypt, which would reflect the practical imposition of the *jizya* as it is promised in Q 9:69.[93] It now appears that the Muslim rulers of early and mid seventh century Egypt were not the passive receptors of Byzantine bureaucratic traditions, as some earlier scholars had argued, but assertive participants in their transformation.[94]

Mu'awiya?', *Revue Numismatique*, 157 (2002); C. Morrison, 'Monnayage omeyyade et l'histoire administrative et économique de la Syrie', in P. Canivet and J. P. Rey Coquais (eds.), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam* (Damascus, 1992), esp. p. 312.

92 A. Grohmann, *The world of Arabic papyri* (Cairo, 1952), pp. 113 14.

93 See F. Morelli, *Documenti Greci per la fiscalità e la amministrazione dell'Egitto Arabo* (Vienna, 2001), pp. 19 20.

94 See J. Gascou, 'De Byzance à l'Islam: Les impôts en Egypte après la conquête arabe', *JESHO*, 26 (1983); P. Sijpesteijn, 'New rule over old structures: Egypt after the Muslim conquest', in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, Proceedings of the British Academy 136 (London, 2007), pp. 183 200.



4. The Umayyads (dates of accession).
After Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the age of the caliphates*, 2004, p. 403. Copyright Longman, reproduced with permission.

The papyri from Egypt, like the many fewer that survive from Palestine, thus demonstrate the continuity of Byzantine traditions and, in the Egyptian case, an expansion and elaboration of Byzantine traditions during the first half century of Islamic rule. But if Egypt possessed a sophisticated tax regime, nowhere do we find anything reliable that connects it to the imperial capital, either in Arabia, southern Iraq or Syria. Nor do we find any indication that the Arab Muslim oversight of the Byzantine machinery that they had inherited was conditioned by an imperial programme projected by Medina, Kufa or Damascus. In fact, that the impetus for maximising tax revenue was a local initiative is suggested by the contrasting histories of other provinces, such as Northern Mesopotamia, where taxation appears to have been relatively low and irregular for most of the seventh century – that is, until the Marwanids imposed an altogether new and more robust tax administration.[95] To judge from a small clutch of papyri that survive from Nessana, an irregular regime seems to have been in place there too.[96]

95 Robinson, *Empire and elites*, pp. 33ff.
96 Johns, 'Archaeology and the history of early Islam', p. 421; cf. Hoyland, 'New documentary texts', pp. 399ff.

In sum, there is good reason to think that first and second generation conquerors may have been hesitant imperialists, who, settling more frequently at some distance from local inhabitants than next to them, looked after themselves rather than their subjects. 'What, then, did the Arabs do with the regions they conquered?', an archaeologist asks: 'For the most part, they seem to have left them alone.'[97] This is what the evidence says,[98] and it is what sense dictates: why emulate the traditions of the Byzantine and Sasanian states when God had delivered victory over them to austere monotheists, and when there already were people in place to do the job well? Precisely the same conservatism that led the early caliphs to leave indigenous Greek and Persian speaking and writing bureaucrats in place in the provinces acted as a brake upon administrative innovation at the empire's centre.

And being conservative came naturally: all of the caliphs who ruled until 680 had been born and bred in Arabia, and had witnessed the glorious moments of early Islam.[99] Mu'awiya, whose father had been a very prominent opponent of Muḥammad's and had converted only late and opportunistically, himself converted only when Mecca was conquered by Muḥammad, whereupon he entered his circle of advisers and confidants (he is conventionally identified as one of the Prophet's secretaries). He was thus very much the product of the same world that had produced Muḥammad himself: a Qurashī schooled in the ways of tribal politics of Mecca and Medina, he was already in his fifties when he became caliph in 40/661. By contrast, 'Abd al Malik was born in 26/646f., that is, at the beginning of 'Uthman's reign. His formative experience was not of Qurashī Mecca or Muḥammad's community in Medina, nor even of Medina filled with the spoils of 'Umar's spectacular conquests. It was of a town riven by the controversies of 'Uthman and 'Alī's reigns. In other words, what 'Abd al Malik knew of Islam's glorious origins was mediated by others, and the lessons he learned during his childhood were about the

97 Foss, 'Syria in transition', p. 266.

98 Even much later, in the middle decades of the eighth century that is, when state institutions had developed considerably, and the instruments of state power had become more coercive conquering Muslims seem to have balked before imposing state structures in their newly acquired territories: Islamic coinage began to circulate in northern Afghanistan only after a full century of hands off rule; and although the tradition describes a late seventh and eighth century programme of Arabicising official documents, the surviving material remains in Bactrian. See N. Sims Williams, *Bactrian documents from northern Afghanistan*, vol. I: *Legal and economic documents* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 116, 134 ('Arab dirhams in silver' appear in 507/739 and again in 525/757); the poll tax only appears in the latter.

99 See Crone, *Slaves on horses*, p. 5: 'Rarely have a preacher and his followers lived in such discontinuous environments: what made sense to Muḥammad made none to Mu'awiya, let alone to 'Abd al Malik.'

fragility of the early Islamic elite. These lessons would be repeated during the second civil war, when the elite fragmented further. Historical discontinuities may have taken an enormous toll on the preservation of their history, but it freed Muslims of the early period to innovate and experiment.

Little wonder, then, that it is only with ʿAbd al Malik and his generation of Muslims that we have clear evidence for a programme of state building that was driven by the Muslim ruling elite, and which systematically diffused new ideas of power and authority.[100] Since the evidence for all of this explodes onto the scene within a short time the late 680s and early 690s we must accordingly describe the process of early Islamic state building as revolu tionary, rather than evolutionary.

The second *fitna* and the Marwanid revolution

The second *fitna*,[101] like the first, was triggered by problems of succession. Muʿawiya's appointment of his son as heir apparent seems to have been unpopular in principle, since it departed from traditions of acclamation and election. Yazīd's difficulties were compounded by his conduct: the son pos sessed little of the father's nous and forbearance, and it was at the beginning of Yazīd's reign that an Umayyad army suppressed a rebellion led by the Prophet's grandson, al Ḥusayn. In the long term, his gruesome slaying at Karbala' (680) came to exemplify Umayyad brutality and provide inspiration to subsequent Shīʿite movements, especially as it followed earlier instances of Sufyanid abuse of the Shīʿa, such as Muʿawiya's execution of the Kufan Shīʿite al Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī; in the short term, it deepened the crisis for Muʿawiya's successor. Umayyad rule was further weakened with the succession in 683 of the sickly and incompetent Muʿawiya II, who ruled for a matter of months. Umayyad authority outside Syria had started to dissolve earlier, but now it collapsed almost entirely, with the result that several Umayyads and non Umayyads emerged as candidates for the caliphate. Of these, four are espe cially prominent in the sources: ʿAbd Allah ibn al Zubayr, the pious son of a revered Companion who would rule effectively from Mecca; al Ḍaḥḥak ibn Qays al Fihrī, a governor of Muʿawiya's; Ḥassan ibn Malik ibn Bahdal, a cousin of his son, Yazīd; and ʿAmr ibn Saʿīd, an Umayyad who had served Muʿawiya.

100 For a different view, see F. M. Donner, 'The formation of the Islamic state', *JAOS*, 106 (1986), pp. 283 96.

101 The fullest discussion remains G. Rotter, *Die Umayyaden und der Zweite Bürgerkrieg (680 692)* (Wiesbaden, 1982).

In the event, Umayyad rule would be reconstituted, but the process would be slow and difficult. It started in the early summer of 684 with the acclamation in al Jabiya (near Damascus) of Marwan ibn al Ḥakam, a well respected and senior member of the Umayyad house; Marwan promptly set about establishing himself in Syria, defeating al Ḍaḥḥak at Marj Rahiṭ, and then moving to Damascus. He died in the spring of the following year, and was succeeded by his son, 'Abd al Malik. It was 'Abd al Malik who, after several false starts and heavy campaigning, completed the process eight years later by defeating his Syrian rivals (notably 'Amr ibn Sa'īd), campaigning in Iraq and Northern Mesopotamia, and eventually sending an army against Ibn al Zubayr's Mecca. There, in March 691, 'Abd al Malik's most trusted commander and future governor of the east, al Ḥajjaj ibn Yusuf, laid siege to the city and put an end to the caliphate of Ibn al Zubayr.[102] Although 'Abd al Malik's bid for the caliphate dates from 685, when he received the oath of allegiance in Syria, it was probably only with the death of Ibn al Zubayr late in 692 that he was widely acknowledged as caliph. Regnal dates that conventionally put the beginning of his caliphate in 685 say more about subsequent Umayyad claims than they do about contemporaneous attitudes.

Indeed, there can be little doubt that Ibn al Zubayr, although portrayed by much of the primary and secondary literature as a pretender or rebel (one most frequently described as 'he who takes refuge in the house', i.e. the Ka'ba),[103] had been widely acknowledged as caliph certainly much more so than Yazīd, Mu'awiya II, Marwan and, at least until 692, 'Abd al Malik himself. A political and dynastic dead end who had the great misfortune to have been overthrown by the extraordinarily successful 'Abd al Malik, Ibn al Zubayr then had his caliphate written out of most (if not all) of the history books. History itself was different. Almost universally respected because of his descent from al Zubayr, the Prophet's Companion who had rebelled alongside 'Ā'isha in the battle of the Camel, Ibn al Zubayr had firm control of the Prophet's homeland and the emerging cultic centre of Mecca, and minted coins as early as 684 (using what was becoming the standard caliphal title, 'the commander of the faithful'). He ruled lands stretching from Egypt in the west to eastern Iran and parts of Afghanistan in the east by appointing governors,

102 The following is spelled out in much more detail in C. F. Robinson, *'Abd al Malik* (Oxford, 2005). The politics of the period is very usefully summarised in A. A. Dixon, *The Umayyad caliphate 65 86/684 705 (a political study)* (London, 1971).

103 In addition to Robinson, *'Abd al Malik*, pp. 31ff., see Abu al Fatḥ al Samirī, *The continuatio of the Samaritan chronicle of Abu al Fatḥ al Samirī al Danafī*, ed. and trans. M. Levy Rubin (Princeton, 2002), pp. 54f.

levying taxes and dispatching armies, and successfully suppressed the most potent opposition movement of the civil war, a Shī'ite rebellion in southern Iraq (685 7) led by a shadowy figured named 'al Mukhtar', who championed the right to the caliphate of Muḥammad ibn al Ḥanafiyya, a son of 'Alī's by a concubine. It is true that his vision of a Ḥijazī based empire turns out to have been naive and nostalgic, but in several respects he was an innovator: for example, it is during his reign that part of the Muslim profession of faith ('Muḥammad is the messenger of God') first appears on coinage, one of several practices that would survive his death in 692. He also undertook what appears to have been a substantial rebuilding programme in Mecca, which anticipates 'Abd al Malik's. In overthrowing Ibn al Zubayr, 'Abd al Malik thus defeated the man who was at once the most effective spokesman for the interests of the Ḥijazīs left behind by Umayyad rule, the most respected opponent of Umayyad dynastic claims, and the one most widely acknowledged as caliph.

'Abd al Malik's revolutionary impulse carried him beyond his defeat of Ibn al Zubayr. For it was during his reign that we witness nothing less than the transformation of the loosely federal, ideologically inchoate conquest polity of the early caliphs into the land based, bureaucratic state that lay at the heart of the Marwanid empire and one that, within a generation of 'Abd al Malik's death, would reach its greatest size. Just how fragile the conquest polity had been can be seen in its catastrophic collapse upon the death of Mu'awiya. Just how robust 'Abd al Malik's state was can be seen in the events following his death, when he was succeeded by no fewer than four sons, three grandsons and two nephews. And because his and his sons' rule was so successful in the short term, the traditions, institutions and ideas they put in place survived in the longer term, underpinning the 'Abbasid empire of the eighth and ninth centuries.

The changes were military, administrative and ideological; all contributed to the complex process itself already under way in which Islamic society became in many respects increasingly differentiated and complex, and the instruments of rule more powerful and persuasive. We may begin with the army.

