

# Muhammad and the Course of Islam

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MUHAMMAD and THE COURSE OF ISLAM  
by H.M.

Balyuzi

This is the Book, undoubtedly, a guidance to  
the God-fearing, who believe in the world unseen,  
who render the prayer ordained, who give alms from  
what We have bestowed upon them, who believe in the  
Revelation sent down to thee and what has been sent  
down before thee, who believe in the life hereafter.

SURAT AL-BAQARAH  
Opening verses from the  
second surah of the Qur'an

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Foreword

This book has been about a decade in writing, not continuously but at intervals.

It took the best part of 1974 to complete it.

My sources have in the first place been works in Arabic and Persian, and secondly books written in the West on the Founder of Islam and the course of His Faith.

I have studiously avoided giving copious references to my sources for two good reasons.

Firstly, the general reader finds it boring and cumbersome, as I do myself, when I encounter miles of print containing just numbers of pages.

Secondly, of some books more than one edition exists, and in a number of cases the edition which I owned or had access to is rare and unobtainable.

Such was the case with my edition[1] of the life of the Prophet by Ibn-Hisham (d.

A.D.

833) which, unfortunately, some Western authors still refer to as the book by Ibn-Ishaq (d.

A.D.

768).

That earliest biography of the Prophet does not exist and Siratu Rasuli'llah is its recension by Ibn-Hisham.

Again, the excellent history by 'Izzi'd-Din Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi't-Tarikh, on which I have relied to a great extent, I own in a six-volume edition printed[2] in Cairo.

There is an earlier edition of this book, in fourteen volumes, published in Leyden and Upsala.[3]

[1 Traubner, London, 1871.]

[2 1290 A.H. (A.D.

1873-74).]

[3 1851-76.]

I have consulted all the books detailed in my bibliography.

There are other works, scholarly and otherwise, from which I have gained much knowledge and understanding, but the cramming of a bibliography can be as tedious for the reader as filling footnotes with too many references.

To my cousin, Abul-Qasim Afnan, I am particularly grateful for having kept me provided, over the years, with a wide variety of books.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to Shahab Zahrai, who, having heard that I was engaged in writing this book, <pxii> kindly sent me a recent Arabic publication: 'Abdu'llah Bin Saba Wa Asatir Ukhra ('Abdu'llah Bin Saba and other Myths) by Murtada al-'Askari.[1] The author, powerfully and almost convincingly argues his case that 'Abdu'llah Ibn Saba -- -a man said to have been of Jewish origin and to have achieved notoriety by proclaiming the divinity of 'Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, losing his life in the bargain for such blatant blasphemy -- had never really existed.

But, no matter how mythical the person of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Saba, the fact remains that a firm belief in the divinity of 'Ali has persisted down the centuries in diverse forms.

[1 Published in Beirut, 1968.]

I am profoundly grateful to my old friends Abul-Qasim Faizi and Professor Zeine N.

Zeine for reading my manuscript and making valuable suggestions.[1] I have also to thank Geoffrey Nash most sincerely for a last-minute checking of much of the

text.

But whatever error is contained in the book is entirely mine.

My grateful thanks also go to Rustom Sabit and Denis MacEoin for assisting in reading the proofs.

[1 Professor Zeine kindly sent me the facsimile of a document, purported to be the Prophet's letter to the ruler of Iran.

This document is in Beirut and has been put on exhibition.

If genuine this would be a find of prime importance.

But it is not within my competence to express any opinion.]

My debt of gratitude to Marion Hofman is truly immense for putting this book into its present shape ready for publication.

And finally my wife's encouragement, suggestions and patience have been unfailing, helping me through to the end.

London

August 1975 <pxiii>

A Note on Transliteration

The system of transliteration used in this book is on the whole the same favoured by orientalists of an earlier generation, including two occupants of Sir Thomas Adams's Chair of Arabic at the University of Cambridge:

Edward Granville Browne and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson.

They did not, however, put a line under 'ch', 'dh', 'kh', 'sh', 'th' and 'zh'; it has been done here to show that these combinations of two letters indicate a single letter in the original script.

But the accenting here used is the same, and indicates the following pronunciation of vowel sounds: 'a' as long 'a' in 'ah' or 'father'; the unaccented 'a' is short as in 'band' or 'ran'. 'I' represents a vowel sound as in 'meet' or 'feet'; the unaccented 'i' represents a simple 'e' sound as in 'met' or 'set'. [1] 'U' indicates 'oo' as in 'boot' or 'root'; the unaccented 'u' serves as 'o' as in 'port' or 'sort'.

[1 In two cases I have broken the rule and have used accents reluctantly when not warranted, by accenting the 'i' in Mu'awiyah and Ziyad I believe, it will make it easier to pronounce these names.]

As for the consonants, 'zh' has the same sound as 'j' in French; an English 's' conveys it in 'pleasure', as does 'g' in words borrowed from the French, such as 'barrage' and 'garage', or 'z' in words like 'azure'.

Although the sounds of 'kh' and of 'gh' are not easy for English-speaking people to utter, they are not uncommon in the West. 'Ch' in 'loch' has the same sound as 'kh', which is also a familiar sound in German.

The French give utterance to the sound of 'gh' when they speak of 'Paris'. 'Q' has a sound which cannot be described in writing, and the same is true of 'd' 'dh' and 'z', as spoken in Arabic, when they have distinct modes of

pronunciation, although in Persian the, v all sound as 'z'.

I am conscious that this description of sounds cannot apply to words in Turkish.

An Arab or a Persian says 'Muhammad' where a Turk would have it as 'Mehmet'.

This is why in earlier times the name of the Prophet appeared as 'Mahomet' in <pxiv> English; it had come from the Turks and Turkish.

Later, when it was realized that the letter is 'd' not 't', 'Mahomed' replaced 'Mahomet'.

Throughout this book I have tried to give the Arabic version where Arabic names and words are concerned, and have treated Persian names and words in the same manner.

But pitfalls are many.

Arabs say 'Khadijah' and 'Fatimah'.

Persians say 'Khadijih' and 'Fatimih' -- these names having found a secure home in Persian.

Take the reverse side of the coin.

The word Dastur is a Persian word which has more than one meaning, but its meaning in modern Arabic is not one of them.

Today an Arab uses ad-Dusturiyyah or ad-Dusturi to connote Constitutional Government, and his pronunciation does not accord with the Persian's.

Mashrutih is the Persian's word for 'Constitutional'; it is of Arabic origin and pronounced as Mashrutah in Arabic, to convey the meaning of 'conditional'.

In the Indian sub-continent, Dastur is the designation which the Parsis have given to their priests, and their pronunciation of the word is subtly different.

Arabic has no 'v' (that is why Victoria has become Fictoria in Arabic) and Persian has no 'w'.

The name of a certain province and city in Transoxania always appears as 'Khwarizm' in the writings of orientalists, for which there is no justification, unless they regard it as purely Arabic.

Persian has many words containing a 'v' -- 'vav (Persian), waw (Arabic) -- which is not at all pronounced, and 'Kharazm' is one of them.

In recent years, attempts have been made, unsuccessfully, to drop this unpronounced letter altogether in spelling.

Khivih is the modern name for Kharazm, and it should not be written as 'Khiwah', unless it is stated at the same time that this is how an Arab would speak of that city.

Arabic has no letter to correspond to 'ch'.

It also lacks such sounds as are conveyed by 'p', 'zh', and a hard 'g'.

Egyptians have turned the soft 'g' ('jim') into a hard one, and speak of 'Gamal' although it is written as 'Jamal'.

Kharazmi, or Khwarizmi (in the version of orientalists), is the name of a very great scientist of the Islamic civilization, who was certainly not an Arab, but wrote in Arabic because it was the common language of learning and the learned, as Latin was in Europe of the Middle Ages, even into the days of Copernicus and Newton.

Kharazmshah was the generic title of the rulers of two dynasties who were based on Kharazm.

The second of these <pxv> dynasties, which eventually went down before the Mongols, had a flourishing and extensive kingdom.

When Arabic words and phrases poured into Persian, to enrich it immeasurably and make it a much more expressive language, the Persians accepted the alphabet of the Arabs, but added to it four letters with sounds corresponding to those of 'p', 'ch', hard 'g' and 'zh'.

They also had to accept letters that are represented in our system of transliteration by 'th', 'h', 's', 'd', 't', 'z', and 'q', but their pronunciation, as one finds with Arabs, is not followed today. 'Th' and 's' sound in Persian like a plain 's'; 'd' and 'z' are indistinguishable from 'z'; 'h' and 't' are treated as 'h' and 't' without the dot, ' ' (a sound impossible to convey in writing) and 'q' are greatly softened.

Now it only remains to point out a sad lapse on the part of popular writers, notably reporters and journalists; and to show how unrealistic a particular practice of the orientalists has been.

Ever since the time of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid of Turkey (or perhaps even earlier), who was objurgated as 'Abdul the Damned', certain writers have assumed that 'Abdul' by itself is a first name.

It is nothing of the sort.

It means 'the Servant of the', and is a part of a name.

It would not have mattered very much, apart from displaying ignorance, if this lack of understanding did not have more serious implications.

To imagine that a man named 'Abdu'l-Qayyum has 'Abdu'l as his first name and Qayyum as his surname is grossly erroneous; and then referring to him as Mr.

Qayyum borders on offensive sacrilege, because Qayyum means 'Self-Subsistent', and for a devout Muslim it can only denote God.

And for some years, orientalists have insisted on reproducing the Arabic definite article 'al' exactly as it is, no matter if it is pronounced or not.

Now Arabic letters are of two kinds: the Solar (ash-Shamsiyyah) and the Lunar (al-Qamariyyah).

When the article 'al' is placed before a word that has a solar letter as its first letter, the 'l' of 'al' is not enunciated and becomes a replica of that solar letter, as in ash-Shams (sun) itself.

But not so with words that begin with a lunar letter. 'Al' before such words has its 'l' fully enunciated as in al-Qamar (moon) itself.

Why, one is entitled to ask, do a host of orientalists insist on writing that 'al' exactly as it is, in such instances when its 'l' is transmuted into something else?

No less an authority than the late Professor Arberry has <pxvi> time and again written the name of the great mystic Persian poet, Rumi, as Jalal al-Din, although it is pronounced Jalali'd-Din or Jalala'd-Din or Jalalu'd-Din.

Should an unsuspecting English-speaking lover of oriental poetry tell an Iranian that he knew of the great Jalal al-Din, the Iranian would put it down, at best, to downright crass ignorance and, at worst, would feel insulted and consider it a stupid attempt to have fun at his expense.

Fortunately, in more recent times a number of orientalists have reversed the process and reproduced their definite articles realistically.

But what can one do when renowned works of reference perpetuate the error.

One final word to underline the fact that words of Arabic origin which have found a home in Persian are not necessarily bound by grammatical rules that originally governed them.

The same might be said for words of Persian origin which have found a niche in Arabic, but whereas Arabic grammar is as complex as Latin, Persian grammar is as simple as English. <p1>

#### Introduction

There is no lack of books in English on Muhammad and the Faith which He founded.

We have very learned tomes as well as light chronicles.

In spite of a few notable and brilliantly outstanding exceptions, such as *The Preaching of Islam* by Sir Thomas Arnold, *The Spirit of Islam* by Syed Ameer Ali, and in our day the works of Professors Arberry, Bernard Lewis and Montgomery Watt, the majority fail to do full justice to their theme.

This inadequacy among Western authors may be traced to a fundamental lack of appreciation of the full claims and mission of the Prophet.

However greatly impressed by His achievements, character and even doctrines, their judgement of Muhammad Himself and their evaluation of His Faith cannot be other than suspect when their fundamental conviction was that He was a deluded impostor.

Witness George Sale's meticulous and scholarly introduction to his translation of the Qur'an.

This comment, by a famous Dean of Durham, exemplifies a similar approach: 'Nor can it be doubted that Mohammed, to whom, in an historical sense, most of our troubles in the Near East are due, might well have been won to Christianity had the representatives of the faith whom he encountered been in any sense worthy of their name.

On Trinity Sunday it is worth while for us to remember that if, instead of a zeal for arid disputations on the mysteries of the faith, they had shown an unmistakable zeal for righteousness, that titanic power might have been enlisted in the Christian cause, and the God of Mohammedan worship, instead of being the God of Power, might have been the God of Love whom Jesus Christ proclaimed.[1] As recently as the year 1971, Lord Soper, another famous churchman, stated in a radio programme that Islam, like Communism, was a 'Christian heresy'.

[1 Dr.

C.

A.

Alington in the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post of 11 June 1938.]

Then there are renowned scholars:

Alfred Guillaume, Emile Dermenghem, A.

S.

Tritton, to name a few, who, despite their <p2> intense admiration for Muhammad and their ready admittance that the Prophet of Arabia sincerely believed in His divine mission, cannot accept the Qur'an as the 'Word of God'.

They consider Him to have been a very remarkable man, a very great man, but go no further.

Either they have a religious persuasion that precludes the recognition of Muhammad as a Messenger chosen by God, or none at all.

Thirdly, we have had popular writers whose portrait of Muhammad is grotesquely distorted.

The Arabian Prophet is not so much the Founder of a Theophany, a new Dispensation but a leader of men in the mould of a successful chieftain, courageous and bold and generous, but also full of human foibles.

Some borrow from the writings of those Muslim apologists from the East, whose outlook was primitive, who related stories of angels assuming human form to take part in bloody combats, of jinn (genii) holding converse with the Prophet, and who expatiated on how Muhammad literally cleft the moon in twain.

At the time of the Apollo 15 exploration of the moon, an organization in London, which called itself the Moslem Educational Bureau, was reported to have

issued a statement asserting the literal fact of the cleavage of the moon and expressing its certainty that the astronauts of the Apollo 15 would find in the Hadley Rille (a crack on the surface of the moon) the positive proof of the performance of that miracle.

An enterprising British journalist in one of the national dailies (known as a quality newspaper), blew up this incredible statement into a sensational story, which occupied a prominent place in a centre page under the heading: 'Mohammed's Moonshot'.

It would have been laughable, were it not insulting to one of the major Faiths of mankind.

Those Eastern chroniclers and theologians, who gave currency in the past to such stories, bear a heavy burden of responsibility for lowering the Arabian Prophet in the eyes of the West.

Today, fortunately, their extravagances are discounted.

These two paragraphs from a work by Professor Montgomery Watt show clearly the standpoint of a Western admirer of Muhammad and His Faith:

'We have to allow a large measure of truth to the Islamic vision, not merely for what it has achieved in the lives of Muslims, but also for what we ourselves may learn from it.

At the same time we cannot fully accept the standard Islamic view that the Qur'an is <p3> wholly true and the criterion of all other truth; for in the strictly historical field we cannot hold that the Qur'an may override the usual canons of historical evidence.

The solution of this problem would appear to be most likely of attainment through some expansion of the diagrammatic conception of truth.

Other points have to be taken into consideration, however, in finding a consistent formulation of those mentioned, so that the whole operation properly belongs to the province of theology and cannot usefully be discussed further here.

Finally a personal word may be in order.

Critics of my books on Muhammad have accused me of not stating my views clearly.

Presumably they meant that I did not state a view obviously concordant with their own, or else one they could easily denounce as false.

I may have fought shy of a decision, but the matter is difficult when one is writing for a great variety of readers who will understand the key concepts in many different ways.

May I put my position as follows?

I am not a Muslim in the usual sense, though I hope I am a Muslim as "one surrendered to God"; but I believe that embedded in the Qur'an and other

expressions of the Islamic vision are vast stores of divine truth from which I and other occidentals have still much to learn.'[1]

[1 Watt, What is Islam?, p.

21.]

The present writer believes in the God-given mission of Muhammad.

Islam and its Holy Book, the Qur'an, he believes to have represented God's purpose and guidance for mankind.

The power of Muhammad, he believes, did not reside in human ingenuity, not in the production of supernatural feats, nor in the arraying of angels on the battlefield, but in the fundamental fact of His being the chosen Messenger of God, the vehicle of the Logos.

He could and did re-create the lives of men.

He brought them the gift of second birth.

On the basis of His teachings and by virtue of the enlightenment of His followers, there arose a civilization and a culture, which, though monotheistic, did not preclude pagan thought; which brought within their pale the philosophy and the science of ancient Greece, without giving the heritage of the past a supernatural aura and sanction.

Even more, this civilization and this culture were not wrought by Arabs alone or;by Muslims alone.

People of other creeds and many nations were partners in this great adventure.

Tolerance was engendered by the Faith of the Muslims and was practised. 'Those who have <p4> believed the Jews, the Christians and the Sabeans, who believe in God and the Day of Judgement, and do righteously, have their reward with their Lord; neither is there fear for them, nor are they to grieve' -- so unequivocal was the pronouncement of the Qur'an (ii, 59).

The warning and the promise, which the following verse contains, should also be noted: 'Do not revile them who worship others besides God, lest they, moved by malice and ignorance revile God; thus have we adorned every nation with their own works, and unto God shall they hereafter return, and He shall inform them of that which they have done.'[1] (vi, 108.)

[1 Translations of Arabic and Persian texts are by the author unless otherwise attributed. (Ed.)]

Over a vast area of the world, extending from the heart of Asia and the boundaries of the Pacific to the shores of the Atlantic, the power of Islam raised men to a high level of achievement and ennobled their lives.

Only prejudice can ignore these facts.

This book is not intended for scholars nor yet for those little acquainted with the general background of history.

Scholars have the great tomes of the orientalisists to read, and the works of the

great Arab historians, such as Ibn-Khallikan, Ibn-Khaldun and Ibn-al-Athir, to consult.

To have attempted to cater for those with little knowledge of history would have made it impossible to put within the compass of a single manageable volume all that the author had set out to do.

There is nothing new that we can learn about the life of Muhammad.

No archaeological find can add to our knowledge.

No lost record or forgotten document is expected to come to light which can tell us more about events and actions already known to history.

All that remains is to interpret, and here is another attempt at interpretation. <p7>

Prologue

Founder of Islam was an Arabian.

He was born, grew up, received His mandate, preached, fought against odds, achieved staggering, almost unbelievable triumphs and died in Arabia.

And Arabia was, and still is, a forbidding land.

To the best of our knowledge, there are areas in its vastnesses that no human foot has ever touched.

To obtain a picture of its immensities and its frightening solitude one should read Arabia Deserta, the classic work of that prince of travellers:

Charles Doughty.

The prodigious stores of oil that lie deep, deep under its scorching soil betoken a time, scores of millions of years ago, when lush vegetation covered Arabia.

But in the days of the Founder of Islam, and for a long, long time before them, as today, Arabia was arid and barren, torrid and parched.

Rainfall was, and is, scarce.

There were, and are, times when not a single drop falls from the skies throughout the year.

And there were, and are, times when the skies open and torrents descend and the dry river-beds, called wadis, bubble with water.

At these times even the desert blooms; lovely flowers, particularly the red anemone, blossom and herbage appears.

But it is all short-lived.

The water seeps through the earth and riverbeds dry up and the desert becomes forlorn once again.

Here and there the nomads have dug deep wells to reach the water and here and

there water comes to the surface to give life to an oasis.

These wells and oases feature prominently in the story of the Arabian Prophet.

Although there had been nomads eking out a poor existence in parts of the interior, settled life was possible only along the peripheries of the peninsula.

No townships could flourish in the heart of Arabia.

The most advanced of these settled regions were Hirah in the north and Yemen (Yaman) in the south.

They could boast of being kingdoms, and of their rich, ancient civilizations.

Neither of them, however, experienced the impact of the mission of Muhammad until the closing years of His life.

The regions with which Muhammad was principally concerned, throughout His ministry, were Hijaz and parts of Najd.

These regions were backward and barbaric, and possessed no culture or learning, apart from the traditions and the lore of the Jews, who lived in settlements of their own and were aliens in Arabia.

There was no law to be observed, other than the law of necessity and certain tribal customs and taboos, and there was no recognized authority to enforce any law.

Therefore the prescript of vendetta prevailed, every clan (subdivision of a tribe) used its strength to give protection to its members, and powerful men of each clan also indulged in extending protection[1] to whomever it pleased them to take under their wing.

However, the peoples of Arabia had one great asset: their language, an important branch of the Semitic tree.

Arabic was and remains a marvel.

No one has ever been able to explain how this disparate group of people, whose past is buried in legend and myth, managed to develop such a poetic, mellifluous, highly expressive and extremely malleable language, endowed with vast potentialities.

