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The Magazine of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah

Issue 13

On the Cover:
Prayer Rug
LNS 29 R
Silk Cotton & Wool
Ottoman Turkey, late 16th Century.

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Produced by the Editorial Staff of the
Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI).

The magazine Hadeeth Ad-Dar of
the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah
(the Kuwait Museum of Islamic Art,
KMA) is published quarterly.
The articles, views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (KMA).

Complimentary subscriptions are available upon written request.
Printed in Kuwait.

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The Magazine of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah

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Medieval Islamic Textiles
Handmade Textiles in
Fez, Morocco Illuminate
Age Old Traditions

by Louise Mackie

Textiles were the backbone of the medieval economy and often served as symbols of identity, religion, and political power, yet their significance is difficult to reconstruct based on tantalizing tidbits in medieval sources. The opportunity to examine traditional urban practices today raises a range of issues which could provide insight, albeit not precise information, about medieval textiles. The framework exists in Fez, Morocco, the only city in the western world where about a dozen different types of high-end urban textiles are still made by hand, continuing long-established practices. For centuries, Fez was famous for textile manufacturing and for dyeing, however, little survives before the 18th century (Fig. 1). Today most textiles are made on fast automated machines, in marked contrast with the comparatively few that are still made by hand as a result of their vital cultural significance.

The manufacturing Environment

The manufacture of handmade textiles in Fez reveals the necessity of a complex infrastructure in order to provide all the essential requirements, such as the resources, skills, and marketing. Most importantly, the needs differ for each technique, in other words, for each type of embroidery, or woven textile, or decorative trim. Marketing varies depending on the type of fabric. Some are commissioned directly from artisans at home while others are ordered from middlemen in the market. Consumers often provide the raw materials.

The time required to learn a skill varies considerably, ranging from days to years, depending on the technique and the attitude of the learner. In an environment where many family members are involved in making textiles, consumers quickly recognize differences in quality.
Although many medieval textiles have survived in the dry Egyptian soil, only the “prettiest” reached the art market. Therefore, medieval textile production is better represented by the variety of some 2,500 scraps excavated by George Scanlon in 1980 at Fustat, located beside Cairo, which are attributed to 750-1100. Most are plain without any pattern, woven in numerous qualities; this supports the twenty-two different types listed in the Geniza documents. Only about one hundred and fifty textile scraps, including those imported from Iran, India, and Spain, have patterns. They were made in numerous techniques, including knitting, resist-dyed, embroidery, tapestry weave, knotted carpets, and compound structures woven on drawlooms. The scraps rarely, however, suggest their medieval significance.

**Technology.**

Large amounts called drawlooms have the greatest historical significance among the variety of traditional textile techniques still made by hand in Fez (Fig.2). All Islamic and European skills with elaborate patterns were woven on drawlooms until replaced by mechanized jacquard looms in the nineteenth century. Drawlooms are efficient machines. They can repeat patterns automatically across the width and along the length of a fabric, create multiple designs in a fabric, and produce yardage of existing patterns upon
command. Operated by skilled specialists, the weaver is responsible for the structure and is assisted by a drawboy, seated at the side of the Fez drawloom, who is responsible for the pattern. The selling price is based on the cost of the raw materials, as in medieval times, not on the time required for weaving. Once woven, fabrics may be starched for greater stiffness, as also occurred on Ottoman silks. In addition, patterns are usually designed to meet the technical specifications of working drawlooms, another efficient process confirmed for Safavid silks and recently for Ottoman silks.

Historically, textile designers used the versatility of drawlooms to create silks with multiple patterns, often arranged in horizontal bands. Renowned examples include Fez wedding sashes (Fig.1), 14th century silks from Granada and occasional Iranian silks, such as the shroud of St. Jose (Fig.3). Richly caparisoned elephants, potent symbols of power, stand above the inscription, “glory and prosperity to Qa’id Abu Mansur Bahshakin, may God prolong his existence,” which identifies a Turkish commander in northeast Iran who was killed in 961. The sturdy fabric was woven in a popular medieval structure called complementary weft-faced twill with inner warps in English, or satin in French. It required several different pattern systems, the elephants are in mirror image whereas the inscription beneath them is not.

Pattern

Two French silk patterns have been exceptionally fashionable in Fez since about 1915, the rose pattern called “khirb”, and the bouquet pattern, called behja. Both were woven in Lyon, in the early 1900s specifically for export to Morocco. Called “Tissus d’Orient”, the French adapted individual features, especially color, to the tastes of the targeted “oriental” markets.

How often were medieval textiles which were exported vast distances adapted to the tastes of remote consumers? During the 8th century, for example, tapestry-woven woolen cloths on crimson grounds were made in Iran/Iraq and in Egypt (Fig.4), where they all survived. Did the imported Iran/Iraqi textile inspire Egyptian imitations or did the Egyptian style inspire Iran/Iraq to make export textiles for the Egyptian market?

The Fez framework also documents the roles of continuity with change, both artistic and technical, over many decades, as witnessed by rose bouquet patterns. Continuity with change also occurred in gold thread and in Fez stitch embroidery. While the artistic motifs remained relatively constant for at least 100 years, change has been recorded in the scale of the motifs, and in the combination of the motifs, plus the color selection.

In the Middle East, continuity with change has been documented in traditional wedding costumes from Bethlehem during the 20th century and Istanbul during the 19th century. Regardless of the sources of influence, the issue of change warrants consideration, even if difficult to assess medieval textiles.

The Fez framework also reveals an interdependence between pattern, technique, and function, based on established cultural associations. Consequently, motifs and designs

Fig. 4: Complete Tiraz Cover or small hanging.
Egypt, Buhaisa, Abbasid period, 9th c.
Wool, linen; tapestry weave.
The Cleveland Museum of Art, J.H.
 Wade Fund, 1959. 48
are selected from an established repertoire, and do not random.

This correlation appears to illuminate the largest group of medieval textiles, tiraz, which were woven in most Muslim countries (fig. 5). Tiraz describes textile workshops as well as textiles with Arabic script.

The Fez framework also sheds light on hierarchies, they are identified only within a single technique, based on differences in quality, rather than on separate techniques. For example, the popular drawloom-woven bouquet pattern was imitated in printed cotton and in gold thread embroidery, whereas Fez with embroidery was imitated on drawlooms, automated looms, plus printed on paper goods. Fez consumers, however, do not perceive the original and its imitations in other techniques on a hierarchical scale of inferior and inferior, but simply as different, providing their qualities are comparable. This appears to contradict most art historical interpretations.

**Symbolic significance**

Why does any pattern, with slight modifications, remain fashionable for decades? In Fez, correlations between patterns and cultural significance abound. Patterns represent values associated with the cherished traditional and age-old cultural life of the city. Consequently, they serve as potent symbols of regional identity and pride, coupled with a sense of cultural superiority. Equally important is their prominence at weddings which generate an endless demand for supply. This visual and aesthetic appeal, with their symbolic regional identity, which is widely recognized throughout Morocco, continue to fuel fashionable patterns for decades.

To what extent were medieval textiles also symbolic? In the best known examples, rulers conveyed personal symbolism imbued with political overtones when they bestowed skilled artisans composed of Idrissids and textiles on visiting dignitaries and deserving courtiers. This was confirmed by Ibaa Khaled. "Royal garments are embroidered with such a tiraz as to increase the prestige of the ruler or the person of lower rank who wears such a garment, or in order to increase the prestige of those whom the ruler distinguishes by bestowing upon them his own garment when he wants to honor them."

In another instance, prisoner scenes woven in 16th century Iranian silks combine political, regional, and religious symbolism as explicit propaganda. Images of prisoners with hands bound represent Shah Tahir's triumphal military victories over the Christian Georgians during the 1540s and 1550s, supported by historical texts according to Mary McWilliams. (Figure 5)

In conclusion, the Fez framework provides a catalyst for raising questions about the far-reaching significance of medieval textiles.
Carpets, Traditional Societies and Islamic Courts

The Early Court Carpets of Turkey, Iran and Egypt and their Origins

Walter B. Denny
I- The pile carpet:  
Islamic culture's great gift to world art

Any serious student of European painting quickly becomes aware of the appearance in hundreds of European paintings since the 14th century of depictions of oriental carpets. In countless portraits, kings, nobles, and princes of the church are depicted standing on carpets or sitting next to tables draped with carpets. Prosperous businessmen were often painted with carpets among their possessions, adding a note of color and opulence. An astonishing number of portraits that include carpets also include depictions of the act of reading or writing; inkwells, quires of blank paper, bound books and quill pens are shown again and again on carpet-covered tables. Obviously in these portraits Islamic carpets have acquired an important role in European society as indicators of status and power, of wealth and education.

At the same time, the evidence from paintings tell us that in certain European societies, carpets from the Islamic world were incorporated into the material culture associated with secular pageantry and ceremonial. A small anonymous 17th-century painting in the Hungarian National Museum shows a ceremony in Moscow's Palace of Facets, with many small Turkish carpets covering the floor. The Venetian artists Gentile Bellini and Matteo Pagan, who in the 15th and 16th centuries created works of art showing the procession of the Venetian Doge and Senate through St. Mark's Square, depicted the hundreds of carpets hung from balconies on holidays that were a standard part of Venetian civic ritual.

Even more interesting is the association of Islamic carpets in European depictions and uses that depict the carpet as a kind of "holy ground." Italian paintings of the Virgin and Child often show the infant Jesus lying on a carpet placed over a balcony rail, while other paintings depict magnificent Islamic carpets before the altars of Roman Catholic churches, a common practice to the present day. A well-known painting in the National Gallery, London, entitled The Somerset House Conference depicts a Turkish carpet covering the table before which the English and Spanish legates have just concluded peace between their countries in the late 16th century; here again the carpet symbolizes the sanctified space in which the treaty has been negotiated and signed--it adds gravitas and meaning to the event. It is further worth noting that four papal funerals in the second half of the 20th century continued the old Egyptian custom of placing an Islamic carpet under the Pope's coffin.

Thus the Islamic carpet also carries in European material culture strong connotations of the sacred, and of the holy. This explains the use of Islamic carpets, some of them with Hebrew inscriptions, as parokhed or torah curtains in synagogues from Spain and Italy, and also accounts for the peculiar use of Islamic carpets as theologically "neutral" decoration in Calvinist churches in Europe, such as the famous Black Church in Brasov (Brașov) in Romanian Transylvania. (Figure 1). Recent research has determined that the religious "reach" of the Islamic carpet extended even farther afield historically; carpets are found in significant numbers in Buddhist and Shinto shrines in Japan, and other carpets appearing recently in Western art markets are said to come from Buddhist religious sites in Tibet. And of course at the root of this world carpet culture is the carpet's cultural homeland in the matrix of the rich traditions of Islamic lands. No other artistic medium has such a broad cultural pervasiveness across classes, religions, races, patterns of habitation, and economies, as well as such a wide geographical range; even Chinese porcelain, that other great boundary-crosser of world art, has nowhere near the complexity and depth of cultural and geographic diffusion that is found in the realm of the Islamic carpet.