Having settled in the provinces in the 640s and 650s, by the 670s and 680s many conquering tribesmen would have begun to take up a variety of occupations, depending on their resources, abilities and opportunities; and in some instances we know that sedentarisation was encouraged among pastoralists, and that garrisons were being transformed into towns.[104] Even

104 For an overview, see K. 'Athamina, 'Arab settlement during the Umayyad caliphate', *JSAI*, 8 (1986).

so, the contrast between civilian and soldier remained indistinct until 'Abd al Malik's military reforms, when the tribesmen soldiers of the conquest armies, generally mustered and led by chieftains drawn from high status kinship groups, began to be replaced by a professional soldiery of Syrians. The lesson taught by the civil war, when fickle chieftains had abandoned the Sufyanids for rival candidates, was duly learned. What resulted was thus an altogether clearer contrast between civilian and soldier, which, in the view of a state claiming a monopoly on legitimate violence, transformed the armed civilian into a brigand or rebel. At the same time, because the army was overwhelmingly Syrian in composition, it also resulted in an altogether clearer distinction between (ruling) Syrian and (ruled) non Syrian.

In the short term, the new style Syrian army was a success: within three years of defeating Ibn al Zubayr, 'Abd al Malik had launched what would turn out to be a four year campaign on the Byzantine frontier, and parts of Armenia would fall under Islamic rule for the first time. (The *jihad* would be expanded with considerable success by 'Abd al Malik's son and successor, al Walīd, especially in North Africa and Sind.) But problems naturally appeared. We occasionally read of desertion and the soldiers' reluctance to fight; we also read of spectacular rebellions led by commanders on extended campaigns (thus a dangerous revolt in the east led by the celebrated Kindī commander, Ibn al Ash'ath, in 699) and of soldiers who had fallen off the *dīwan* and thus out of favour with the Umayyads (thus the Kharijite rebellion led by Shabīb ibn Yazīd al Shaybanī in Northern Mesopotamia and Iraq in late 695 and 696).[105] Perhaps most important, the distinction between Syrian and non Syrian became politically explosive. The occupation of Iraq and Iran by Syrian soldiers Syrian garrisons were established in Iraq and Iran, the garrison of Wasiṭ being built in 702 or 703, equidistant between Baṣra and Kufa as a base against their restive tribesmen provided the coercion necessary to extract taxes and tribute from non Syrians. This would lead in the short term to endemic rebellion in the provinces, most notably by Kharijites, and, in the long term, to the catastrophic revolution of 749 50. Meanwhile, the profes sionalisation of the army led to the emergence of two rival factions (the Qays/Yaman, or 'northerner'/'southerner'); and this rivalry would also subvert Umayyad rule until its end.[106]

105 On Ibn al Ash'ath, see R. Sayed, *Die Revolte des Ibn al Ash'at und die Koranleser* (Freiburg, 1977); on Shabīb, see Robinson, *Empire and elites*, pp. 109ff.

106 P. Crone, 'Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad period political parties?', *Der Islam*, 71 (1994).

Military reforms thus strengthened Umayyad power in the short term, as they reflected the shift away from a relatively undifferentiated conquest society. The same processes characterised the administrative and fiscal reforms of the period. Here, too, we find indirect influence being replaced by direct control. The scale of these reforms is hard to exaggerate. As the Islamic historical tradition makes clear, the changes were in part linguistic: the language of tax administration, which until this period had remained unchanged in Greek and Persian, was now replaced by Arabic. The surviving documentary evidence offers some corroboration for this shift, although the pace of change in the Islamic east seems to have been considerably slower than the historical tradition would have it.[107] The introduction of Arabic into the tax administration had the effect of opening up bureaucratic careers to Arabs and to non Arab converts (*mawalī*), who were incorporated into Islam through admission as clients by Arab patrons, although Christians and Jews would continue to serve; the Marwanid period is consequently filled with examples of extraordinary social climbing, as Arabs and *mawalī* alike joined the ranks of administrators and tax officials. A relatively closed elite of tribesmen soldiers was cracking open. Effects aside, the intention of this linguistic change must have been to extend Umayyad control over tax revenues so as to maximise the elite's share. Indeed, there is no doubt that the last two decades of the seventh century and first two of the eighth were a watershed in the fiscal history of the Near East, as irregular and inconsistent tribute taking was replaced by regular and more systematic taxing. The documentary and Syriac historical traditions show this at work in Syria and Northern Mesopotamia; in the latter we have a handful of apocalypses and apocalyptic histories that describe in hyperbolic detail the devastating effects of the new taxing regime.[108] Even in Egypt, where the engines of the Byzantine tax machine had never stopped firing, we read of the unprecedented extension of tax liabilities to mobile peasants and monks, and the unrest that resulted from the new regime. Arabs, too, now became increasingly liable to taxation, as the poll and land taxes were firmly established for the first time, the former on non Muslims, the latter on non Muslim and Muslim alike.[109]

The scale and nature of these changes are reflected in the material evidence. Leaving aside all the papyri generated by the Byzantine machinery of Egypt,

107 See above, note 98.

108 For a survey, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 257ff.; Robinson, *Empire and elites*, pp. 48ff.

109 See J. B. Simonsen, *Studies in the genesis and early development of the caliphal taxation system* (Copenhagen, 1988), esp. pp. 113ff.; Morimoto, *Fiscal administration of Egypt*, pp. 139ff.

we have precious little elite sponsored documentary and inscriptional material (which is to be distinguished from occasional graffiti) dating from the conquest and Sufyanid periods, but with the Marwanids the corpus not only grows larger, but also more consistent. For example, while no pre Marwanid milestones have been discovered, no fewer than six date from the reign of 'Abd al Malik.[110] Patterns of non elite settlement and land use may have been slow to change in this period, but new tools and techniques of rule were being adopted: it is at the tail end of the seventh and early eighth centuries, to take another example, that mobile non Muslim taxpayers were made to wear seal pendants to mark their tax status.[111] The best evidence for the scale and nature of change comes in the coinage. We saw earlier that coinage had been diverse, preserving (and elaborating upon) the varieties of Byzantine and Sasanian minting traditions that had carried on through the conquests. Starting almost immediately upon the defeat of Ibn al Zubayr, 'Abd al Malik's minters abandoned the conservatism of their forebears, first (starting in *c.* 692) by introducing distinctively Islamic designs and motifs (such as a portrait of 'Abd al Malik; what may be a spear in a prayer niche), and second, starting with gold coins in around 696 7, by abandoning altogether the figural imagery and languages of pre Islamic coinage in favour of purely non figural, epigraphic coins with exclusively Arabic legends that expressed in formulaic ways distinctively Islamic ideas.[112] Alongside these coinage reforms, which centralised minting and imposed standard weights,[113] sits a reform of weights and measures. In addition to circulating tokens that broadcast legitimising and universalising claims, the elite was thus taking an unprecedented interest in fostering economic exchange. The Marwanids certainly patronised commercial building projects in Palestine and Syria.[114]

What we have, in sum, is the relatively sudden appearance of a cluster of institutions and practices: an imperial state designed for the systematic extraction of agricultural revenues was being engineered. It was to be effected by a professional soldiery resourced by an increasingly thorough tax regime, which

110 A. Elad, 'The southern Golan in the early Muslim period: The significance of two newly discovered milestones of 'Abd al Malik', *Der Islam*, 76 (1999).

111 C. F. Robinson, 'Neck sealing in early Islam', *JESHO*, 48 (2005).

112 Bone, 'Copper coins'.

113 P. Grierson, 'The monetary reforms of 'Abd al Malik: Their metrological basis and their financial repercussions', *JESHO*, 3 (1960).

114 See R. M. Foote, 'Commerce, industrial expansion, and orthogonal planning: Mutually compatible terms in settlements of Bilad al Sham during the Umayyad period', *Mediterranean Archaeology*, 13 (2000); and S. Berthier (ed.), *Peuplement rural et aménagements hydroagricôles dans la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrat, fin VIIe XIXe siècle* (Damascus, 2001).

was managed by new cadres of bureaucrats and administrators. Its authority was to be anchored in that unitary conception of authority with which this chapter began, and which was now crystallising. As the poetry and prose of this and subsequent periods shows, 'Abd al Malik was 'God's caliph', heir to the Prophet's authority and God's 'shadow on earth', a legislator, judge, guide, warrior, rain maker, prayer leader, perhaps an editor (the Qur'anic text may have been fixed only in the early Marwanid period)[115] and certainly a builder of what remains the oldest intact Islamic building: the domed, octagonal building in Jerusalem that is called the Dome of the Rock. Completed in around 72/691f., the Dome of the Rock sits atop the Temple Mount, which looks down upon Christian Jerusalem. The building is a monu ment to victory: not merely victory over Ibn al Zubayr (its construction seems to have taken place during or soon after the end of the *fitna*) but, more importantly, victory over rival monotheisms. In fact, it was an imposing reminder of their obsolescence: just as the building was made to sit at the heart of the Holy Land, literally upon the foundations of the Jews' Temple, so did the faith that it symbolised claim to reform and perfect earlier revelations. Thus its inscriptions announce that God is merciful and compassionate, that He is alone and has no sons ('The messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God ... [Who] is too exalted to have a son'), that Muḥammad is His Prophet, and that:

> Religion with God is Islam. Those who received the scripture differed only after knowledge came to them, out of envy for one another. Whoever denies the signs of God [beware], for God is swift to call to account.[116]

Conclusion

Given the extraordinarily modest cultural and political traditions generally associated with western Arabia in Late Antiquity, how is it that Muḥammad and the Arab caliphs and commanders who immediately succeeded him had both the vision and perspicacity to forge a new religio political tradition that would survive in post conquest Syria and Iraq? Sophisticated religious tradi tions generally emerge in societies with relatively high levels of social differ entiation; the rule of history calls for the assimilation of conquering pastoral

115 Thus M. Sfar, *Le coran est il authentique?* (Paris, 2000), pp. 83ff.; Robinson, *'Abd al Malik*, pp. 100ff.
116 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, pp. 696ff.

and semi pastoral tribesmen, along with their political and cultural traditions, into the more developed, sedentary culture so conquered, be it fifth century Roman Italy or twelfth century Saljuq Iraq. Why were seventh century Arabs so different? These questions can be answered in a variety of ways, but it may be useful to contrast two of them.

The first, here put in its most extreme form, is to argue that the Ḥijaz had nothing to do with earliest Islam. Because religious traditions have a habit of misrepresenting their origins, and because we lack corroborating evidence that is contemporaneous to the crucial events of the seventh century, there is no reason to suppose that everything happened as the Islamic tradition tells us it happened. One may accordingly assert that Muḥammad did not exist, that the conquests – that is, the Ḥijazī Arabs' violent seizure of power from the Byzantines (and Sasanians) – did not take place, and that the Qur'an, with all of its debts to Judaism and Christianity, was compiled at least a century (and perhaps two centuries) later.[117] (Islamic history would thus be comparable to Israelite history, its scripture, conquest and early polity as enigmatic as those ascribed to Moses and David.) There being no historical basis for early Islamic narratives, the problematic Ḥijazī context of earliest Islam is thus solved at a stroke: Islam's origins lie not in Arabia, but in the Late Antique world of the eighth and ninth century Fertile Crescent, in the religious, ethnic and linguistic matrix that produced comparable forms of monotheism, such as, especially, rabbinic Judaism. According to this line of argument, Arabian origins reflect not historical reality, but an invented tradition.

Now, it can hardly be doubted that the early Islamic historiographic tradition was at once deeply conditioned by polemical assertions regarding identity, origin and social status, and preserves only very incompletely any authentic material from the seventh century. But if it is one thing to envision the growth of the Islamic tradition as part of a much broader process, in which monotheist identity of several varieties took shape, it is altogether something else to reject in its entirety the tradition's claim for Arabian origins. In fact, revisionism of this sort can readily be blunted by adducing a variety of seventh century evidence. The fact is that Christian and Jewish sources confirm that Muḥammad *did* exist and did make prophetic claims, that some kind

117 For revisionism of the most radical kind, see Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: The origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state* (Amherst, NY, 2003), inspired, in part, by the work of Wansbrough, which is usefully discussed in H. Berg, 'Islamic origins reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the study of early Islam', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 9 (1997); cf. I. Olagüe, *Les arabes n'ont jamais envahi l'espagne* (Paris, 1969).

of violent political change effected by monotheist tribesmen soldiers from Arabia *did* occur, and that, at least in some fragmentary form, some kind of an Islamic scripture *can* be dated to the seventh century. Non Islamic and material evidence is far too sketchy to produce a coherent account of Islam's beginnings, but it securely locates those beginnings in events that are familiar to us from the Islamic tradition itself. In any case, if one deprives the conquests of the great motive force of Muḥammad's revelations and politics, one makes them altogether harder to understand.