Much that has been written about the early history of Arabia, and of the nomads of later times and their brethren settled in Mecca (Makkah), Yathrib and at-Ta'if, is purely conjectural. 'Until we can dig for history in Arabia, as we have dug in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia,' writes Professor Bernard Lewis, 'the early centuries of Arabia will remain obscure, and the searcher in the field will have to pick his way warily among the debris of half-erected and half-demolished hypotheses which the historian, with the scanty equipment of fact he now possesses, can neither complete nor raze to the ground.' [2]

[1 Jiwar or juwar.]

[2 The Arabs in History, p.22.]

Southern Arabia had a civilization, a legacy of the times of antiquity, and a language with a script of its own, close to the Ethiopic; but the language which finally held sway over the whole of the peninsula was the Arabic of further north.

And strange it is that although inscriptions have been found in Yemen and elsewhere in Southern Arabia, no book of any kind has come down from the ancient civilization of that region.

Arabic being the language that it is, poetry ranked high amongst the Arabs.

This poetry, luxuriantly rich in imagery and hyperbole, cared little for the abstract.

Because Muhammad presented the Qur'an, with its stunning terseness and fluidity, its enchanting eloquence, as His greatest proof, His detractors said of Him that He was a poet, which He immediately disavowed:

He had not composed a single line of poetry in His life.

Contemporary with Muhammad were poets of high repute and a number of them were extremely antagonistic to Him.

They used their undoubted talent to lampoon the Prophet and pour scorn over Him.

Jewish poets were particularly guilty in this respect.

The greater the extension of the Prophet's work became, the more strident became the invective of hostile poets.

This type of satire and contempt had a visible and deleterious effect on the body-politic which was emerging from Muhammad's mission, for the Arabs were susceptible to the bewitchments of poetry.

Muhammad could no longer ignore the barrage of abuse and derision, as he had done in days past, no matter how wounding the lashing of tongues.

He had to condemn the offending poets in the strongest terms.

That was why Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf, the prominent Jewish poet, lost his life; and Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr, the most eloquent poet of his time, would have lost his had he not hurried to seek the Prophet's pardon.

Poets, with their heroics and panegyrics, were no less instrumental in fanning the embers of feuds and vendettas which set man against man, clan against clan and tribe against tribe.

Except for four months of the year when taboos barred all fighting, murder and raid and treachery, ravishing and plundering constituted the normal mode and pattern of life, in a land where the struggle for existence was hard and bitter.

Islam was born in this inhospitable milieu and survived to become a world religion. <p10>

## The Homeland of Muhammad and His Early Years

Accounts of the life of Muhammad generally open with a description of Arabia, its forbidding deserts, its scorching sun and paucity of rainfall, its caravan routes and oases, its nomads and town-dwellers and settlements of Jews and Christians.

A knowledge of the geography of the peninsula and the background against which Muhammad lived His life is, of course, essential.

But too often the emphasis is misplaced.

The starkness of the desert was there; so was the poverty of existence and the perpetual feuds and barbarous ways.

Muhammad was, certainly, keenly aware of them.

He undoubtedly came in contact with the monotheists of the peninsula and beyond, and came to know their creeds.

It has been suggested that what He gleaned from their lore was garbled.

No doubt Jews did not speak with one voice, nor did the Christians.

Nestorian influence was very strong in and around Arabia.

The Monophysites of Ethiopia had attempted the conquest of Mecca, the birth-place and home of Muhammad.

Both these Christian sects had been declared heretical by oecumenical councils (Ephesus, A.D.

431; Chalcedon, A.D.

451).

But it was not the topography and the climate, the environment and the conflicting versions of faith and practice that awakened a chord in the mind of Muhammad and fired His soul to action.

He was sensitive and discerning, honest and upright.

Years before He came forth with a Message, He was called al-Amin -- the One to be Trusted.

But His call came to Him from God, and He responded to that call.

There is a saying ascribed to Muhammad: 'I was born during the reign of the just king'; that king was Chosroes I (Khusraw Anushirvan), the Sasanid monarch.[1] It has also long been held <p11> that Muhammad was born in the 'Year of the Elephant', supposed to have been either A.D.

570 or 571.

Recent research has tended to predate it by two years.[2] The 'Year of the Elephant' witnessed the assault on Mecca by the Ethiopians, who came with

elephants and were seemingly invincible.

Abrahah or Abraham, the Ethiopian ruler of Yemen, was seeking to destroy Mecca and its shrine, the Ka'bah, which housed idols.

A short surah (chapter) of the Qur'an (cv), entitled the 'Surah of the Elephant', relates what befell them: 'Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the people of the elephant?

Did He not make their stratagem to lead them to error and send against them flocks of birds that hit them with stones of baked clay?

Then He turned them into the likeness of munched straw.' Professor Hitti states that the Ethiopians were destroyed by an epidemic of small-pox.

[1 Reigned A.D.

531-79.]

[2 This view is not, however, universally accepted.]

How was it that the Ethiopians had come to rule over Yemen?

The occasion was the attempt by the Jewish king, Dhu-Nuwas,[1] to break up the Christian community of Najran.

The Ethiopians came to their defence, and were encouraged by Byzantium to undertake the conquest of South Arabia.

Although the Ethiopians, being Monophysites, were heretics in the eyes of the Byzantines, the latter were glad to see them established in Yemen.

The Iranians, however, could not tolerate any extension of Byzantine influence, and the already inflamed situation was aggravated by Ethiopian tyranny.

Sayf, the son of Dhu-Yazan, a descendant of the Himyarite kings, led an expedition against them with Persian aid.

The Ethiopians were slaughtered and the control of Yemen passed into Persian hands.

But this dominance was short-lived, for Badhan, the Iranian viceroy, and those of his countrymen who had settled in Yemen, embraced Islam shortly before the passing of the Prophet.

[1 He was the last Himyarite king.]

These ebbs and flows of fortune in Yemen during the sixth century A.D., besides registering a trial of strength between contending creeds, were a strong pointer to the intense and ruinous antagonism between the Mazdean (Zoroastrian) Sasanid Empire and the Christian Byzantine.

On the northern frontiers of Arabia the Irano-Roman conflict was even more in evidence, and had forced vassal Arab principalities to be arrayed in opposing camps.

The Ghassanids were Christians and bound to Byzantium.

The <p12> Lakhmids, who ruled over Hirah, were also Christian, but they owed

allegiance to Iran.

Ghassan was Monophysite, Hiraah Nestorian.

The court of Hiraah was renowned for its patronage of culture.

Imru'-al-Qays and Nabighih,[1] the greatest of the poets of pre-Islamic Arabia, were Christians of the north.

[1 Of Banu-Dhubyan.]

But for the Arabs who worshipped idols, Mecca was the focal point.

And Mecca was in the hands of the Quraysh, the great tribe into which Muhammad was born.

They took their name from Fihir, surnamed Quraysh, a remote ancestor of the Prophet.

The tribe was divided and subdivided, with an even greater number of clans.

Qusayy, another ancestor of Muhammad, nearer to Him in time, who lived in the middle of the fifth century, succeeded in gaining control over Mecca, and possibly over almost the whole of Hijaz, that area of western Arabia in which Mecca and Medina are situated.

Holding the reins of power, he set about rebuilding Mecca and its shrine.

Qusayy was an able administrator and shrewd planner.

People thronging to worship at the Ka'bah required food and water; a system had to be devised to supply their needs.

This he devised.

The city, no longer an assortment of mean huts, had to have a worthy building to serve as its seat of administration.

This he provided.

By the sixth century the face of Mecca had changed.

The grandsons of Qusayy fell out among themselves.

Wrangling over who should exercise authority, they decided in the end to divide it.

Sons of 'Abda'd-Dar, a son of Qusayy, became the custodians of the Ka'bah and the keepers of the city standard. 'Abd-Shams, the son of 'Abd-Manaf (another son of Qusayy) took over the administration of the revenue and the water supply.

From him these powers passed to his brother Hashim, another man of outstanding ability and enterprise.

This transference of authority was destined to affect profoundly the course of Islam.

Hashim was a merchant.

He saw clearly that Mecca, in order to maintain its paramount position, needed trade, and on a considerable scale.

To obtain it, he instituted two annual treks.

One caravan, large and well-equipped, travelled northwards in summer to Syria.

Another took the road to the south and Yemen, in the winter season.

Both were highly profitable.

Hashim also realized that trading could not be safely conducted without the goodwill of neighbours.

He made overtures to the Ethiopians in Yemen, to the Arab principalities in the north, to the Byzantine and Sasanid officials on the periphery of the peninsula, and concluded agreements with them.

Hashim died about A.D.

510, and his brother Muttalib took his place.

But Muttalib's tenure of office was not long, and on his death Hashim's son, Shaybah, better known as 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, succeeded him.

Shaybah was the grandfather of Muhammad.

Under his roof, Muhammad, when orphaned, was to spend some years of His childhood.

By then the descendants of 'Abda'd-Dar were getting restive, and Umayyah, a son of 'Abd-Shams, chafed under a sense of grievance.

He was the progenitor of the Umayyads, who, in the following century, came to wield power in the Empire of Islam, having wrested it from the House of the Prophet.

They were eventually overthrown by the scions of the House of Hashim.

Notwithstanding opposition from his relatives, 'Abdu'l-Muttalib remained the virtual ruler of Mecca for almost sixty years.

He was helped by the elders and avoided ruinous dissensions in the sacred city. 'Abdu'l-Muttalib achieved further renown by rediscovering the waters of Zamzam, that legendary fountain which was believed to have welled forth at the heels of the infant Ishmael, saving him and his mother, Hagar, from death.

In the course of centuries Zamzam had disappeared under layers of sand. 'Abdu'l-Muttalib guessed aright that the well must have been close to Ka'bah.

The water was brackish, but was a great boon to pilgrims.

This great patriarch had ten sons.

Five of them are well remembered: 'Abdu'llah, the youngest, because he was the father of Muhammad; Abu-Talib, because he inherited his father's position and in his house Muhammad grew to manhood; Hamzah, for his heroic devotion to the

cause of his Nephew; 'Abbas, for his superb feat of sitting on the fence for so long, and because his descendants, in the eighth century A.D., overthrew the detested Umayyads; and Abu-Lahab, who gained notoriety by his implacable hatred of his Nephew, and because of the injuries which he and his equally vituperative wife inflicted upon Him.

Abu-Lahab is the sole kinsman of the Prophet whose name appears in the Qur'an.

Thus runs the surah cxi: 'Perish shall the hands of Abu'-Lahab and perish shall he, His riches profit him not, neither what <p14> he hath gained.

In flaming fire shall he be burned, also his wife bearing faggots, having on her neck a cord of palm-fibres.'

The city of Mecca, at the time of Muhammad's birth, enjoyed pre-eminence in Arabia.

It had a fairly efficient system of administration, wealth and a flourishing trade.

The aristocracy lived in good houses, in the neighbourhood of Ka'bah, in a quarter called Batha, a name which has, at times, been applied to Mecca itself.

On the edge of the town were hovels peopled by the dregs of humanity, also houses of pleasure and entertainment, and parasites swarmed there for whom a place of pilgrimage, such as Mecca, provided the right milieu for their activities.

The climate of Mecca was far from salubrious.

The heat was intense, the water unwholesome and difficult to come by, and the landscape bleak and barren.

Medina, then known as Yathrib, presented a vivid contrast.

Its air was kinder, good water was abundant, and there were orchards and varieties of fruit.

Mostly it was peopled by the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, while close by were large and powerful settlements of Jews.

And it had an effective system of administration.

Not far from Mecca was at-Ta'if, with lush orchards, water and fruit in plenty.

This fair oasis features prominently in the story of the life of the Prophet.

Mecca, Ta'if, Yathrib, Jewish and Christian settlements, Yemen and northern principalities did not, however, make a nation.

Over vast tracts of the peninsula only brutal lawlessness held sway.

Tribes battled and pillaged mercilessly, except during four months of the year, which by the sanction of custom were free from fighting.

During this period of truce people went on pilgrimage, and gathered at great fairs, such as 'Ukaz, to recite and listen to poetry.

Their poetry was rich and pictorial, but its range was limited and abstract thought had no place in it.

Although very hospitable, people were also treacherous.

Their manners were uncouth and they paid scant attention to cleanliness and hygiene.

They also had the habit of walking into one another's homes unbidden and unannounced, even when a man was closeted with his wife.

Muhammad Himself suffered from this discourtesy.

People scaled the walls of His house, broke in upon His privacy and called out to Him, 'O Muhammad!

Talk to us'.

Later, the Prophet would counsel them not to enter anyone's house before knocking at the door.

Yet another custom was sometimes to bury infant girls alive, since girls were not highly prized.

Indeed, Muhammad would have to teach them a good deal. <p15>

### The Lineage and Kinsmen of Muhammad

Quraysh

|

Qusayy

|

-----  
|           |  
Abd-Manaf    Abda'd-Dar

-----  
|                           |           |  
'Abd-Shams                Hashim (d.510)   Muttalib

|                           |  
Umayyah                 Abdu'l-Muttalib (Shaybah)

|

-----  
|           |           |           |           |           |  
Abdu'l-'As    Harb   Hamzah   Abu-Talib   Abdu'llah 'Abbas   Abu-Lahab  
-----           |           |           + Aminah

|           |           |           |           |  
Al-Hakam   'Affan   Abu-Sufyan           |   MUHAMMAD + Khadijah

|

|           |           |           |           |           |  
|           |           |           |           |           |  
Marwan   'Uthman   Mu'awiyah           |   |   |   |   |

'Ali + Fatimah   Zaynab   Ruqayyah   Umm-Kulthum

656-61   (four sons died as infants)

| - - - - -

|            |  
Hasan        Husayn

The first two Caliphs, members of the Quraysh, are not included above:

Abu-Bakr of Banu-Taym (632-34), 'Umar of Banu-'Adi (634-44).

Four later Caliphs are included.

A.D. dates are of their reigns. <p16>

Such was Arabia when Muhammad was born and such were His forbears.

A Manifestation of God always comes to the darkest, dreariest land, amidst people who are degraded.

It is related that 'Abdu'llah, the father of Muhammad, was the old patriarch's favourite son.

It is also said that he was strikingly handsome.

He married Aminah, the daughter of Wahab, of the clan of Zuhrah, a subdivision of the Quraysh.

Shortly after his marriage 'Abdu'llah died in Yathrib, where he had gone in pursuit of trade.

He was twenty-five years old.

Muhammad was born some months later in Mecca.

We cannot be certain whether the year was A.D.

570 or 571.

August 20th and also August 29th have been suggested as the day of His birth.

Sunnis[1] and Sh'iahs[2] differ regarding the date according to the lunar calendar.

The former celebrate the twelfth day of Rabi'al-Awwal, the latter consider the felicitous day to have been the seventeenth of that month.

[1 Upholders of the elective principle in the matter of succession to the Prophet.]

[2 Legitimists upholding the rights of the House of the Prophet.]

Muhammad was fatherless, His mother was not rich, and the air of Mecca did not suit the infant.

His grandfather decided that the child should be left in the care of a foster-mother, away from Mecca.

At that time, women of nomadic tribes used to come to the holy city to offer their services as foster-mothers.

It was an arrangement that benefited them financially, helped the children to grow up in healthier conditions and relieved rich parents of some pressing problems.

The woman into whose care Muhammad was given was named Halimah.

She was a member of the tribe of Banu-Asad.

Her husband was a shepherd, and his people were more concerned with seeking pasturage than with battle and booty.

They roamed over the desert in search of food for their flocks and herds, and at that tender age Muhammad lived with them the life of a nomad.

When Muhammad was six years old Halimah took Him to Mecca and delivered Him to His mother.

Aminah, who had relatives in Yathrib, was anxious that they should see her child and they journeyed there.

So, early in His life, Muhammad first saw the city which was to offer Him safety and fealty in future <p17> years.

Their stay in Yathrib was short, and within weeks they were once again crossing the desert.

Aminah succumbed to its hardships and was buried at a place named Abwa.

Her son was taken to Mecca and handed over to His grandfather, the renowned patriarch.

But 'Abdu'l-Muttalib was an old man and within two years he too was dead.

Before he died he gave the charge of Muhammad to his son, Abu-Talib.

Muhammad was then barely eight years old.

Abu-Talib succeeded to his father's office.

He traded and led caravans, but he was not a rich man and the size of his family taxed his resources.

Muhammad had no inheritance of His own and did not grow up in circumstances of affluence.

When no longer a child He accompanied His uncles on their expeditions:

Abu-Talib leading trading caravans to Syria; az-Zubayr heading forays into hostile territory.

In the northern limits of Arabia was the town of Busra, a flourishing and important centre of commerce on the caravan route, where merchants from Byzantium came to exchange goods.

All around were Christians, and near by lived a Christian monk of Nestorian persuasion named Bahirah.

On one occasion he saw Abu-Talib's young nephew and saw in Him the Christ.

He urged the Meccan chief to take particular care of the youth.

Very little is known of the childhood and youth of Muhammad.

Stories are told in which supernatural beings are involved -- jinn, angels, heavenly hosts, Lucifer and his hordes.

There is the story that Pushkin has made the subject of a poem, concerning the time when Muhammad lived with His foster-mother in the desert.

One day while out with His playmates, Muhammad, it is said, was snatched away by angels, His chest was opened and His human heart was replaced by one celestial.

Some of these stories spring from interpretations placed upon Qur'anic verses, some have a symbolic import, some are the fabrications of an age different from ours.

Their counterparts abound in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

There are other accounts and anecdotes which concern the affairs of this world and describe Muhammad's bearing and conduct in His years of young manhood.

His integrity shines through them.

People trusted Him and called Him al-Amin: the One who was honest and in whom they could repose their confidence, a quality illustrated by the following story. <p18>

Ka'bah, the most holy shrine of Arabia, was (and is) a solid cubic structure.

In a corner of it is the most revered object, the Hajara'l-Aswad (al-Hajar al-Aswad -- the Black Stone).

This is the stone which, it is said, the Angel Gabriel brought to Abraham from Paradise.

Ravages of time and the elements necessitated extensive repairs to the cubic masonry.

The Black Stone was removed, the structure was renovated, and then a furious argument began about the replacement of the sacred stone.

The honour was coveted by all.

Who was to do it?

They turned to Muhammad for judgement.

He spread His cloak on the ground and told them to put the stone on it.

Then He invited them all to take hold of the cloak, lift it up and carry the stone to the spot where it was to be placed.

Thus they were all participants in the act and were equally honoured.

An ugly clash was averted by His wisdom and tact, and the respect which people already had for Him was heightened.

Muhammad has been referred to as a camel-driver.

The connotation is obscure.

If it is meant that Muhammad was a groom, it is palpably false.

If it is to indicate that He, like His uncle, led caravans carrying merchandise, it is correct.

And what Arab would not tend a camel?

At this time there lived in Mecca a lady twice widowed, who commanded considerable wealth, named Khadijah Bint[1] Khuway-lid.

Trading was her concern and she was seeking someone to whom she could entrust the management of her flourishing business.

Her choice fell on Muhammad.

But here a digression is necessary.

[1 'Bint' means 'daughter of'.]

It has become fashionable among writers of popular histories and apologists of Faiths to transpose the modes of speech, thought and practice current in the present day to their portrayal of the past, in order to make the events of bygone ages easier to understand.

A classic example is provided by the late Dorothy Sayers's admirable and moving radio serial on the life of Christ, *The Man Born to Be King*.

This brave attempt to make situations foreign to modern experience more comprehensible is indeed worthy, but it should be done within definite limits.

Otherwise a picture is presented which is not true: the Arabian fair at 'Ukaz would be seen as a present-day Eisteddfod, the Meccan mart as Leadenhall Street, the bewildered, infuriated and toiling masses of <p19> Judea of twenty centuries ago as men of today contesting the merits of their football teams or dazed by the awful doom of the hydrogen bomb.

Certainly, basic human instincts and emotions produce recurring patterns.

In that sense history repeats itself.

It is obvious, too, that man is always presented with a choice of alternatives.

But man's domain of knowledge at any given time, be it scientific or traditional, intellectual or esoteric, mystical or superstitious, profoundly affects his condition and his reactions.

Cruelty is never commended, always condemned.

But what one age fails to see as cruel another does.

And how many are there today in the Western world who, whenever an eclipse occurs, talk for days and weeks with dread and terror of the attempt made by the dragon to swallow the moon or the sun, and try to put the monster to flight by beating their copper pots and pans?

Yet this was how the generality of men once behaved in the East when dark shadows fell over these celestial bodies.

The fear of the dragon might be equated with the fear of the bomb.

But the ways men in different ages have talked of their fears and reacted to them are different.

Having made this digression, let it be stated at once that Muhammad, as a merchant or as a trading agent for a widow in Mecca, should not be equated with a tea trader or a metal merchant of today.

His approach to His problems and the very nature of the problems would have been different.