II- Four societal levels of carpet production

The great German scholar Kurt Erdmann postured four levels of carpet production in traditional Islamic societies. The first consisted of the nomadic carpet-weaving traditions, long thought by some scholars to be the original wellspring of most of the important early surviving designs in the knotted-pile technique, and the vectors by which they moved to West Asia from Central Asia after the year 1000 C.E. The second level was village weaving, as the settlement of nomads in villages throughout medieval Anatolia has been carefully documented, especially by the Turkish scholar Faruk Sümür, and as semi-nomadic patterns of living, in which tribes spent the winter in lowland houses and the summer living in tents in high pastures, are quite common, we may assume a high degree of conflation of these first two levels. In both of them, carpets appear to have been woven in a tremendous variety of genres, mainly for use in the society in which they were produced. The weaving appears to have been done exclusively by women, and learning, practicing and teaching the economic activity of carpet-weaving appears to have been an essential part of their social and economic role within the nomadic or village society. On these levels, carpets also constituted a saleable commodity, something that could be sold or bartered to town or city dwellers for items such as copper dye-pots or steel shears, that were not produced on the local level.

The next level of production in Erdmann's scheme was that of commercial carpets, made in towns in handicraft ateliers as items of trade. As just mentioned, there is also some blurring of the boundaries between commercial carpets and those on the first two levels, as the latter were also often items of trade as well. Interestingly enough, most of the earliest surviving Islamic carpets, thought to have been made in Anatolia in the 13th and 14th centuries, appear to be commercial products. Finally scholars have defined a class of carpets that in terms of size, cost, technical complexity and lavishness of materials, and artistic accomplishment, represent the ultimate achievement of the art form. These are the so-called court carpets, thought to have been made in very small quantities, often from one-of-a-kind designs created by professional salaried artists, and woven in special ateliers under court control. According to the scholarly consensus, such carpets were woven either for use in the court itself; or as gifts to be presented to foreign princes. Their designs for the most part are closely related to the arts of the book: illumination (naskhī) and miniature painting (rasmī).
Fig. 2. Girih design in tile mosaic, Attarin Madrasa, Fez, Morocco
III- The notion of a “carpet design revolution”

The transition between an older tradition repetitive designs consisting in the main of geometrical or highly stylized vegetal motifs perhaps based on nomadic antecedents, and a later tradition in which the carpet was conceived as a sort of “dot matrix” that would be used to reproduce highly curvilinear designs from illumination and painting, was posited by Erdmann to have occurred in the second half of the 15th century C.E. Erdmann’s thesis was based on his study of Timurid painting, where we can see a number of depictions of carpets that chronicle a design shift. Because the paintings were created at the Timurid court, Erdmann posited that what he called the “carpet design revolution” took place in the cultural orbit of the Timurid capital of Herat. One problem with the thesis is the lack of surviving carpets definitely attributable to Herat at these times.

The institution that would have produced the designs for these new kinds of carpets is known in Islamic history as the khatib-khana (literally “house of books” or “royal library”) or naskash-hane (literally “house of design”). Erdmann felt that professional artists and designers in the later 15th century extended their influence and reached into court carpet-weaving ateliers.

Unlike the Iranian tradition, with no surviving examples documenting the carpet revolution, many Ottoman Turkish carpets, and a few crucial documents, dating as rarely as the reign of Sultan Mehmed II (1451-1481) and as late as the reign of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) survive. The later link the Ottoman court carpet tradition with the commercial so-called “Mamluk” tradition of Syria and Egypt. The Iraqi tradition, as mentioned, poses more of a problem. Until very recently, no one could point with any confidence to a single extant Iranian carpet from the magical 15th century, either before or after the “revolution.” Rather, like the Ottoman examples, the most easily dateable examples are from the 16th; the earliest dating to the late 1530s. In all cases, much of the complexity of the techniques used appears to focus on interesting combinations of wefts, the purpose of this being to achieve on the grid of design. Different ratios of vertical and horizontal knots as close to equal as possible, something we might term “squaring the knot ratio.”

Squaring is not important in tribal rugs or those with repetitive geometric motifs such as these. Early Syrian carpets woven in Damascus often demonstrate a design that is “stretched” vertically (due to the wefts either being too thick or too numerous), while Turkmen examples from Anatolia and Central Asia are frequently compacted vertically (due in most cases to the vigorous packing of the knots and wefts during weaving). The result is that an octagon or 8-pointed star conceptualized with radial symmetry and measuring the same number of knots from top to bottom as from side to side, often appears in the carpet itself either in a long or wide form. But the new design mechanism of the carpet design revolution requires a uniform ratio of knots, ideally one to one, to aid in the transfer of designs from pen on paper to the carpet medium.

The finer the weave, the more latitude the designer of a carpet has with regard to fluidity of line, complexity of design, and the ability to escape the right-angle tyranny of the graph paper. Fineness of weave and short pile are associated therefore with court weavings, and coarseness of weave and long pile with nomadic weavings. But we should also remember that the Ottoman Sultans enjoyed their coarsely-woven and long-piled tülü carpets, while many products of nomadic Türkmen weaving are created with exceptionally fine knot density.

IV- Gırikh and the the earliest carpet designs

Gırikh – the Persian form of the word means quite literally “knot” – is a term currently used to describe the familiar Islamic decorative device also termed the “geometric arabesque.” In Islamic art this form of decoration is found from the Indus to the Atlantic in the beauty of geometry the Islamic artist sees a proof of God’s plan for beauty and order in the universe. In most media, such as tile-mosaic, book illumination, stone or wood carving, painted decoration, an Islamic artist can choose from a wide variety of geometric possibilities; he may use for example a decagon (ten-sided) basis for a gırikh design, as seen in a tile panel from a late 15th-century Moroccan school in Fes. (Figure 2) But this freedom of unlimited geometric choice is usually denied to the carpet-weaver, who usually must confine designs to polygons whose number of sides is divisible by four: that is, squares, and octagons – because of the graph-paper nature of the carpet itself. (Figure 3).

The limitations of the knotted-pile medium suggest that such geometric ideas in such great complexity may have come from outside the carpet-weaving environment. Their adaptation to Islamic carpet weaving occurs however from very early on; an example in the Vak flap Museum in Istanbul is plausibly as early as the 13th century. (Figure 4) In this gırikh design, arguably the most complex found in early Islamic carpet-weaving, the designer, adhering to the limitations set by the technique that require only 90° and 45° angles, the carpet medium adapts very easily to the demands of complex gırikh designs.

Over time, early prototypes such as this carpet undergo in successive generations of carpets the process known as historical stylization, that leads to a number of interesting artistic consequences. Among these are design simplification, and the confusion of ground and motif, a misunderstanding of the logic of the prototype, and other processes that either quickly or gradually may obscure the original complex designs, as the requirements of the weaving medium and the mentality of the artist-weaver assert authority against the geographically and historically remote designer of the original prototype.

These gırikh ideas appear to have affected court as well as commercial weaving from early on. A recently-discovered, but hitherto not published, carpet purporting to be from the time of Timur himself shows the same familiar design of a central gırikh octagon medallion and geometric borders. The gırikh ancestors of the celebrated silk carpet of the 16th century from Cairo, found in the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, are obvious. But the problems of adaptation remain the same.
An easy way to observe what happens in confusion of design and background in carpet weaving is to look at Islamic geometric woodcarving, especially examples where the interstices between the defining geometric interface are filled with a contrasting material such as mother-of-pearl or ivory. In vision (or in artistic memory) the geometric interface, the “important” part of the design, may fade from importance, while the ivory “fillers” become the central aspects of the design important. The same thing is true in the carpets, which in addition have far less room for artistic maneuvering in the corners, transitions between shapes, and other “awkward” spots.

V- Carpet revolution or carpet evolution?

In fact the process Erdmann termed the carpet design revolution is a slow one. It moves in conservative stages. There is no better way to see this than in a badly worn carpet, probably dating to the 15th century CE, from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in which repeating geometric motifs — in our view, a very old idea — are beginning to be submerged by the newer curvilinear floral and vegetal motifs; both exist together in the same carpet as the change takes place.

Fig 4: Gürkhl carpet from the Great Mosque of Divriği, possibly 13th century, Vakıflar Museum, Istanbul
The curvilinear medallion in this case is obviously a foreign element, imposed on top of a field composed of far more archaic and traditional elements – in this case girkh strapwork stars and an arabesque of lotus flowers. In examples of the developed 16th-century Persian carpet tradition, the role of participation of court artists and the evolution from "commercial to court" are even more difficult to delineate, and the two categories do not easily admit of a border between them.

Of even more interest is the process whereby traditional designs and new kinds of designs were woven side by side in carpets of identical technique, probably in the same commercial manufactories. We see this in a group of carpets today thought to have been woven in Syria, probably Damascus, in the late 15th and throughout the 16th centuries. Often the real inventiveness, one is tempted to conclude, lies with weaver-designers rather than with court artists.

The transition from girkh to curvilinear designs is also seen in "Mamluk" carpets from Egypt. An artistically casual attitude toward the adoption of girkh motifs appears to occur in the earliest commercial Egyptian carpets from the 15th century, such as the large fragmentary example from Vienna. Upon close examination it becomes very easy to see where this scattered and sometimes arbitrary layout originates. The multitude of small forms are of course design "fillers" similar to the ivory polygons seen in Mamluk woodcarving. In the ensuing century and a half, especially under Ottoman domination after 1616, the commercial "Mamluk" carpet developed into a production with amazing variety in both design and size, before evolving ultimately into what we today call the Ottoman court carpet. We are very fortunate in being able to see where the transition from girkh-based "Mamluk" to curvilinear "Ottoman" took place, in a very tattered but highly significant carpet once on the market in Munich that shows elements of both traditions.

But I would like to argue the real design revolution in Ottoman realms took place not in the late 16th century in the sphere of court rugs, but rather in the later 15th-century commercial manufactories of Ushak. And there is no indication that court artists were in any way responsible for its genesis. Rather, it took its inspiration from a far more logical source – ceramic building decoration. Like the tile veneer on a building, the carpet is a wool veneer on an architectural surface. Scale is the same in both cases. And it is in my view far more logical to assume that the impact of the art of pen on paper on that of the carpet occurred indirectly, through the medium of architectural tile decoration.

There are many of visual parallels that support this thesis, and the prime piece of evidence is the tile revetments of the Masjid-i Khud or "Blue Mosque" created around 1465 in Tabriz under the Ak Koyunlu Turkmen dynasty. In my view, it is in the west (Tabriz and Anatolia) rather than in the east (Herat) that the "design revolution" -- or more properly, the design evolution -- first began to occur.

VI- Conclusion

We must recognize the importance of new discoveries over the past four decades in helping us to understand and analyze the early history of carpets. And we must recognize the strong potential for further surprises, shocks, and modifications to our ideas as more early objects continue to surface, today from Inner Asia as well as in the mosques of the Middle East and the princely residences of Europe. What is interesting about these new discoveries, no matter how initially shocking and unexpected, however, is that for the most part they have served to confirm many of the major premises of carpet study established by the founders of the discipline between fifty and a hundred years ago.