One solution to the problem of the Ḥijaz's cultural insularity is thus to pull Islamic origins entirely out of Arabia and into the Late Antique Fertile Crescent of the eighth and ninth centuries. The second, which is more promising, is to pull Late Antiquity into the seventh century Ḥijaz. For the more evidence we have that it was open to the political, cultural and religious currents of Late Antiquity, the easier it is for us to understand not merely the Qur'an that 'text without a context' but also early Islam more generally. There is disappointingly little of it that we can securely date to the sixth and early seventh centuries, however. (Arguments for Christian, Jewish or Manichaean influence upon Muḥammad and his contemporaries typically adduce the biographical and historical tradition, especially Prophetic *sīra*, which generally dates from eighth and ninth century Iraq;[118] until the genesis and transmission of this tradition are understood more fully, evidence such as this is far from clinching.) The political and cultural circumstances for Arabian archaeology are admittedly very unfavourable, but, such as the archaeology is, it yields virtually no sure evidence for the extension of political and cultural influences from the Late Antique heartland into the sixth and seventh century Ḥijaz; this contrasts with earlier periods and other regions of Arabia, particularly the south and the east, which, according to the material and historical record, were frequently brought into the orbit of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires.[119] To assemble the thin evidence for local monotheisms, we must fall back upon the incidental references in the slim non Islamic tradition, and, as we have already seen, the testimony of the one text that was generated in the seventh century Ḥijaz the Qur'an.

In the present state of our knowledge, the most we can do is propose hypotheses that accommodate the available evidence according to models appropriate to the Late Antique world in which early Muslims evolved. Arabia

118 For a Manichaean example, see M. Gil, 'The creed of Abu 'Āmir,' *Israel Oriental Studies*, 12 (1992).

119 For an overview, Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*.

was moving perhaps sluggishly towards monotheism, and Muḥammad seems to have greatly accelerated this process. Beyond adducing the force of his personality, political acuity and the victories of the early Medinan period, explaining why his vision of reform and political action should have been so successful is very difficult, but it may be because western Arabia lay outside the dense network of Christian and Jewish belief and institutions that Muḥammad was free to innovate in the long abandoned style of a Hebrew prophet, legislating, leading and warring, and that this style had such appeal; had he been born and raised in Syria, one might expect a very different career, perhaps as a more typical (but equally charismatic) holy man. What is clearer is that he articulated a religious vision that was at once reassuringly familiar and passionately revolutionary and this, in a distinctively Arabian idiom. Thus paganism is repudiated, but the pagan sanctuary of Mecca is reinterpreted as Abrahamic and integrated into the new dispensation; similarly, the Arabic Qur'an rejects the *jahiliyya* ethos, but draws upon registers of orality that had been closely associated with the very kinship patterns that were at the heart of *jahilī* paganism.[120] While the universality of Islam took some time to develop, the special role of the Arabs and their traditions of kinship had to have a place from the start. Indeed, from as early as we can trace things, we know that the central institution of rule (the caliphate) was dominated by Arabs, while, at least in theory, the only institution of incorporation (conversion) was effected through the adoption of Arab tribal lineage.

Whatever their Ḥijazī origins, Arab identity and the nascent religious tradition were subsequently conditioned by patterns of post conquest settlement and assimilation. There is no reason to doubt that the garrisons founded apart from or adjacent to pre Islamic settlements were intended at least in part to insulate Arab Muslims from non Arab non Muslims; but they inevitably attracted and generated trade and exchange, and, with it, the influx of non Arabs. What appears to have been an initial experiment, in which an ethnic and religious elite would rule at arm's length, was overtaken by the realities of settlement. From this perspective, the late seventh century programme of Arabisation marks a transitional phase between the relative insularity of the first generations, born and bred in Arabia and among the Arabs of Syria, and the clear universalism and cosmopolitanism of the Iraqi based caliphate of the 'Abbasid period. In the meantime Muslims developed their religious tradition in response to, and in interaction with, their fellow monotheists, even if the

120 A. Jones, 'The language of the Qur'an', in K. Dévéni, T. Iványi and A. Shivtel (eds.), *Proceedings of the Colloquium on Arabic Lexicology and Lexicography* (Budapest, 1993).

early Islamic tradition is disappointingly taciturn about the world in which these interactions took place. Muslims having been small minorities through out the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, classical Islam that is, the religious and political system that crystallised during the ninth century owes innumerable debts to the prevailing, majority cultures of the day,[121] which were evolving and transforming as well, at least sometimes in response to Islam.[122] Disputation and controversy began very early on,[123] but much of classical tradition was forged in multi ethnic Iraq and the Islamic east. As Muslim rulers left Arabia and Arabian Syria, Islamic society and belief were changing.

121 For Muslim debts to the rabbis, see M. Cook, 'The opponents of the writing of tradition in early Islam', *Arabica*, 44 (1997), pp. 437 530; M. Cook, 'Magian cheese: An archaic problem in Islamic law', *BSOAS*, 47 (1984); for background, M. J. Kister, 'Ḥaddithu 'an banī isra'īla wa la ḥaraja', *Israel Oriental Studies*, 2 (1972).

122 For Karaite debts to Muslims, see Cook, ''Anan and Islam'.

123 See S. H. Griffith, 'Disputes with Muslims in Syriac Christian texts: From Patriarch John (d. 648) to Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286)', in B. Lewis and R. Niewöhner (eds.), *Religionsgespräche in Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden, 1992).

Chapter 2

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SHI'ISM

Shi'ism began with a reference made for the first time to the partisans of Ali (shi'ah-i 'Ali), the first leader of the Household of the Prophet, during the lifetime of the Prophet himself.[1] The course of the first manifestation and the later growth of Islam during the twenty-three years of prophecy brought about many conditions which necessitated the appearance of a group such as the Shi'ites among the companions of the Prophet.

The Holy Prophet during the first days of his prophecy, when according to the text of the Quran he was commanded to invite his closer relatives to come to his religion,[2] told them clearly that whoever would be the first to accept his invitation would become his successor and inheritor. Ali was the first to step forth and embrace Islam. The Prophet accepted Ali's submission to the faith and thus fulfilled his promise.[3]

From the Shi'ite point of view it appears as unlikely that the leader of a movement, during the first days of his activity, should introduce to strangers one of his associates as his successor and deputy but not introduce him to his completely loyal and devout aides and friends. Nor does it appear likely that such a leader should accept someone as his deputy and successor and introduce him to others as such, but then throughout his life and religious call deprive his deputy of his duties as deputy, disregard the respect due to his position as successor, and refuse to make any distinctions between him and others.

The Prophet, according to many unquestioned and completely authenticated hadiths, both Sunni and Shi'ite, clearly asserted that Ali was preserved om error and sin in his actions and sayings. Whatever he said and did was in perfect

conformity with the teachings of religion4 and he was the most knowledgeable of men in matters pertaining to the Islamic sciences and injunctions.[4]

During the period of prophecy Ali performed valuable services and made remarkable sacrifices. When the infidels of Mecca decided to kill the Prophet and surrounded his house, the Holy Prophet decided to emigrate to Medina. He said to Ali, "Will you sleep in my bed at night so that they will think that Iam asleep and will be secure from being pursued by them?" Ali accepted this dangerous assignment with open arms. This has been recounted in different histories and collections of hadith. (The emigration from Mecca to Medina marks the date of origin of the Islamic calendar, known as the hijrah.) Ali also served by fighting in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khaybar, Khandaq, and Hunayn in which the victories achieved with his aid were such that if Ali had not been present the enemy would most likely have uprooted Islam and the Muslims, as is recounted in the usual histories, lives of the Prophet, and collections of hadith.

For Shi'ites, the central evidence of Ali's legitimacy as successor to the Prophet is the event of Ghadir Khumm [5] when the Prophet chose Ali to the "general guardianship" (walayat-i 'ammah) of the people and made Ali, like himself, their "guardian" (wali).[6] It is obvious that because of such distinctive services and recognition, because of Ali's special virtues which were acclaimed by all,[7] and because of the great love the Prophet showed for him,[8] some of the companions of the Prophet who knew Ali well, and who were champions of virtue and truth, came to love him. They assembled around Ali and followed him to such an extent that many others began to consider their love for him excessive and a few perhaps also became jealous of him. Besides all these elements, we see in many sayings of the Prophet reference to the "shi'ah of Ali" and the "shi'ah of the Household of the Prophet."[9]

2.1 The Cause of the Separation of the Shi'ite Minority from the Sunni Majority

The friends and followers of Ali believed that after the death of the Prophet the caliphate and religious authority (marja'iyat-i 'ilmi) belonged to Ali. This belief came from their consideration of Ali's position and station in relation to the Prophet, his relation to the chosen among the companions, as well as his relation to Muslims in general. It was only the events that occurred during the few days of the Prophet's final illness that indicated that there was opposition to their view.[10] Contrary to their expectation, at the very moment when the

Prophet died and his body lay still unburied, while his household and a few companions were occupied with providing for his burial and funeral service, the friends and followers of Ali received news of the activity of another group who had gone to the mosque where the community was gathered faced with this sudden loss of its leader. This group, which was later to form the majority, set forth in great haste to select a caliph for the Muslims with the aim of ensuring the welfare of the community and solving its immediate problems. They did this without consulting the Household of the Prophet, his relatives or many of his friends, who were busy with the funeral, and without providing them with the least information. Thus Ali and his companions were presented with afait accompli.[11]

Ali and his friends-such as 'Abbas, Zubayr, Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad and 'Ammar-after finishing with the burial of the body of the Prophet became aware of the proceedings by which the caliph had been selected. They protested against the act of choosing the caliph by consultation or election, and also against those who were responsible for carrying it out. They even presented their own proofs and arguments, but the answer they received was that the welfare of the Muslims was at stake and the solution lay in what had been done. [12]

It was this protest and criticism which separated from the majority the minority that were following Ali and made his followers known to society as the "partisans" or "shi'ah" of Ali.

The caliphate of the time was anxious to guard against this appellation being given to the Shi'ite minority and thus to have Muslim society divided into sections comprised of a majority and a minority. The supporters of the caliph considered the caliphate to be a matter of the consensus of the community (ijma') and called those who objected the "opponents of allegiance." They claimed that the Shi'ah stood, therefore, opposed to Muslim society. Sometimes the Shi'ah were given other pejorative and degrading names. [13]

Shi'ism was condemned from the first moment because of the political situation of the time and thus it could not accomplish anything through mere political protest. Ali, in order to safeguard the well-being of Islam and of the Muslims, and also because of lack of sufficient political and military power, did not endeavor to begin an uprising against the existing political order, which would have been of a bloody nature. Yet those who protested against the established caliphate refused to surrender to the majority in certain questions of faith and continued to hold that the succession to the Prophet and religious authority belonged by right to Ali.[14] They believed that all spiritual and religious matters should be referred to him and invited people to become his followers. [15]

2.2 The Two Problems of Succession and Authority in Religious Sciences

In accordance with the Islamic teachings which form its basis, Shi'ism believed that the most important question facing Islamic society was the elucidation and clarification of Islamic teachings and the tenets ofthe religious sciences.[16] Only after such clarifica- tions were made could the application of these teachings to the social order be considered. In other words, Shi'ism believed that, before all else, members of society should be able to gain a true vision of the world and of men based on the real nature of things. Only then could they know and perform their duties as human beings- in which lay their real welfare-even if the performance of these religious duties were to be against their desires. After carrying out this first step a religious government should preserve and execute real Islamic order in society in such a way that man would worship none other than God, would possess personal and social freedom to the extent possible, and would benefit from true personal and social justice.