We ought to be able to stretch our imaginations to encompass the past, not try to see the past entirely in terms of the present.

Perhaps until three or four decades ago, one could still find, here and there in the East, merchants whose styles might have approximated to the style of the merchants of sixth-century Arabia.

The present writer recalls times not too far past, the years of his own childhood, so unlike today when a commercial agent flies in and out of a country with a brief-case of samples and glossy literature.

Then agents took long sea journeys, with several trunks of goods and wares and voluminous matter-of-fact catalogues.

The outlook of those sellers and their customers of a few decades ago could not have been like ours today.

Therefore, when writers speak of business concerns and banking arrangements in Mecca in the days of Muhammad, one ought to be on one's guard not to fall into the trap of a closed imagination.

Our knowledge of Muhammad during the years that He traded <p20> on behalf of Khadijah Bint Khuwaylid is meagre.

We do know that Khadijah was much His senior in age.

Historians have averred that there was a difference of fifteen years between them.

Were it so, she was forty years old when she herself proposed marriage to Muhammad, for the Prophet's age, we know, was twenty-five at the time He married.

According to Ibn-al-Athir, eight children were born to them, four sons and four daughters.

None of the sons -- Qasim, 'Abdu'llah, Tahir and Tayyib -- lived beyond infancy.

The four daughters -- Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm-Kulthum and Fatimah -- reached womanhood and married, but all died before the age of thirty.

Only Fatimah outlived her father, and that by six months.

Zaynab was married to Abu'l-'As, the son of Rabi', of the clan of 'Abd-Shams.

The mother of Abu'l-'As was a sister of Khadijah and had a great affection for her nephew Muhammad.

Ruqayyah was married to 'Uqbah, a son of Abu-Lahab, but he was made to divorce her when opposition to the Prophet became fierce.

Ruqayyah was subsequently wedded to 'Uthman, the son of 'Affan, of the clan of Umayyah.

After her death, Muhammad gave His third daughter, Umm-Kulthum, in marriage to 'Uthman.

She also died childless.

The fourth daughter, Fatimah, became the wife of 'Ali, the son of Abu-Talib.

Muhammad, as we have seen, grew up in the house of Abu-Talib, His uncle.

And now to make the burden of supporting a large family less onerous for that uncle, Muhammad took 'Ali into His own care.

Another member of His household was Zayd, the son of Harithah.

Zayd, a Christian from the north, had been captured during a raid and sold into slavery.

A nephew of Khadijah bought him and gave him to his aunt, who in turn presented the boy to her husband.

Eventually Zayd's father traced his son to Mecca and came to buy him.

Muhammad gave Zayd the choice of accompanying his father to Syria, but Zayd preferred to remain in Mecca.

Whereupon Muhammad freed him from slavery and adopted him as His own son. 'Ali, though Muhammad's cousin, was also young enough to be His son.

It was a happy household, and Muhammad, much devoted to His wife and children, His adopted son and His cousin, went on His way as a merchant, quietly engaged in trade and commercial transactions.

And during the lifetime of Khadijah, Muhammad did not take a second wife.

It is related that one day, on a journey north, He took shelter from the blazing sun under the shade of a tree.

A Christian monk <p21> happened by and seeing Him exclaimed that none but a Prophet had ever sat under that tree.

Christian monasticism pioneered by St.

Anthony in the wilderness of Egypt, in the year 285, had reached its peak in the years that Muhammad had grown into manhood.

As Muhammad's years increased, tradition has it that He became more reflective,

taking Himself to the bleak hills round Mecca for longer and longer periods of quiet meditation.

A particular resort, favoured by Him, was a cave in Mount Hirra'. <p22>

2 'Read in the Name of Thy Lord'

The vehicle of the Revelation which came to Muhammad on Mount Hirra' has been traditionally described as the Angel Gabriel.

He held up a Tablet to Muhammad to read.

But Muhammad was untutored and He could not read.

Again He was told to read and again He pleaded ignorance.

A third time the Angel told Him to read, and once again Muhammad said that read He could not.

Then the words of revelation reached Him: 'Read in the Name of thy Lord Who created; Who created Man of blood congealed.

Read, thy Lord is the Most Beneficent; Who taught by the Pen; Who teacheth Man what he knoweth not.' [1] Muhammad was so overcome that He would have hurled Himself down a precipice.

Then, the clear voice rang out again, in the stillness of the lone hillside, to tell Muhammad that God had chosen Him to be His Messenger to mankind.

The weight of revelation was too great to bear, and Muhammad, now aware of His awesome mission to proclaim the Oneness of the Godhead, fled to His home, not more than three or four miles away, and asked Khadijah, His wife, to cover Him with His mantle.

Muhammad said, on this occasion, that as He lay covered He felt that His soul had left His body for a while.

It is related that it became His wont to seek the cover of His mantle, at the approach of a fresh revelation.

[1 Surat al-'Alaq -- The Congealed Blood', xcvi, 1-5.]

There are two surahs in the Qur'an, the seventy-third and the seventy-fourth -- al-Muzammil ('The Enwrapped') and al-Mudaththir ('The Covered'), both Meccan (revealed in Mecca) -- that spotlight the inauguration of the ministry of Muhammad.

Scholars have been busy speculating about them, some even suggesting that the very first intimation of His prophethood was given to Muhammad by the seventy-fourth: [1]

[1 'The Covered', according to Sale; 'The Immantled', according to Montgomery Watt; 'Shrouded', according to Arberry.

O thou covered!

Rise and warn.

Thy Lord magnify.

Thy garments purify.

Abomination flee.

Give not as to gain more.

And be patient unto thy Lord.

(vv.1-7.)]<p23>

It is claimed that, at the outset, Muhammad's prime task was to 'warn' His people.

He is referred to in the Qur'an as Nadhir (He Who Warns), and as Bashir (He Who Gives Glad Tidings).

Muhammad's wife, Khadijah, was the first to believe in Him She had no doubt at all that her husband's experience on Mount Hirra' was truly a call from God.

She had a cousin named Waraqah, son of Nawfal, who was Christian, probably a Nestorian or a Monophysite, believed to have translated the Gospels into Arabic and to have been learned in Christian traditions.

Khadijah went to him and related what her husband had experienced in the cave overlooking Mecca.

Waraqah listened intently and then exclaimed with joy that Namus[1] -- the Spirit of God witnessed by Moses on Mount Sinai -- had descended upon Muhammad.

Indubitably, he said, Muhammad was the chosen Messenger of God.

[1 This word is of Greek origin (nomos), meaning 'Law'.]

All accounts agree that then a long hiatus followed, during which no revelation reached Muhammad.

He was in despair until at length He was assured, by being reminded of God's benefactions in the past:

By the bright forenoon,  
And the brooding night.

Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor doth He hate thee.

Verily the life hereafter shall be better for thee than the life in this world.

And ere long shall thy Lord reward thee, whereby thou shalt be pleased.

Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter?

Did He not find thee erring and give thee guidance?

Did He not find thee in need and provide for thee?

As to the orphan, do not oppress him. <p24>

As to the beggar, do not turn him away.

And declare the goodness of thy Lord.

(Surah xciii, Ad-Duha -- 'The Forenoon'.)

The duration of that hiatus has been a matter of conjecture.

Some[1] have put it as long as three years, others as low as ten days to a fortnight.

Whatever the case, the first three years of the ministry of Muhammad are relatively obscure.

All we know for certain is that from the year 610 to 613 there was no public announcement of His mission, that His followers could be counted on one's fingers, and that the people of Mecca were unaware that God had chosen one of themselves -- a man well known -- to be His Messenger to them.

[1 Amongst them the great historian, Muhammad Ibn Jarir at-Tabari (d.

A.D.

922).]

The fifty-third surah of the Qur'an, an-Najm -- 'The Star', gives a vivid account of the moment the Prophet was made aware of His mission and destiny.

But this surah was revealed when Meccans, having learnt of Muhammad's claims, were ridiculing

By the star when it waneth,

Your companion erreth not, nor is he led astray.

Neither doth he speak of his own caprice.

This is naught but a revelation revealed.

Taught him by one of great might

And of great strength.

He stood poised

On the highest level of the horizon.

Then He approached [Muhammad] and drew near to him,

At the distance of two-bows' length, or nearer.

Then He revealed to His servant what He revealed.

His heart lieth not of what he saw.

Would ye dispute with him concerning that which he saw?

(VV.

I -- 12.)

The second to believe in Muhammad, with unsurpassed devotion, was His cousin 'Ali, the son of Abu-Talib, who was only nine or ten years old.

He and Zayd Ibn Harithah, the next to acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad, were, as we have seen, members of His household.

There is no doubt that Abu-Bakr Ibn Abi-Quhafah, of the Quraysh clan of Banu-Taym, was the fourth Muslim.

He was younger than Muhammad by some two or <p25> three years, and was a man of substance.

Gaining his allegiance was a signal victory because he was much respected in Mecca, but we know nothing of the circumstances of his conversion.

Abu-Bakr's name was 'Atiq; Muhammad gave him the name of His own father, 'Abdu'llah.

Another early convert was Khalid Ibn Sa'id, whose father was one of the richest men in Mecca and remained an unbeliever.

Khalid was a much younger man and was a descendant of Umayyah.

We have already noted that there was much bitterness in the relationships between the rival and kindred Houses of Umayyah and Hashim.

Therefore his conversion, which was followed, not long after, by that of 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, another member of the House of Umayyah, was particularly significant.

Islam overrode feuds of families and clans.

As previously mentioned, Muhammad gave two of His daughters (one after the death of the other) in marriage to 'Uthman, who rose to be the third successor to the Prophet.

A modern scholar has expressed surprise that Khalid did not attain prominence in later years.

Perhaps a reason lies in events immediately following the Prophet's death, when Khalid, who was in charge of a region in Yemen, hurried to Medina and promptly declared that succession to Muhammad rightly belonged to 'Ali.

He refused to transfer his allegiance to Abu-Bakr.

Another youthful member of the group of fifty, whose names have come down to us as the first Muslims, was Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, cousin of the Prophet, whose mother 'Atikah was a daughter of the patriarch 'Abdu'l-Muttalib.

And so was Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas, then seventeen years old, who was destined to humble the might of the Sasanian Empire.

How many of them acknowledged the prophethood of Muhammad in the first three years of His ministry is a problem unresolved.

It must be borne in mind that those men who gave their allegiance to Muhammad in the inaugural years of His ministry were called primarily to renounce the worship of their idols, to acknowledge the existence of one God, supreme over all, and to accept Muhammad as His Prophet and Messenger.

There was no other obligation.

But the renunciation of idols by a Meccan was no easy matter.

The life of Mecca revolved round the four- square shrine of Ka'bah which housed

al-Lat and al-'Uzza, Manat and Hubal and Taghut and other idols which Arabs came <p26> from near and far to worship.

To become a Muslim meant cutting oneself away from a social milieu which was all one's native town could offer.

The idea of monotheism was not a novelty.

The clans and tribes of Arabia had rubbed shoulders with Jews and Christians for centuries.

Waraqah, the cousin of Khadijah, was a Christian, and there were others similarly inclined.

We are told of a man named Zayd Ibn 'Amr who could no longer believe in his idols.

Judaism, Christianity and even Islam passed him by, while he lamented that he did not know how to worship the one true God.

Men who were monotheists or had monotheistic tendencies were known as hanifs.

A man so styled is supposed to have been a follower of the religion of Abraham, whatever that might have been.[1] But all the hanifs in Mecca and its neighbourhood had had little or no influence on the mould of thought of the people of that town.

It was Muhammad who shook Mecca to its foundations.

[1 The term hanif has also been and is applied to Islam itself and also to Muslims.] <p27>

### 3 Public Declaration

Most of the early Muslims were young men, some very young, less than twenty years old.

With a few exceptions they came from humble walks of life.

Their conversion to Islam posed no serious threat to the confraternity of merchants, heads of clans and attendants of the Ka'bah, who held power in Mecca.

Yet they did not remain immune from rejection and various degrees of ill-treatment.

Khalid Ibn Sa'id, for example, brought upon himself such fury from outraged parents that, for a period of time, he had to seek shelter in the house of the Prophet Himself.

Slaves, who had become Muslims, were particularly harassed and even tortured by their masters.

One such was an Ethiopian named Bilal Ibn Ribah.

His master, Umayyah, the son of Khalaf of the clan of Banu-Jumah, made him lie down every day in the blistering sun, with a huge piece of rock laid on his chest.

This torment did not daunt the Ethiopian.

Eventually Abu-Bakr rescued him from his plight, by exchanging a slave of his own for Bilal, and promptly giving him his freedom.

Later, Bilal gained the distinction of becoming the first mu'adhdhin (muezzin) in Islam.

Abu-Bakr spent a fortune buying and freeing slaves, who, because of their newly-found Faith, were suffering at the hands of their masters.

The exact dates of these events cannot now be ascertained.

It may be that they belong to the time when Muhammad had made the Meccans at large aware of His claim to be the Messenger of the one true God.

Some time in the fourth year of His ministry, or thereabouts, Muhammad received a revelation bidding Him give the tidings of His mission to His kith and kin:

So, call not upon another god, with God, lest thou be of those who are chastised. <p28>

And warn thy clan, thy nearest kin.

And lower thy wing to those who follow thee, being believers.

Should they disobey thee, then say:

I am quit of what ye do.

And put thy trust in the All-Mighty, the All-Compassionate:

Who sees thee when thou standest,

And when thou turnest about amongst those who bow and prostrate in worship.

Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

(Surat ash-Shu'ara' -- 'The Poets', xxvi, 213-20.)

We have differing accounts, but there is general agreement that Muhammad invited the descendants of Hashim to a repast to tell them that God had chosen Him to be His Messenger.

It is impossible to believe that many of them (and particularly His uncle, Abu-Talib) had not already sensed the change in Him.

We are told of a time when Abu-Talib came upon Muhammad, with 'Ali and Zayd, when they were occupied with their daily devotions.

Abu-Talib, astonished by their genuflections and prostrations, demanded an explanation of this strange behaviour; whereupon Muhammad apprised him of His mission.

At the repast to which 'Ali had invited their kinsmen, on behalf of the Prophet, nothing of any consequence happened.

Abu-Lahab, Muhammad's uncle, the wealthiest son of the patriarch

'Abdu'l-Muttalib, with much derision and jest sent the guests away before Muhammad could speak to them.

Abu-Talib, who had already told his Nephew that he was too old to change his beliefs, was, as usual, mild and understanding.

There was a further gathering of the House of Hashim.

One account has it that the Prophet called all the Meccans to meet Him on Mount Safa, and His kinsmen came with the rest.

At this second gathering, either of Banu-Hashim alone, or of the Meccans at large, Muhammad made a public declaration of His mission, summoning them to the worship of the one true God, Invisible, Transcendent, Supreme.

Abu-Lahab, according to the eminent historian, at-Tabari, made himself the spokesman of denial.

He complained scornfully that Muhammad had wasted their time dragging them to a gathering, in order to speak of sweet nothing.

He then advised them to go away, mind their own business, and not listen to Muhammad, who had taken leave of His senses.

His wife, Jamilah, a sister of Abu-Sufyan, the leading man <p29> of the House of Umayyah, was no less abusive.

Abu-Lahab to his dying day remained an implacable enemy of his Nephew.

Whereas before this public declaration Muhammad and the handful of His followers could worship at ease, and in their own manner, within the enclosure of the Ka'bah, now it became increasingly difficult for them to do so.

Hardly a day passed without overt attacks being made on them.

An opponent, no less determined and vitriolic than Abu-Lahab, was Abu-Jahl,[1] a member of the powerful Quraysh clan of Banu-Makhzum.

On the other hand, al-Arqam, a wealthy man of the same clan, said to have been under twenty-five years of age, threw open his large house, which was not far from the Ka'bah, as a meeting-place for the Prophet and His followers.

Muhammad's 'entry into the house of al-Arqam' became a landmark in the course of His ministry.

From that time, probably about the year 614, opposition to the Prophet intensified, while the number of Muslims increased.

Two men, who gave their allegiance to Muhammad in this period, brought great strength to the still weak and defenceless Muslim community.

One was Hamzah, the hunter uncle of the Prophet; the other was 'Umar, the son of al-Khattab, a prominent member of the Banu- 'Adi clan of the Quraysh.

[1 Abu'l-Hakam 'Amr Ibn Hisham.

Abu-Jahl means 'father of ignorance'.

He is known by this epithet because of his stubborn opposition to the Prophet.] One day, on his return from a hunting expedition, Hamzah was told that Abu-Jahl had maltreated Muhammad in a most offensive manner.

Aroused, he rushed to the Ka'bah where he found Abu-Jahl seated amongst his friends.

Hamzah made a dash for him and hit him with his bow.

How dared Abu-Jahl abuse Muhammad when he, Hamzah, was a follower of the Faith that his Nephew was preaching?

Some of the Banu-Makhzum who were present rose to oppose the hunter, but Abu-Jahl, confessing his exceeding vindictiveness in his treatment of Muhammad, restrained them and bloodshed was averted.

Hamzah had not professed Islam before this incident, but he never went back on his word.

There is another version of his sudden and impetuous espousal of the cause of his Nephew but, however it happened, Hamzah remained an ardent Muslim and met his death, years later, on the battlefield.

Verse 122 of the sixth surah, al-An'am ('The Cattle'), refers to Hamzah and Abu-Jahl: 'Shall the dead, whom We have quickened, and for whom We have ordained a light <p30> whereby he may walk among men, be like him, whose likeness is in the darkness, whence he will not come forth?

So it is decked out fair to the unbelievers the things they have done.'  
'Umar's conversion took place under equally dramatic circumstances.

He was well known for his quick, fiery temper and proneness to sudden outbursts.

Hearing one day that Muhammad was in the house of al-Arqam with His followers, he flew into a rage and decided to go straight there, disperse the gathering and slay Muhammad.

On his way he met a member of his own clan, who, hearing what 'Umar intended, retorted that he had better look first to his own kindred.

To his horror and astonishment, 'Umar heard that his sister Fatimah, and her husband Sa'id, had become followers of Muhammad. 'Umar, carrying his sword, now rushed to his sister's home where, at that moment, Fatimah and Sa'id had a visitor, a literate slave named Khabbab, who had brought the twentieth surah of the Qur'an to read to them. 'Umar heard the sound of Khabbab's voice, and his imprecations, heralding his arrival, made Khabbab seek hiding, since, as a slave, he could easily be cut down by 'Umar.

Beside himself with rage, 'Umar would have struck his brother-in-law, but Fatimah shielded her husband and received the full force of the blow, which drew much blood from her face.

This cooled 'Umar's temper and, instead of subjecting his sister and Sa'id to

further torments, he asked to be shown what was being read.

But Fatimah told him that he was a worshipper of idols, unclean, and was not fit to handle the sacred text.

Strangely enough, 'Umar went meekly away, washed himself and returned.

On reading the opening verses of the surah of Ta-Ha, he marvelled at their excellence and was overcome with remorse.

We have not sent down the Qur'an unto thee that thou shouldst grieve.

But for an admonition unto him who feareth God, being a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the lofty heavens.

The All-Merciful sitteth on His throne.

To Him belongeth whatsoever there is in the heavens and on the earth, and whatsoever there is between them, and whatsoever there is neath the soil. <p31>

And shouldst thou raise thy voice, He assuredly knoweth all that is secret and all that is yet more hidden.

God -- beside Whom there is no other God, and to Whom belongeth the Names most excellent. (xx, 1-7.)

'Umar left his sister's home to seek Muhammad once again in the house of al-Arqam.

Muslims gathered there, noticing his approach, were perturbed, but Hamzah told them not to fear, for he could deal with 'Umar single-handed.

It was Muhammad Himself who met 'Umar at the door. 'How much longer art thou going to persecute me?' he asked.

And 'Umar, contrite and abashed, replied: 'O Messenger of God!

I have come to offer thee my allegiance.' <p32>

4 Migration to Ethiopia

Sometime in the year 615, a number of Muslims, men, women and children, went to Ethiopia.

Some returned within a few years, others stayed in Africa for more than a decade, and at least one of them became a Christian there.

These are the bare facts.

However, Western scholars have posed problem after problem in the context of this migration.

Why did these Muslims leave Mecca?

Why did they choose to go to Ethiopia?

Why did some return earlier and some much later?

Was there the danger of some kind of schism within the relatively minute Muslim community?

These are some of the questions they have been asking, and since there is no way of getting detailed answers in histories written by Muslims themselves, they have resorted to conjecture.

But perhaps there are simple answers to these questions.

The opposition to the Prophet was increasing, but so was the number of Muslims.

Even the person of Muhammad Himself was no longer immune from attack, for His adversaries, no longer content with verbal abuse, would strike Him, throw ashes over Him, and strew thorns in His path.