Many court rugs of course continue to occupy a central role as a part of carpet history and also a part of the history of painting and illumination and the other court design arts. But we have to remember that the kinds of neat and definitive boundaries drawn in later times by historians of art seldom if ever reflect the messier realities of artistic creation in the periods that we study. Just as the oriental carpet, virtually uniquely among all genres of artistic creation, has over the centuries crossed boundaries to become an integral part of many different visual cultures, so at the times of their creation the great Islamic carpets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries represented the abilities of artistic ideas to travel, mutate, and adapt in a complex way to different environments of technique, economics, patronage, and taste.
Urban Planning and Architecture in the Umayyad and Early Abbasid Period

Claus Peter Haase

It is only recently that studies of the so-called Umayyad desert castles were expanded to include research on the city foundations of the early Muslims in Syria and elsewhere in the vast Umayyad empire. It remains a question whether the central province of Syria was at all garrisoned by Amsar, fortified camps for the Muslim and tribal warriors. Arab chronicles do not use this term for Syrian places, except once for the frontier garrison Tyana, at the Gulf of Tarsus. But evidently new urban centers were founded and not only at the borders. The warriors arrived with their families and certainly did not mingle easily with the indigenous population. On the other hand, some of the Desert Castles, like Qasr al-Hayr ash-Shaqqi, show the type and size of such Amsar as are known from Iraq, Egypt (Fusar), North Africa and Central Asia.

One of the first Arab urban foundations in Syria is Hadir Qinnasrin, four kilometres to the east of the ancient Hellenistic and Byzantine city of Chalkis/Qinnasrin, south of Aleppo. From pre-Islamic times, it is often mentioned in chronicles as one of the centers of tribes such as the Banu Tay and Banu Taghlib. In 1998, we prospected the site with a small team and discovered that it had been one of the major settlements in the region, extending over more than three kilometres in diameter, with coins from the Byzantine and ceramics until the early-Islamic period. To judge from the shape of the ruined terrace, the historical settlement had no walls, was laid out in a rectangular plan, and the houses were not oriented north-south. Unfortunately, only the margins of the settlement can be studied in the fields of the rapidly expanding modern village, which covers the old center at the foot of a Bronze Age tell. As there was very little Islamic material to be found at the impressive site of Qinnasrin itself, we have the impression that in early Islamic times the capital of the “djunb Qinnasrin”, of the “military district”, was switched from Byzantine Chalkis/Qinnasrin to Hadir Qinnasrin.

Another foundation, attributed to the Umayyad family itself, was Ramallah in Palestine, studied from the historical sources by Dominique Soudel. It is the only case where such an enterprise was successfully developed into a city that has survived to this day.

The founder was Sulayman b. Abdulmalik, the future caliph. After the second civil war in 692, the Islamic Empire spread over North Africa to Spain as well as into Central Asia, with many new foundations like ribats and amsar, with great public buildings like the Great Mosques in many old cities and with urban settlements to install
the new political and cultural system. The caliphal family and other leaders appropriated large domains, far from the old centers, and irrigated these and other arable areas. The economy received a great impetus, demand multiplied and new ideas spread, even in a country of such ancient traditions as Syria. A second urban foundation in Syria dating most probably from the same period and better studied by archaeologists is Khirbat al-Majjar in Lebanon, at the crossing of the Damascus-Beirut and Hims-Baalbeck-Tiberias/Tabariyya routes. From corresponding Syriac, Byzantine, and Arab sources it may be identified with the historical Ayn al-Jazz/Gerza, founded by the Caliph al-Walid I and his son, al-Abbas. The ruins show a rectangle of walls (310 x 360m), the cruciform plan of large streets and the insulae between smaller alleys for public buildings and houses, as is known from traditional Hellenistic city planning. The round towers, also flanking the city gates, and the stone construction with layers of brick show the post-Roman variations. Only one strangely small bath has been found - but this is also the case in some of the smaller Roman legionary forts. The tetrapylon marking the crossing of roads at the center is a traditional sign. The mosque close to a palace and no sign of a church shows the exclusive milieu of the conquerors. But apparently the urban plan was never completely implemented by the inhabitants and the place became abandoned, probably at the end of the Umayyad period. It seems that the building of houses was left to private initiative, and we do not know the reasons why construction did not take place.

The rectangular plan shows the urban projection, which does not seem to be restricted to caliphal foundations, as was the case with the harbor Ayla, at the Gulf of Aqaba. This little town, excavated by Donald Whitcomb, dates perhaps to the earliest Islamic period and shows at the center a solid building, perhaps belonging to a local governor or a city council. This raised our curiosity to see another foundation, established by Maslama, a son of Abd al-Malik. A great warrior and entrepreneur, he was governor in Jazira for several years, and led different campaigns into Anatolia, besieging Constantinople in 716. He sponsored irrigation works at the Euphrates near Balis to make the inhabitants return to agriculture. His most famous possession was Hisn Maslama on the road from Raqqa to the north, to Harran and Edessa/Urfa and close to the west-east route from Aleppo – Marjij to Ras Al-Ayn. He had a six-kilometre canal constructed to bring the water of the Balikh into the town.

Syrian archaeologists had studied the biggest site on the Balikh, Madinat al-Far, seventy kilometres north of Raqqa, in 1981 as the most probable place to identify with Hisn Maslama. Since 1987, the German Archaeological Institute sponsored by the Van Berchem Foundation (Geneva), has cooperated in the study. In short, after two further soundings and four campaigns, we are glad to be able to present further evidence for the identity of this site, though this did not prove to be as simple as it appeared on the surface.

The ruins show a quadrangular walled compound in the north of about the same measurements as Anjar (3.30 square metres) and also in the exact north-south orientation. One cistern was excavated there, two others were detected and much of our work concentrated on this part of the city, which extended a further 1.5 kilometres towards the south. The southern city walls were found to be second additions to the north compound, at the southwest corner tower, and we wanted to concentrate on a possible Umayyad foundation. They enclosed two major compounds – a large rectangle turned slightly out of the north-south axis and to the west another complex of apparent importance to be encircled by the fortified urban development. We had called the rectangle the "Citadel"
from the beginning, and later on it was found to be a large palace complex of compact walls and elegant rooms. However, we looked in vain for a mosque at the places where they are found in other cities.

In the quadrangular compound, the traces of alleys and insulae for large courtyard houses are visible above the surface. Unfortunately, the archaeological work is rather difficult because most of the walls are in mud brick or even pisé, only occasionally of bricks and pebbles. For us, this mixed fabric means a mixture of eastern, Mesopotamian building traditions with classical Western, Mediterranean planning. To my knowledge we do not find Arabic sources on the foundation of cities before that of Baghdad, but even there the planning was done as a first initiative to create a symbol of the sovereignty of the new Abbasid dynasty. This was even copied with slight variations at the temporary residence at Raqqa and in some parts of Samarra. There also, much of the building activity was left to private initiative. In Madinat al-Far/ Hish Maslama, this organization makes for the light, even shabby construction of the few houses with large courtyards. Apparently they were meant for only a few inhabitants, and if we consider Maslama’s troops assembling here for the ghazwa into Anatolia, they must have camped outside the walls and used the city only for water supply, administrative and religious duties.

The largest building in the center of the northern compound stands right on the crossing of the two main axes, like the building in Ayla/Aqaba, where usually in the more traditional Hellenistic plan the tetrapylon marks the meeting place of caravans and processions. The few insulae somehow recall the 7 bays of the larger enclosure in Qasr al Hayr al-Sharqi, which has half the size of Madinat al-Far/ Hish Maslama, but in the foundation inscription of Hisham is called a madina.

It will be very interesting to know what will be found in the center of a further Islamic city foundation in northern Syria, in Khirb (Bani) Siyar, which is much bigger (nearly 500 square m), and is currently being studied by another German team. These five examples of the same type of urban planning in three different sizes show features which reappear in ribs and gil’as in North Africa and Central Asia, some as a small-scale single building (like Kizkale in Termez/Uzbekistan) and others more extended. The large town of Khirb Siyar, which is probably the latest garrison foundation in the border province (thugur), is especially interesting for its failed planning. Even this partly some fortification did not attract enough inhabitants to become a road post and was apparently abandoned after a relatively short period, like most of the other examples. On the reasons for this, one can only speculate for the moment – perhaps a closer study of the finds will help us in the near future.

The first excavations in Madinat al-Far/ Hish Maslama have brought to light mostly late Umayyad or early Abbasid ceramics. Of the few coins, the majority are Abbasid, and about 15% Umayyad. However, this is not representative, as the excavations are not yet extensive and show a difficult stratigraphy. Though there are only two main construction periods, they are not always easy to distinguish. Some walls of the first period had been reused, the floors cleared and partly refaced; in other places like the “Citadel”, up to more than one metre of clay and mud separate it from the later second period. However, several features (and coins) show the second layer to date from the times of Harun Al-Rashid, when he had his palaces constructed in Raqqa around the year 180H/976. The reason for the clearing of the first layer seems to be its complete destruction, mostly down to the earth, which may be due to one of the great earthquakes in this region during the latter half of the 2nd/8th century, as in 796, when the famous cathedral of Edessa collapsed, only 70 kilometres away.

In the “madina”, the second construction period mostly consists of rather poor looking, narrow rooms within the outlines and the orientation of the extended architecture of the first layer. However, in the “Citadel” we have found valuable painted floors and floor tiles in the second layer which could not, as yet, be
removed, so that we have uncovered only very small parts of the first construction period. The finds in ceramics and other materials do not represent a balanced statistic of the two layers. The second layer was also destroyed and partly removed after only a short period for some feeble constructions in reused brick fragments and pisé walls, the debris being heaped up in several places between these huts.

The houses in the northern compound were characterized by large courtyards nearly twenty metres long — also found in the second period — and facades towards the Decumanus street in simply decorated plaster. In the northern quarter, the space was even more empty as at least two covered and one open cistern were found. The town evidently served trade and the roads were paved with irregular stones. Under the highest elevation of the ruins we found the beautiful east gate, covered by white lime slabs and showing a vaulted access room — surely attractive to travelers on the great route, passing apparently on this side of the town. On the west side, we found traces of a canal from the river Balidh, which is about six kilometres away. This is one of the proofs for identifying the site as Hisn Maslama, which a late 9th century report in Yakut’s Geographical Dictionary mentions along with one cistern.

As already mentioned, the center of the northern compound shows a deviation from the Hellenistic town plan: the crossing of the axis roads is closed off by a large building with several rooms, a court and a ceremonial eastern entrance. Little channels led water from the north into a small bath with hypocaust heating. In the center of the court, the spectacular architecture of a round stylobate for 16 brick columns was found, the rest of only two of them being found in situ. Within the stylobate stood an octagonal structure of stamped mud covered with waterproof plaster.

This elegant and light architecture was covered by stucco ornament, forming arches and perhaps a vault, which give it a princely aspect. Perhaps it belonged to the bath nearby and had an octagonal piscina, as one finds in Roman baths. The light, quadrangular pavilion recently found in the gardens outside Rosafa, thought to belong to the times of Hisham, can be compared to it. A reconstruction is based on another possible comparison, namely with the columned round buildings (tholos) on the mosaics of the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus. They are apparently connected to some water diversions, as in the famous example of a Nymphaeum in the Umayyad palace of Khirbat al Mafjar.