These two ends could be accomplished only by a person who was inerrant and protected by God from having faults. Otherwise people could become rulers or religious authorities who would not be free from the possibility of distortion of thought or the committing of treachery in the duties placed upon their shoulders. Were this to happen, the just and freedom-giving rule of Islam could gradually be converted to dictatorial rule and a completely autocratic government. Moreover, the pure religious teachings, could become, as can be seen in the case of certain other religions, the victims of change and distortion in the hands of selfish scholars given to the satisfaction of their carnal desires. As confirmed by the Holy Prophet, Ali followed perfectly and completely the Book of God and the tradition of the Prophet in both words and deeds.[17] As Shi'ism sees it, if, as the majority say, only the Quraysh[18] opposed the rightful caliphate of Ali, then that majority should have answered the Quraysh by asserting what was right. They should have quelled all opposition to the right cause in the same way that they fought against the group who refused to pay the religious tax (zakat). The majority should not have remained indifferent to what was right for fear of the opposition of the Quraysh.

What prevented the Shi'ah from accepting the elective method of choosing the caliphate by the people was the fear of the unwholesome consequences that might result from it: fear of possible corruption in Islamic government and of the destruction of the solid basis for the sublime religious sciences. As it hap-

pened, later events in Islamic history confirmed this fear (or prediction), with the result that the Shi'ites became ever firmer in their belief. During the earliest years, however, because of the small number of its followers, Shi'ism appeared outwardly to have been absorbed into the majority, although privately it continued to insist on acquiring the Islamic sciences from the Household of the Prophet and to invite people to its cause. At the same time, in order to preserve the power of Islam and safeguard its progress, Shi'ism did not display any open opposition to the rest of Islamic society. Members of the Shi'ite community even fought hand in hand with the Sunni majority in holy wars (jihad) and participated in public affairs. Ali himself guided the Sunni majority in the interest of the whole of Islam whenever such action was necessary.[19]

2.3 The Political Method of the Selection of the Caliph by Vote and Its Disagreement with the Shi'ite View

Shi'ism believes that the Divine Law of Islam (Shari'ah), whose substance is found in the Book of God and in the tradition (Sunnah)[20] of the Holy Prophet, will remain valid to the Day of Judgment and can never, nor will ever, be altered. A government which is really Islamic cannot under any pretext refuse completely to carry out the Shari'ah's injunctions. [21] The only duty of an Islamic government is to make decisions by consultation within the limits set by the Shari'ah and in accordance with the demands of the moment.

The vow of allegiance to Abu Bakr at Saqifah, which was motivated at least in part by political considerations, and the incident described in the hadith of "ink and paper,"[22] which occurred during the last days of the illness of the Holy Prophet, reveal the fact that those who directed and backed the movement to choose the caliph through the process of election believed that the Book of God should be preserved in the form of a constitution. They emphasized the Holy Book and paid much less attention to the words of the Holy Prophet as an immutable source of the teachings of Islam. They seem to have accepted the modification of certain aspects of Islamic teachings concerning government to suit the conditions of the moment and for the sake of the general welfare.

This tendency to emphasize only certain principles of the Divine Law is confirmed by many sayings that were later transmitted concerning the companions of the Holy Prophet. For example, the companions were considered to be in-

dependent authorities in matters of the Divine Law (mujtahid),[23] being able to exercise independent judgment (ijtihad) in public affairs. It was also believed that if they succeeded in their task they would be rewarded by God and if they failed they would be forgiven by Him since they were among the companions. This view was widely held during the early years following the death of the Holy Prophet. Shi'ism takes a stricter stand and believes that the actions of the companions, as of all other Muslims, should be judged strictly according to the teachings of the Shari'ah. For example, there was the complicated incident involving the famous general Khalid ibn Walid in the house of one of the prominent Muslims of the day, Malik ibn Nuwajrah, which led to the death of the latter. The fact that Khalid was not at all taken to task for this incident because of his being an outstanding military leader[24] shows in the eyes of Shi'ism an undue lenience toward some of the actions of the companions which were below the norm of perfect piety and righteousness set by the actions of the spiritual elite among the companions.

Another practice of the early years which is criticized by Shi'ism is the cutting off of the khums[25] from the members of the Household of the Prophet and from the Holy Prophet's relatives.[26] Likewise, because of the emphasis laid by Shi'ism on the sayings and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet it is difficult for it to under stand why the writing down of the text of hadith was completely banned and why, if a written hadith were found, it would be burned. [27] We know that this ban continued through the caliphate of the khulafa' rashidun[28] into the Umayyad period[29] and did not cease until the period of Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, who ruled from A.H. 99/A.D. 717 to A.H. 101/A.D. 719.[30]

During the period of the second caliph (13/634-25/644) there was a continuation of the policy of emphasizing certain aspects of the Shari'ah and of putting aside some of the practices which the Shi'ites believe the Holy Prophet taught and practiced. Some practices were forbidden, some were omitted, and some were added. For instance, the pilgrimage of tamattu' (a kind of pilgrimage in which the 'umrah ceremony is utilized in place of the hajj ceremony) was banned by Umar during his caliphate, with the decree that transgressors would be stoned; this in spite of the fact that during his final pilgrimage the Holy Prophet-peace be upon him-instituted, as in Quran, Surah II, 196, a special form for the pilgrimage ceremonies that might be performed by pilgrims coming from far away. Also, during the lifetime of the Prophet of God temporary marriage (mut'ah) was practiced, but Umar forbade it. And even though during the life of the Holy Prophet it was the practice to recite in the call to prayers, "Hurry to the best act" (hayya 'ala khayr el-'amal), Umar ordered that

it be omitted because he said it would prevent people from participating in holy war, jihad. (It is still recited in the Shi'ite call to prayers, but not in the Sunni call.) There were also additions to the Shari'ah: during the time of the Prophet a divorce was valid only if the three declarations of divorce ("I divorce thee") were made on three different occasions, but Umar allowed the triple divorce declaration to be made at one time. Heavy penalties were imposed on those who broke certain of these new regulations, such as stoning in the case of mut'ah marriage.

It was also during the period of the rule of the second caliph that new social and economic forces led to the uneven distribution of the public treasury (bayt al-mal) among the people,[31] an act which was later the cause of bewildering class differences and frightful and bloody struggles among Muslims. At this time Mu'awiyah was ruling in Damascus in the style of the Persian and Byzantine kings and was even given-the title of the "Khusraw of the Arabs" (a Persian title of the highest imperial power), but no serious protest was made against him for his worldly type of rule.[32]

The second caliph was killed by a Persian slave in 25/644. In accordance with the majority vote of a six-man council which had assembled by order of the second caliph before his death, the third caliph was chosen. The third caliph did not prevent his Umayyad relatives from becoming dominant over the people during his caliphate and appointed some of them as rulers in the Hijaz, Iraq, Egypt, and other Muslim lands.[33] These relatives began to be lax in applying moral principles in government. Some of them openly committed injustice and tyranny, sin and iniquity, and broke certain of the tenets of firmly established Islamic laws.

Before long, streams of protest began to flow toward the capital. But the caliph, who was under the influence of his relativesparticularly Marwan ibn Hakam[34]-did not act promptly or decisively to remove the causes against which the people were protesting. Sometimes it even happened that those who protested were punished and driven away.

An incident that happened in Egypt illustrates the nature of the rule of the third caliph. A group of Muslims in Egypt rebelled against Uthman. Uthman sensed the danger and asked Ali for help, expressing his feeling of contrition. Ali told the Egyptians, You have revolted in order to bring justice and truth to life. Uthman has repented saying, 'I shall change my ways and in three days will fulfill your wishes. I shall expel the oppressive rulers from their posts.'" Ali then wrote an agreement with them on behalf of Uthman and they started home. On the way they saw the slave of Uthman riding on his camel in the direction of Egypt. They became suspicious of him and searched him. On him they found

a letter for the governor of Egypt containing the following words: "In the name of God. When 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Addis comes to you beat him with a hundred lashes, shave his head and beard and condemn him to long imprisonment. Do the same in the case of 'Amr ibn al-Hamq, Suda ibn Hamran, and 'Urwah ibn Niba'." The Egyptians took the letter and returned with anger to Uthman, saying, "You have betrayed us!" Uthman denied the letter. They said, "Your slave was the carrier of the letter." He answered, "He has committed this act without my permission." They said, "He rode upon your camel." He answered, "They have stolen my camel." They said, "The letter is in the handwriting of your secretary." He replied, "This has been done without my permission and knowledge." They said, "In any case you are not cempetent to be caliph and must resign, for if this has been done with your permission you are a traitor and if such important matters take place without your permission and knowledge then your incapability and incompetence is proven. In any case, either resign or dismiss the oppressive agents from office immediately."

Uthman answered, "If I wish to act according to your will, then it is you who are the rulers. Then, what is my function?" They stood up and left the gathering in anger.[35]

During his caliphate Uthman allowed the government of Damascus, at the head of which stood Mu'awiyah, to be strengthened more than ever before. In reality, the center of gravity of the caliphate as far as political power was concerned was shifting to Damascus and the organization in Medina, the capital of the Islamic world, was politically no more than a form without the necessary power and substance to support it.[36] Finally, in the year 35/656, the people rebelled and after a few days of siege and fighting the third caliph was killed.

The first caliph was selected through the vote of the majority of the companions, the second caliph by the will and testament of the first, and the third by a six-man council whose members and rules of procedure were organized and determined by the second caliph. Altogether. the policy of these three caliphs, who were in power for twenty-five years, was to execute and apply Islamic laws and principles in society in accordance with ijtihad and what appeared as most wise at the time to the caliphs themselves. As for the Islamic sciences, the policy of these caliphs was to have the Holy Quran read and understood without being concerned with commentaries upon it or allowing it to become the subject of discussion. The hadith of the Prophet was recited and was transmitted orally without being written down. Writing was limited to the text of the Holy Quran and was forbidden in the case of hadith.[37]

After the battle of Yamamah which ended in 12/633, many of those who

had been reciters of the Holy Quran and who knew it by heart were killed. As a result Umar ibn al-Khattab proposed to the first caliph to have the verses of the Holy Quran collected in written form, saying that if another war were to occur and the rest of those who knew the Quran by heart were to be killed, the knowledge of the text of the Holy Book would disappear among men. Therefore, it was necessary to assemble the Quranic verses in written form.[38]

From the Shi'ite point of view it appears strange that this decision was made concerning the Quran and yet despite the fact that the prophetic hadith, which is the complement of the Quran, was faced with the same danger and was not free from corruption in transmission, addition, diminution, forgery and forgetfulness, the same attention was not paid to it. On the contrary, as already mentioned. writing it down was forbidden and all of the written versions of it that were found were burned, as if to emphasize that only the text of the Holy Book should exist in written form.

As for the other Islamic sciences, during this period little effort was made to propagate them, the energies of the community being spent mostly in establishing the new sociopolitical order. Despite all the praise and consecration which are found in the Quran concerning knowledge ('ilm),[39] and the emphasis placed upon its cultivation, the avid cultivation of the religious sciences was postponed to a later period of Islamic history.

Most men were occupied with the remarkable and continuous victories of the Islamic armies, and were carried away by the flood of immeasurable booty which came from all directions toward the Arabian peninsula. With this new wealth and the worldliness which came along with it, few were willing to devote themselves to the cultivation of the sciences of the Household of the Prophet, at whose head stood Ali, whom the Holy Prophet had introduced to the people as the one most versed in the Islamic sciences. At the same time, the inner meaning and purpose of the teachings of the Holy Quran were neglected by most of those who were affected by this change. It is strange that, even in the matter of collecting the verses of the Holy Quran, Ali was not consulted and his name was not mentioned among those who participated in this task, although it was known by everyone that he had collected the text of the Holy Quran after the death of the Prophet.[40]

It has been recounted in many traditions that after receiving allegiance from the community, Abu Bakr sent someone to Ali and asked for his allegiance. Ali said, "I have promised not to leave my house except for the daily prayers until I compile the Quran." And it has been mentioned that Ali gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr after six months. This itself is proof that Ali had finished compiling

the Quran. Likewise, it has been recounted that after compiling the Quran he placed the pages of the Holy Book on a camel and showed it to the people. It is also recounted that the battle of Yamamah after which the Quran was compiled, occurred during the second year of the caliphate of Abu Bakr. These facts have been mentioned in most works on history and hadith which deal with the account of the compilation of the Holy Quran.