His followers -- particularly slaves and young members of well-known families -- likewise suffered persecution.

What could be more natural than to get a number of them away from the seething cauldron of Mecca.

But where would they go?

Not yet to Yathrib, where they could not be certain of their reception.

On the northern confines of the peninsula, Persians and Byzantines and their respective clients were at each other's throat.

Yemen in the south was in Persian hands.

Over the years, however, there had been traffic between Arabia and Ethiopia, and the Negus (or the Najashi as the Arabs called him) was known to be a humane and benevolent monarch.

Those Muslims who went to Ethiopia came from a variety of clans and from many backgrounds.

There were 'Uthman Ibn <sup><p33></sup>'Affan and the youthful Khalid Ibn Sa'id, both of the clan of 'Abd-Shams of the House of Umayyah; Ja'far Ibn Abi-Talib, a brother of 'Ali, of the House of Hashim; 'Uthman Ibn Maz'un of the clan of Banu-Jumah; 'Amr Ibn Suraqah of Banu-'Adi, the clan to which 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab belonged; Abu-'Ubaydah, the son of al-Jarrah of the clan of al-Harith; 'Ayyash Ibn Abi-Rabi-'ah of Banu-Makhzum, a powerful clan.

These few names suffice to show their diversity.

Yet nowhere can one find any evidence of schism.

The whole Muslim community was under attack, was too small to split apart, and, above all, gave total and unreserved allegiance and devotion to the Prophet.

Had there been any danger of a rift, would the Prophet have allowed a large number of Muslims to take themselves off to a distant land for an indefinite period, totally bereft of His guidance?

That is inconceivable.

We shall never know on what basis the choice of emigrants was made, or exactly how many they were.

Ibn-Hisham, in his life of the Prophet (Siratu Rasuli'llah), has recorded eighty-three names, but the number has been put as high as one hundred and nine.

They could not have attempted to move out of Mecca in one group; their adversaries would have blocked their departure.

So, in small numbers, they quietly slipped away, without such men as Hamzah, Abu-Bakr and 'Umar, who would not take the road to self-imposed exile.

When the leaders of the Meccans learned of the Muslims' exodus, they took fright, and sent two men to the Negus to ask for the return of the emigrants.

One of these was 'Amr Ibn al-'As, whom we shall encounter frequently in the course of this book.

The other has been named variously as 'Abdu'llah, the son of Abu-Rabi'ah, and 'Ammarah, the son of Walid.

It was the wily 'Amr who acted as the spokesman for the aggrieved leaders of the Quraysh. 'Amr, destined to become the conqueror of Egypt, whether as pagan or Muslim had always a sweet tongue and was master of the art of beguilement.

The two envoys took with them an appreciable supply of leather goods, for which the craftsmen of Mecca were famous, to smooth their way into the favour of the officials and courtiers at Axum, the capital city of Ethiopia.

When received by the Negus, 'Amr protested that these emigrants were renegades who had brought disgrace to their town and clans; they had abandoned the religion <p34> of their forefathers, had not adopted the religion which the Negus followed, but instead had contrived a pernicious religion of their own.

He besought the Negus not to keep such mischief-makers in his realm, but to send them back to Mecca where they could be contained.

Courtiers, well primed and bribed, added their voices to his pleas.

However, as the emigrants had rightly surmised, the Negus was a just man and would not be swayed by 'Amr Ibn al-'As., or by his own courtiers.

He summoned the emigrants to appear before him, and they chose Ja'far Ibn Abi-Talib, the cousin of the Prophet, to speak for them.

When questioned by the Negus, Ja'far replied: 'O King!

Ask these men whether we have been guilty of theft or murder.' They could only answer in the negative.

Then Ja'far told the Negus that they had been idolaters leading a life of lustful extravagance; they had been cruel to the weak and totally unmindful of their deeds, until God gave them a Prophet, whose name was Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi'llah.

Their Prophet, Ja'far said, had taught them the worship of the one true God, and had guided them to shun evil ways.

Then the Negus asked to hear some of this Prophet's sayings.

Ja'far had with him either the whole or a part of the nineteenth surah of the Qur'an -- the Surah of Maryam or Mary -- in which the story of Zachariah and John the Baptist and Mary and Jesus is told, and wherein it is related that the infant Jesus said, while in his cradle: 'Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive' (v.

34).

The ruler of Ethiopia was well satisfied, and declared that the emigrants could stay in his country and live amongst his people as long as they wished.

'Amr, although crest-fallen, would not admit defeat.

He thought of a ruse which he was certain would enmesh the Muslims.

A day or two later, he once again sought an audience with the Negus.

The Muslims, he suggested, should be interrogated on how they viewed the person of Christ.

Ja'far was again sent for and questioned.

His answer was that Christ, in the words of their Prophet, was the Servant of God, His Apostle, His Spirit and His Word, born of Mary, the Blessed Virgin.

'Amr had lost. <p35>

5 Boycott of the House of Hashim

Muhammad was now left in Mecca with a reduced following, and seemed more defenceless than ever.

But His vehemence in denouncing the worship of idols did not abate.

On the contrary it gained in vigour.

He had indeed risen to be the Nadhir -- He who warns.

The man who was now increasingly the spearhead of opposition to Muhammad was Abu-Jahl ('Amr Ibn Hisham) of the Banu-Makhzum.

The failure of the Meccans' envoys to Ethiopia made His opponents even more determined to quash His Faith, which was gaining ground so alarmingly.

They arranged to meet visitors to Mecca, mostly those who had come to worship al-'Uzza and al-Manat and the other idols in the Ka'bah, and tell them that Muhammad was an accomplished magician, who had, by His art of magic, succeeded in breaching family loyalties.

For Arabs, family ties and the sense of kinship were of paramount value, not to be trifled with. (This was particularly evidenced in' the case of Muhammad Himself, when all His relations, with the exception of His uncle, Abu-Lahab, stood by Him, even though most of them were not Muslims.) The leaders of the Quraysh were certain that these grave charges of assaulting family bonds and of

practising magic, which their tradition abhorred, would make any visitor approached by Muhammad and His followers recoil in horror.

When 'Abdu'llah Ibn Mas'ud, who was a freedman, tried to recite verses from the Qur'an in public, he was stoned and driven away.

As the Muslims, in general, came to feel more and more the burden of rejection, even Abu-Bakr, a highly-respected figure in the society of Mecca, could not but sense that he was becoming isolated from the merchants who ordered the affairs of the town.

He had bought a number of slaves, fellow Muslims, in order to free them, and had given financial aid to the emigrants.

Now his <p36> business was dwindling and he was growing poorer all the time.

At last even his life was threatened, and the Prophet bade him leave Mecca and find a place of safety.

Reluctantly he left the town, bewildered as to where to go.

His own clan, the Banu-Taym, was not powerful enough to give him adequate protection.

Ibn-Hisham tells us that in the desert Abu-Bakr came upon Ibn-ad-Dughunnah (or al-Dughaynah), of the clan of Banu'l-Harith Ibn 'Abd-Manat, who was also the head of a confederacy called al-Ahabish.

This man knew Abu-Bakr well, and enquired what he was doing there in the middle of the desert.

On learning of Abu-Bakr's plight, he took him back to Mecca and announced to the people that Abu-Bakr was under his jiwar or 'protection', and that none should presume to molest him.

Since no degree of ill-treatment, no amount of calumny or persecution could either discredit Muhammad or silence Him, the leaders of the Quraysh tried fresh tactics.

They chose a deputation to attend upon Abu-Talib and appeal to him to restrain His Nephew.

Included in that deputation were Abu-Jahl; Abu-Sufyan, the son of Harb, the leading man of the House of Umayyah; 'Utbah, the son of Rabi'ah, and his brother, Shaybah, of the clan of 'Abd-Shams -- all wealthy and influential merchants of Mecca.

Abu-Talib managed to pacify them, but the Prophet's denunciation of all the polytheists of previous generations stung the leaders of the Quraysh to the quick, and a second deputation went to Abu-Talib complaining bitterly.

They stated that their patience was exhausted, and that if the head of the House of Hashim did not act soon to put an end to Muhammad's activities, or to disown him, both he and his Nephew would suffer the consequences.

Yet a third time a deputation visited Abu-Talib.

Still the Prophet would not yield an inch to the idolaters' demands, nor would Abu-Talib withdraw his protection from Muhammad.

By then the leaders of the Quraysh had reached the end of the road.

They decided to impose a boycott on the Houses of Hashim and Muttalib.

A formal declaration was drawn up and placed in the Ka'bah.

It banned marriage with any member of the two Houses, and forbade all transactions with them: nothing was to be bought from them, nothing sold to them.

This boycott was imposed sometime in the year 616 and lasted for three years.

With the exception of Abu-Lahab all the Hashimites and the Muttalibites, most <p37> of whom were not Muslims, moved into the valley adjacent to Mecca, where Abu-Talib had his abode.

Muhammad could still frequent the heart of the town and converse with the people.

Muslims of other clans, not being under a similar interdict, had no need to move, but they suffered enormously and some of them had to seek protectors.

While most of the historians and chroniclers have glossed over the events of those three years of the boycott, some exaggerated accounts do exist which bear no relation to the facts.

It is simply not true that Muhammad and his people went hungry and thirsty, that they lived the life of pariahs in barren caves.

The interdict voiced by the leaders of the Quraysh in Mecca had no binding effect on other clans and tribes who dwelt around Mecca.

And roads into the town were not barred either to the members of the two Houses or to non-Meccans who traded with them.

It is interesting to note that during this very period a number of the emigrants returned from Ethiopia.

But all that being said, the embarrassments, hardships and tribulations of those three years ought not to be underestimated.

Abu-Jahl and Abu-Sufyan and the other vociferous and inveterate adversaries of Muhammad had achieved a good measure of success.

And when the boycott ended, because of its ineffectiveness in ridding the Meccan merchants of the towering personality of the Prophet, and because of the diminishing interest of the bulk of the population which balked at its enforcement and clamoured for its repeal, the Prophet was suddenly overwhelmed by such stark tragedies and tyrannies as put His life at risk, causing Him to say: 'No Prophet has ever suffered as I'. <p38>

## 6 Darkest Days

No sooner had the boycott ended than Khadijah died.

For twenty-five years she had been Muhammad's mainstay and support.

She it was who gave Him an occupation and provided Him with means of livelihood.

She it was who gave Him a home of His own.

She it was who in the hour of doubt gave Him assurance.

She it was who prior to anyone else gave Him unreserved allegiance.

As long as Khadijah lived Muhammad took no other wife, although she was advanced in years when He was still in the prime of His manhood.

Now she had gone from Him and the sense of desolation must have been immense.

The woman He married, a year later, was Sawdah, widow of one of the emigrants to Ethiopia; her father, Zam'ah, was a man of influence in Mecca.

Sawdah's son by her late husband became a charge of the Prophet.[1]

[1 This was 'Abda'r-Rahman, who was killed in the battle of Jalula, the second great battle which the Arabs fought with the forces of the Sasanid Empire.]

Hard upon the heels of the loss of His wife, Muhammad suffered another bereavement: the death of Abu-Talib, which deprived Him of His protector and led to His loss of security.

When Abu-Talib was on his deathbed, the leaders of the Quraysh visited him and asked him to send for Muhammad, so that they could come to terms and make their peace.

Muhammad's response was that they should say, 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God', and then all would be well.

These hardened idolaters would never admit that, and the chasm between them and Muhammad remained as wide as ever.

The man who succeeded Abu-Talib as the head of the House of Hashim was that same inveterate foe who, in the three years of the boycott, had cut himself off from all his kinsmen, but now had the right of seniority.

Abu-Lahab, it being expected of him, at first gave his protection to Muhammad, but soon he found a pretext <p39> to reverse his decision, withdraw that protection and disown his Nephew.

He tried to make the Prophet compromise Himself by withdrawing His condemnation of their idolatrous ancestors, a step which Abu-Talib had never taken.

Being left without the protective arm of one's dan had very serious consequences in Arabia.

Muhammad's life was now imperilled, and He decided to leave Mecca.

Alone and unaided He made His way to Ta'if, although some chroniclers have

stated that He was accompanied by Zayd Ibn Harithah, His freedman and adopted son.

Ta'if, peopled by the Banu-Thaqif, was some fifty miles southeast of Mecca, and stood in vivid contrast to it.

Being well endowed with water, Ta'if was far more salubrious and was a place of verdure and trees.

Many wealthy merchants and notables of Mecca possessed orchards and vineyards there, to which they resorted occasionally.

Thus the influence of the Quraysh was much felt in Ta'if.

According to Ibn-Hisham there were three brothers in Ta'if, sons of 'Amr Ibn 'Umayr, who held the reins of power: 'Abd-Yalil, Mas'ud and Habib.

The Prophet sought them out and told them of His mission.

But they rejected Him.

One of them said, 'Could not God find someone other than thee to send us as His Messenger?' and another exclaimed: 'Should God have sent thee He would have torn away the covering of the Ka'bah,' while the third brother made this plea: 'If thou art a Messenger of God as thou sayest, then thou art too great a person to talk to me, and if thou art lying, it is not seemly for me to speak to thee.' Muhammad was taken aback by their levity and shallowness and sensed that with such men at the head of the town, it was futile to tarry any longer with the Banu-Thaqif.

He asked them not to mention to anyone what he had told them, but the three brothers laughed and invited the people to mock and taunt him.

Muhammad had to make His escape followed by the mob who pelted Him with stones.

Wounded and bruised in body and spirit, the Prophet found refuge in a vineyard which belonged to the brothers, 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabi'ah, who had been members of the first deputation that attended Abu-Talib to ask him to restrain his Nephew.

Both brothers were in their vineyard and noticed the state to which Muhammad had been reduced.

Even they were moved to pity for Him and gave their Christian slave, 'Addas, a plate of grapes to take to Muhammad.

Before eating, the Prophet said, 'Bismi'llah' -- 'In the Name of God'.

The Christian slave was greatly astonished and, looking intently at Muhammad, said: 'By God, this is not the kind of word spoken by the people of these parts.' Muhammad asked him: 'Of which land art thou a native and what is thy Faith?' 'I am a Christian from Nineveh,' 'Addas replied.

The Prophet said, 'The home of Jonah, son of Matthew.' 'Addas, even more astonished, asked Muhammad: 'And what dost thou know of Jonah?' 'He was my

brother, a Prophet,' replied Muhammad, 'and I am a Prophet.' Then, Ibn-Hisham tells us, 'Addas kissed the head and hands and feet of the Messenger of God, and his masters, seeing him do this, berated him.

But 'Addas said: 'My masters I in the whole world nothing can be better than this, because He spoke of something which none but a Prophet can know,' to which the sons of Rabi'ah rejoined: 'Do not abandon thy religion for his, for thine is a better one.'

It was there in Ta'if that the Prophet, rebuffed and insulted by its headmen and stoned by its people, prayed thus: 'O God!

I grieve before Thee for the feebleness of my powers and the insignificance of my being amongst men.

O God, the Most Merciful I Thou art the Lord of the weak and Thou art my Lord.' This was the darkest hour.

Muhammad was isolated, insecure everywhere in the land of His birth, where He had been reared and had lived all His life.

Cast out of Ta'if, He could return to Mecca only if He could find a powerful chieftain to provide Him with jiwara (protection).

He appealed to Akhnas Ibn Shurayq, the head of the Banu-Zuhrah, but was rejected.

Then He turned to Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, who also refused to stand by Him.

Al-Mut'im Ibn 'Adi, chief of the Banu-Nawfal, agreed, in the end, to extend his protection to Muhammad.

How harrowing it must have been for the Prophet to set foot in His native town under the umbrella of a chieftain not of His own clan, and an inveterate idolater to boot.

When the Prophet reached Mecca the fair and the annual markets were in full swing, and many tribes had come to render homage to the idols of the Ka'bah and participate in various ceremonials.

Muhammad approached them to gain their adherence, while Abu-Jahl and Abu-Lahab and Abu-Sufyan went about telling these visiting Bedouins not to heed Muhammad, for He had taken leave of His senses.

The first tribe to reject Him out of hand was the Banu-Hanifah.

The leading man of Banu-Amir <p41> Ibn Sa'sa'ah would have entered into an alliance with Him with the object of establishing his own dominion over the whole of Arabia.

But he found the Prophet completely unresponsive to such overtures.

Then Tufayl Ibn 'Amr of the clan of Banu-Daws recognized and accepted the mission of Muhammad.

However, the Prophet chose to remain in Mecca and not to commit Himself to an

uncertain reception by the Banu-Daws.

It is said that sixteen clans and tribes gave a negative answer to Muhammad's call.

It was at this time that the Prophet had an experience which is known as the Mi'raj or the Ascent.

The first verse of the seventeenth surah, the Bani-Isra'il ('The House of Israel'), reads:

Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night  
from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque  
the precincts of which We have blessed,  
that We might show him some of Our signs.

He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing.[1]

[1 A.

J.

Arberry's translation.

He calls this surah 'The Night Journey'.]

This verse is the basis for the account of the Prophet's 'Night Journey' from Mecca to Jerusalem, and the 'Ascent' from Jerusalem to Heaven.

Emile Dermenghem relates the full story of the mi'raj in his book, *The Life of Mahomet*.

The world of Islam has accepted the literal fact of this Night Journey, just as Christendom has accepted the literal fact of the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ.

However, voices have been raised, here and there, to assert that the mi'raj of the Prophet was not an actual physical occurrence but a profound spiritual experience.

Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i (1743-1826) and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti (1793- 1843), founders of the Shaykhi school, took this stand openly, for which they were severely criticized and even vehemently denounced.

A full decade had passed since the day Muhammad received His call in the wilderness of the hills overlooking the House of Ka'bah.

Still the idols stood around the Ka'bah, and Muhammad was tolerated in His native town only by the fiat of an idolatrous chieftain, unrelated to His own clan.

At the end of that decade, in the summer of A.D.

620, an event occurred, at first apparently insignificant, which was to open the way to the total triumph of Muhammad's ministry. <p42>

7 Converts in Yathrib

In the pilgrim season of A.D.

620 Muhammad focused His attention on visitors from Yathrib.

This was the town where His father had died in the prime of manhood and near which he was buried.

In His childhood, Aminah, His mother, had taken Him to Yathrib where she had relatives.

Conditions in this town differed from those at Mecca.

The existence of three strong Jewish colonies -- the Banu-Qaynuqa', the Banu'n-Nadir and the Banu-Qurayzah -- enriched the life and widened the outlook of the people, who were mostly tillers of the soil and keepers of orchards, unlike Meccans who were men of the mart and trade.

They belonged in the main to two tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, each with its own subdivisions and clans.

Civil war in or around 615 had disturbed the calm of Yathrib.

At the battle of Bu'ath, the Aws, with the aid of the Jewish Banu-Qurayzah and Banu'n-Nadir, had defeated the Khazraj.

Muhammad, in that summer of 620, met and conversed with several men from Yathrib, six in number according to Ibn-Hisham and seven according to Ibn-al-Athir.

Their names have been recorded.[1] They listened to Muhammad and accepted Him.

Then they returned home with the good news that a Prophet had risen amongst the Arabs.

[1 They were As'ad Ibn Zurarah, 'Awf Ibn al-Harith, Rafi' Ibn Malik, Qutbah, the son of 'Amir, and 'Uqbah, the son of another 'Amir, Jabir Ibn 'Abdu'llah, and 'Amir Ibn 'Abd-Harithah.]

Speculation regarding these first converts of Yathrib and their motives is fruitless.

All of them were men of the Khazraj, the beaten and subdued tribe.

None of them, with the possible exception of As'ad Ibn Zurarah, were of particular eminence amongst their compatriots.

On the whole, the people of Yathrib were poverty-ridden as compared with the merchants of Mecca, for the <p43> money, skills and good properties of Yathrib belonged to the Jewish colonies.

Yathrib was not a compact township.

It consisted of a number of fortified villages within which the various clans dwelt, cultivating the palm groves and orchards which separated them.

The few men who accepted Muhammad had nothing to gain, but were genuinely convinced that He was indeed what He claimed to be -- the Messenger of God and His Apostle.

The following year five of them came back to Mecca, bringing seven others to whom they had imparted His message.

We do not know in what manner they conveyed that message.

Nor do we know what Muhammad did in Mecca during that year, from one summer to the next.

He does not seem to have attracted any more Meccans to His Faith.

It is said that the idolater Mut'im gave Him protection, on the understanding that He did not engage in public debate.

Whatever the reason, it looks as if Muhammad, by this time, had turned His back on the people of Mecca.

In a mountain pass, the 'Aqabah, close to Mecca, the Prophet met the twelve men of Yathrib, and they pledged their fealty to Him.