But this is not the only palace construction in Madinat al-Far / Hisn Maslama. Opposite the south gate, the impressive stone corner of a massive “citadel” still rises to more than two metres, lined with a layer of briques and introduced by a file of spolia from a Byzantine cannelled stone pillar. The original large rooms had later on been filled up to a kind of terrace, on top of which the second period building of the palace was re erected in mud bricks, but with surprisingly beautiful decoration. Among its singularities is a separate toilet within a room with waterproof floor and overlooking the southern walls of the city. On the same level we found a large room with two niches, one semi circular with most beautiful fine stucco decorations, and the other a rectangular wall cupboard, with shelves closed by niches in stucco work with pointed and round arches. This is the first archaeological example of an Islamic book-case, to be compared to the one in a miniature from the Hariri ms. of 1238 in Paris. The floor of this room was white gipsum — probably the foundation for a glass dado, of which a tiny fragment was left, like those found in one of the Raqqah palaces. The question is whether this room represents a private mosque. We are not really decided on this, as its decoration, especially the floor, appears to be too luxurious. But we have yet to find another mosque. Also the two adjoining rooms partly uncovered were elegantly decorated, this time with painted floors showing purely geometric designs.

The walls in this western part of the “Citadel” also stem from the first period, but are made from bricks and were reused with slight additions. We can safely date this second period from the stucco decorations found in several places since some of the motifs, especially the large palm leaves, reappear in the palaces at Raqqah, dating from the time of Harun Al-Rashid. As to the small size stucco decoration of the niche, its closest parallel exists in the qibla wall of the old mosque at Najim in Iran. Its date — often given as 10th century by conjecture — has to be revised to a century earlier now.

Further comparisons of stucco work allow us to draw close, perhaps even identical workshop relations to far away Afsharab / Samargand where, in the early Abbasid mosque, a stucco mihrab was found to show not Indians, but Arabs from Iraq or even Syria itself, since they worked in the cities and buildings founded by the Muslim army, and not in the Iranian living quarters. So we have proof not only of the wide diffusion of the early Islamic urban foundations, but also of the mobility of its early craftsmanship.
Tower
Temples in the
Ancient Orient

Yves Calvet

The earliest temples in the literal sense do not appear in ancient Orient before the beginning of the 3rd millennium, when the first written sources mention them. Some earlier buildings have been considered as temples but neither their architecture, nor their inner layouts nor their furniture can attest to that. This is the case for instance in Eridu, in Sumer in southern Mesopotamia, whose so-called temple dated 5000 B.C. looks like a small house with a niche, with nothing to indicate that it had a religious function.

Temples really appear with the first terraced buildings in Uruk, also in Sumer, such as the famous White Temple from the end of the 4th millennium. From these early days it seems clear that the religious function of a building was already linked its height, whether natural or artificially augmented by terracing. These terraced temples increased throughout the 3rd millennium, spreading to numerous Mesopotamian sites, such as the “oval” temples at al-Hiba (Lagash), al-Ubaid or Khafajah (Turab). These temples were contained within two or three encircling walls, such that the temple itself was perched on the highest terrace, opposite the entrance. Their terracing eventually led to the most famous buildings of the ancient Near East, namely the ziggurats, a term that means "being high."
Ziggurats appeared at the end of the 3rd millennium, at a time when the Ur dynasty dominated southern Mesopotamia, and remained an important feature of Mesopotamian architecture for one and a half millennia. Sixteen of them have survived as archaeological remains; others are known only from texts. All are in Mesopotamia, except for Tchoga Zambil (Dur-Untash-Napirisha) in Elam, southwestern Iran.

The most ancient, and the supreme model for all is king Ur-Nammu's ziggurat in Ur. It has three floors with huge superposed terraces and a sanctuary at the top. The access is made through external stairs. The heart of the construction is made out of raw bricks and the walls are covered with baked bricks. The construction of Eridu, Uruk and Nippur ziggurats are also attributed to king Ur-Nammu. At the beginning of the 2nd millennium, the kings of Babylonia, especially Hammurabi, raised ziggurats in Babylonia, Larsa, Sippar, Kish, Borsippa, Assur. At the end of the 14th century, the Kassite king Kurigalzu built one in Aqar Qu'a, and two centuries later came Kar Tukulti Ninurta in Assyria and Tchoga Zambil in Elam. During the 1st millennium, the new Assyrian kings raised the Khorsabad (Dur Sharrukin) and Nimrud (Kalhu) ziggurats and restored ancient ones as in Uruk. In the 6th century, the king of Babylonia, Nabuchadnezzar II, completely rebuilt the ziggurat of Babylon with seven floors. His successor, Nabonaid, restored the one in Ur. These are the last buildings of this type in Mesopotamia.

The Failaka Tower Temple

But during the Bronze Age there also appeared other types of temples not built on plain terraces anymore nor elaborated such as ziggurats, but appearing as towers. These are not very common but are quite widely spread from the Mediterranean coast (Archania, Ugarit) to the shores of the Arabian Gulf (Fallaka) and through Mesopotamia (Mari).

Two of them will be discussed here, one from Failaka, built around 2000 B.C., and a group from Ras Shamra (Ugarit), built some time later.

Toward the end of the 3rd millennium and throughout the 2nd millennium, the Dilmun civilisation spread from Kuwait to Bahrain and all along the northeast coast of Arabia. Its prosperity came from trading between Mesopotamia and the countries bordering the Indian ocean. Failaka island was a main stop on this maritime route: an important site from the Bronze age period was discovered there about forty years ago by Danish archaeologists and more recently by a French and Kuwaiti team.

One of the most spectacular buildings is the tower temple which was excavated between 1984 and 1988 (Fig. 1). It is a large square building, about 20 metres per side, built on a low base. The outer walls are very thick (2.80 m.) and are preserved to a maximum height of 1.50 m. The construction is of very high quality. The foundations were made of rubble stones bound with a brown mortar and covered with white plaster. Even the walls were built with ashlar blocks whose traces are still visible on the upper part of the foundation. The stone blocks were in fact reused during the Hellenistic period to build a fortress about 10 meters south of the tower. Stone slabs, some of which are still standing, covered the inner floor of the building, while outside, a plinth decorated the base of the walls.

The entrance was made through a door about 2.50 m. wide, in the southeastern wall. It apparently closed with
two hand flaps. Inside, two symmetrical small rooms stood against the southwestern and the northeastern walls, each entered through a door. The southeastern room had an inside wall which defined a long space with no door. There were two ponds inside the building as well as canals which went through the southwestern wall to drain the water outside.

The great thickness of the walls implies that the building must have been quite high and must have had an upper floor or terrace. In its last phase, it was also considerably reinforced by the adjunction of blocks of stones against the outer walls, which confirms its height. To get to the terrace, a ladder, or more likely stairs, must have been necessary. They were perhaps located in the southwestern room standing against the partition wall mentioned above. The function of the other, northeastern, room is more difficult to establish since very little archaeological material was found in it because it had been greatly plundered. Nevertheless, some copper materials were found still standing in the northeastern room (tripod, ingot, stools), as well as fragments of sciotic vessels and some Dilmun seals, objects that have been found elsewhere in Failaka and in Bahrain and the eastern province of Arabia (Fig. 2).

It is more than likely that the building had a religious function. Even though no inscription was found on the site, some written texts coming from other parts of the site show that the divinity Inazik, in particular, was worshipped in Failaka. The presence of hydraulic fittings, ponds and pipes, may also remind us of Enki, whose cult is linked with fresh water. Failaka was indeed a stop on the maritime route of the Gulf, and sailors used to re-supply there with fresh water regularly.

The Tower Temples from Ugarit

Some 1400 km. away, on the Syrian coast, the tower temples of Ugarit recall the tower temple at Failaka. The Ugarit kingdom, which existed in the middle and late Bronze age (end of the 3rd and 2nd millennium), is located on the Syrian coast and prospered thanks to the trade between the Mediterranean world and the Near East (Assyria, Babylonia, etc.). Its capital, also called Ugarit, was discovered in the thirties and has been continuously excavated since then. The discoveries that were made there are extremely important for the history of the ancient Near East, especially towards the end of the Bronze Age, from 1600 to 1200 B.C. Around this date, Ugarit was suddenly destroyed by invaders from the west, commonly called the “People of the Sea,” at which date the city was forever abandoned.

In addition to its many great contributions, of which the invention of the first alphabet must rank the first, Ugarit contains, on the highest, northeastern, part of the tell two tower temples that were discovered in the thirties. One of them is dedicated to the god Baal, judging from some of the steles that were found there, which represent or mention this god, the protector of the Ugarit kingdom (Fig. 3). Several anchors were left as votive offerings in front of the temple and around the altar facing the entrance. The building (16 m. x 22 m.) is entirely made of unshaped stones and is surrounded by a fence. It consists of two different parts, a narrow hall and a main part. It is accessed on the east from a low staircase.

The walls, which are also very thick, confirm that the building was very high, probably 18 to 20 m. high (Fig. 4). Moreover, an inner stairway enabled access to the upper
level, then to the terrace. The two first flights of stairs were delimited by a partition, which is still visible today. This tower temple dominated not only the city but all the surrounding territory and was perfectly visible from the sea, which is only 1.5 km away from there.

About fifty metres away toward the southeast, another temple tower was discovered. It was probably dedicated to god Dagan, as indicated by some stele found in the enclosure, two of which are dedicated to Dagan. This temple was also surrounded by a sacred fence. Only the foundations of this building, measuring 17 x 23 m, are preserved but their massive size suggest that the building was similar to Baal’s. The access was from the east, from a hall that opened to the sacred part of the building. It was also possible from there to get to the upper floor and to the terrace.

This second temple did not dominate the city as much as the previous one did, because it was built on a lower level. But its great height, probably around 20 metres, made it visible from far away.

The Functions of the Tower Temples

Several common features between the temple towers from Palaka and Ugarit have to be underlined because they indicate that these buildings had related functions. The religious function is obvious: they are the house of god and the place where man can meet him. In order to receive his favours, man creates a cult for him and practices ceremonies and sacrifices in his honour. The furniture of the cult (e.g. altars), the votive offerings (vases, stele) and the dedicatory inscriptions all attest to this religious function.

The geographical location of Palaka and Ugarit tower temples is also similar, both standing very near the coast and both dominating the landscape. Those at Ugarit are very tall and their height is further increased by the 20 m hill on which they stand, so that their tops are 40 m above sea level (Fig. 5). As for the Palaka temple, it must have been lower (about 15 m), but it still dominated the whole landscape which is characterized by its flatness.

Sailors navigating the estuary of the Euphrates river or the length of the Syrian coast could easily find their way because these towers could be seen from far away. Merchants used them as landmarks and points of destination, making offering to them for safe return, such as the anchors at the Baal temple in Ugarit. It is unlikely that the terraces of the temple towers were opened to everyone but they could sometimes be used as an observation posts to watch out for the arrival of the boats, on the sea side, or for the caravans, on the other side.