These and similar events made the followers of Ali more firm in their belief and more conscious of the course that lay before them. They increased their activity from day to day and Ali himself, who was cut off from the possibility of educating and training the people in general, concentrated on privately training an elite.

During this twenty-five year period Ali lost through death three of his four dearest friends and associates, who were also among the companions of the Prophet: Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, and Miqdad. They had been constant in their friendship with him in all circumstances. It was also during this same period that some of the other companions of the Holy Prophet and a large number of their followers in the Hijaz, the Yemen, Iraq, and other lands, joined the followers of Ali. As a result, after the death of the third caliph the people turned to Ali from all sides, swore allegiance to him and chose him as caliph.

2.4 The Termination of the Caliphate of 'Ali Amir al-mu'minin[41] and His Method of Rule

The caliphate of Ali began toward the end of the year 35/656 and lasted about four years and nine months. During his period as caliph Ali followed the ways of the Holy Prophet[42] and brought conditions back to their original state. He forced the resignation of all the incompetent political elements who had a hand in directing affairs[43] and began in reality a major transformation of a "revolutionary" nature which caused him innumerable difficulties.[44]

On his first day as caliph, in an address to the people, Ali said, "O People, be aware that the difficulties which you faced during the apostolic period of the Prophet of God have come upon you once again and seized yow. Your ranks must be turned completely around so that the people of virtue who have fallen behind should come forward and those who had come to the fore without being worthy should fall behind. There is both truth (haqq) and falsehood (batil). Each has its followers; but a person should follow the truth. If falsehood be

prevalent it is not something new, and if the truth is rare and hard to come by, sometimes even that which is rare wins the day so that there is hope of advance. Of course it does not occur often that something which has turned away from man should return to him."[45]

Ali continued his radically different type of government based more on righteousness than political efficacy but, as is necessary in the case of every movement of this kind, elements of the opposition whose interests were endangered began to display their displeasure and resisted his rule. Basing their actions on the claim that they wanted to revenge the death of Uthman, they instigated bloody wars which continued throughout almost all the time that Ali was caliph. From the Shi'ite point of view those who caused these civil wars had no end in mind other than their own personal interest. The wish to revenge the blood of the third caliph was no more than an excuse to fool the crowd. There was no question of a misunderstanding.

After the death of the Holy Prophet, a small minority, following Ali, refused to pay allegiance. At the head of the minority there were Salman, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, and Ammar. At the beginning of the caliphate of Ali also a sizable minority in disagreement refused to pay allegiance. Among the most persistent opponents were Sa'id ibn 'Ass, Walid ibn 'Uqbah, Marwan ibn Hakam, 'Amr ibn 'Ass, Busr ibn Artat, Samurah ibn Jundab, and Mughirah ibn Shu'bah.

The study of the biography of these two groups, and meditation upon the acts they have performed and stories recounted of them in history books, reveal fully their religious personality and aim. The first group were among the elite of the companions of the Holy Prophet and among the ascetics, devout worshipers and selfless devotees of Islam who struggled on the path of Islamic freedom. They were especially loved by the Prophet. The Prophet said, "God has informed me that He loves four men and that I should love them also." They asked about their names. He mentioned Ali and then the names of Abu Dharr, Salman and Miqdad. (Sunan of Ibn Majah, Cairo, 1372, vol.I, p. 66.) 'A'ishah has recounted that the Prophet of God said, "If two alternatives are placed before Ammar, he will definitely choose that which is more true and right." (Ibn Majah, vol. I, p. 66.) The Prophet said, "There is no one between heaven and earth more truthful than Abu Dharr." (Ibn Majah, vol. I, p. 68.) There is no record of a single forbidden act committed by these men during their lifetime. They never spilled any blood unjustly, did not commit aggression against anyone, did not steal anyone's property, never sought to corrupt and misguide people.

History is, however, full of accounts of unworthy acts committed by some of the second group. The various acts committed by some of these men in oppo-

sition to explicit Islamic teachings are beyond reckoning. These acts cannot be excused in any manner except the way that is followed by certain groups among the Sunnis who say that God was satisfied with them and therefore they were free to perform whatever act they wished, and that they would not be punished for violating the injunctions and regulations existing in the Holy Book and the Sunnah.

The first war in the caliphate of Ali, which is called the "Battle of the Camel," was caused by the unfortunate class differences created during the period of rule of the second caliph as a result of the new socioeconomic forces which caused an uneven distribution of the public treasury among members of the community.

When chosen to the caliphate, Ali divided the treasury evenly[46] as had been the method of the Holy Prophet, but this manner of dividing the wealth upset Talhah and Zubayr greatly. They began to show signs of disobedience and left Medina for Mecca with the alleged aim of making the pilgrimage. They persuaded "the mother of the Faithful" (umm al-mu'minin), A'ishah, who was not friendly with Ali, to join them and in the name of wanting to revenge the death of the third caliph they began the bloody Battle of the Camel.[47] This was done despite the fact that this same Talhah and Zubayr were in Medina when the third caliph was besieged and killed but did nothing to defend him.[48] Furthermore, after his death they were the first to pay allegiance to Ali on behalf of the immigrants (muhajirun)[49] as well as on their own.[50]

Also, the "mother of the Faithful," A'ishah, did not show any opposition to those who had killed the third caliph at the moment when she received the news of his death.[51] It must be remembered that the main instigators of the disturbances that led to the death of the third caliph were those companions who wrote letters from Medina to people near and far inviting them to rebel against the caliph, a fact which is repeated in many early Muslim histories.

As for the second war, called the Battle of Siffin, which lasted for a year and a half its cause was the covetousness of Mu'awiyah for the caliphate which for him was a worldly political instrument rather than a religious institution. But as an excuse he made the revenge of the blood of the third caliph the main issue and began a war in which more than a hundred thousand people perished without reason. Naturally, in these wars Mu'awiyah was the aggressor rather than the defender, for the protest to revenge someone's blood can never occur in the form of defense. The pretext of this war was blood revenge. During the last days of his life, the third caliph, in order to quell the uprising against him, asked Mu'awiyah for help, but the army of Mu'awiyah which set out from Damascus to Medina purposely waited on the road until the caliph was killed. Then he returned to

Damascus,to begin an uprising to revenge the caliph's death.[52] After the death of Ali and his gaining the caliphate himself, Mu'awiyah forgot the question of revenging the blood of the third caliph and did not pursue the matter further.

After Siffin there occurred the battle of Nahrawan in which a number of people, among whom there could be found some of the companions, rebelled against Ali, possibly at the instigation of Mu'awiyah.[53] These people were causing rebellion throughout the lands of Islam, killing the Muslims and especially the followers of Ali. They even attacked pregnant women and killed their babies. Ali put down this uprising as well, but a short while later was himself killed in the mosque of Kufa by one of the members of this group who came to be known as the Khawarij.

The opponents of Ali claim that he was a courageous man but did not possess political acumen. They claim that at the beginning of his caliphate he could have temporarily made peace with his opponents. He could have approached them through peace and friendship, thus courting their satisfaction and approval. In this way he could have strengthened his caliphate and only then turned to their extirpation and destruction. What people who hold this view forget is that the movement of Ali was not based on political opportunism. It was a radical and revolutionary religious movement (in the true sense of revolution as a spiritual movement to reestablish the real order of things and not in its current political and social sense); therefore it could not have been accomplished through compromise or flattery and forgery. A similar situation can be seen during the apostleship of the Holy Prophet. The infidels and polythesis proposed peace to him many times and swore that if he were to abstain from protesting against their gods they would not interfere with his religious mission. But the Prophet did not accept such a proposal, although he could in those days of difficulty have made peace and used flattery to fortify his own position, and then have risen against his enemies. In fact, the Islamic message never allows a right and just cause to be abandoned for the sake of strengthening another good cause, nor a falsehood to be rejected and disproven through another falsehood. There are many Quranic verses concerning this matter. [54]

2.5 The Benefit which the Shi'ah Derived from the Caliphate of Ali

During the four years and nine months of his caliphate, Ali was not able to eliminate the disturbed conditions which were prevailing throughout the Islamic

world, but he was successful in three fundamental ways:

1. As a result of his just and upright manner of living he revealed once again the beauty and attractiveness of the way of life of the Holy Prophet, especially to the younger generation. In contrast to the imperial grandeur of Mu'awiyah, he lived in simplicity and poverty like the poorest of people.[55] He never favored his friends or relatives and family above others,[56] nor did he ever prefer wealth to poverty or brute force to weakness.

2. Despite the cumbersome and strenuous difficulties which absorbed his time, he left behind among the Islamic community a valuable treasury of the truly divine sciences and Islamic intellectual disciplines.[57] Nearly eleven thousand of his proverbs and short sayings on different intellectual, religious and social subjects have been recorded.[58] In his talks and speeches he expounded the most sublime Islamic sciences in a most elegant and flowing manner. He established Arabic grammar and laid the basis for Arabic literature.[59]

He was the first in Islam to delve directly into the questions of metaphysics (falsafah-i ilahi) in a manner combining intellectual rigor and logical demonstration. He discussed problems which had never appeared before in the same way among the metaphysicians of the world.[60] Moreover, he was so devoted to metaphysics and gnosis that even in the heat of battle he would carry out intellectual discourse and discuss metaphysical questions.[61]

3. He trained a large number of religious scholars and Islamic savants, among whom are found a number of ascetics and gnostics who were the forefathers of the Sufis, such men as Uways al-Qarani, Kumayl al-Nakha'i, Maytham al-Tammar and Roshaid al-Hajari. These men have been recognized by the later Sufis as the founders of gnosis in Islam. Others among his disciples became the first teachers of jurisprudence, theology, Quranic commentary and recitation.[62]

2.6 The Transfer of the Caliphate to Mu'awiyah and Its Transformation into a Hereditary Monarchy

After the death of Ali, his son, Hasan ibn Ali, who is recognized by the Shi'ah as their second Imam, became caliph. This designation occurred in accordance with Ali's last will and testament and also by the allegiance of the community to Hasan. But Mu'awiyah did not remain quiet before this event. He marched with his army toward Iraq, which was then the capital of the caliphate , and began to

wage war against Hasan.

Through different intrigues and the payment of great sums of money, Mu'awiyah was able gradually to corrupt the aides and generals of Hasan. Finally he was able to force Hasan to hand the caliphate over to him so as to avoid bloodshed and to make peace.[63] Hasan handed the caliphate to Mu'awiyah on the condition that the caliphate would be returned to him after the death of Mu'awiyah and that no harm would come to his partisans.[64]

In the year 40/661 Mu'awiyah finally gained control of the caliphate. He then set out immediately for Iraq and in a speech to the people of that land said: "I did not fight against you for the sake of the prayers or of fasting. These acts you can perform yourself. What I wanted to accomplish was to rule over you and this end I have achieved." He also said, "The agreement I made with Hasan is null and void. It lies trampled under my feet." [65] With this declaration Mu'awiyah made known to the people the real character of his government and revealed the nature of the program he had in mind.

He indicated in his declaration that he would separate religion from politics and would not give any guarantees concerning religious duties and regulations. He would spend all his force to preserve and to keep alive his own power, whatever might be the cost. Obviously a government of such a nature is more of a sultanate and a monarchy than a caliphate and vicegerency of the Prophet of God in its traditional Islamic sense. That is why some who were admitted to his court addressed him as "king."[66] He himself in some private gatherings interpreted his government as a monarchy,[67] while in public he always introduced himself as the caliph.

Naturally any monarchy that is based on force carries with it inherently the principle of inheritance. Mu'awiyah, too, finally realized this fact, and chose his son, Yazid, who was a heedless young man without the least religious personality,[68] as the "crown prince" and his successor. This act was to be the cause of many regrettable events in the future. Mu'awiyah had previously indicated that he would refuse to permit Hasan ibn Ali to succeed him as caliph and that he had other thoughts in mind. Therefore he had caused Hasan to be killed by poisoning,[69] thus preparing the way for his son, Yazid.