The Meccans, of course, had no inkling of what was happening between Muhammad and these men.

In addition to the seven newcomers, have had come to Mecca for a second time.[1] According to Ibn-Hisham, 'Ubadah, the son of Samit, related that at night they repaired to the 'Aqabah and made the pledge that they would never join partners with God,[2] would refrain from theft, adultery, murder of their offspring and calumny, and would obey the Prophet in all things.

This pledge was called the Bay'at an-Nisa' -- the Pledge of Women -- because, although embracing loyalty and fidelity, it did not include a promise to fight.

When the time came for them to depart, Muhammad sent Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr with them to teach and instruct them.

Mus'ab was a descendant of 'Abd-Manaf, the great-great-grandfather of the Prophet.

Before long he gained a signal victory by winning the allegiance of Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, the chieftain of the tribe of Aws, and Usayd Ibn Hudayr, another prominent figure of the same tribe.

[1 The seven newcomers are named as: 'Uwaym Ibn Sa'idah, 'Ubadah Ibn Samit, Abu'l-Haytham Ibn Tayyihan (or Tayhan), 'Abbas Ibn 'Ubadah, Yazid Ibn Tha'labah, Dhakwan Ibn 'Abd-Qays, and Mu'adh Ibn al-Harith, a brother of 'Awf, who had responded the previous year to Muhammad's call and had come once again.

In addition to 'Awf, the four others who came a second time were:

As'ad Ibn Zurarah, Rafi' Ibn Malik, 'Uqbah and Qutbah.]

[2 This expression means putting oneself on a par with the one God, Who is supreme over all.]

And now once again a curtain falls upon the events in Mecca.

There is no report of further opposition to Muhammad, no report of any new converts to Islam.

But in Yathrib Mus'ab was forging ahead with remarkable success, for in the pilgrim season of the following year, A.D.

622, seventy-two men and three women came to Mecca to present themselves to the Prophet.

In the dead of night, when Mecca and the visitors to Mecca slept, those seventy-five Muslims of Yathrib quietly made their way to the same mountain pass, the 'Aqabah.

Muhammad came, accompanied by his uncle, 'Abbas, who, although still an idolater, kept an eye on the interests of his Nephew. 'Abbas wished to be assured of their unswerving loyalty to Muhammad, were He to make His home with them and entrust to them His all.

He spoke first, followed by Muhammad, who recited to them portions from the Qur'an.

Mus'ab had done his work well.

These Muslims of Yathrib were firm, determined, unwavering.

They made it plain that they would stand by the Prophet through thick and thin.

According to Ibn-Hisham, the recognized leader of the group, al-Bara' Ibn Ma'rur, spoke for all when he said that they would protect the Prophet with their arms.

Thus they gave their word that, should necessity arise, they would not hesitate to fight under the banner of the Prophet.

Abu'l-Haytham now posed the question whether Muhammad would in future ever leave them to their fate and return to His native town.

The Prophet smiled at this and gave a categorical declaration: 'Your blood will be my blood, and your cause my cause.

Ye are mine and I am of you.

I shall fight whoever shall fight you, and shall keep peace with whoever is at peace with you.' Then 'Abbas Ibn 'Ubadah addressed his compatriots, asking whether they were absolutely certain in their hearts as to what they were committing themselves.

Whoever had any doubts, he said, should go, for there would be no turning back later; but should they give their allegiance to Muhammad, it would benefit them forevermore.

With one voice they gave their assent and expressed their conviction: they believed in Muhammad.

They accepted Him as the Messenger of God.

Then they filed past Him, one by one, touching His hand which was their way of swearing fealty.

Then the same 'Abbas Ibn 'Ubadah <p45> asked the Prophet for His word of command that they might, on the morrow, set upon the idolaters and disperse them.

Muhammad replied that God had not sanctioned such action and that they should go in peace.

Twelve men were now chosen to be the Nuqaba' -- the leaders -- nine from the Khazraj and three from the Aws.

Muhammad told them that they stood in the same relation to Him as the Apostles to Jesus; they were to be the shepherds of His flock.

The nine Khazrajites were:

As'ad Ibn Zurarah, Sa'd Ibn Rabi', 'Abdu'llah Ibn Rawahah, Rah' Ibn Malik, al-Bara' Ibn Ma'rur, 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Amr, 'Ubadah Ibn as-Samit, Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, Mundhar Ibn 'Amr; and the three from the Aws were:

Usayd Ibn Hudayr, Sa'd Ibn Khaythamah and Abu'l-Haytham Ibn Tayhan.

Their pledge given and the compact made, the Muslims of Yathrib went back quietly to their encampment, but the movement of such a large number did not go unnoticed.

The leaders of the idolaters of Mecca became aware that something had passed between Muhammad and some of the pilgrims from Yathrib.

They sent their men to investigate, but those responsible for the contingent from Yathrib denied any knowledge of the affair, as indeed they had none.

The Yathribites were allowed to depart, but the conviction grew at Mecca that all was not well and that Muhammad had had some dealing with these people.

A body set out in pursuit of the pilgrims from Yathrib, who had already covered a good distance.

Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, one of the twelve muqaba', who was some way behind his compatriots, fell into the hands of the Meccans.

He was beaten and dragged back to Mecca, and would most probably have met his death at their hands, had he not invoked the jiwār of Jubayr Ibn Mut'im, which he enjoyed.

Jubayr was the son of that Mut.'im who had given the Prophet his protection.

Muhammad now counselled His followers in Mecca to betake themselves to Yathrib, but they were not to go in a mass exodus because it would enrage the idolaters.

This meant total uprooting, abandoning homes, businesses, property, although many of them had little to leave behind.

But what the heads of clans and families most resented, as they had already shown when they had asked the Negus to send away the Muslim emigrants, was the total disregard of blood ties and kinship which Muslims displayed, and which

the idolaters of Mecca considered to be a <p46> deliberate and unforgivable insult. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab and his brother, Zayd, found little difficulty in quitting Mecca, but some of the younger men were less fortunate.

Two of them, Hisham Ibn al-'As and 'Ayyash Ibn Abi-Rabi'ah, were held and chained, but were eventually rescued.

Suhayb Ibn Sinan was another Muslim who found himself prevented from leaving Mecca; but he was wealthy and could buy his way out.

It is thought that verse 203 of the second surah of the Qur'an, al-Baqarah ('The Cow'), refers to him: 'And there are those amongst men who sell themselves to attain the good pleasure of God, and God is kind to His servants.'

Within a short time Mecca was almost denuded of its Muslims, and the idolaters were not only outraged but sorely frightened.

However, Muhammad was still there, and so were the first Muslims: 'Ali and Zayd and Abu-Bakr. <p47>

#### 8 The Idolaters' Plot

The leaders of the Quraysh, now thoroughly aroused to future possibilities, held a conclave to decide what action they should take against the person of Muhammad.

It may be diverting to read a historian writing solemnly of Satan coming into that conclave in the guise of a benign old gentleman from Najd.

But Satan or no Satan, the purpose of those leaders of the Quraysh was truly satanic.

They intended to find the most convenient way of destroying the Prophet.

Of course Abu-Jahl and Abu-Sufyan were there, and so were 'Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabi'ah; Umayyah and Ubayy, sons of Khalaf; Abu'l-Bakhtari Ibn Hisham and al-'As Ibn Wa'il -- all seasoned opponents.

Some forty of these men had assembled in the council chamber which Qusayy had built, taking care to exclude the members of the House of Hashim and their confederates.

The conclusion they reached was that Muhammad should be murdered, not by a solitary assassin, but with all the clans participating in the act, each to provide one man for the purpose.

Thus the Banu-Hashim would be faced with the fact that there was not just one murderer, whose clan they could engage in a blood-feud, and they would rest content with receiving blood-money, to be provided by all the clans.

Verse 30 of the eighth surah, al-Anfal ('The Spoils'), refers to this consultation of the idolaters of Mecca: 'And when the unbelievers were plotting against thee, to put thee under restraint, or to slay thee, or to expel thee, they were plotting and God was plotting and God is the best of plotters.' About this time Abu-Bakr was preparing to depart for Yathrib, but Muhammad

asked him to wait a while so that they could go together.

Abu-Bakr was overjoyed that he would be travelling in the company of the Prophet, and undertook all the arrangements for the journey.

By then the idolaters were keeping watch <p48> over Muhammad's house.

One noon in June 622 (September has also been suggested), the Prophet left His home in such a manner that He was not noticed and went to the house of Abu-Bakr.

That night 'All slept in the Prophet's bed, but the idolaters did not recognize him.

They thought that the sleeper was Muhammad Himself and watched and waited for the daylight.

In the meantime, the Prophet and Abu-Bakr, under cover of darkness, left Mecca and withdrew to a hiding-place in a cave on Mount Thawr, about three miles from the town, in the opposite direction from Yathrib.

Abu-Bakr had bought two camels and left them in the charge of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Arqat (or Urayqat) of the clan of Banu-Dayl (a branch of the Kinanah), who was not a Muslim but was trusted by Abu-Bakr.

A freedman of Abu-Bakr, a Muslim named 'Amir Ibn Fuhayrah, had been commissioned to take them milk every evening and to bring his sheep to the mouth of the cave, so that footprints would be obliterated by their hooves. 'Abdu'llah, a son of Abu-Bakr, was to convey to them news of what the leaders of the Quraysh were doing.

Abu-Bakr had only five thousand dirhams left of his riches, which he carried with him.

The Prophet, it seems, had no money to carry.

In the morning when the idolaters discovered the identity of the sleeper they were naturally furious, and one of them, Abu'l Bakhtari, would have murdered 'All, but Abu-Jahl prevented him:

Muhammad had gone and no purpose would be served by 'Ali's death.

They set out in search, coming close to the entrance of the cave.

Hearing footsteps, Abu-Bakr was greatly agitated, but the Prophet told him that God was with them and they had nothing to fear. 'If ye do not help him, God did verily help him, when he was driven out by the unbelievers; when the two were in the cave, and the second of the two told his companion: "Sorrow not, for God is surely with us"; and God sent down on him His Shechinah,[1] and aided him with unseen hosts; and degraded the word of the unbelievers to the uttermost, and God's word is that which attaineth the heights, and God is the All-Mighty and the All-Wise.' (Surah ix, 40, entitled at-Tawbah -- 'The Repentance'.)

Legend has it that a shrub grew at the mouth of the cave and threw out its tendrils, doves came, built a nest and laid their eggs, and spiders wove their

webs; when searchers wanted to enter the <p49> cave, Umayyah, the son of Khalaf (who used to expose his slave, Bilal, to the blaze of the midday sun), told them not to waste their time since no one could have gone into that cave without disturbing the doves and the spiders' webs, adding jocosely that the spiders seemed to have been at work long before the birth of Muhammad.

The idolaters, not finding any trace of Muhammad and His companion, announced a reward of a hundred camels (another version gives two hundred) for anyone who would bring them Muhammad, dead or alive.

[1 A Hebrew word meaning 'calmness':

Sakinah in Arabic.]

After three days, 'Abdu'llah, the son of Abu-Bakr, reported that the uproar in Mecca had subsided and the-Meccans had given up hope of finding the fugitives in the precincts of the town.

His sister, Asma', brought food for the journey, a lamb roasted whole and wrapped in a leather spread.

In order to fasten the bundle of food and the water-gourd, two lengths of cord were needed, and since they had none, Asma' took off her girdle and tore it into halves, earning the appellation of Dhat an-Nitaqayn (Possessor of Two Girdles), which has come down throughout history.

Then 'Abdu'llah Ibn Arqat brought the two camels.

Muhammad and Abu-Bakr rode one, and 'Amir and 'Abdu'llah the other.

They needed the son of Arqat, although a polytheist, to act as their guide through the unbeaten tracks of the desert.

Before long they were overtaken by Suraqah Ibn Malik of the Banu-Mudlij, who was after the reward offered by the leaders of the Quraysh.

However, a mishap to his horse forced him to appeal to the Prophet for help, which being granted he gave up the pursuit and went back to tell the Quraysh that he had tried but could not find Muhammad anywhere in the desert.

The next encounter was with Buraydah of the Banu-Aslam, who had an escort of seventy riders.

Such was the power and eloquence of Muhammad's speech that, enthralled and overwhelmed, Buraydah exclaimed: 'Who art thou?' to which the Prophet replied: 'I am Muhammad, the son of 'Abdu'llah the son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, the Messenger of God -- the Lord of all the worlds.' Buraydah instantly affirmed: 'I bear witness that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is verily the Messenger of God.' His riders followed their master's example and ranged themselves behind the Prophet.

Buraydah asked Muhammad to let him be His host in Yathrib, to which Muhammad replied that He would <p50> allow His camel to go wherever it wished; where it stopped there He would take His abode.

But Buraydah, afire with the zeal of his newly-found Faith and wishing to perform a spectacular deed, took off his turban, fixed it on his lance, and rode in front of the cavalcade as the standard-bearer of the Prophet.

Az-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, the cousin of the Prophet, was the next person met with on the road.

By then, Muhammad was well away from the danger zone.

Az-Zubayr, returning from a trading journey to Syria, had white robes with him which the Prophet and Abu-Bakr donned.

Muhammad advised him to go on to Mecca, settle his business transactions, and then join Him in Yathrib.

The question naturally arises, why did not some of the idolaters of Mecca themselves set off in pursuit of Muhammad, to gain the reward of a hundred or two hundred camels, rather than leaving it entirely to the men of the desert?

We shall never know.

They had a sufficient number of young and agile men in their ranks, who were fiercely opposed to the Prophet.

There were 'Ikrimah, the son of Abu-Jahl; Safwan, the son of Umayyah the son of Khalaf; and Khalid Ibn al-Walid.

Abu-Jahl closely questioned 'Abdu'llah and Asma', who had helped their father to escape.

He slapped Asma' so hard in the face that her earring came loose and fell off.

But there it all ended and no further effort was made by the Meccans to trace the whereabouts of the Prophet.

Meanwhile, the Muslims of Yathrib had received news of the Prophet's departure from Mecca.

Each day they went to the outskirts of the town, taking shelter from the sun under overhanging rocks, to scan the horizon for a sign of the Prophet; and when the midday sun began to wane, they returned to their homes, anxious and perplexed.

On June 28th (other versions are July 2nd and September 24th), after the Muslims had gone home, a Jew, looking over the wall of his settlement, saw the Prophet approaching the oasis on his camel, named al-Quswah.

He called out to the Muslims that He whom they awaited had come; and Muslims, some five hundred men and many women and children, poured out of the town singing and shouting: 'The Prophet of God has come, the Messenger of God has come.' It is reported that a Jew, whether the same one who had announced the arrival of the Prophet or not, bitterly complained to a co-religionist that these <p51> accursed Arabs had just then gathered round a man from Mecca, who claimed to be a Prophet.

That was how the celebrated Salman al-Farsi[1] -- Salman, the Persian -- working in the palm grove of his master, first heard about Muhammad. [1 The Persians would call him Salman-i-Farsi] <p52>

9 Medina -- the City of the Prophet

With the arrival of Muhammad, Yathrib changed its name and the old name was soon forgotten.

It was now the City of the Prophet -- al-Madinat an-Nabi.

In the course of years that was shortened to al-Madinah[1] -- the City, and the City it has remained.

[1 Medina is the form used in English, just as Mecca has become current for al-Makkah.]

When the Prophet reached Yathrib He alighted at Quba' on the edge of the oasis, where the clan of Banu-'Amr Ibn 'Awf lived.

He was very tired after the hardships of His hurried exit from Mecca.

Kulthum Ibn Hidm, who was not as yet a Muslim, invited Muhammad to rest in his house for a while, which the Prophet accepted.

How long He stayed in Quba' is uncertain -- three days, four days, five, fourteen, even twenty-two days have been mentioned.

What is certain is that He stayed long enough for 'Ali to join Him, and for a mosque to be built on a piece of land owned by Kulthum, opposite his house. 'Ali had remained in Mecca for a few days to pay Muhammad's creditors and return all the goods consigned to Him.

He had then started on foot for Yathrib, arriving there in a state of exhaustion.

Yet soon he was at work, helping to build the mosque at Quba' -- the first house of worship in the realm of Islam.

Muhammad purchased the land from Kulthum, and all the Muslims gave a hand in constructing the mosque.

Muhammad Himself could be seen carrying earth and making mud bricks.

Verse 109 of the Surah of Repentance (ix, at-Tawbah) is said to refer to the mosque of Quba':

A mosque that was founded  
upon godfearing from the first day is worthier  
for thee to stand in; therein are men who love  
to cleanse themselves; and God loves those  
who cleanse themselves.[1]

[1 Translated by A.

J.

Arberry.] <p53>

At last the day came when the Prophet mounted His camel again to continue into the heart of Medina.

The route lay through a quarter where the clan of Banu-Salim Ibn 'Awf lived.

Here the Muslims had a place for worship, and it being a Friday, Muhammad halted there to greet and talk to them.

It was the first sermon He gave in His city.

Once more on His camel, Muhammad was surrounded on all sides by people who pleaded with Him to make His home with them. 'Itban Ibn Malik and Nawfal Ibn 'Abdi'llah of the Banu-Salim took hold of the halter of the camel to persuade the Prophet to stay in their quarter.

But Muhammad gave them the same answer He had given to Buraydah in the desert:

He would let His camel decide and take Him where it wished.

Thus He went through the quarters of the Banu-Sa'idah and the Banu-Harith Ibn al-Khazraj, until He reached that of the Banu-'Adi Ibn an-Najjar.

Abu-Salit of that clan reminded Muhammad that the Banu-'Adi were His uncles; it was meet that He should reside with them.

And Silma, the mother of the patriarch 'Abdu'l-Muttalib came from this clan.

But the Prophet went His way.

As He passed by the house of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, the latter turned aside, saying: 'Go to the people who deceived thee and brought thee to this town.' Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah (one of the twelve nuqaba') intervened to inform the Prophet that the son of Ubayy was now a frustrated, resentful man, moved by envy, and should be ignored; subsequent to the miseries of their civil war people had agreed to hail him as their ruler, but the advent of the Prophet had blocked his path to power.

On a piece of land, barren and empty save for a few palm trees, the camel stopped and knelt.

There the Prophet would make His abode, but there was no house on that site.

Close to it, however, lived Khalid Ibn Zayd, known as Abu-Ayyub, and he took the Prophet's baggage into his house.

When another invitation was pressed on Him, Muhammad replied that a man should always stay with his baggage.

He lodged in the house of Abu-Ayyub for several months.

The land, where the camel had stopped, belonged to two orphans, Sahl and Suhayl, who would happily have made a present of it to the Prophet.

As'ad Ibn Zurarah, one of the first Muslims of Medina and one of the twelve nuqaba', was their guardian and supported their suit, but Muhammad desired them to <p54> accept payment.

This was made by Abu-Bakr.

A mosque was built on that site and, next to it, a house for the Prophet.

Eventually other houses were built on the periphery of the mosque which was then of simple construction.

When Muhammad gave His first sermon there, He leaned against the trunk of a palm tree.

And there today beside the mosque stands the tomb of the Prophet.

As'ad Ibn Zurarah died shortly afterwards.

His clan, an-Najjar, asked Muhammad to appoint a naqib (singular of nuqaba') for them, to take office in succession to As'ad.

The Prophet, whose great-grandmother belonged to this clan, offered Himself as their Naqib.

So here was Muhammad established in Medina.

But large numbers of the inhabitants of the town were still either idolaters or feigned a belief in Muhammad which was far from genuine.

And the Jews of the three settlements, who had hoped that Muhammad, preaching monotheism as fervently as He did, would naturally gravitate towards them, began to draw back and even turn hostile, when they realized that Muhammad was calling them to testify to His Faith.

However, one of their outstanding men, Husayn Ibn Salam, to whom the Prophet gave the name of His own father, sought the company of Muhammad, and was eventually won over to Him.

Other Jewish leaders kept their distance.

Muhammad named the emigrants from Mecca al-Muhajirun (which means exactly that -- the Emigrants), and gave the Muslims of Medina the appellation of al-Ansar, the Helpers.

Then He established ties of brotherhood between individuals of the two groups, and likewise joined a number of Meccans together in the same relationship. 'Ali He chose as His own brother.

His uncle Hamzah, whom Ibn-Hisham designates as Asadu'llah -- the Lion of God, and the Lion of His Apostle -- became a brother to Zayd Ibn Harithah, the freedman of the Prophet and His adopted son.