What was considered an advantage in time of peace became a danger in time of war, because the enemy could easily spot the place where it could disembark in order to attack there it came to kill or plunder. The inhabitants of Ugarit must have seen the ships of those “People of the Sea” navigate in their direction to come and annihilate them.
Many areas known today by the name Tihamat Al-Baha in southern Saudi Arabia have remained an almost unknown world, surrounded by mystery and oblivion, even to many students and researchers of archaeology and history. Doubtless they can be excused for this to a great extent. This part of the province of Tihama is only very briefly and rarely mentioned in the historical and geographical sources available, and this cannot be a starting point for a study or a signpost for an excavation. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the towns of Khalaf and Khulaif, the subject of this study. The reason for this is certainly the distance of all these areas from the Yemeni pilgrimage and caravan routes to Makkah, and perhaps it may also be due to the difficulty of the terrain with its many mountains and valleys.

Undoubtedly, if we had depended only on this kind of sources of knowledge, the past of these areas would have remained unknown to a great extent. Their contribution to Islamic Arab civilization, especially to its urban and cultural aspects, including calligraphy and various types of decoration and other civilized arts, would have remained forgotten.

However, with the development of archaeological research in Saudi Arabia and the wide scale excavations carried out by archaeologists there, it has been possible to rescue the area of Tihamat Al-Baha from the claws of oblivion, and reveal some of its ancient past and aspects of a continuous and flourishing civilization in which those areas lived since the early Islamic era, and whose landmarks and evidence have remained visible up to our present age.
Fine Examples of Calligraphy

There is no better evidence of this than the fine examples of Arabic calligraphy that have been found carved on stones, and the beautiful architectural creations in whose building and design great care seems to have been taken. Some of these remain standing to this day, to bear witness to the urbanization and civilization, the progress and development, that the people of this area attained, as well as their comfortable living standard and abundance of livelihood. All these are clearly evident in the concern with precision in the lines of design, and the great ability to implement what they had designed, with aesthetic touches and precision unmistakable to the eye. This is essentially embodied in the precision in good calligraphy and skill and decorative patterns, which can only be a reflection of a high standard of education, and diversification and in-depth study in the various arts and aspects of knowledge.

All this is apparent through this archaeological evidence and the architectural achievements which have been discovered in the two towns of Khalaf and Khulaif, and are the result studies and excavations that took a long time. To write this brief study, they required me to make a large number of working trips and frequent visits to the two aforementioned sites. Some of these efforts began during the years of study and learning when I was preparing my doctoral thesis in England, and some were after that during different years. Some of them I undertook by myself, and others together with other people whose presence the archeological work required, like the topological surveyor, the photographer and the ordinary workers.

Thus, once I had collected a large amount of scientific matter and clear archaeological evidence, and my university gave me a year of study leave, I organized this material, classified it, prepared it and then published it in my book Khalaf and Khulaif: their Antiquities and Islamic Inscriptions.

These results are a series of independent studies which I carried out on the subject of Islamic antiquities in Al-Baha region. They are also a presentation of the linguistic meaning of the names Khalaf and Khulaif, their derivation, their geographical location, mention of them in the sources available, their mention is known of their political history, a list of the families who lived on their lands, their influence on public life in the two locations, the residential areas in them, archaeological data and architectural phenomena of each of Khalaf and Khulaif. Since the two towns are next to each other and their names have a closely related meaning linguistically, "one of them has seldom been mentioned without the other", in the words of the historian Abul Abbas Al-Zahawi Al-Sharif (d. 1488 AD) in his book Tabaqat Al-Khawass Al-Bad Al-Siqq wal-Ikhlas. They are both derived from the word khalaafa. Among the meanings of khalaif is a water cannon, a valley between two mountains, or a road between two mountains. The first mention of Khalaf and Khulaif may have been preserved by the historical sources available. They were mentioned by the historian of Makkah Taqriidin Al-Fasi (d. 832 AH/1429 AD), who said that the two locations are joined together in one place. He mentioned Khalaf alone in another place. He said, "Khalaf is an impregnable fortress six days away from Makkah." (Al-Aqiq al-Thamin fi Tarikh Al-Balad Al-Amin).

Most historians of Makkah after him followed his example. His description of Khalaf and Khulaif as a fortress may have come from the fact that, the other surrounding area, form one of the provinces south of Makkah, although the context of the statement means the fortress with which it is protected.

In terms of history, the Amir or ruler of Khalaf and Khulaif kept his distance from the troubled political life of Makkah as a result of conflicts between its Amirs, the Sharifs descended from Hussein (the Prophet Muhammad's grandson). But the two towns entered the conflict at the beginning of the eighth century AH when one of the Sharifs, Humayya Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Hasan Ibn Ali Ibn Qurada, took refuge in Khalaf, married the daughter of its ruler and sought his protection. This led the Amir...
of Makkah to send an army against Khulaif, capturing it and destroying its fort. That was the first and last important event in which the fort was destroyed, even though there were some other instances of revolt in Thahmi against the Amir of Makkah. As a result, the role of Khalaif and Khulaif faded away around the tenth century AD. They were replaced by the town of Qiwa, and then Mikhwaif, which was also known as Suq Al-Khams. It is not unlikely that Khalaif and Khulaif and the surrounding area may have played an effective part in the wars which the Zahrani tribes launched against the Ottoman state.

In terms of civilization, the antiquities left by the inhabitants of Khalaif and Khulaif, like Islamic inscriptions on tombs and the architecture and buildings are regarded as vital evidence of the civilized progress and sophistication that they achieved. The fame of some of the men of learning from that region went beyond its borders. Probably the first of these was Shahrul Musa Ibn Isa Al-Zahrani, nicknamed Sharafuddin (circa 730 AH). There was also Shahrul Ibrahim Ibn Jami' (last quarter of the eighth century AH), and many others from the Sunni Jabir family, the families of Al-Sul, Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim and other families. Up to this day the inhabitants linked in one way or another with Khalaif and Khulaif are mostly regarded a part of the greater tribe of Zahrani.

Khulaif is almost empty of inhabitants (apart from two or three families), and Khalaif is completely deserted. But the families who lived there in the past have moved to neighboring towns and villages like Qiwa, Mikhwaif and others.

Twenty-eight carved inscriptions have been found in these two archaeological sites, covering the time span from the first half of the third century AH to the middle of the ninth century AD to the second half of the fifth century AH (the second half of the eleventh century AD), with the exception of one inscription which goes back to around the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth centuries AH (the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries AD).

What Belongs to Khalaif and What to Khulaif?

Twenty-seven carved inscriptions are attributed to Khulaif and its surrounding area, and only one inscription to Khalaif. All of these carvings are in Kufic script. The method of calligraphy and decoration is classified as Simple Kufic, Leafy Kufic and Branch or Flowery Kufic. Thirteen of these inscriptions are dated and twelve undated. There are three other inscriptions undated, but their dates are certain because they appear on dated lists.

It has been possible to trace back the dates when the other undated inscriptions were carved to with a relative degree of certainty by comparing them with other inscriptions of the same group which are dated, and then with nearby inscriptions in Thahmi which resemble them in calligraphy, decoration and methods of execution. There are also other similar inscriptions which can be used for this. The oldest date on the dated carved inscriptions is Rajab 234 AH (February 850 AD), while the most recent date is 14 Ramadan 468 AH (April 1076 AD).

Most of the residential houses of the town of Khalaif, as well as its main mosque and some graves, lie on the ridge of a mountain which overlooks the Mahla Valley from its eastern side. On the north it is bound by a depression which separates it from some houses of scholars of Islamic law who live in a secluded retreat. This depression, made up of small agricultural plots, winds round to the east of the site until it ends at the eastern part of Khalaif's main graveyard as well as some of its farms. After that, to the east and south-east are some houses which form the second residential quarter of Khalaif. One can see it from the first quarter, standing in ruins at the foot of the slopes of Jabal Kaddash or Jabal Al-Shaikh which overlooks the site from the east.

From the south, the hill on which the main quarter is located slopes down until it ends in a depression in the direction of some modern houses which form an extension of the town of Qiwa in the north to Wadi Sibbah. A group of mountains overlook the residential quarter of the town of Khalaif. These are Jabal Alu Ramad to the north, Jabal Kaddash (Al-Shaikh) to the east and Jabal Arwan to the west. Some valleys and ravines adjoin it, the most important of which is Wadi Mahla, which separates Khalaif from the two mountains of Abul Ramad and Arwan. It is one of the important valleys in Qiwa Governorate, and derives its streams from the Nis mountains which overlook the site from the northeast. After it comes Wadi Sibbah in the south, a valley with branches which derives its streams from the Surut mountains and flows with Wadi Mahla into another valley, Wadi Al-Hajafa, one of the tributaries of the large Wadi Dawqa.

The residential part of the town of Khalaif consists of two quarters, one of them small and formed of a limited number of stone houses which lie at one end of the eastern depression of the Khalaif site. The main quarter forms the major part of the Khalaif site. The houses are divided into groups for family or clan reasons, with spaces empty of buildings and other things separating each group from the others. Most of them at the present time are in ruins, but their remains are still standing and contain plenty of evidence of the level of urbanization and comfort in which their inhabitants lived. It is noteworthy that what remains of the houses of Khalaif in the main quarter does not provide clear proof of the form and area of this quarter in the early stages of the construction of the town. The reason is the damage done to the houses and their ruins in our time from transportation by trucks, and the initiative of the inhabitants to use some of these ruins for other building activities.

Precision and Solidity in Building

Nevertheless, all the surviving architectural evidence suggests that the houses in Khalaif were of a high standard of strength and precision. In the center of the residential quarter there is a large, deep depression, whose appearance reveals that it was a large pool, or a reservoir dug out of the rock, to collect rainwater which would be stored and kept to be used for drinking.

The town of Khalaif is about five kilometres north-west of the city of Qiwa, the capital of Qiwa Governorate, and about two kilometres west of its sister town Khalaf. Khulaif occupies a high position on the slope of Jabal Al-Durda
which embraces it from the north and the north-west and which in the past was an impregnable barrier for it on that side. Khulalif overlooks Wadi Reem from the west and Wadi Dhi Ghalaf from the east and south-east. Both Jabal Al-Sawda and Jabal Umm Al-Shabak overlook Khulalif from the south, and Jabal Arwan from the east. The latter blocks it off from Khalaf. The site of Khulalif is separated from Jabal Arwan by Wadi Reem, as well as some farms which extend southwards alongside the valley.

Amidst this geographical intricacy of mountains and alleys lies the residential area of Khulalif village on a piece of impregnable high ground that is difficult to climb up to, except by one road which penetrates it from the south. The houses of Khulalif are characteristically crowded close to each other, and together look like a forest (or a Casha in a North African country), rather like a fortified town which can easily be closed when necessary in dangerous situations, such as attacks. Thus the main direction of the open space which leads into the center of the town of Khulalif and its various parts begins from the south and heads northwards, and various small paths and alleys branch out from it for short distances. Then the open space begins to ascend towards the mountain on the top of which the town is located, so that its layout which overlooks these spaces forms a broad enclosed area with a wide entrance that looks like a large gate through which pedestrians and riders and caravans with their loads throng. When necessary for security reasons it used to be closed at night with strong chains.