In breaking his agreement with Hasan, Mu'awiyah made it clear that he would never permit the Shi'ah of the Household of the Prophet to live in a peaceful and secure environment and continue their activity as before, and he carried into action this very intention. It has been said that he went so far as to declare that whoever would transmit a hadith in praise of the virtues of the Household of the Prophet would have no immunity or protection concerning

his life, merchandise and property.[70] At the same time he ordered that whoever could recite a hadith in praise of the other companions or caliphs would be given sufficient reward. As a result a noticeable number of hadiths were recorded at this time praising the companions, some of which are of doubtful authenticity.[71] He ordered pejorative comments to be made about Ali from the pulpits of mosques throughout the lands of Islam, while he himself sought to revile Ali. This command continued to be more or less in effect until the caliphate of Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, when it was discontinued.[72] With the help of his agents and lieutenants, Mu'awiyah caused elite and the most outstanding among the partisans of Ali to be put to death and the heads of some of them to be carried on lances throughout different cities.[73] The majority of Shi'ites were forced to disown and even curse Ali and to express their disdain for him. If they refused, they were put to death.

2.7 The Bleakest Days of Shi'ism

The most difficult period for Shi'ism was the twenty-year rule of Mu'awiyah, during which the Shi'ites had no protection and most of them were considered as marked characters, under suspicion and hunted down by the state. Two of the leaders of Shi'ism who lived at this time, Imams Hasan and Husayn, did not possess any means whatsoever to change the negative and oppres- sive circumstances in which they lived. Husayn, the third Imam of Shi'ism, had no possibility of freeing the Shi'ites from persecution in the ten years he was Imam during Mu'awiyah's caliphate, and when he rebelled during the caliphate of Yazid he was massacred along with all his aides and children.

Certain people in the Sunni world explain as pardonable the arbitrary, unjust and irresponsible actions carried out at this time by Mu'awiyah and his aides and lieutenants, some of whom were like Mu'awiyah himself, among the companions. This group reasons that according to certain hadiths of the Holy Prophet all the companions could practice ijtihad, that they were excused by God for the sins they committed, and that God was satisfied with them and forgave them whatever wrong they might have performed. The Shi'ites, however, do not accept this argument for two reasons:

1. It is not conceivable that a leader of human society like the Prophet should rise in order to revivify truth, justice and freedom and to persuade a group of people to accept his beliefs - a group all of whose members had sacrificed their very existence in order to accomplish this sacred end - and then

as soon as this end is accomplished give his aides and companions complete freedom to do with these sacred laws as they will. It is not possible to believe that the Holy Prophet would have forgiven the companions for whatever wrong action they might have performed. Such indifference to the type of action performed by them would have only destroyed the structure which the Holy Prophet had built with the same means that he had used to construct it.

2. Those sayings which depict the companions as inviolable and pardoned in advance for every act they might perform, even one unlawful or inadmissible, are most likely apocryphal ; the authenticity of many of them has not been fully established by traditional methods. Moreover, it is known historically that the companions did not deal with one another as if they were inviolable and pardoned for all their sins and wrongdoings. Therefore, even judging by the way the companions acted and dealt with each other, it can be concluded that such sayings cannot be literally true in the way some have understood them. If they do contain an aspect of the truth it is in indicating the legal inviolability of the companions and the sanctification which they enjoyed generally as a group because of their proximity to the Holy Prophet. The expression of God's satisfaction with the companions in the Holy Quran, because of the services they had rendered in obeying His Command,[74] refers to their past actions, and to God's satisfaction with them in the past, not to whatever action each one of them might perform in the future.

2.8 The Establishment of Umayyad Rule

In the year 60/680 Mu'awiyah died and his son Yazid became caliph, as the result of the allegiance which his father had obtained for him from the powerful political and military leaders of the community. From the testimony of historical documents it can be seen clearly that Yazid had no religious character at all and that even during the lifetime of his father he was oblivious to the principles and regulations of Islam. At that time his only interest was debauchery and frivolity. During his three years of caliphate he was the cause of calamities that had no precedent in the history of Islam, despite all the strife that had occurred before him.

During the first year of Yazid's rule Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Holy

Prophet, was massacred in the most atrocious manner along with his children, relatives, and friends. Yazid even had some of the women and children of the Household of the Prophet killed and their heads displayed in different cities. During the second year of his rule, he ordered a general massacre of Medina and for three days gave his soldiers freedom to kill, loot, and take the women of the city. During the third year he had the sacred Ka'bah destroyed and burned. [75] Following Yazid, the family of Marwan gained possession of the caliphate, according to details that are recorded in the history books. The rule of this eleven-member group, which lasted for nearly seventy years, was successful politically but from the point of view of purely religious values it fell short of Islamic ideals and practices. Islamic society was dominated by the Arab element alone and non-Arabs were subordinated to the Arabs. In fact a strong Arab empire was created which gave itself the name of an Islamic caliphate. During this period some of the caliphs were indifferent to religious sentiments to the extent that one of them - who was the "vicegerent of the Holy Prophet" and was regarded as the protector of religion - decided without showing any respect for Islamic practices and the feelings of Muslims to construct a room above the Ka'bah so that he could have a place to enjoy and amuse himself during the annual pilgrimage.[76] It is even recounted of one of these caliphs that he made the Holy Quran a target for his arrow and in a poem composed to the Quran said: "On the Day of Judgment when you appear before God tell Him 'the caliph tore me.'"[77]

Naturally the Shi'ites, whose basic differences with the Sunnis were in the two questions of the Islamic caliphate and religious authority, were passing through bitter and difficult days in this dark period. Yet in spite of the unjust and irresponsible ways of the governments of the time the asceticism and purity of the leaders of the Household of the Prophet made the Shi'ites each day ever more determined to hold on to their beliefs. Of particular importance was the tragic death of Husayn, the third Imam, which played a major role in the spread of Shi'ism, especially in regions away from the center of the caliphate, such as Iraq, the Yemen, and Persia. This can be seen through the fact that during the period of the fifth Imam, before the end of the first Islamic century, and less than forty years after the death of Husayn, the Shi'ites took advantage of the internal differences and weaknesses in the Umayyad government and began to organize themselves, flocking to the side of the fifth Imam. People came from all Islamic countries like a flood to his door to collect hadith and to learn the Islamic sciences. The first century had not yet ended when a few of the leaders who were influential in the government established the city of Qum in Persia and made it a Shi'ite settlement. But even then the Shi'ah continued to live for the

most part in hiding and followed their religious life secretly without external manifestations.[78]

Several times the descendants of the Prophet (who are called in Persian sadat-i 'alawi) rebelled against the injustice of the government, but each time they were defeated and usually lost their lives. The severe and unscrupulous government of the time did not overlook any means of crushing them. The body of Zayd, the leader of Zayd Shi'ism, was dug out of the grave and hanged; then after remaining on the gallows for three years it was brought down and burned, its ashes being thrown to the wind.[79] The Shi'ites believe that the fourth and fifth Imams were poisoned by the Umayyads as the second and third Imams had been killed by them before.[80]

The calamities brought about by the Umayyads were so open and unveiled that the majority of the Sunnis, although they believed generally that it was their duty to obey the caliphs, felt the pangs of their religious conscience and were forced to divide the caliphs into two groups. They came to distinguish between the "rightly guided caliphs" (khulafa rashidun) who are the first four caliphs after the death of the Holy Prophet (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali), and the others who began with Mu'awiyah and who did not possess by any means the religious virtues of the rightly guided caliphs.

The Umayyads caused so much public hatred as a result of their injustice and heedlessness during their rule that after the definitive defeat and death of the last Umayyad caliph his two sons and a number of their family encountered great difficulties in escaping from the capital. No matter where they turned no one would give them shelter. Finally after much wandering the deserts of Nubia, Abyssinia, and Bajawah (between Nubia and Abyssinia) during which many of them died from hunger and thirst, they came to Bab al-Mandab of the Yemen. There they acquired travel expenses from the people through begging and set out for Mecca dressed as porters. In Mecca they finally succeeded in disappearing among the mass of the people.[81]

2.9 Shi'ism During the 2nd/8th Century

During the latter part of the first third of the 2nd/8th century, following a series of revolutions and bloody wars throughout the Islamic world which were due to the injustice, repressions, and wrongdoings of the Umayyads, there began an anti-Umayyad movement in the name of the Household of the Prophet in Khurasan in Persia. The leader of this movement was the Persian general, Abu

Muslim Marwazi, who rebelled against Umayyad rule and advance his cause step by step until he was able to overthrow the Umayyad government.[82]

Although this movement originated from a profound Shi'ite background and came into being more or less with the claim of wanting to avenge the blood of the Household of the Prophet, and although people were even asked secretly to give allegiance to a qualified member of the family of the Prophet, it did not rise directly as a result of the instructions of the Imams. This is witnessed by the fact that when Abu Muslim offered the caliphate to the sixth Imam in Medina he rejected it completely saying "You are not one of my men and the time is not my time."[83]

Finally the Abbasids gained the caliphate in the name of the family of the Prophet [84] and at the beginning showed some kindness to people in general and to descendants of the Prophet in particular. In the name of avenging the martyrdom of the family of the Prophet, they massacred the Umayyads, going to the extent of opening their graves and burning whatever they found in them.[85] But soon they began to follow unjust ways of the Umayyads and did not abstain in any way from injustice and irresponsible action. Abu Hanifah, the founder of one of the four Sunni schools of law, was imprisoned by al-Mansur and tortured[86]Ibn Hanbal the founder of another school of law was whipped.[87] The sixth Imam died from poisoning after much torture and pain.[88] The descendants of the Holy Prophet were sometimes beheaded in groups, buried alive, or even placed within walls of government buildings under construction.

Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph, during whose reign the Islamic empire reached the apogee of its expansion and power, occasionally would look at the sun and address it in these words: "Shine wherever thou wilt, thou shalt never be able to leave my kingdom." On the other hand his armies were advancing in the East and West, on the other hand a few steps from the palace of the caliph, and without his knowledge, officials had decided on their own to collect tolls from people who wanted to cross the Baghdad bridge. Even one day when the caliph himself wanted to cross the bridge he was stopped and asked to pay the toll.[89]

A singer, by chanting two lascivious verses, incited the passions of the Abbasid caliph, Amin, who awarded him three million dirhams. The chanter in joy threw himself at the feet of the caliph saying, "Oh, leader of the faithful! You give me all this money?" The caliph answered, "It does not matter. We receive money from an unknown part of the country."[90]

The bewildering amount of wealth that was pouring every year from all corners of the Islamic world into the public treasury in the capital helped creating

luxury and a mundane atmosphere. Much of it in fact was often spent for the pleasures and iniquities of the caliph of the time. The number of beautiful slave girls in the court of some of the caliphs exceeded thousands. By the dissolution of Umayyad rule and the establishment of the Abbasids, Shi'ism did not benefit in any way. Its repressive and unjust opponents merely changed their name.

2.10 Shi'ism in the 3rd/9th Century

At the beginning of the 3rd/9th century Shi'ism was able to breathe once again. This more favorable condition was first of all due to the fact that many scientific and philosophical books were translated from Greek, Syriac, and other languages into Arabic, and people eagerly studied the intellectual and rational sciences. Moreover, al-Ma'mun, the Abbasid caliph from 198/813 to 218/833, had Mu'tazilite leanings and since in his religious views he favored intellectual demonstration, he was more inclined to give complete freedom to the discussion and propagation of different religious views. Shi'ite theologians and scholars took full advantage of this freedom and did their utmost to further scholarly activities and propagate Shi'ite teachings. Also, al-Ma'mun, following demands of the political forces at the time, had made the eight Shi'ite Imam his successor, as is recounted in most standard histories. As a result, the descendants of the Holy Prophet and their friends were to a certain extent free from pressures from the government and enjoyed some degrees of liberty. Yet before long the cutting edge of the sword once again turned towards the Shi'ites and the forgotten ways of the past came upon them again. This was particularly true in the case of al-Mutawakkil (233/847-247/861) who held a special enmity towards Ali and the Shi'ites. By his order the tomb of the third Imam in Karbala was completely demolished.[91]

2.11 Shi'ism in the 4th/10th Century

In the 4th/10th century certain conditions again prevailed which aided greatly the spread and strengthening of Shi'ism. Among them were the weaknesses that appeared in the central Abbasid government and administration and the appearance of the Buyid rulers. The Buyids, who were Shi'ite had the greatest influence not only in the provinces of Persia but also in the capital of the caliphate in Baghdad, and even upon the caliph himself. This new strength of considerable

proportions enabled the Shi'ites to stand up before their opponents who previously had tried to crush them by relying upon the power of the caliphate. It also made it possible for the Shi'ites to propagate their religious views openly.