Abu-Bakr and 'Umar He pronounced brothers; and then He joined Abu-Bakr to Kharijah Ibn Zayd of the Khazraj, and 'Umar to 'Itban Ibn Malik, also of the Khazraj. 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'A'waf and 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, both Meccans, were allied together as brothers, and then 'Uthman was given a brother from the Ansar in the person of Aratt Ibn Thabit, while 'Abda'r-Rahman was joined to Sa'd Ibn ar-Rabi'.

Sa'd offered to share with 'Abda'r-Rahman everything he had (including two wives, one of whom he offered to divorce for 'Abda'r-Rahman to marry, the choice being left to the <p55> brother-emigrant), but all that 'Abda'r-Rahman wanted was a small loan, and to be shown the way to the market.

He was not a Meccan for nothing.

Beginning most probably as a pedlar, he went on to become a prosperous merchant. 'Uthman had salvaged his possessions in Mecca, and in Medina he added to his considerable wealth, which he spent freely in the interests of the Faith he professed.

But many of the Muhajirun were not as lucky as 'Uthman or even 'Abda'r-Rahman.

They depended entirely on the generosity of their fellow believers in Medina, who were not themselves endowed with an abundance of worldly goods.

Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet, was penniless, and had to manage with what his Nephew could give him.

There were times when the Prophet Himself had not a morsel of food in the house, and there were times when He had to pawn His armour. 'Ali had to earn his living, at one time, drawing water from a well to irrigate an orchard belonging to a Jew.

There were a number who were homeless.

Muhammad arranged some kind of a sleeping-place for them in the mosque, a suffah (bench); hence they came to be known as al-Ahl as-Suffah -- the People of the Bench.

The peasants of Medina shared their cultivated land with their brother-emigrants, but these Meccans, born and bred in arid areas, were not used to lush fields and stagnant water.

They fell ill and, for some time, were useless as workers.

It took them many long months to become acclimatized. 'Uthman Ibn Maz'un of the Banu-Makhzum, a foster-brother of Muhammad, who had also been an emigrant to Ethiopia, died and was buried in the cemetery of Baqi', which achieved fame because many of the descendants of the Prophet and a multitude of early Muslims lie buried there.

The Adhan, the Call to Prayer, was instituted during those initial months in Medina.

The Prophet asked the advice of His followers as to how it should be done.

Someone suggested that the system of blowing a horn, which the Jews had, could be adopted, but the Prophet was averse to it.

Next the bell-ringing of the Christians was mentioned and again the Prophet felt this not suitable.

Lighting a bonfire was the third choice presented to the meeting, but Muhammad

rejected this because of its identification with the practices of the Magians.

Incidentally, it was about this time that Salman the Persian, who was in all probability a Mazdean (Zoroastrian), embraced the Faith of Muhammad.

Finally 'Umar proposed a vocal call, which was hailed as the ideal way, and was accepted by the Prophet.

Bilal, the Ethiopian, was installed in the office of mu'adhdhin.[1]

[1 This word usually appears as muezzin in English.

It denotes one who gives the call to prayer.]

Muhammad's daughters, Fatimah and Umm-Kulthum, and his wife, Sawdah, were still in Mecca.

He sent Zayd Ibn Harithah and Rafi', another of His freedmen, to bring them to Medina.

The leaders of the Quraysh did not prevent their departure, and Zayd was able to bring away His own family as well. 'Abdu'llah, the son of Abu-Bakr, also succeeded in moving out of Mecca, accompanied by his mother, Umm-Ruman, and his two sisters, Asma' and 'A'ishah.

Asma', married to az-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, the cousin of the Prophet, was with child, and her famous son, 'Abdu'llah, was born as soon as they reached Quba'. 'Abda'r-Rahman, another son of Abu-Bakr, still bitterly opposed to his father and to the religion of Muhammad, remained in Mecca, as did Abu-Quhafah, the father of Abu-Bakr, who was very old and blind.

Not long after the arrival of Abu-Bakr's family, Muhammad married 'A'ishah, who was then nine years old.

There was no wedding feast, but Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, as 'A'ishah herself has narrated, sent them a bowl of fresh milk. 'A'ishah was the first child born in Islam.[1]

[1 'A'ishah, Muhammad's third wife, was a daughter of Abu-Bakr, the fourth Muslim, Muhammad's companion on the journey to Medina and the provider of the means of escape, whose dwindling assets were always at the service of the Prophet and the Muslim community.

Abu-Bakr expected to be thus honoured.]

The number of Muslims in Medina was steadily increasing, and the Jews, who had cold-shouldered the Prophet, came to realize that the coming of Muhammad was not just a passing phase in the life of their town, and that they needed a working arrangement with Him.

There is uncertainty regarding the form and manner of negotiation between Muhammad and the Jewish leaders, who have been named as Ka'b Ibn Asad of the Banu-Qurayzah, Huyy Ibn Akhtab of the Banu'n-Nadir, and Mukhayrayq of the Banu-Qaynuqa'; but it is certain that in the charter which the Prophet gave to all the inhabitants of the oasis, forming one body-politic out of its diverse elements, Jews were accorded freedom to practise their own Faith.

Their security was guaranteed under the protection of Islam.

They were not to be molested or affronted. <p57> Their enemies were not to be aided.

Should Medina be attacked Jews would share in its defence, and were they ever to fight on the side of the Muslims, they would contribute financially as well.

No group in the oasis was to engage in a war or enter into any alliance without the sanction of the Prophet.

Mutual trust and loyalty were the keynotes of the Prophet's charter. <p58>  
10 Badr and Uhud

The Muslim calendar dates from the Prophet's Hijrah[1] -- Emigration. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, when caliph, instituted this calendar, and made the month of Muharram its starting-point, though the Prophet's journey from Mecca to Medina took place in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, which is the second month after Muharram.

[1 Some writers in the West have translated Hijrah as 'Flight'.

For this there is no justification. (Variants in English are hegira, hejira, hejra, hijra.)]

When the first year of Hijrah reached its conclusion Muhammad was the virtual master of Medina.

The Muslim community, within that oasis, was growing rapidly, and on the surface all was calm.

But, metaphorically, Medina was the only oasis of calm in all Arabia, and even within Medina anger smouldered in the Jewish settlements and the Munafiqun caused constant annoyance.

These people, condemned more than once in the Qur'an, have had their name rendered into English as 'Hypocrites'.

But as Sir John Glubb points out, this 'translation does not completely convey the sense'.

The Munafiqun, at whose head stood the bitterly disappointed 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, were dissemblers who paid lip service to the Faith of Muhammad but derided it at every possible opportunity.

On one occasion their own kinsmen could no longer tolerate them and threw them out of the mosque.

Prior to the Prophet's arrival on the scene, the Jews outshone the peasants of the Aws and the Khazraj.

Spiritually, culturally, financially, they were the giants; but now, a year after the coming of Muhammad, they felt humbled and dwarfed, and were therefore resentful and angry.

Even the gentle Abu-Bakr could, one day, no longer stand their taunts, and was violent to a Jew who mocked the collecting of alms; their God must be in a

dreary state to need alms, he had observed. <p59>

The Meccans, too, although further enriched at the expense of the Muslims by confiscating everything they had perforce left behind, were smarting under the shame of being thwarted.

Muhammad had slipped from their hands, at the very time when His destruction was assured, and was building a bastion for Himself to the north of them, not far from the route their caravans took to Syria; He would, they believed, undoubtedly come forth in future to challenge them.

Bedouins were no less disturbed.

They were rapacious and valued the freedom of the desert.

The Prophet was kind and considerate to them.

He wished them to give up the life of nomads, and, once Muslim, to live in Medina and forget their boorish ways.

One day a Bedouin was found urinating in the mosque.

Naturally, the Medinites were furious, but the Prophet told them to leave him alone: 'Let him produce a bucketful if he wants'.

Muhammad went to such lengths to tame the fierce men of the desert.

The Prophet knew that sooner or later a clash must come with the unruly forces straddling Arabia.

The second pledge of 'Aqa-bah, which bound seventy-two men of Yathrib to His person, carried with it a promise to fight for Him if needed.

Within three years that promise would be put to the test.

A year and a half had passed since the Prophet's arrival in Medina, when, suddenly and without any previous intimation, He changed the Qiblah (the point towards which the Muslim turns his face while saying his daily obligatory prayers) from the direction of Jerusalem to the direction of Mecca.

Western scholars have contended that Muhammad had originally chosen Jerusalem in order to ingratiate Himself with the Jews, but later, finding them unresponsive, had veered round from Jerusalem to Mecca.

However, there is no evidence in support of this theory -- quite the contrary.

Salat, the daily obligatory prayer, was instituted by Muhammad in the opening years of His ministry, when the number of Muslims could be counted on finger-tips.

In fact, he did not come into contact with the Jews, in any appreciable number, for at least another decade.

There is no record anywhere to show that Muhammad had spoken of His mission to any Jew.

Certainly, before Muhammad reached Yathrib, He had not a single follower from

the Jewish fold.

Then, what reason would He have to ingratiate Himself with the Jews?

Muslims for years had been <p60> turning in prayer towards Jerusalem, when there was no Jew in sight or on the horizon.

Western scholars apart, it looks strange to see in the Nasikhu't- Tavarikh the work of Lisanu'l-Mulk-i-Sipihir, a Persian historian of the nineteenth century, the same allegation that, by turning towards Jerusalem, Muhammad intended to 'soften the hearts of the Jews'.

Even more preposterous is the statement by Sipihir that all the while the Prophet was sad at doing this and told the Angel Gabriel that He wished God would sanction turning towards Mecca, which was also the point of adoration of Abraham, His forbear.

This ridiculous story is taken a step further by affirming that Gabriel maintained his own helplessness in the matter and advised the Prophet to pray and beseech God for the desired dispensation.

This state of affairs, according to Sipihir, went on until the day Gabriel brought, with great joy, the revelation which authorized Muhammad to change the Qiblih.

The vapidness of Sipihir's story, which he must have culled from the writings of one as gullible as himself, is past belief.

This is the verse which permitted Muhammad to change the Qiblih:

We have seen thee turning thy face about  
in the heaven; now We will surely turn thee  
to a direction that shall satisfy thee.

Turn thy face towards the Holy Mosque; and  
wherever you are, turn your faces towards it.

Those who have been given the Book know it is  
the truth from their Lord; God is not heedless of  
the things they do.[1]

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry.

Surah ii, vv.

139 and 136, al-Baqarah -- 'The Cow'.]

The Jews and the idolaters were equally contemptuous of the alteration.

Verse 136 of the same surah counters their jejune objections:

The fools among the people will say,  
'What has turned them from the direction

they were facing in their prayers aforetime?'

Say:

'To God belong the East and the West;  
He guides whomsoever He will  
to a straight path.' <p61>

The 109th verse also alludes to the question of the Qiblah, and the cavillings of the opponents of the Prophet:

To God belong the East and the West;  
whithersoever you turn, there is the Face of God;  
God is All-embracing, All-knowing.

The ordinance of fasting throughout the entire month of Ramadan was also instituted during the second year of the Hijrah.

Instructions regarding the fast are contained in verses 179-83 of the same surah, al-Baqarah.

Also in that second year, Fatimah, the youngest daughter of Muhammad, was married to 'Ali.

This wedding, too, was a simple affair. 'Ali was poor and so was Muhammad, and feasts could be costly.

To provide His daughter with a few necessities, Muhammad had to sell a coat of armour.

It was bought by 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, whose affairs were flourishing.

Abu-Bakr was entrusted with the money and sent to the market-place.

It is said that when Muhammad saw the goods that had been purchased, He was so moved by their paucity that tears welled up in His eyes and He said: 'O God! bless Thou those whose wares are mostly made of clay.'

It was sometime in the same year that a series of raids and skirmishes began, culminating in the battle of Badr and its sequel, the battle of Uhud.

These struggles were to assume ever wider scope and greater intensity, until the whole of Arabia would acknowledge the Faith of Islam.

At Badr, Meccans suffered a disastrous defeat, and at Uhud, Muslims were vanquished.

Generally, Western writers have maintained that the first steps towards a passage of arms were taken by Muhammad.

They have not been unsupported.

There were Muslim writers who believed that the mandate to wage war against the idolaters, contained in verse 40 of the twenty-second surah (al-Hajj -- 'The Pilgrimage'), was a command to attack and destroy the enemy.

That verse and the following one read: 'Permission is given to those who would fight, because they were wronged, and God is verily able to aid them -- they

who were unjustly driven out of their homes because they say, "God is our Lord".

And if God had not repelled people, some by the means of others, monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques, where the name of God is much mentioned, <p62> would have been destroyed.

And, verily, God will give victory to whosoever gives Him victory, for God is the All-Strong, the All-Glorious.'

But scholars such as Sir Thomas Arnold, the author of *The Preaching of Islam*, and Syed Ameer Ali have pointed out that the aggressive and menacing attitude of the idolaters forced Muhammad to action, because He was no longer only a Nadhir and a Bashir,[1] but the ruler of a large oasis with specific duties towards its inhabitants.

He had to ensure the safety and the security of the people of Medina and, within the oasis itself, He had to guard against the half-hearted and the traitorous who would betray their fellow citizens.

Syed Ameer Ali writes:

[1 See p.23.]

'He who never in his life had wielded a weapon, to whom the sight of human suffering caused intense pain and pity, and who, against all the canons of Arab manliness, wept bitterly at the loss of his children or disciples, whose character ever remained so tender and so pathetic as to cause his enemies to call him womanish, -- this man was now compelled, from the necessities of the situation, and against his own inclination, to repel the attacks of the enemy by force of arms, to organise his followers for purposes of self-defence, and often to send out expeditions to anticipate the treacherous and sudden onslaughts.

Hitherto, Arab warfare consisted of sudden and murderous forays, often made in the night or in the early morn; isolated combats or a general melee, when the attacked were aware of the designs of the attacking party.

Mohammed, with a thorough knowledge of the habits of his people, had frequently to guard against these sudden onslaughts by sending forth reconnoitring parties.'[1]

[1 *The Spirit of Islam*, p.

61.]

Expeditions led by the Prophet Himself are called ghazwah and others are known as sariyyah.

Many of them did not lead to encounters.

Professor Montgomery Watt believes that in some cases the reason why nothing came of them was espionage on the part of Muhammad's adversaries in Medina, who sent news of His intentions to the Meccans.

There is no agreement regarding the number of the ghazwahs.

Some have said as high as twenty-seven, but in only nine did an actual contest take place.

Regarding the sariyyahs, too, there have been diverse opinions.

According to one account, the first expedition was a ghazwah; according to another, a sariyyah.

The first has it that Muhammad with sixty men went as far as Abwa, a village situated between Medina and Mecca; there the headman of the village, Muthanna Ibn 'Amr, a chieftain of the Banu-Damrah, came out in peace.

Muhammad stayed for fifteen days in Abwa and no fighting occurred.

The first sariyyah was led by Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet, who, with thirty men, went nearly to the sea, deep into territory held by the clan of Juhaynah.

Abu-Jahl was near by with some three hundred men.

Majd Ibn 'Amr of the Juhaynah intervened and prevented a clash of arms.

Subsequently the Prophet praised the perspicacity of Majd.

But when Abu-Jahl reached Mecca, he roused its citizens to immediate action against Muhammad, assembling a fighting force with 'Ikrimah, his son, in command.

The news soon reached Medina, and the Prophet sent sixty men of the Emigrants, under 'Ubaydah Ibn al-Harith, to meet the Meccans.

Two men in the ranks of the idolaters, who had thus far succeeded in concealing their conversion, found it an opportune moment to join their brother Muslims. 'Ikrimah was infuriated by their desertion and ordered an immediate attack.

Arrows were exchanged.

The first arrow aimed at the Meccans was shot by Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas, destined for resounding fame in future years.

Just what happened next is doubtful.

It appears that the Meccans took fright and abandoned the field.

In any case, there were no casualties.

These abortive expeditions were followed by others equally abortive.

At Dhu'l-'Ushayrah, near the seaside town of Yanbu', Muhammad found no trace of the Quraysh, who had been reported as in the neighbourhood, but His sojourn there provided an opportunity to talk peace with some of the chiefs of the Banu-Mudlij.

The Quraysh next made a furtive sortie and carried away, from their pasturage, camels and cattle belonging to the people of Medina.

Muhammad took a number of the Emigrants with Him and gave chase, going as far

as the vicinity of Badr, but the idolaters had made good their escape.

However, the following expedition, a sariyyah, had consequences which could have been very grave. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Jahsh, a cousin of the Prophet, was sent by Him with twelve men to reconnoitre.

They encountered a Meccan caravan, returning from Ta'if with merchandise.

There was a skirmish at Banu-Nakhlah. 'Amr Ibn al-Hadrami of the Quraysh was killed and two of his compatriots fell into Muslim hands, together with rich booty.

But, as it happened, that day was the last of Rajab, one of the four months in which warfare was forbidden.

As the news spread that Muslims had engaged in an armed attack in the month of Rajab, recrimination came from all sides.

Even Jews joined in.

The Muslims were crest-fallen.

Muhammad forbade the sharing out of the captured goods.

For days 'Abdu'llah Ibn Jahsh and his companions repined and felt greatly apprehensive.

But to the relief of all, there came a revelation to Muhammad, which announced: 'They will question thee concerning the holy month and fighting therein.

Say: "Fighting therein is reprehensible, it bars the way to God and is negation of faith; but in the sight of God, more grave is the expulsion of the people from the Holy Mosque, and fitnah[1] is more offensive than slaying.'" (Surah ii, 214.)

[1 This word has been variously rendered as 'schism', 'sedition', 'persecution'.]

Now the ground was prepared for the first battle with the idolaters -- the great battle of Badr.

## BADR

In the autumn of the second year of the Hijrah (623), Abu-Sufyan took the annual caravan of the Meccans to Syria.

A fairly large number of prosperous Meccan merchants travelled with him.

They were due to return in the spring.

Muhammad sent two men to discover the whereabouts of the caravan, but they lost their way and came back to Medina without news.

Muhammad then sent two other men to reconnoitre, who were successful, but their presence in the neighbourhood of Badr was discovered by Abu-Sufyan.

He immediately stopped in his tracks and turned back towards Syria whence he had come.

He also dispatched a messenger to Mecca to raise the alarm.

Then, with the aid of 'Amr Ibn al-'As, he made a detour, touched the sea by Jiddah, and led the caravan safely to Mecca.

In the meantime Muhammad had come out of Medina with a force composed of 314 men, and the Meccans had sallied forth to protect their caravan.

Until then, participants in the expeditions mounted by the Prophet had been exclusively from the ranks of the Emigrants, but, on this occasion, there were only 83 of these and almost three times as many of the Helpers:

61 Awsites and 170 Khazrajites.

These figures are given by Ibn-Hisham.

Between them they had only two horses and seventy camels.

It was the month of <p65> Ramadan, and Muhammad broke His fast as soon as they were encamped outside the city.

But many of His men did not follow His example.

The next day He sent out a crier amongst them to announce: 'O ye the disobedient!

I have broken my fast, do ye the same.'

A few stages out of Medina, two of the Medinites who were not Muslims joined them.

Muhammad wished to know what had prompted this action.

They stated frankly that they were after booty.

The Prophet said: 'He who is not of our Faith does not march with us.' Khubayb Ibn Yasaf became a Muslim and stayed.

Qays Ibn al-Harith would not and went back, only to change his mind when the Muslims returned in triumph.

Qays died at Uhud.

Damdani Ibn 'Amr, the messenger whom Abu-Sufyan had dispatched to raise the alarm in Mecca, reached there in record time and called the people to hurry to the rescue of their caravan.

Some of the prominent men among the Meccans, such as Abu'l-Bakhtari and al-Harith Ibn 'Amir, detested going out with an expedition; while others, such as Abu-Jahl and Tu'aymah Ibn 'Adi and Hanzalah, the son of Abu-Sufyan, vigorously set about collecting men and arms.

All the clans joined in, except that of 'Adi Ibn Ka'b who refused to fight Muhammad.

At this juncture Abu-Lahab fell ill and deputed al-'As Ibn Hisham to go in his stead.

The latter owed Abu-Lahab a large debt which he discharged by replacing him, but al-'As died at Badr.

Umayyah, the son of Khalaf, was another recalcitrant.

He was too old and obese, he protested, to go to war.

But Abu-Jahl and 'Uqbah, the son of Abu-Mu'ayt, bitterly reprimanded him.

The latter, who in years past had, at the instance of Umayyah, spat on the face of Muhammad, came to him with an incense-burner. 'Stay at home and perfume thyself like women,' he mocked.

And so Umayyah went, to meet his death at Badr. 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, still sitting on the fence, made no preparations to fall in with the others.

To 'Uqbah's remonstrances he replied that he was an old man, incapable of fighting, and would send his sons, 'Abdu'llah and 'Ubaydu'llah, Fadl and 'Uthman.