The houses are mostly in traditional style distinctive of Tihamat Al-Baha, namely blocks of buildings built of hard local stone. They are mostly square or rectangular in shape, broad at the bottom and slightly narrower at the top in the style of the towers which are widespread in Hijaz and Tihama. The houses of Khulalif generally have two or three storries, and are characteristically solid and strong. Some of them are spacious, particularly those belonging to some well-to-do families there and those which were relatively recently built. Some houses in Khulalif are noticeably more splendid than those in Khalaf, in terms of their strength and solidity, their location, and the fact that they are well preserved and cared for. This is because Khulalif and its houses have remained inhabited until very recently, whereas Khalaf has been abandoned for a relatively longer time, and some of the remains of its houses have been removed. Some families still live in Khulalif to this day, although it is believed to have been built before Khalaf. Some houses in Khalalif were relatively recently built, some of them of reinforced concrete and could have remained inhabited indefinitely, had it not been for the development of construction, abundance of livelihood and facilitation of communications that occurred in the region, and other things that made many of the local people build outside Khalalif on larger areas than were available to them in the old town. The old mosque in Khalaf, which it is believed has been the main mosque of the town since the early days of Islam, and the schools and rooms for memorizing the Holy Quran attached to it, were regrettably destroyed some time ago, and a new mosque was built instead.
The Relationship Between the Mob and the Rulers in the Mamluk Sultanate

Hayat Nasser Al-Hajji
The topic of the mob or populace is a neglected one in conventional historical writings throughout the different stages of Islamic history. Both historians and thinkers took interest in writing only about the elites among caliphs, sultans and leaders, thus excluding the lower classes of the society, namely the mob.

Such writing may be called, the pattern of "The King died. Long live the King." Moreover, this tendency of writing only on "The history of the elites among the influential persons of authority" has no room in modern historical studies in Contemporary universities.

History is the history of peoples and not that of rulers. There are many peoples without rulers, but no ruler without people.

In addition, specialization, rather than generalizations must be followed in the study of any Islamic history phenomenon. Regions vary, peoples differ, conditions contradict each case has its individual nature and discrepant consequences.

The knowledge of the "Mob in general Islamic History" is of a general nature. It has derived from the readings of Islamic resources belonging to different ages. However, the knowledge of the mob during the Mamluk era is accurate, definite, and documented since it has been derived from the Mamluk history abundant resources and documents.

"Segmentation" is considered the modern method adopted for the last half a century in almost all progressive universities in all types of historical studies. This is the logical and effective method of identifying historical facts. This method has also been adopted by renowned orientalists specialized in the history of the Mamluk sultanate and the relevant aspects of their civilization such as: Vermenlen, Stern, Bosworth, Walter Fischel, Goitein, Poliak, Sauvaget, Ashton, David Avalon, Donald Little, Peter Holt, U. Haarmann, Claude Cahen, and others.

Reference to the mob in Islamic history resources of the Mamluk era, whether in the form of manuscripts or writings, was implicitly made in describing events and was never dealt with as a separate topic.

Prominent historians of the Mamluk era took interest only in significant events, Islamic Jihad (warfare) happenings, the sultan's achievements and his relationships with the Mamluk princes ...etc, and never cared to mention the mob rulers unless such mention was dictated by virtue of the event stated, and then mention was made in sheer casual manner.

Such casual mention indicates that the mob constituted one of the important bases of the Islamic community in Egypt and Syria under the Mamluk Rule.

As regards the mob during this significant era of Islamic history, the following remarks must be made:

- The relationship between the mob and the Mamluks was a direct, strong and interactive one.
- Political events proved the significance of their presence, their loyalty and their support of the ruling authorities.

Their relationship with the sultan was associated with stability in economic conditions. The mob refused the reign of Sultan Kitbugha due to the occurrence of famine then the spread of plague, while they rejoiced the reign of Sultan Husam al-Din Lachin as a result of the solving of that crisis.

The political role of the mob materialized in the following:

1- The phenomenon of public support which the mob was keen to manifest towards some sultans can be considered an outstanding feature of a class deprived of everything at times.

2- The mob's participation in official delegations attending negotiations between the furious sultan and the powerful Mamluk is an indication of the importance of the mob's role in the society.

3- The mob was characterized with courage in expressing their feelings and stands towards many events, which caused members of the mob quite often to face a lot of personal physical torture.

4- The mob participated in all types of celebrations and festivities, such as the inauguration of a new mosque, school or a guest house, when princes took office, the reception held on the return of the sultan from pilgrimage or Syira, the sacred struggle against Mongols or Crusaders.

On the other hand, the sultans, due to their respect of the rights of the mob, established the House of Justice "Dar al-Adel" where the sultan attended every Monday and Thursday to listen to people's complaints in the presence of the caliph, the deputy, the vizier, the four judges and the personal deputy of the sultan.

Another indication of the interactive relationship between the ruler and the mob was when some members of the mob sometimes acted as the sultan's spies who reported to him what was going on in market places and the various areas of the country.

Members of the mob were keen to participate in the sultan's special celebrations, since these sultans were quite popular among the mob. This popularity was shown in hailing the sultan's name, singing folk songs, queueing on the sides of streets or on building roofs to rejoice seeing the sultan. Among those who acquired this popularity were: Al Manusr Qalawun, Al-Ashraf Khalil, Al-Nasir Muhammad, Baqooq, Al-Mu'ayyed Sheikh and Bersbey.

Among the most important ways of befriending the mob on part of the sultans was the establishment of mosques, school, Sufis guest houses, poor hermit houses, religious orientation and sheltering houses, and
orphans care houses. The mob benefited a lot from these scientific institutions, social center, counseling and guiding houses for men, women and children.

The constant conflict among princes for acquiring power constituted one of the most important factors of consolidating bonds between the sultan and the mob. Sultans were keen to please the mob, therefore members of the mob considered themselves responsible for achieving the good of the sultan, who realized that the mob constituted the power he could rely on regarding the prince's competition for authority.

Some sultans tried to acquire the loyalty of the mob through canceling taxes and tributes as was the case with Sultans Lachin, Al-Nasir Muhammad and Barqo. Moreover, charities constituted one of the ways of acquiring the mob's affiliation. Many Sultans were so generous in distributing charities on many occasions especially the religious ones. Another form of the sultan's sympathy was the establishment of the "Orphans House" to care for orphans and minors until they reached the age of maturity.

On the other hand, the members of the mob felt the significance of the direct powerful relationship binding them with the sultan, taking into consideration that meeting the sultan personally was an easy issue in such places as the House of Justice and the like.

The fact that the judiciary responsible for the enforcement of Islamic Shari'a consisted of members of the public, and that they were always present in the sultan's council made people feel that they had representatives speaking and acting on their behalf, protecting their interests in the presence of the sultan and the Mamluk princes.

The mob contributed to many of the political assemblies either for the sake of calling for the return of a dethroned sultan, or dethroning an illegitimate sultan, or for calling for political, economic and social reform.

Images of bold public objection to some compulsory restrictions leading to closing down markets and bringing trading to a halt, took many forms. When the situation did not improve, members of the mob would plunder houses of those who inflicted injustice on them such as the minister, the judge or the treasurer.

On occasions when it was difficult to contact the sultan because the "House of Justice" was closed due to the sickness of the sultan, or for fear of rebellion, they used pigeons - the acknowledged method of sending mail there and then - to send messages to the sultan across the walls of the Citadel so that he would be informed of what was going on in the streets and suburbs of Cairo.

The mob considered the right to call for political reform a legitimate issue therefore, they practiced it in every sense and by every possible means. They talked to the chief judge, who usually held his sessions in one of the mosques or schools, they took part in public demonstrations around the walls of the Citadel and called for the need to talk to the sultan in person, they used pigeons which played a major role in delivering their mail to the sultan, they closed down their markets and shops thus bringing economic activity to a standstill, or by carrying out pillage on the properties of the dictating authorities.

On the other hand, the mob was exposed to suppression, oppression and injustice during the times the sultan was helpless, e.g. when Prince Qusayr was the most powerful during the reign of Sultan al Mansur Abu Bakr. This prince forced the mob to light the streets of Cairo at night at their own expense. Thus the mob had to put up with his compulsion. But when that prince led a rebellion to reach the throne but was defeated and killed, it was the mob that totally plundered his palaces, stores, and sheds.

The mob also suffered from "slavery" in all its forms. The government system in the Mamluk Sultanate had three main features:

1. The Sultan was a ruling powerful prince according to the principles "Primum enter Pares"

2. Princes were a group of Oligarchy who were combined together in case the interest of the country was threatened. When the threat was over, they were only dominated by personal interest.

3. The voice of the mob was quite loud and clear and could easily reach the sultan and the princes within the walls of the Citadel in various ways. It was never mentioned that the mob failed to make that voice heard by the legal authorities.

The Mamluk were foreign groups who came from eastern and western countries, but in spite of their foreign origin and their ethnic, linguistic and civilization differences, they were able - thanks to their Islamic faith - to rule Egypt and Syria for more than two and
half centuries. This can be attributed to these issues:

1. Military efficiency
2. Devotion to public interest
3. Caring for the mob’s rights

In addition, on many occasions did it occur that the alliance between the mob and the sultan stood firmly in the face of princes’ rebellions aiming to achieve personal interests, and thus helped the mob to realize the ultimate goal of reaching comprehensive stability in the country.

This sultan-mob alliance materialized quite obviously in achieving the great victory against the princes’ plots to gain power and authority.

Events occurring throughout many decades proved beyond doubt both the sultan’s and independent princes’ realization of the need to acquire the mob’s support. This happened many times in confronting rebellions and mutinies.

This political significance of the mob gave it the right to work for achieving social justice. Thus, whoever was a cause of corruption became the target of the mob’s vengeance and plundering including some judges, preachers, treasurers and departments and endowment ministers.

The mob often played a major role in administrative appointments - such as appointing a “wali” or deposing another, appointing a Friday congregation preacher or stopping another, or firing a treasurer and appointing another.

Moreover, members of the mob considered themselves responsible for security issues in the country, therefore they never hesitated to follow up and penalize those who disturbed it. The relationship between the mob and the sultan was proportionate to stability and thus any tension in that relationship led to a negative impact on the society’s stability. Consequently, men of authority were keen to satisfy the mob’s political, economic and social needs in an attempt to secure stability. Neglecting the mob’s requirements was a major threat to stability.

The mob often showed their sympathy towards a weak sultan or a helpless child, so that they always organized themselves to object to the prince’s plundering would occur, or the mob might besiege the walls of the Citadel, therefore they usually used to give in to the mob’s requests.

Many sultans also took great interest in enforcing Islamic Shari’a, thus consolidating their relations with the mob.

Events also verified those serious attempts made by people of authority and the mob to eradicate corruption during the different periods of the Mamluk reign of Egypt and Syria. Among the most outstanding examples of these was that sound relationship between Syria deputy Tinkiz Al Husami and the people of Syria throughout a period of thirty one years during the first half of the fourteenth century A.D.