As recorded by historians, during this century most of the Arabian peninsula was Shi'ite with the exception of some of the big cities. Even some of the major cities like Hajar, Uman, and Sa'dah were Shi'ite. In Basra, which had always been a Sunni city and competed with Kufa which was considered a Shi'ite center, there appeared a notable group of Shi'ites. Also in Tripoli, Nablus, Tiberias, Aleppo, Nayshapur, and Herat there were many Shi'ites, while Ahwaz and the coast of the Persian Gulf on the Persian side were also Shi'ite.[92]

At the beginning of this century Nasir Utrush, after many years of propagation of his religious mission in northern Persia, gained power in Tabaristan and established a kingdom which continued for several generations after him. Before Utrush, Hasan ibn Zayd al-'Alawi had reigned from many years in Tabaristan.[93] Also in this period the Fatimids, who were Isma'ili, conquered Egypt and organized a caliphate which lasted for over two centuries (296/908-567/1171).[94] Often disputation and fighting occurred in major cities like Baghdad, Cairo and Nayshapur between Shi'ites and Sunnis, in some of which the Shi'ites would gain the upper hand and come out victorious.

2.12 Shi'ism from the 5th/11th to the 9th/15th Centuries

From the 5th/11th to the 9th/15th centuries Shi'ism continued to expand as it had done in the 4th/10th century.[95] Many kings and rulers who were Shi'ite appeared in different parts of the Islamic world and propagated Shi'ism. Toward the end of the 5th/11th century the missionary activity of Isma'ilism took root in the fort of Alamut and for nearly a century and a half the Isma'ilis lived in complete independence in the central regions of Persia. Also the Sadat-i Mar'ashi, who were descendants of the Holy Prophet, ruled for many years in Mazandaran (Tabaristan).[96] Shah Muhammad Khudabandah, one of the well-known Mongol rulers, became Shi'ite and his descendants ruled for many years in Persia and were instrumental in spreading Shi'ism.[97] Mention must also be made of the kings of the Aq Qoyunlu and Qara Qoyunlu dynasties who ruled in Tabriz and whose domain extended to Fars and Kerman,[98] as well as of the Fatimid government which was ruling in Egypt.

Of course religious freedom and the possibility of exerting religious power

by the populace differed under different rulers. For example, with the termination of Fatimid rule and coming to power of the Ayyubids the scene changed completely and the Shi'ite population of Egypt and Syria lost its religious independence. Many of the Shi'ites of Syria were killed during this period merely on the accusation of following Shi'ism. One of these was Shahid-i awwal (the First Martyr) Muhammad ibn Makki, one of the great figures in Shi'ite jurisprudence, who was killed in Damascus in 786/1384.[99] Also Shaykh al-ishraq Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi was killed in Aleppo on the accusation that he was cultivating Batini teachings and philosophy.[100] Altogether during this period Shi'ism was growing from the point of view of numbers, even though its religious power and freedom depended upon local conditions and the rulers of the time. During this period, however, Shi'ism never became the official religion of any Muslim state.

2.13 Shi'ism in the 10th/16th and 11th/17th Centuries

In the 10th/16th century Isma'il, who was of the household of Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardibili (d. 735/1334), a Sufi master and also a Shi'ite, began a revolt in Ardibil, with three hundred Sufis who were disciples of his forefathers, with the aim of establishing an independent and powerful Shi'ite country. In this way he began the conquest of Persia and overcame the local feudal princes. After a series of bloody wars with local rulers and also the Ottomans who held the title of caliph, he succeeded in forming Persia piece by piece into a country and in making Shi'ism the official religion in his kingdom.[101]

After the death of Shah Isma'il other Safavid kings reigned in Persia until the 12th/18th century and each continued to recognize Shi'ism as the official religion of the country and further to strengthen its hold upon this land. At the height of their power, during the reign of Shah 'Abbas, the Safavids were able to increase the territorial expansion and the population of Persia to twice its present size.[102] As for other Muslim lands, the Shi'ite population continued the same as before and increased only through the natural growth of population.

2.14 Shi'ism from the 12th/18th to the 14th/20th Centuries

During the past three centuries Shi'ism has followed its natural rate of growth as before. At the present moment, during the latter part of the 14th/20th century, Shi'ism is recognized as the official religion in Iran, and in the Yemen and Iraq the majority population is Shi'ite. In nearly all lands where there are Muslims one can find a certain number of Shi'ites. It has been said that altogether in the world today there are about eighty to ninety million Shi'ites.

Notes

1. The first designation to have appeared during the lifetime ofthe Holy Prophet of God was shi'ah, and Salman, Abu Dharr. Miqdad and 'Ammar were known by this name. See Hadir al'alam al-islami, Cairo, 1352, vol. I, p.188.

2. Quran, XXVI, 214.

3. According to this hadith, Ali said, "I who was the youngest of all have submitted that I am your vizier. The Prophet put his hand around my neck and said, 'This person is my brother, inheritor and vicegerent. You must obey him.' People laughed and told Ahu Talib. 'He has ordered you to obey your son.'" Tabari, al-To'rikh, Cairo, 1357, vol.II, p.63: Abu'l.Fida', al-Ta'rikh, Cairo, 1325, vol. I, p.116: Ibn al-Athir, al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, Cairo. 1358, vol.III, p.39; Bahrani, Ghayat al-maram. Tehran. 1272, p.320. [Editor's note: The reader Will notice that this hadith and certain others which are quoted more than once appear each time in a slightly different form. This is because the author has made use of different transmitted versions in each place.]

4. Umm Salmah has recounted that the Prophet said: "Ali is always with the Truth (haqq) and the Quran, and the Truth and the Quran are always with him, and until the Day of Judgment they will not be separated from each other." This hadith has been transmitted through fifteen channels in Sunni sources and eleven in Shi'ite sources. Umm Salmah, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Bakr, A'ishah. Ali, Abu Sa'ld Khudri, Abu Layla. Abu Ayyub Ansari are among its transmitters. Ghayat al-mararn pp.539-540. The Prophet has also said,

"God bless Ali for the Truth is always with him." al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, vol. VII. p.36.

5. The Prophet said: "Arbitration has been divided into ten parts. Nine parts are given to Ali and one part is divided among all the people." al-Bidayah wa'lnihayah. vol. VII, p.359. Salman Farsi has transmitted this saying from the Prophet: "After me the most learned of men is Ali." Ghayat al-maram, p.528. Ibn 'Abbas has said that the Prophet said: "Ali is the most competent among people in judgment." From the book Fada'il al-sahabah. mentioned in Ghayat al-maram, p.528. Umar used to say: "May God never afflict me with a difficult task where Ali is not present." al.Bidayah wa'l-nihayah. vol. VII. p.359.

6. Editor's note.' According to Shi'ite beliefs, on returning from the last pil grimage to Mecca on 'the way to Mednia at a site called Ghadir Khumm the Prophet chose Ali as his successor before the vast crowd that was accompanying him. The Shi'ites celebrate this event to this day as a major religious feast marking the day when the right of Ali to succession was universally acclaimed.

7. The hadith of Ghadir in its different versions is one of the definitely established hadiths among Sunnis and Shi'ah. More than a hundred of the companions have recounted it with different chains of transmission and expressions, and it has been recorded in books of Sunnism and Shi'ism alike, Concerning details refer to Ghaayat al-maram, p. 79, 'Abaqat of Musawi India, 1317 (Volume on Ghadir) and al-Ghadir of Amini, Najaf, 1372.

8. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, Najaf, 1358, vol, II, pp. 137 and 140; Tarikh-i Abi'l-Fida', vol. I, p.156; sahih of Bukhari, Cairo, 1315, vol. IV, p.207; Muruj al-dhahab of Mas'udi, Cairo, 1367, vol.ll, p.437, vol.lll, pp.21 and 61.

9. Sahih of Muslim, vol. XV, p.176; Sahih, of Bukhari, vol. IV, p.207; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.lll, p.23 and vol.ll, p.437; Tarikh-i Abi'l-Fida', vol.l, pp.127 and 181.

10. Jabir says: "We were in the presence of the Prophet when Ali appeared from far away. The Prophet said: 'I swear by Him who holds my life in His hands, this person and his partisans (Shi'ah) will have salvation on the Day of Judgment."' Ibn 'Abbas says: "When the verse: '(And) lo! those

who believe and do good works are the best ofcreated beings' (Quran, XCVII, 7) was revealed, the Prophet told Ali: 'This verse pertains to you and your partisans who will possess felicity on the Day of Judgment and God will also be satisfied with you."' These two hadiths and several others are recorded in the book al-Duirr al-manthur of Suyuti, Cairo', 1313, vol. VI, p.379, and Ghayat al-maram, p.326.

11. While suffering from the illness that led to his death, Muhammad organized an army under the command of Usamah ibn Zayd and insisted that everyone should participate in this war and go out of Medina. A number of people disobeyed the Prophet including Abu Bakr and Umar and this disturbed the Prophet greatly. (Sharh, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Cairo, 1329, vol.l; p.53.) At the moment of his death the Holy Prophet said: "Prepare ink and paper so that I will have a letter written for you which will be a cause of guidance for you and prevent you from being misled." Umar, who prevented this action, said: "His illness has run out of hand and he is delirious." (Tarikh-i Tabari; vol.ll, p.436: Sahih of Bukhari, vol.lll and Sahih, of Muslim, Cairo, 1349, vol. V; al-Bidayah wa'l-nihayah, vol. V, p.227; Ibn Abi'l- Hadid, vol. I, p.133.) A somewhat similar situation occurred again during the illness which led to the death ofthe first caliph. In his last testament the first caliph chose Umar and even fainted while making the testament but Umar said nothing and did not consider him to be delirious, although he had fainted while the testa ment was being written. The Prophet had been inerrant and fully conscious when he asked them to write down a letter of guidance. (Raudat al-Safa' of Mir Khwand, Lucknow, 1332, vol.ll, p.260.)

12. lbn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.l, p.58 and pp. 123135; Trikh-i Ya'qubi.vol.ll, p.102; Tarikh.i Tabari, vol.ll, pp.445-460.

13. Tarikh.i Ya'qubi; vol.ll, pp. 103-106; Tarikh-i Abi'l-Fida, vol.l, pp.156 and 166; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.ll, pp.307 and 352; lbn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.l, pp.17 and 134. In answer to Ibn Ahbas's protest Umar said, "I swear to God Ah was the most deserving of all people to become caliph, but for three reasons we pushed him aside: (1) he was too young, (2) he was attached to the descendants of 'Abd al-Muttalib, (3) people did not like to have prophecy and the caliphate assembled in one house hold." (Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.l, p.134.) Umar said to Ibn Abbas, "I swear to God that Ali deserved the caliphate, but the Quraysh would not have been able to bear his caliphate,

for had he become caliph he would have forced the people to accept the pure truth and follow the right path. Under his caliphate they would not have been able to transgress the boundaries ofjustice and thus would have sought to engage in war with him." (Tarikh-i Ya'qubi; vol.ll, p.137.)

14. Amr ibn Horith said to Sa'id ibn Zayd, "Did anyone oppose paying alle giance to Abu Bakr ?" He answered, "No one was opposed to him except those who had become apostates or were about to become so." Tarikh-i Tabari, vol.ll, p.447.

15. In the famous hadith of thaqalayn the Prophet says, "I leave two things of value amidst you in trust which if you hold on to you will never go astray: the Quran and the members of my household; these will never he separated until the Day ofjudgment." This hadith has been transmitted through more than a hundred channels by over thirty-five of the companions of the Holy Prophet. ('Abaqat, volume on hadith-i thaqalayn; Ghayat al-maram, p.211.) The Prophet said, "lam the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate. Therefore whosoever seeks knowledge should enter through its door." (al-Bidtyah wa'l-nihayah, vol. VII, p.359.)