Abu-Jahl was incensed and threatened, on their return, to expel from Mecca all the remaining members of the House of Hashim, as they were at heart partisans of Muhammad.

Other elders of Mecca concurred.

Thus, 'Abbas too began to prepare.

He was so furious that he refused to have anyone with him except <p66> a slave.

But his nephews, Nawfal, Talib and 'Aqil (the last two brothers of 'Ali), being concerned that his age would tell against him, accompanied him.

The Quraysh encamped outside Mecca with 950 men, one hundred horses and seven hundred camels, in glaring contrast to the Muslims' strength.

The rich elders -- Abu-Jahl and 'Utbah, Shaybah and Zam'ah, and eight others -- took it in turn to provide the daily fare of the army. 'Addas, that Christian slave who had taken grapes to Muhammad in Ta'if, warned his masters that the man they were setting out to fight was, in truth, the Messenger of God; they were sure to come to grief.

The brothers 'Utbah and Shaybah were killed at Badr.

Doubts lingered in both camps.

The second pledge of 'Aqabah had assured the Prophet of the support of the people of Medina, but whether they were bound to defend Him in the desert remained a moot point.

Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, the Awsite leader, promised that the Ansar would march with Him to any danger.

The Quraysh, having moved out of Mecca to fight Muhammad, received word from Abu-Sufyan that their caravan was safe.

Now, whether they should return to Mecca, since the *casus belli* had disappeared, led to serious questioning.

Abu-Jahl, making a highly emotional appeal to the elders of Mecca, persuaded the Quraysh not to be faint-hearted. 'Abdu'llah, the brother of 'Amr Ibn al-Hadrami -- he who was murdered by the Muslims in the skirmish on the last day of Rajab -- was brought in with garments rent, crying out for revenge. 'Utbah and Shaybah, who preferred to give up and return to Mecca, were silenced.

But the clan of Zuhrah, as well as Talib, the brother of 'All, refused to go on and returned home.

Both sides were by now sending out scouts to determine how far the other had advanced.

On approaching the wells of Badr, Muhammad called a halt.

Hubab Ibn al-Mundhir asked Him whether by the writ of a revelation He had chosen that particular spot, or was it His personal choice?

When Hubab learned that they had bivouacked there on Muhammad's own judgement and not by command of a revelation, he strongly objected and urged that they go forward and take possession of the wells, thus denying water to the Quraysh.

Muhammad accepted his advice and changed their position, just as the Quraysh advanced towards them over the hill.

In the early morning of March 15th (624), Muhammad received <p67> a revelation: 'Should they incline to peace, do thou likewise; and put thy trust in God; He is verily the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.' (Surah viii, 63.) He sent 'Umar ahead to parley with the Quraysh.

Muhammad, 'Umar told them, did not wish to fight against them, for they were His own kith and kin. 'Utbah Ibn Rabi'ah, who had all along tried hard to prevent a clash, now went into the ranks of the Meccans and begged them to listen to the words which 'Umar had brought from Muhammad.

He himself, 'Utbah declared, would give them the equal of all the merchandise they had lost to the Muslims at Banu-Nakhlah, and would pay the blood-money to 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Hadrami.

But Abu-Jahl, Muhammad's inveterate enemy, intervened once again, fanned the ire of the Quraysh, and openly accused 'Utbah of cowardice.

There was no drawing back now and battle had to be joined.

'Utbah, smarting under the insults hurled at him by Abu-Jahl, stepped forward with his brother Shaybah and his son al-Walid, and challenged the Muslims to single combat.

Three of the Ansar went to meet them, but 'Utbah declared that although he acknowledged the valour of these adversaries, they wished to fight with men related to themselves.

Thereupon the men of the Ansar withdrew, and Muhammad sent 'Ali, Hamzah and 'Ubay-dah Ibn al-Harith (of the House of Muttalib) to fight the three champions of Mecca.

The Meccans were killed, but 'Ubaydah also was fatally wounded.

They carried him to the Prophet for whom a shelter of palm fronds had been constructed.

Abu-Bakr was with the Prophet, while in front of His shelter Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh and a few others stood guard, and behind, camels were tethered to carry Him away should the day go against Him. 'Am I not a martyr?' asked the dying 'Ubaydah.

And Muhammad replied, 'Indeed thou art.' Then, weeping over 'Ubaydah, Muhammad cried out: 'O God!

Fulfil what Thou hadst promised me, fulfil what Thou hadst promised me, fulfil what Thou hadst promised me.

Were this band of Muslims to perish, none would be left on earth to worship Thee.'

Muhammad had tried to avert the battle and had failed; and strangely, the first to fall in the ranks of the Quraysh were those men who also had pleaded for peace.

Now, Muhammad went out amongst His people to put heart into them.

Their opponents numbered three times as many, and were better mounted and better equipped.

A youth, 'Umayr Ibn al-Himam, standing near <p68> the Prophet, was idly eating dates when he heard Muhammad's appeal.

He threw away his dates, shouted that between him and Paradise stood only death, and the death of a martyr he would seek.

He plunged into the melee and was cut down.

And the leading men of Quraysh fell -- one after the other:

Tu'aymah, the son of 'Adi; Hanzalah, the son of Abu-Sufyan; Zam'ah, the son of al-Aswad, and his brother, al-Harith.

This Zam'ah was the father of Sawdah, whom the Prophet married after the death of Khadijah.

Abu-Bakr saw his own son, 'Abda'r-Rahman, fighting against the Muslims and called out to him in bitter reproach, but received only a dusty answer.

Two brothers of the Ansar, named Mu'adh and Ma'udh, were seeking Abu-Jahl, whom they knew to have been an unrelenting enemy of the Prophet, harming Him gravely over the years.

Staying close to 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'Awf, they asked him to identify Abu-Jahl,

whereupon they attacked and brought him down.

At that instant 'Ikrimah came upon the scene and, to avenge his father, dealt Mu'adh a blow which almost severed his arm.

Mu'adh, unconscious of the terrible injury he had sustained, went on fighting, until the weight of the arm hanging by the skin became unbearable, when he put it under his foot and tore it off.

Strangely, he recovered and lived for many years, but his brother Ma'udh was killed.

'Abdu'llah Ibn Mas'ud, also one of the Ansar, found Abu-Jahl in his death-throes.

By then the Quraysh were in full flight, throwing away their armour to facilitate escape, and leaving behind seventy dead, seventy-four prisoners and rich booty.

The Muslims had lost only fourteen men -- six from the Muhajirun, and eight from the Ansar.

The dying idolater asked to whom the victory had gone. 'Abdu'llah answered: 'To God and His Prophet.' But Abu-Jahl was still defiant. 'Abdu'llah gave him the coup de grace and carried his head to the Prophet.

Muhammad gazed at it long before saying: 'This man was the Pharaoh of our people'.

'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'Awf discovered Umayyah Ibn Khalaf sitting helpless among the dead.

Umayyah was too old and corpulent, as he had himself protested in Mecca, to run away.

Nor was there a steed available for him to ride to safety.

His son, 'Adi, unable to leave him to his fate, was also stranded, and could save neither himself nor his father. 'Abda'r-Rahman and Umayyah <p69> were not strangers.

They had been friends in a past which now seemed remote. 'Abda'r-Rahman formally took Umayyah and 'Adi as his prisoners, but just then the Ethiopian, Bilal, who as Umayyah's slave had suffered torments at his hands, came upon them and, spying his former master, denounced him so violently that 'Abda'r-Rahman's protest was of no avail; both Umayyah and 'Adi were slain.

Abu'l-Bakhtari had, at the time of the boycott of the House of Hashim, intervened on their behalf.

The Prophet ordered that his life be spared.

It was not to be, for Abu'l-Bakhtari would not be parted from a companion, and fighting they both met their death.

An-Nadr Ibn al-Harith and 'Uqbah Ibn Abi-Mu'it were executed because of their

evil deeds.

These men had done everything possible to belittle Muhammad and His creed.

An-Nadr used to follow Muhammad in the streets of Mecca, ridiculing His words and telling improbable Persian tales, which he claimed were as good as Muhammad's. 'Uqbah had never failed to insult the Prophet.

The dead of the Quraysh were interred together in one large grave.

Muhammad approached the gaping pit and spoke these words: 'O people of the pit I Did you find what your god promised you to be true?

I have found what my God promised me to be true.' Abu-Hudhayfah, the son of 'Utbah, visibly moved when he saw his father's corpse laid in that pit, told the Prophet that his father was a sagacious, kindly and cultured man; he was saddened to see him die an unbeliever. 'Utbah indeed had shown both compassion and a love of peace.

The question of dealing with the prisoners raised some debate. 'Umar was for putting them all to death.

Among them were 'Abbas and his nephews, and Abu'l-'As, the husband of the Prophet's daughter, Zaynab.

Abu-Bakr, wise and generous, suggested that they should be ransomed.

Muhammad agreed, and word was sent to the Meccans to redeem their kinsmen. 'Abbas pleaded that he was a Muslim and should not be made to pay a ransom.

But he had fought in the ranks of the idolaters, and the Prophet knew that His uncle, as a very rich man, was trying to have the best of both worlds.

In the end, 'Abbas had to ransom himself and also his nephews, who were poor.

Zaynab sent a valuable necklace which had been her mother's to obtain her husband's freedom.

The sight of Khadijah's necklace made the <p70> Prophet weep, and the Muslims decided not to put that piece of jewellery in the common pool.

Abu-'As had been a favourite nephew of Khadijah, but he would not accept the Prophet and, when he reached Mecca, sent Zaynab to Medina as he had promised.

His story, however, had a happy ending.

Some years later he did become a Muslim and was reunited with Zaynab.

Ruqayyah, another daughter of Muhammad, had died during the Prophet's absence from Medina.

Her husband, 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, had remained with her.

Nevertheless, Muhammad included 'Uthman among the warriors of Badr.

Those prisoners who could not raise the ransom money were freed, on their promise never again to bear arms against the Muslims.

Before their release they were kept busy teaching the Medinites how to read and write.

The merchants of Mecca were far more literate than the peasants of Medina.

In Mecca the sense of desolation was great.

Abu-Lahab could not believe the tidings of disaster when they reached him, and hurried out as fast as his racked, corpulent body could take him, to the well of Zamzam where many had gathered.

He could not outlive the shock of defeat and died a week later.

Mecca had lost almost all its elders, and now Abu-Sufyan rose to pre-eminence, resolved that the dead of the Quraysh would be avenged.

A number of the Meccans decided to prevent the departure of Zaynab, the Prophet's daughter, but she had already gone.

Abu-Sufyan joined them to ride out in pursuit.

Habbar Ibn al-Aswad and Nafi' Ibn 'Abdi'l-Qays overtook Kinanah, the brother of Abu'l-'As., who was leading the camel which bore the howdah of Zaynab.

Habbar raised his spear to attack her, but Kinanah, who was a master of archery, would have shot Habbar and his associates had not Abu-Sufyan come up in time to intervene and prevent bloodshed.

However, terrified by Habbar's assault, Zaynab, who was with child, suffered miscarriage.

We shall hear of Habbar once again.

One of the prisoners in Medina was a man called Wahb.

His father, 'Umayr, was poor and could not ransom his son.

Safwan, the son of Umayyah Ibn Khalaf, made a secret pact with 'Umayr to look after his family and pay his debts, if the latter would go to Medina, ostensibly to implore Muhammad for the release of Wahb, actually to murder the Prophet when an opportunity presented itself.

But Muhammad found him out, and both 'Umayr <p71> and his son embraced Islam.

Muhammad sent them back to Mecca to guide the Muslims through the desert, whenever needed.

The battle of Badr constitutes a landmark in the history of mankind.

It assured survival to Islam.

Had the Muslims been routed that day the whole polity of Medina would have broken down, and Muhammad would have had nowhere to establish a base.

Those chroniclers who have written, with gusto, of hosts of angels descending to mow down the idolaters at Badr have indeed belittled the achievement of that day.

The assassination of a Jewess, named 'Asma, soon after the episode of Badr, and the expulsion of the Jews of the Banu-Qaynuqa', some two months later, were indications of the weaknesses which the Prophet's base at Medina still sustained. 'Asma, the daughter of Marwan and a poetess of fame, continuously satirized Muhammad and His Faith.

Arabs, as a people, had (and have) a penchant for poetry, and were much influenced by it, especially when recited with bravado and panache.

Muhammad suffered a good deal at the hands of hostile poets; he was much disturbed when He Himself was accused of being just another poet (and a mediocre one at that) whom other poets could excel.

A blind Medinite named 'Umayr Ibn 'Adi resolved, entirely on his own to rid the Muslims of the caustic tongue of 'Asma.

The traditional account of this murder is most extraordinary.

It is said that he, although blind, managed one night to make his way into the house of 'Asma, where he found her in bed with her children, one of whom she was suckling.

Pushing the children aside, he pressed his dagger hard upon the chest of 'Asma until she was transfixed.

But why did 'Asma make no effort to defend herself or run away?

It is an unbelievable tale.

Another Jew, Abu-'Afak, also a poet holding Muhammad up to ridicule, was assassinated soon after; as he was a very old man, said to have been one hundred and twenty years of age, Salim Ibn 'Umayr, the assassin, would have had little difficulty in overpowering him.

The expulsion of the Banu-Qaynuqa', according to Ibn-Hisham, had its origin in an affront to a Muslim woman, committed by a Jew in the market-place of that clan.

A Muslim, who witnessed the event, murdered the Jew on the spot and was, in turn, immediately set upon and killed by the Jews.

Muhammad sent for the elders of the Banu-Qaynuqa' and reminded them of <p72> His pact with them, but they reacted with scorn and went off, confident that they could easily defy Him.

However, a fortnight's siege convinced them of the necessity of submission. 'Ubadah Ibn as-Samit, of the Aws, who had ties of confederacy with the Banu-Qaynuqa', renounced them, while 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, of the Khazraj, would not.

Muhammad ordered their expulsion from Medina, and 'Ubadah, their one-time ally, was given the task of removing them.

They went north to join their co-religionists, their quarters and goods

becoming the property of the Muslims.

It is strange that the other two Jewish clans of Medina, the Banu'n-Nadir and the Banu-Qurayzah, made no attempt to come to their aid.

Once the contest was joined between Medina and Mecca, it must have been obvious that, given the conditions and circumstances of Arabia, there could never be unbroken peace between these contestants.

Within Mecca there was rage and an intense desire for revenge.

Within Medina there were still a large number of people who were either half-hearted or positively antagonistic to the Prophet, and who kept up a clandestine traffic with the Quraysh; they would have had no hesitation in rendering any help in their power to weaken the position of Muhammad.

The Prophet, too, had His men in and around Mecca who sent Him news of the activities of the Quraysh and their allies.

We read of several sorties and ghazwahs during the months following the battle of Badr.

On one occasion Abu-Sufyan reached the vicinity of Medina in a lightning raid, killed a man or two, destroyed some houses and palm trees and quickly withdrew.

Muhammad set out in pursuit, but Abu-Sufyan was well beyond reach.

This expedition of the Prophet has been called the ghazwah of Sawiq, because in his haste to reach safety, apparently Abu-Sufyan told his men to discard their sacks of sawiq (toasted wheat or barley) that they might travel faster, and their pursuers collected them.

Next the Prophet heard that men of the Banu-Sulaym and Ghatafan were lurking close to Medina, ready to deal a blow on behalf of the Quraysh.

But they fled precipitately when apprised of the Prophet's decision to march out to meet them.

On this occasion a large number of camels were captured and brought to Medina.

Not long after, some of the Banu-Tha'labah gathered at Dhu-Amr, hoping to take the Medinites by surprise.

Muhammad went out once again in person, at the head of four hundred and fifty men, <p73> to deal with them.

He did not encounter them because, having heard of the Prophet's approach, they had taken up a position on cliff-tops.

The life of the Prophet was imperilled on this expedition when the chieftain of a hostile clan found Him alone and unarmed.

Muhammad, however, overcame him and sent him back to his people.

That was in June 624; in August came news that a number of the men of Banu-Sulaym had foregathered at Bahran to the east of Medina.

But they too dissolved into the desert as soon as they learned that Muhammad had set out to meet them.

Zayd, the adopted son of the Prophet, soon after led an expedition to intercept a caravan of the Quraysh which was taking a circuitous route to Syria.

Since the battle of Badr the Meccans had decided not to let their caravans come too close to Medina.

One of the leaders of this particular caravan was Safwan, who, after the death of his father, Umayyah Ibn Khalaf, at Badr, had attained prominence in Mecca.

Zayd was successful, for leaders of the caravan fled and abandoned all their merchandise.

In the opening months of the third year of the Hijrah, two other prominent Jews, Ka'b Ibn al-Ashraf and Sallam (also known as Abu-Rah') Ibn Abi'l-Huqayq, were assassinated, the first by the Awsites and the second by the Khazrajites.

Ka'b was another poet, half-Jewish, who reviled Muhammad and eulogized His enemies.

After the battle of Badr, he hurried to Mecca to condole with the Quraysh and to incite them to retaliation.

As he lived close to Medina with the Jews of Banu'n-Nadir, his presence in the proximity of Medina was a constant menace to the safety and the tranquillity of the city.

One day the Prophet was heard to exclaim: 'Who will deliver me of Ibn-al-Ashraf?' Whereupon Muhammad Ibn Maslamah concerted a plan with Abu-Na'ilah, a foster-brother of Ka'b.

They won the poet's confidence, lured him out of his stronghold and stabbed him to death.

The next day Ka'b's relations came to the Prophet to ask why He had tolerated the assassination of their kinsman.

Muhammad detailed to them Ka'b's unceasing efforts to undermine His position and disrupt utterly the life of Medina with his vituperative but eloquent poetry, which had cast its baneful influence over a wide region.

Having no answer to the charges laid at the door of Ibn-al-Ashraf, they went quietly away.

Men of Aws had struck down a powerful and implacable foe; now the men of Khazraj resolved to match that deed with one of <p74> their own.

The obvious choice was Abu-Rafi', a wealthy merchant who possessed a castle close to the Jewish settlement of Khaybar in the north.

An inveterate enemy of the Prophet, he was perpetually striving to arouse hostility to Muhammad among his coreligionists, as well as in the neighbouring tribe of Ghatafan.

Because Abu-Rafi' lived far from Medina, it was neither easy to reach him nor to gain entry to his castle.

Moreover, an intruder unfamiliar with its plan and the habits of its dwellers could quickly become lost and entrapped. 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Atik, choosing four others to support him, went north without arousing suspicion.

By a ruse he managed to get into the castle, just at sunset as the gate-keeper was about to shut and lock the gate for the night.

The gathering dusk saved him from being discovered as he sought a hiding-place, where he could keep a sharp eye on the domestic arrangements within the castle.

Abu-Rah' met the same fate as Ka'b.

In his haste to get away, 'Abdu'llah fell down a ladder and broke his ankle, but he had purloined the great key of the castle and succeeded in rejoining his companions.

#### UHUD

Abu-Sufyan, since his swift raid on the outskirts of Medina, had been preparing for decisive action, collecting money and men and trying to weld alliances with the clans of the desert.

In the spring of 625, all was ready to steal a march on Medina. 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, sent a messenger post-haste to warn his Nephew of the impending attack.

Muhammad called a council of war.

His own view was that they should not go out of the city to meet the enemy, but should rather see to their defences and await the arrival of the Meccans.

But the young men of Medina, anticipating a repetition of the victory at Badr, insisted that they ought to face the Quraysh in the open.

Muhammad acceded to their wish.

When the Prophet had put on His armour and the men had gathered, there were only a thousand of them and they had no more than two horses and two hundred cuirasses.

Doubts were expressed whether, with that showing, it would not be wiser to remain entrenched in Medina.

Muhammad refused to change plans at this eleventh hour, and told His men that once a Prophet had drawn His sword, it would be unedifying were He to put it back in its sheath, out of fear.

The army of Mecca presented a splendid sight: five thousand <p75> men with three thousand camels, two hundred horses, seven hundred cuirasses, fifteen howdahs in which sat the wives of notables and chiefs.

The women had come to encourage the men to greater effort, with their songs and poems; but the fact of bringing them out of Mecca and exposing them to the

hazards of war was a display of supreme confidence.

At the head of the Meccan army stood Abu-Sufyan, supported (apart from a few of the old guard) by a younger generation such as Safwan, 'Ikrimah (whose fathers had died at Badr) and Khalid Ibn al-Walid, a brilliant master of both tactic and strategy, whose rise to eminence, with the passage of years, was to be truly remarkable.

Two days out of Medina and approaching Mount Uhud, the Muslim army was suddenly depleted of three hundred men. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy and those attached to him deserted the Prophet because He had not listened to their advice to stay in Medina.