The mob also spared no effort in offering many services to the ruling authority against all types of hazards threatening the cities of Egypt and Syria and all their Islamic ports.

The good-intentioned Mamluk reformers among princes were quite honest in cooperating with the mob to retaliate against unfair authorities, such as Prince Al-Haj al-Mulk, Prince Barqoq, Prince Tinkiz Al-Husami, Prince Paktash Al-Fakhr and others.

Some Mamluk princes were obsessed by the tasks of making fortunes and accumulating wealth, so that their safes were teeming with such wealth from Egypt and Syria.

Many sultans made an effort in fixing convenient prices for all basic needs sold in the various markets and also tried to maintain such prices even during hard times. Any Mamluk prince who violated such rules had to endure the sultan’s reproaching and a threat that penalty amounting to execution could be applied.

There was also evidence showing cooperation between the mob and the authorities to get the Europeans “al-Ifranj” to yield to principles of Islamic Shari’a in the executive bodies operating in Egypt, Syria and their ports.

The mob always took the side of administrators among Mamluk princes who were keen to apply the sacred principles of Shari’a thus challenging the aspirations of those aiming at achieving personal interest at the expense of the country’s interest.

A mutiny in the Citadel for the sake of acquiring power meant a turbulent political status, and consequently stagnated economic activities i.e. closing down markets and shops, thus prices soared. Then the mob would have no alternative but take the side of the legitimate authority and oppose those who sought personal interest in an attempt to achieve social stability and economic prosperity.

Finally, the objective of achieving political stability, and social justice was a majority requirement. So, the existing regime was able to continue for more than two and a half centuries, during which Egypt and Syria witnessed some of the best Islamic jihad incidents, comprehensive diplomatic relationships as was clear in their protocols, letters, cooperation treaties, reconciliation treaties among various lands surrounding the Mamluk Sultanate to the east and west. Many scientific and social endowment institutions emerged with the emergence of a class of scientists, so that the Arab was enriched by a new type of writings i.e. dictionaries and encyclopedias which were not known before.

It is sufficient to say that in spite of the seemingly foreign appearances of the Mamluks, they managed to acquire the love and friendship of the peoples of Egypt and Syria for a duration of two and a half centuries.
Cultural Orientalism and Oriental Studies in the West

Milos Mendel

Hatred, xenophobia or at least mutual misunderstanding has characterized relationships between Islam and the West since times immemorial. This was not surprising during the Middle Ages, when the flourishing and culturally superior Islamic civilization posed a real threat to the very political existence of several Western empires. And it was not surprising in the era of European colonialism of the 19th and early 20th century, when the Western world tried to justify its imperial policy towards Islamic countries. This paper attempts to explain the ongoing struggle between the Islamic world and the West by examining its political and psychological dimensions. This struggle continues even now, in the era of globalization, when the Western world still bombastically shows off its “super-humanism” and its hypocritical care about human rights. Through the eyes of European intellectuals and politicians Islamic civilization is generally seen as primitive, backward and unreliable, to be treated as a dangerous threat to the humanistic, democratic, progressive and enlightened West.

Moreover, Islam has been used in the last two or three decades increasingly as a false explanation for social, cultural, economic and political conflicts. For example, Willy Claes, the former Secretary-General of NATO, claimed that “Islamic fundamentalism is a greater threat to the democratic world than communism has ever been.” And just five years ago Samuel Huntington of Harvard University wrote in Foreign Affairs about an unavoidable “clash of civilizations” between the Western world and Islam. In his oppositions of democracy versus totalitarianism and humanity versus brutality, he described a new “iron curtain” dividing Islam and the West.

The central theme of this lecture is the concept of “Orientalism,” through which I intend to demonstrate the depth of mutual misunderstanding between Islam and the West. Semantically, “Orientalism” is an ambiguous term that requires some explanation. Orientalism will be understood here as: a) distorted Western view of Islam through multiple artistic expression, including painting, music, architecture, and literature; b) more-or-less distorted scientific interest of the West in the Islamic civilization and Islam’s equally distorted responses.

Founder of the first “Turkish Coffee-House” in Poland 1863.
Orientalism in European Art and Literature

Historically, Orientalism begins in the 18th century, when it became clear that Islamic civilization lagged economically and technologically behind the West. This feeling of technological dominance served to moderate the West's attitude toward Islam, no longer indulging in the earlier fanatical rhetoric against the Qur'an and the Prophet that characterized the Middle Ages. This political-psychological state contained a false messianic idea that entailed exporting the concepts of European Enlightenment, Parliamentarianism and liberal thought to the Islamic world. Convinced of its cultural, military and political superiority, Europe no longer feared the "Muslim barbarian," viewing them instead from a romantic perspective that trivialized their religion and lifestyle.

This romanticizing literature, painting and music produced an entirely European construction of Islam that was completely different from reality. Inspired by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, this wave of cultural romanticism demonstrated for the first time a deep contrast between the former Christian attitude of the Middle Ages and a new capitalist-enlighened attitude of the European liberal age. Having eliminated the Mamluk army in less than one hour, Napoleon demonstrated his arrogant and demeaning attitude toward Islam by declaring himself a Muslim and manipulating Muslim institutions as part of his imperial purpose in Egypt. "I respect Allah, his Prophet and the Qur'an," he declared and then proceeded to act and behave as a Muslim ruler, adopting the title of khalif and beginning his letters to neighboring Arab rulers by Islamic basmala. Thus, Napoleon professed a strange mixture of arrogant provocation and stupid romanticism, both of which must have been very humiliating for Arab Muslims.

Though not deeply concerned with doctrinal differences between Christianity and Islam, this Orientalism was even more detrimental to Islamic civilization.

Napoleon may have reopened the door for further distortions of the Islamic world, already whetted by medieval adventurous travelers' stories, inspired by Arabian Nights. The European "petty-bourgeois" of the 19th century were very pleased when reading and listening to fabricated stories of caliphs, viziers, emirs, harems, slaves and eunuchs, polygamy, stoning of women, sexual extravagance, drug use, mystical practices, and so forth. Indeed, for some Europeans, this distorted reality became a new exotic realm, in which they could explore new possibilities, use a new kind of artificial expression and even speak freely on sexual topics. In the hypocritical ethics of the 19th century Europe, it was practically impossible to discuss any of these topics when talking about "white women."

Orientalism also opened up a new fabricated world in which Europeans sought to find themselves, discovering in the process new images and expressions, including Orientalising women's fashion, some features of Ottoman Janissary or Sipahi dress on the uniforms of Polish or Hungarian cavalrymen, coffee drinking, and "original" Oriental decoration of Middle Eastern coffee-houses (in Vienna or Prague. We could mention also some examples of romantic architecture, like the minaret near the castle of Liechtenstein in the town of Lednice (southeast Czech Republic). To that level belong also some extravagant parties and costume balls, dancing festivals, where some ladies exhibited their particular taste by wearing the alleged dress of harems concubines, the queen of Sheba, or Zenobia of Palmyra. Men used to enrich their celebrations by erecting bedouin tents and wearing the distinctive robes of shepherds and nomads, or even exhibiting a live camel or an "original" Arab-horse. In the 20s of our century many of them exhibited their admiration for "Lawrence of Arabia", whose Bedouin-like image was commonly shared and beloved.

To sum up then, cultural Orientalism can be defined as a trend in European art, literature and architecture, which began at the end of the 18th century and embodied Europe's distorted vision of Islam. It was a strange mixture of the growing interest in the Orient, the display of Western superiority, and the residual fear and hatred towards the Islamic world.

Orientalism as a Branch of Science

Western scholarly studies of the Islamic faith and societies grew side by side with this broadening cultural interest. Preliminary attempts had already been made during the Middle Ages to translate the Qur'an and some of the Hadith, motivated by a desire to reach a more accurate understanding of Islam. For example, the first English translation of Qur'an was prepared in 1734 and featured a discourse in which the first generation of British Orientalists spoke of Muslim achievements with considerable respect and even admiration, for the first time using Arab sources to write their history and to understand their lifestyle.

Towards the end of the 18th century, large numbers of texts, both literary and religious, began to be translated into European languages. During the 19th century the range of Oriental studies continued to broaden to cover religion, biblical criticism and comparative philology. At the beginning of the 20th century Islamic studies emerged from the shadow of these subjects to become an independent discipline. Men like the Hungarian Jew...
Ignaz Goldziher, the Dutch scholar Snouck Hurgronje or the Russian V.V. Bartold began to think of themselves as Islamic specialists bringing the highest standards of scholarship and interpretation. They founded the academic tradition which reached its highest peak in the work of the Frenchman Louis Massignon, who greatly enlarged our understanding of the spiritual dimensions of Islam, and the Englishman Hamilton Gibb, who strove to provide a frame within which the historical development of Islam could be comprehended.

Since World War II Islamic studies have steadily expanded as the subject has grown in the USA, the USSR and its satellites, and Central Europe. Consequently, Islamic studies have gained new dimensions, because of the implementation of new research methodologies and new focus on issues like contemporary history, political science, anthropology of "non-official" Islam, new approaches to the shari'a, and so forth. Though there has always been a considerable strive for objectivity among Western Orientalists, many of them have worked to serve the political ambitions of their regimes, both Western neo-colonial and Eastern communists. That does not necessarily mean that the Oriental studies as a whole is an instrument of Western imperialism, Communism or Zionism. A distinction must be made between "engaged" and "independent" Oriental studies.

Although we must concede that within the huge corpus Orientalist studies there can still be found shocking distortions of the Islamic world, the entire field has been the target of unjust criticism from Islamists and Arab nationalists alike. Islamic ideologues, some Ulama and journalists have written extensively on matters like "The Decline of Orientalism" (Tahafut al-istishraq), "Collaboration of Orientalists with the Zionist Conspiracy" (Tahafut al-mustashriqin ma'a al-mu'amarah as-sahayniyyah) or "Subverting Islam and The role of Oriental Centres". An analysis of at least five such essays reveals the following:

1. A total refusal to distinguish modern and contemporary Oriental studies from the Medieval or later Christian
polemical attacks on Islam.

2) An assumption that Orientalism reflects a Crusader mentality and the cunning of Jews against Islam.

3) A pervasive belief that Orientalist studies are mere networks of Christians and Zionists who, behind the facade of the academic institutions and the pretense of scholarly objectivity, engage in an effort to distort Islam.

4) A suspicion that even Western converts to Islam lack honesty and objectivity and display a poor knowledge of Islam.

5) A common belief in a great "conspiracy" involving geo-political strategies and secret service agencies whose purposes are served by Orientalism.

6) A warning of Muslims against Christian missionary centres, which use subterfuge and engagements in order to delude Muslims.

The secular/nationalist stream could be hardly described without mentioning the name of Prof. Edward Said, the Palestinian-American scholar who has since 1978 critiqued the very foundation of Oriental studies. In his book, Orientalism, Said criticised with unprecedented sharpness the entire project of Orientalist studies, subjecting it to a penetrating analysis of its sources, foundations, and purposes. It was the aggressive character of Said's book that led scholars on both sides to question the role of Oriental studies, producing quite polarised reactions. Some Western scholars were quite dismissive of the book, viewing it as just another instance of Muslim ingratitude toward the Orientalists. Islamic intellectuals, on the other hand, used Said's polemic to fasten their conviction about the Orientalists' role in the Western conspiracy against the Islamic world.