16. Ya'qubt-. vol.ll, pp.105-150, where this is mentioned often.

17. The Book of God and the sayings of the Holy Prophet and his household are replete with encouragement and exhortation to acquire knowledge, to the extent that the Holy Prophet says: "To seek knowledge is incumbent upon every Mus lim." Bihar al-anwar of Majlisi, Tehran. 1301-15, vol.l, p.55.

18. al-Bidayah wa'I-nihayah, vol. VII, p.360.

19. Editor's note: The Quraysh was the most aristocratic tribe in pre-Islamic Arabia from which rose the Holy Prophet himself. But the Quraysh, being the guardians of the Ka'bah, first opposed his prophecy and offered the greatest resistance against him. Only later did they surrender to the new religion in which they have always continued to hold a place of honor, especially the branch directly connected with the family of the Prophet.

20. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, pp.111, 126 and 129.

21. Editor's note.' The traditions of the Prophet as contained in his sayings are called hadith, while his actions, deeds, words and all that made up.the life which has become an example to all Muslims are called sunnah.

22. God says in His Word: "For lo! it is an unassailable Scripture. Falschood cannot come at it from before it or behind it." (Quran, XLI, 41-42) And He says, "The decision is for Allah only" (Quran, VI, 57, also XII, 40 and 67), meaning the only shari'ah is the Shari'ah and laws of God which must reach man through prophecy. And He says. "but he [Muhammad] is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets." (Quran. XXXIII,40) And He says, "Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are the disbelievers." (Quran, V, 44)

23. Editor's note: According to Shi'ite sources after the death of the Prophet people gathered in the "covered porch" (saqifah) of Bani Sa'idah and swore alle giance to Abu Bakr as caliph. As for the hadith of "ink and paper" it refers to the Iast moments in the life ofthe Prophet as related above in Note 11.

24. Editor's note: The mujtahid is one who through mastery of the religious sciences and the possession of moral qualities has the right to practice ijtihad or the giving of fresh opinion on matters pertaining to the Shari'ah. The right of exercising one's independent judgment based on the principles of the Law. or ijtihad has ceased ih Sunni Islam since the 3rd/9th century whereas the "gate of ijtihad has been always open in Shi'ite Islam. The leading authorities in the Divine Law are called in Shi'ism mujtahids.

25. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi vol.ll. p.110; Tarikh-i Abi'l Fida', vol. I, p. 158.

26. Editor's note: A religious tax paid to the family of the Prophet which was discontinued in Sunni Islam after his death but continues in Shi'ite Islam to this day.

27. al-Durr al-mathur. vol.lll, p.186; Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, vol.lll. p.48. Besides these, the necessity of the khums has been mentioned in the Holy Quran: "And know that whatever ye take of spoils of war, Io! a fifth (khumus) thereof is for Allah, and for the messenger and for kinsmen(Quran, VIII, 41).

28. During his caliphate Abu Bakr collected five hundred hadiths. A'ishah recounts: One night I saw my father disturbed until morning. In the morning he told me: 'Bring the hadiths.' Then he set them all on fire." (Kanz a1-'ummal of 'Ala' al-Din Mutttaqi. Hyderahad. 1364-75, vol. V, p. 237.) Umar wrote to all cities stating 'that whosoever had a hadith should destroy it. (Kanz al-'ummal, vol. V. p.237.) Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr says: "During the time of Umar hadiths in creased. When they were brought to him he ordered them to be burned." (Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, Beirut, 1376, vol. V, p.140.)

29. Editor's note: The first four caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, are together called the Khulafa rashidun, the rightly guided caliphs, and their period of caliphate is sharply distinguished from that of the Umayyads which followed because the rule of the first four caliphs was strongly religious in character while the Umayyad caliphate was colored by mundane and worldly considerations.

30. Tarikh-i Abi'l-Fida', vol.l, p.151, and other similar sources.

31. Editor's note: For the benefit of non-Muslim readers, all dates will be given in both A.H. (Islamic, lunar calendar dating from the Hijrah) and the corre sponding A.D. years (13/634-25/644); when a reference is made to a century, we have given first the Islamic century and then the corresponding Christian century: (4th/lOth century).

32. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, vol.ll, p.131; Tarikh-i Abi'l-Fida', vol.l, p.160.

33. Usd al-ghabah of lbn Athir, Cairo, 1280. vol. IV, p.386; al-lsabah of lbn Hajar 'Asqalani, Cairo, 1323, vol.lll.

34. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, vol.ll, p.150; Abu'l-Fida', vol.l, p.168; Tarikh-i Tabari, vol.lll, p.377, etc.

35. Tarikh- Ya'qubi, vol. ll;p. 150; Tarikh-i Tabari; vol.lll, p.397.

36. Tarikh- Tabari, vol.lll; pp.402-409; Tarikh-i Ya'qubi; vol.ll, pp.150-151.

37. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol.lll, p.377.

38. . 27ahih ofBukhari, vol. VI, p.98; Tarikh-i Ya'qubi; vol.ll, p.113.

39. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.III; Tabari; vol.III, pp.129-132.

40. Editor's note: The word ilm means science in its most universal sense, like the Latin scientia, and applies to the religious as well as intellectual, rational and philosophical forms of knowledge. Generally it is distinguished from ma'rifah or irfan which is Divine knowledge and may be compared to the Latin sapientia. Certain Muslim masters, however, consider 'ilm in its highest sense to stand above irfan since it is a Divine Quality, one ofGod's Names being al-'Alim, He Who knows.

41. Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.113; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.I, p.9.

42. Editor's note: The title amir al-mu'minin, commander of the faithful," is used in Shi'ism solely for Ali, whereas in Sunni Islam it is a general title conferred upon all the caliphs.

43. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.154.

44. Ya'qubi; vol.II, p.155; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.II, p.364.

45. Editor's note: Revolutionary in this context does not ofcourse bear the same meaning that it carries generally today. In a traditional context a revolutionary movement is the reestablishment or reapplication of immutable principles of a transcendent order whereas in an anti-traditional context it means rebellion against either these principles or their application or against any established order in general.

46. Nahj al-balaghah, the fifteenth sermon.

47. Muruj al-dhahab, vol.II. p.362; Nahj al-balaghah, sermon 122; Ya'qubi vol.II, p.160: Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. I, p.180.

48. Ya'qubi; vol.II, p.156: Abu'l-Fida-', vol.I, p.172; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.II, p.366

49. Ya'qubi; vol.II, p.152.

50. Editor's note: The muhajirun refers to the early converts to Islam who im migrated with the Prophet to Medina from Mecca.

51. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.154; Abu'l-Fida, vol.I, p.171.

52. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.152.

53. When Uthman was surrounded by those who had rebelled he wrote to Mu'awiyah asking for help. Mu'awiyah prepared an army of twelve thousand men and sent them toward Medina. But he asked them to camp around Damascus and came to Uthman himselftu report on the readiness ofthe army. Uthman said, "You have made your army stop on purpose so that I will be killed. Then you will make the spilling of my blood an excuse to revolt yourself" Ya'qubi vol.II, p.152; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.25; Tabari, vol.III, p.403.

54. Muruj al-dhahab, vol.II, p.415.

55. For instance, see the traditional commentaries which describe the circum stances at the time of the revelation of these verses: "The chiefs among them go about, exhorting: Go and be staunch to your gods!" (Quran, XXXVIII, 7) and "And if We had not made thee wholly firm thou mightest almost have inclined unto them a little" (Quran, XVII, 74 and "Who would have had thee compromise, that they may compromise." (Quran, LXVIII, 9)

56. Muruj al-dhahab, vol.II, p.431; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.I, p.181.

57. Abu'l-Fidl', vol. I, p.182; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid. vol.I, p.181.

58. Nahj al-balaghah and hadiths found in books of both Sunnis and Shi'ites.

59. Kitab al-ghurar wa'l-durar of Amidi, Sidon, 1349.

60. Such works as the Nahw (Grammar) of Suyuti, Tehran, 1281 etc., vol.II, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.I, p.6.

61. See Nahj al-balaghah.

62. Amidst the fighting of the Battle ofJamal a Bedouin asked Ali: "Oh, Com mander of the Faithful! ,You say God is one?" People attacked him from two sides and said:'Don't you see that Ali is worried and his mind occupied with so many diverse matters? Why do you engage in a discussion with him?" Ali told his com panions. "Leave this man alone. My goal in fighting with these people is none other than to clarify true doctrines and the ends of religion." Then he set out to answer the Bedouin. Bihar al-anwar, vol.II, p.65.

63. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. I, pp.6-9.

64. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p. 191, and other histories.

65. Ya'qubi; vol.II, p.192; Abu'l-Fida', vol.I, p.183.

66. al-Nasa'ih, al.kafiyah of Muhammad al-'Alawi, Baghdad, 1368, vol.II, p.161 and others.

67. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.193.

68. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.207.

69. Yazid was a lecherous and self-indulgent person. He was always drunk and wore silk sod unbecoming dress. His nightly parties were combined with music and wine. He had a dog and a monkey which were always with him as companions with which he amused himself. His monkey was named Abu Qays. He would dress him in beautiful attire and make him be present at his drinking parties. Sometimes he would mount him on horseback and send him to races. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.196; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.77.

70. Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.s; Abu'l-Fida', vol.I, p.183.

71. al-Nasa'ih, al-kafiyah p.72, recounted from Kitab al-ahdath.

72. Ya'qubi; vol. II, pp.199 and 210; Abu'l-Fida, vol.I, p.186; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, pp.33 and 35.

73. al-Nasa'ih al-kafiyah, pp.72-73.

74. al-Nasa'ih al-kdfiyah, pp.58.64, 77-78.

75. See Quran. IX, 100.

76. Ya'qubi. vol.II, p.216: Abu'l-Fida', vol.I, p.190; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.64, and other histories.

77. Ya'qubi, vol.II, p.223: Abu'l-Fida', vol.I, p.192; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.78.

78. Ya'qubi. vol.II, p.224; Abu'l-Fida', vol.I, p.192; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.III, p.81.

79. Walid ibn Yazid mentioned in Ya'qubi, vol.lll, p.73.

80. Walid ibn Yazid mentioned in Muruj al-dhahab, vol.lll, p.228.

81. Mu'jam al-buldan Yaqut Hamawi, Beirut, 1957.

82. Muruj al-dhahab vol. III, pp.217-219; Ya'aubi. vol.ll, p.66.

83. Bihar al-anwar vol XII, and other Shi'ite sources.

84. Ya'qubi vol. III; p. 84.

85. Ya'qubi; vol. III p. 79; Abu'l-Fida', vol.l, p.208, and other histories.

86. Ya'qubi' vol. III, p.86; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.lll, p.268.

87. Ya'qubi, vol.lll, p.86; Muruj al-dhahab, vol.lll, p.270.

88. Ya'qubi; vol.lll, pp.91-96.. Abu'l-Fida', vol. I, p.212.

89. Abu'l-Fida', vol.ll, p.6.

90. Yu'qubi-. vol.lll, p.198; Abu'l-Fida', vol.ll. p.33.

91. Bihar al-anwar, vol. XII, on the life of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq.

92. al-Aghani of Abu'l-Faraj Isfahani, Cairo 1345-51, the story of the bridge of Baghdad.

93. al-Aghani' the story of Amin.

94. abu'l-Fida-' and other histories.

95. al-Hadarat al-islamiyah of Adam Mez, Cairo, 1366, vol.l, p.97.

96. Murj al-dhahab, vol. IV, p.373; al-Milal wa'l-nihal of Shahristani, Cairo, 1368. vol.l, p.254.

97. Abu'l-Fida', vol.ll, p.63 and vol.lll, p.50.

98. See the histories al-Ka-mil of Iba Athir, Cairo, 1348; Raudat al-safa'; and Habib al-siyar of Khwand Mir, Tehran, 1333.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Rayhanat al-adab of Muhammad 'Ali Tabrizi, Tehran 1326-32, vol.II, p.365. and most works on the biography of famous men.

103. Rayhanat al-adab, vol.II, p.380.

104. Raudat al-safa-', Habib al-siyar and others.

105. Tarikh-i 'alam aray-i 'abbasi of Iskandar Bayk, Tehran, 1334 A.H. solar.