Here, it should be noted that Said exhibited incomplete knowledge of the history of Oriental studies, focusing exclusively on the colonial powers - Britain and France - while totally ignoring Orientalist studies in non-colonialist countries whose languages are little-known in the Arab world. Indeed, the Oriental studies produced in these small Central and Eastern European countries, including Czechoslovakia, were included by Said among his list of enemies without knowing anything about them. On the contrary, when Said criticises Orientalism as "a result of Eurocentrism, that covers European domination over the surrounding world," he fails to note that Czech Orientalists are not only innocent of this charge but are actually themselves critics of such Eurocentrism.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that in our time the ever growing gap between North and South, between producers and consumers of technology is the main reason that this deeply rooted tension between two macro-civilizations still persists. In this context, both camps - the West and Islam alike - continue to feel themselves as besieged and threatened. It is here, I believe, where intellectuals and their relevant cultural and scientific institutions should offer the public, both in the West and the Islamic world, a consistent, ongoing and objective explanation of the realities on both sides. We should also strive to analyse the past and examine the history of mutual xenophobia. This can help us avoid repeating the great mistakes of the past today and in the future.

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The Relation between Central Asia, Middle East and India during the second half of the 16th century

G. L. Bondarevsky

The lecture deals with the emergence of the four great powers in Asia and the system of International relations that existed one thousand years ago but disappeared with the Gengis Khan, at the second half of the 16th century. The powers emerged because of the seizure of the Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks, the final liberation of Moscow from Tatar in 1480 and the discovery of sea-route to India by Vasco de Gamma.

After the seizure of Constantinople, the Ottomans became masters of the trade routes from Asia to Mediterranean and emerged as the strongest in Western Asia, East Europe and North Africa. The final liberation of Moscow Russe from Tatar helped in the advent of a mighty Euroasian power during the reigns of Evan III and his son Vasiliiv, and particularly during the reign of bloody Ivan the 4th.

The discovery of the sea route to India in 1498 was significant in establishing political and economical contacts as well as military confrontations between the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Except for the Ottoman Empire no one else in the region had a mighty navy. The discovery made the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British masters of the seas and especially of the Indian Ocean. Trade, hence, fell in their hands which brought them prominence and wealth and brought eclipse to the Ottoman Empire. New powers in Asia had found their way in the world scene, such as Safavid Iran, Mughal India and lesser known the state of Bukhara Khanate under the Shebanis. They all carried active political and military policies after losing their control over the sea route but only to become masters of the silk route.

The rulers of Mughal India remained closely connected to their motherland Central Asia. Bahur tried to re-conquer his ancestor's lands several times. After 1530 the Mughal Emperor Humayoun started a fight for more power but failed and had to flee to the Safavid court of Tahmasp. He repaid his host's hospitality by giving the Safavid ruler the famous Gandahar, the mainland passage to Central Asia.

In Iran, after bloody wars between Kha Qoyonlu and AK Qoyonlu in 1501, the young Ismail, the leader of the Karsyapash tribe, made it his main task to conquer Khurasan with the Shebani Khan of Bukhara Khanate, the third great power in Asia at the time.

In 1510, after a prolonged fight between the Uzbeks and the Safavids near Merw, in contemporary Turkomania, the Shebani was killed and his skull ornamented gold, that became Ismail's cup. This was a short victory however. During the reign of Ubaidullah and specially during the reign of Abdulla Khan (1557-1598), the mighty Bukhara Khanate which at the time included East and eventually became a permanent threat to the Safavid rulers in Iran.

The Uzbeks in Central Asia continued their fight with Safavid Iran in the 16th century. The fifth new comer in Central Asia and the Caspian Basin was the Moscow Russe. At the end of the 16th century, under Ivan III, this new power played a great role in East Europe and the Volga Caspian region, particularly after exchanging missions with successors of the Golden Horde, Crimean Khanate, Ottoman Turkey, Iran and Mughal India. After annexing Khazan and Astrakhan Khanates in 1552-56 during the reign of Ivan IV, Moscow russe became an important Euroasian power. The ancient Caspian Volga route became vital for the Euroasian trade, which was later renewed under Russian Czars, especially after the closure of Indian Ocean for Moslem traders by the Portuguese or by the consistent wars between the Ottomans and the Safavids. The mainland route was diverted to the Volga region. To protect this route, and to stop the Ottomans from breaking through from the sea to the North west shores of the Caspian Sea, Ivan IV tried to divert the North East part of the Caucasus under Russian Sphere of influence. This was the beginning of the fight over the North Caucasus. The Russian diplomats established tight contact with the kings of East Georgia. At that time, Georgia consisted of many princey states such as Kurk and Kavina and the more influential princey state of Karurda in North Caucasus. The daughter of the latter princey state became the wife of Ivan IV.
The situation between the Ottoman Turks and Russia became tense when the Ottoman army tried to have a break through the Caspian Sea. The Russians, on the other hand, were also interested in dominating the territory between the two seas. The Ottoman sultans were obviously not pleased with this Russian domination. There Tahmasp of Iran, Khan Abdullah, and the ruler of Moscow Russe who proclaimed himself the first Czar of Russia.

At the dawn of the 16th century, the Ottoman supremacy was evident in the region between East Mediterranean Sea, Black and Red Seas, after conquering Egypt in 1517. The Sultan proclaimed himself Khalifa of the Muslim World. This was one of the reasons why the Turks wanted to impose their power over Central Asian territories. In India, Akbar also refused to acknowledge this Ottoman proclamation, and waged war against them because he did not accept their spiritual leadership. Two main wars between the Ottomans and the Mughals were ongoing between 1514-1556 and ended with signing "Amassia" peace treaty which gave main part of Iran and half of Transcaucusa, including Tabriz to the Cuccasus and Iraq. They had to fight at two fronts. The Russian-Turkish relationship witnessed a lot of strain accordingly. Turks prepared their onslaught on the Cucassus in order to yield the Russians before they launched their second onslaught on Iran. A mighty Ottoman army failed to win a victory over the Russians, but later with the help of the Khan of Crimea, the Turks were able in 1571, to occupy main part of Moscow Russe and burn most of Moscow city. This hostility forced the Russians to enter into an agreement with the Safavid Iran. In 1521, Shah Ismail sent a mission to Moscow asking Vassiliev III for his help against the Turks, and according to Russian Archives (document: file 77, the Iran Affair). In 1568 an envoy of Shah Tahmasp arrived in Moscow to sign an official military alliance against the Ottoman Sultan Selim III. Russian rulers immediately sent an embassy to Gavrin and brought back 100 guns and rifles to be used against the Turks. In 1583 the chronicle mentions the rare occasion where Ivan IV inviected four ambassadors of Turkey, Iran, Bukhara, and Khiva in order to inform them of his interest to mobilize forces against the Ottomans.

In 1557 marked the defeat of the Turkish navy against Spain and Venice. 1552-3 arrived on the scene, Jackson, the representative of the Moskowitz to establish trade between Bukhara, Central Asia and Southern Asia. Ivan IV allowed Jackson to move freely an nominated him as his personal envoy to Iskander Khan of Bukhara. This was the only example of Russian representation in Bukhara. In two years Jackson returns to Moscow accompanied by ambassadors from Bukhara, Balz, and Khiva... In early 1780s relations between Russia and Bukhara suddenly started to deteriorate, the reason had nothing to do with Central Asia. It was in Siberia where a Qugum, the Siberian Aebek' grandson became master of this west Siberian Sheikhdom known also as Ghenem Khanat. The Sheikhdom later became part of Ghogi. The new ruler Qugum asked Abdullah Khan for protection. In 1572, Abdullah sent large political and religious mission to Siberia to convert the locals to Islam and to strengthen his influence in the Ural region, east of the Volga. But in 1551-3 the leader of the Kazak, Yarmak, launched an assault on this Siberian Khanat and the fight between Qugum and Yarmak started. Qugum instantly asked help from Abdullah Khan but the latter could not send help because he was himself engaged in a very severe fight with the Ottomans. At the time, Uzbek army was concentrated at the borders of Iran. Abdullaih sent a letter to Qugum explaining the situation. His second letter which he sent to Moscow worsened his relations with the Russians even more. It was sent to the Czar without a title and worse it did not mention the brother who later became Boris III. The episode explained the tension between Bukhara and Moscow.

In 1588, a new chapter in Russia and Iran relations started. Shah Khudabanda brought oral support in alliance against the Ottomans in order to divide Trans Caucasus. Russia was promised to receive Baku and Darbund. How to attack the Ottoman Empire was the concern of many rulers at the time. Shah Abbas assumed his duties as a ruler, hence all negotiations had to be postponed. Shah Abbas defined for one year to resume talks with the Russian Czar. Because he wanted to fight Abdullah Khan first then discuss the problem pertaining to the Ottomans. He agreed to the Russian proposal that Baku and Darbund should be given to Russia. This diverted the tension between the two countries towards their enemy, Turkey.

A diary of a Russian Ambassador in Iran, kept in the Russian Archives explains the situation in mid 16th century in that region. For over 5000 years trade had been conducted through what is known as the Silk Route as well as through the sea. When the latter was interrupted by the domination of the Portuguese after 1510, tension started to build up between nations using these routes. This tense situation was accelerated with the death of Timur's son, Shah Rukh, who ruled Khurasan, West Afghanistan and Central Asia. Khurasan became the center of conflict between Mughal India, Safavid Iran and Bukhara. This prompted an alliance between these three powers. In 1542-45, the Mughal Emperor Humayoun sought refuge in the court of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp. In 1555, the last year of Humayoun rule, Sayid Ali Riasi was sent by the Ottoman sultan and was received with great honor at the Mughal court. Accordingly Humayoun wrote a letter to Selim II acknowledging him as Khalifat al Muslimin. In 1572, threatened by the softening of Iran and Turkey relations, the Uzbek leader Abdullah Khan sent a mission, headed by Alturij, to Akbar, who succeeded his father as Mughal emperor. The Indian Uzbek negotiations were centered on the question of the annexation of Balkh, the capital of Khustan and the gateway to Badakhshan, from the Safavids which Akbar supported. He was not interested to follow his father's policy, particularly he was not pleased with the gift his father made to the Safavids namely, Qandahar. In 1580, Akbar introduced Aadin Allilah (divine religion) which aggravated Abdullah Khan who sent a letter to ask him to adhere to the Sunni Islam. In 1582, Akbar continued to act independent of the triple alliance when he suggested as alliance with the Portuguese to counterforce the Ottomans. In 1586, Abdullah Khan became master of Balkh and Central Asia. In 1591, he asked Akbar to agree to the demarcation line he proposed between his Uzbek land and India. After some reluctance from the part of Akbar who delayed audience to the Uzbek ambassador, he agreed. This agreement eventually led to the emergence of Hindu kock in 1597. The political events of Central Asia in Mid 16th century still have their impact on today's current events.