By following the foolish counsel of a number of immature youths the lives of many were unnecessarily endangered, they felt, which entitled them to withdraw from the contest.

These verses in surah iii of the Qur'an -- Al-'Imran ('The House of 'Imran') -- refer to Uhud and the desertion of the three hundred:

'When thou went out at dawn from thy people to place the believers in their positions for the battle -- and God is the All- Hearing, the All-Knowing; and when two factions amongst you became faint of heart, though God was their protector -- and in God should the believers put their trust.

God did verily give you victory at Badr, when ye were utterly abject; so fear God that perchance ye will be thankful.' (vv.

117-19.)

'And whatever visited you on the day the two parties clashed, it happened by God's leave, that He might know the believers, and that He might also know the dissemblers.

And when they were told, "Come and fight in the path of God, or defend", they said, "If only we knew how to fight, we would have followed you".

That day they were nearer to denial than to belief.

They let their tongues utter what was not in their hearts.

And God knoweth well what they conceal.' (vv.

160-1.)

Muhammad stationed His men so that they faced Medina, with Mount Uhud at their back and Mount 'Aynan (or 'Aynayn) to their left.

Fifty archers, under the command of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Jubayr and 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Amr, took up a position in the gorge of Mount 'Aynan, to protect the flank of the army and repel assaults from the Meccan cavalry.

The Prophet expressly ordered them not to move out of the gorge, under any circumstances, and no matter what happened elsewhere.

On arriving at the scene, the Meccans wheeled round and barred the way to Medina.

They had their idol, Hubal, with them, and a semblance of an altar was set up, round which the women gathered to sing and play their instruments, shouting encouragement to their warriors.

Hind, the wife of Abu-Sufyan, whose hatred of the Muslims was overwhelming, was one of these women; she had lived for this day to see her father, 'Utbah, her uncle, Shaybah, and her brother, al-Walid, avenged.

As Hamzah, the uncle of Muhammad, had killed her father at Badr, she had engaged an Ethiopian slave named Wahshi to slay Hamzah with his javelin.

Wahshi was promised his freedom should he accomplish this task.

The descendants of 'Abda'd-Dar held the hereditary office of standard-bearer of Mecca.

Now, one of them, Talhah Ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzza, was holding the banner of the Quraysh.

Noting this, Muhammad gave His own banner into the charge of Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr, who was also of the House of 'Abda'd-Dar.

Abu-'Amir, known as ar-Rahib (The Hermit), a renegade from Medina, was in the ranks of the Quraysh.

He had inclined towards Islam at one time, but then broke with Muhammad and transferred to Mecca with fifty of his kinsmen.

He had assured the Quraysh that when the Medinites beheld him battling on their side, they would renounce Muhammad and come over to them.

But his appearance at Uhud evoked only jeers and ridicule from the Ansar.

Covered with shame, Abu-'Amir tried to redeem himself by raining arrows at the Muslims. 'Ikrimah, guarding the left flank of the Meccans, attempted a general assault which failed.

At this juncture, Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam mounted an attack on the right flank of the Quraysh, which was led by Khalid Ibn al-Walid.

Khalid, unable to contain the attack, was on the point of giving way when Abu-Sufyan moved to his rescue.

Zubayr had to retreat.

Then came the turn of Talhah, the standard-bearer of the Quraysh, to challenge the Muslims. 'All struck him down and, as he fell, his brother Mus'ab snatched the banner and held it aloft. 'Ali slew him too.

Then the next brother, 'Uthman, grasped the banner and was killed by Hamzah.

Another brother, Abu-Sa'id, next raised the Meccan banner and an arrow shot by Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas, an accomplished archer, laid him low.

Sa'd was standing near the <p77> Prophet, who was handing him his arrows.

It was now the turn of Musafi', the son of Talhah, to bear the banner of the Quraysh. 'Asim Ibn Thabit let fly an arrow at him.

The dying Musafi' was taken to his mother, Sulafah.

She cried out that whoever brought her the head of 'Asim would be rewarded with a hundred camels, and of the skull she would make a drinking-vessel.

The brothers of Musafi', al-Harith and Kilab, followed him to hold the banner of the Quraysh and went down with it.

Five more of the House of 'Abda'd-Dar died, in the attempt to hold aloft the banner, one after the other, until no one was left of that proud House to bear the standard of Mecca.

Suwab, a slave of the fallen scions of 'Abda'd-Dar, leapt into the foray and raised it from the dust.

When 'Ali hacked off his right hand, Suwab took it in his left, and when he lost that hand too, he held the banner pressed against his chest and cried out: 'O sons of 'Abda'd-Dar, are ye pleased with me?' Finally a woman, 'Amrah, the daughter of 'Alqamah carried the banner and was left alone.

The Prophet had a sword on which these words were engraved: 'Cowardice carries its stigma and venturing forth proves the man's mettle; and whoever turns away with fear cannot escape his destiny.' Muhammad called out to his men: 'Who will take this sword from me and do justice to it?' 'Umar and Zubayr stepped out to take it, but the Prophet refused it to them and gave it to Abu-Dujanah, one of the Ansar.

Wrapping a red kerchief round his head which bore the slogan, 'Help is from God and victory is at hand', Abu-Dujanah charged into the serried ranks of the enemy and scattered the men of Quraysh in all directions, until he reached the spot where the idol, Hubal, rested on a camel's back, the women circling around it.

Hubal was overturned, the women fled, and Abu-Dujanah found himself facing Hind, the wife of Abu-Sufyan.

He raised his sword to smite her, but remembered in time that it belonged to the Prophet and should not be stained with a woman's blood.

Hamzah, who had followed Abu-Dujanah into the thick of the battle, had broken into the heart of the enemy's formations.

Now Wahshi, the Ethiopian slave of Jubayr,[1] found his chance, took aim and hurled his javelin at the towering figure standing near by.

It struck Hamzah in the loins.

He wavered and fell, and Wahshi, <p78> as he himself used to say in later years, rushed forward, pulled out his javelin from the body of the dying Hamzah and ran away to freedom.

[1 The son of Mut'im, whose uncle Tu'aymah had died at Badr.

Ibn-Hisham states that it was Jubayr who had directed Wahshi to slay Hamzah in return for his freedom.]

Now came an assault by the Muslims before which the Quraysh visibly quailed.

They began to retreat while the Muslims fell upon them.

But at that moment, the archers whom Muhammad had stationed in the cleft of Mount 'Aynan with strict orders not to move, seeing their fellow believers helping themselves to the booty abandoned by the Meccans, broke ranks and joined the melee. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Jubayr endeavoured to stop them but failed.

Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-'As took note of the unprotected flank of the Muslim army, came up with two hundred men, killed 'Abdu'llah who had remained at his post, raced past the spot where Muhammad stood, and attacked the advancing Muslims from the rear.

The Muslims were caught almost in a vice, and in trying to disentangle themselves caused total confusion, so that friend was fighting friend.

Hudhayfah could not save his father, al-Yaman, from the blows of his fellow Muslims and saw him die.

As at Badr, Abu-Bakr espied his son, 'Abda'r-Rahman, fighting for the idolaters.

He drew his sword to engage him, but Muhammad would not allow it. 'Put back thy sword,' He said; 'come hither and keep us company.' Thirty men stood in front of the Prophet to shield Him from the enemy.

As the day wore on, their number was gradually reduced until only fourteen remained.[1] Ubayy Ibn Khalaf, who was one of the prisoners ransomed after the battle of Badr, now came at full gallop to slay Muhammad, as he had promised to do.

The Prophet had asked His men to caution Him as soon as they sighted the son of Khalaf.

Ubayy hurtled on, reviling the Prophet and shouting that nothing could save Him now.

As he drew near, Muhammad took a weapon from Zubayr and threw it at the arrogant Meccan.

Ubayy received a wound in the neck which made him turn aside and, in the end, proved fatal.

[1 These heroic men were 'Ali, Abu-Bakr, 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'A'waf, Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas, Talhah Ibn 'Ubaydu'llah, az-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam and Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah, of the Muhajirun; Hubab Ibn al-Mundhir, Abu-Dujanah, 'Asim Ibn Thabit, Sahl Ibn Hanif, Usayd Ibn Hudayr, Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh and al-Harith Ibn Simmah, of the Ansar.]

Muhammad was holding His ground, although His army was in disarray.

Mus'ab of the renowned House of 'Abda'd-Dar, so many of whose members had

fallen that day for the glory of Hubal, <p79> was holding aloft the Prophet's banner.

Four idolaters came forward to attack Muhammad.

As Abu-Dujanah disposed of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Hamid, Muhammad exclaimed: 'O God!

Be thou pleased with the son of Kharashah,[1] as I am pleased with him.'

Mughayrah Ibn al-'As, adept at stone-throwing, hit Muhammad on the hand which made Him drop His sword. 'I have killed Muhammad,' he cried, but 'All shouted back: 'Thou liest'; so Mughayrah took aim again and wounded Muhammad in the forehead.

At that moment 'Ammar Ibn Yasir rushed up and struck Mughayrah down.

Just then 'Abdu'llah Ibn Qami'ah approached Muhammad with sword drawn.

Mus'ab, His standard-bearer, barred his way.

When Ibn-Qami'ah struck off his right arm, Mus'ab is said to have spoken words later revealed to Muhammad, which constitute verse 138 of the third surah (Al-Imran) of the Qur'an: 'Muhammad is naught but a Messenger; and verily, other Messengers have passed away before him.

Should he die or be killed would ye turn around on your heels; and he who turns round on his heels, nothing would ever harm God; and God will recompense the thankful.' Mus'ab now held the banner in his left hand, but that too was struck off by Ibn-Qami'ah.

Once more Mus'ab repeated the words he had just uttered, and Ibn-Qami'ah brought him down with his lance, thinking him to be Muhammad Himself.

He gave a loud yell that he had at last rid them of Muhammad.

The cry was taken up by others -- 'Muhammad is dead'.

On hearing this cry, the Muslims, who had torn apart the ranks of the Quraysh, were suddenly seized with panic and abandoned the field.

As they came rushing past the Prophet, He called out to them: 'I am the Messenger of God.

I am here and alive; come back,' but they seemed not to hear or heed.

Anas Ibn an-Nadr attempted to stop the stampede: the more reason now to fight the idolaters, he cried out.

But it was of no avail.

Anas himself turned round and charged again into the massed forces of the enemy.

After the battle, fifty wounds were found on his body, and he could be recognized only by his fingers.

[1 The father of Abu-Dujanah.]

In the meantime, Ibn-Qami'ah, realizing it was not Muhammad he had slain,

renewed his attack on the Prophet, striking His forehead with a stone so that blood poured down His face. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Shibab wounded Muhammad in the arm, and 'Utbah -- the brother of Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas who was defending <p80> the Prophet -- aimed another stone at His mouth and knocked out two of His teeth.

Sa'd would later say that in that moment his brother seemed in his sight the most evil person in the whole of mankind, the one he most ardently wanted to destroy.

According to Ibn-Hisham, Muhammad exclaimed: 'How can a people attain salvation who cause blood to flow over the face of their Prophet, whilst He is calling them to God?' And at that instant, with blows raining upon Him, Muhammad received a revelation:

No part of the matter is thine, whether He turns towards them again, or chastises them; for they are evildoers.[1]  
[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry.

Surah iii, 123.]

And He raised His hands and repeated the words which Jesus had used on the Cross: 'O God I forgive my people, for they know not.'

Once more Ibn-Qami'ah attacked the Prophet, this time with his sword.

Muhammad's coat of mail saved Him from injury, but He lost His balance and fell from His horse into one of the pits which, according to Ibn-Hisham, Abu-'Amir had dug to discomfit the Muslims.

Talhah Ibn 'Ubaydu'llah, who had put forth his bare hand to protect Muhammad from the sword-thrust, leapt into the pit despite his injury, and with 'Ali's aid Muhammad was raised to His feet and helped out.

Abu-Bakr brought some water for the Prophet.

Muhammad directed him to succour the unconscious Talhah, whom He praised.

Accounts differ, but one version gives these as His words: 'Whoever wishes to see someone walking in this world, who is an inmate of Paradise, let him gaze at Talhah Ibn 'Ubaydu'llah.'

The Muslims were now in full flight, and the enemy was relentlessly pressing its advantage.

Wahb Ibn Qabus and his nephew, al-Harith Ibn 'Uqbah, came hurrying from Medina where the rout of the Muslims had already been reported.

Both were cut down.

So was Hanzalah, the son of Abu-'Amir, who, with the Prophet's permission, had remained in Medina for his marriage.

He rose from his nuptial bed, put on his armour, and raced to Uhud and to death.

Mukhayriq (or Mukhariq), a Jew, and Asayrim al-Ashhali, an idolater, both of Medina, also rushed to Uhud when the news of the disaster reached them, fought the Quraysh and fell on the battlefield.

Mukhayriq was very rich; before departing <p81> for Uhud, he told his co-religionists that should he die, all his wealth must be handed over to Muhammad. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Jahsh, a cousin of the Prophet and one of the early Muslims, was another casualty of Uhud.

Muhammad and the few standing with Him now climbed to the top of Mount Uhud.

Muhammad was too weak to climb unsupported but, once more, Talhah came to His aid, ensuring his abode in Paradise, the Prophet said.

Henceforth, Talhah came to be known as at-Talhata'l-Kbayr -- Talhah the Good.

The women of Quraysh now went onto the battlefield to ravish the bodies of the slain.

They sliced off organs, tore open abdomens, and made bracelets and necklaces of noses, ears, livers and genitals.

Hind tried to eat Hamzah's liver, but found it hard to chew.

She is still remembered as 'Hind, the Eater of Liver'.

At last Abu-Sufyan decided that the time had come to disengage and go home.

He rode to the foot of the Mount and called in turn the names of Muhammad, Abu-Bakr and 'Umar.

The Prophet told His men not to answer.

Then, addressing his own people, Abu-Sufyan triumphantly exclaimed that all these three were dead. 'Umar could not resist shouting at him: 'Thou liest, O enemy of God and His Messenger.

God hath kept them alive to thy detriment.' Abu-Sufyan's parting shot was to call out that they would find their dead mutilated; it had not been by his orders but he was not displeased; they would fight again at Badr in the coming year.

The dead of the Quraysh, on the day of Uhud, were some thirty in number.

Muslims lost seventy-four men: four from the Muhajirun and the rest from the Ansar.

It was a reversal of Badr.

As the Meccans left the field, Muhammad sent Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas to follow them to see whether they had taken the road to Mecca or intended to make for Medina.

Should they attempt to raid Medina, He said, He would hasten to fight them

despite His wounds and fatigue.

But Abu-Sufyan, at the end of the day, desired nothing better than to seek rest and comfort in his native town.

From the direction of Medina came a group of women, anguished and distressed by the news that the Prophet had been killed.

Among them were His daughter, Fatimah, and 'A'ishah, his wife.

Muhammad came down from the mountain to reassure them and to attend to the burial of the dead.

As his wounds were still bleeding, Fatimah burnt a piece of straw matting and covered them with the ashes. <p82>

The Prophet did not know that Hamzah was dead and being unable to find him kept repeating: 'How has my uncle, Hamzah, fared; how has Hamzah fared?' Al-Harith Ibn Simmah went in search of Hamzah but did not return, being too pained to give Muhammad the tidings of His uncle's death.

In the end 'Ali took the news to Him.

When Muhammad saw the desecrated body of Hamzah, His grief was uncontrollable. 'O Hamzah, O uncle of the Messenger of God, O Lion of God and the Lion of His Messenger,' He cried out; 'O Hamzah, O author of righteous deeds; O Hamzah, O remover of sorrows.' He vowed to avenge Hamzah, whereupon a revelation came to Him which constitutes the last two verses of the sixteenth surah -- an-Nahl ('The Bee'): 'Were ye to inflict chastisement on anyone, do it in the measure of what was done to you; but if ye be patient, well shall it be with those who practise patience.

Be patient, and thy patience shall be the bestowal of God to thee.

Do not grieve over them, and do not be sad at heart because of what they devise.

Verily, God is with those who fear Him, and they are the people of good deeds.' Muhammad did atonement for the vow He had taken in haste, and affirmed that He would be patient.

'Do not consider as dead those who have died in the path of God.

Indeed they are living with their Lord, partaking of His bounties, rejoicing in what God hath bestowed upon them by His grace, joyful for those who have remained and shall come after them.

No fear is there for them and no sorrow shall touch them.' [1] Such was the verdict on the martyrs of Uhud, as revealed in the Qur'an. [1 Surah iii, 163.] Uhud had a sequel.

On the way to Mecca, Abu-Sufyan began to doubt whether they had been wise to turn back so quickly.

Had they not missed the chance to put Muhammad out of action for all time? 'Ikrimah, Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-As were of the same mind, that

they ought to have made their victory complete.

But other leading men, notably Safwan Ibn Umayyah, disagreed.

So the Meccans tarried for a while at Rawha', to debate the issue and determine their next step.

In Medina, too, Muhammad felt uneasy.

Were the Quraysh really returning to Mecca?

Should they not be thwarted at once, if they were planning to steal a march back to Medina?

And so <p83> He called on all who had been at Uhud to prepare to go out with Him in pursuit of the Quraysh.

Although so many of them, Muhammad included, were wounded and exhausted, they went as far as Hamra' al-Asad, some eight miles from Medina.

Ma'bad of the tribe of Khuza'ah, who was on his way to Mecca, stopped to express his sympathy to the Prophet.

He was not a Muslim, but his tribe and another, the Juhaynah, had become allied to the Muslims; whereas the Banu-Kinanah were confederates of the Quraysh and some had fought at Uhud under Abu-Sufyan.

Continuing his journey, Ma'bad met the Quraysh at Rawha' and informed them that Muhammad had left Medina with a large force and would soon overtake them.

Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who was totally opposed to a resumption of hostilities, felt vindicated and advised his fellow Meccans to start immediately for home.

Ma'bad sent word to the Prophet that the Meccans, induced by Safwan, were well on their way. 'Safwan had rightly guided them, whilst he himself was not of the rightly guided,' was the Prophet's comment.

On the road to Mecca, the Quraysh met men of the clan of Banu-'Abd-i-Qays, who were going to Medina in quest of provisions.

Abu-Sufyan engaged one of them, Na'im Ibn Mas'ud, with the promise of high reward, to frighten the Muslims with tales of the Quraysh strength, that they might hasten back to their stronghold.

Na'im did as he was told but the Muslims retorted: 'God is sufficient unto us and He is the best Protector'.

Surah iii, 67-8 of the Qur'an refers to this incident:

'Those who were told by some people that people had gathered against you, and you ought to fear them, it caused their faith to increase, and they said, "God is sufficient unto us and He is the best Protector".

Then they returned, favoured with the grace and the bounty of God, untouched by evil.

They followed the good pleasure of God, and God's bounty is great.' <p85>

## 11 The Investment of Medina

Repercussions of the Battle of Uhud continued into the following months and into the fourth year of the Hijrah (13 June 625 to 2 June 626).

The first was an ugly incident fraught with treachery and bad faith.

We saw in the last chapter that Sulafah, the mother of Musafi' Ibn Talhah, offered a substantial reward to whoever would bring her the head of 'Asim Ibn Thabit at whose hands Musafi' had met his death. 'Asim survived Uhud, but the offer of that reward stood and was even renewed.

When the Meccan army returned victorious from the battlefield of Uhud, some men of the tribe of Hudhayl, which was allied to the Quraysh, came to present their felicitations.

Amongst them was a member of the Banu-Lihyan clan of the Hudhayl, named Sufyan Ibn Khalid.

He had heard of the heavy losses which the House of 'Abda'd-Dar had sustained at Uhud, and the reward of a hundred camels announced by Sulafah.

Thereupon he concocted a plan for gaining that reward.

This was to send seven men chosen from the clans of 'Adal and Qarih to Medina, who would profess Islam and ask the Prophet to send teachers to convert and teach them.

They were to ensure that 'Asim Ibn Thabit was included in the group.

Muhammad chose six men to accompany the conspirators, including 'Asim.

At ar-Raji', in the vicinity of Mecca, Sufyan Ibn Khalid, leading some two hundred warriors of the Banu-Lihyan, attacked the small Muslim contingent. 'Asim and two of his companions were killed, and the others were captured.

Although 'Abdu'llah Ibn Tariq managed to sever the cord which tied his hands, he had no chance to escape and fell fighting his captors.

The other two, Khubayb Ibn 'Adi and Zayd Ibn al-Dathinnah, were taken to Mecca and sold.

Khubayb was bought by a daughter of al-Harith Ibn 'Amir, whose father had died at Badr.

Zayd was sold to Safwan Ibn Umayyah.

It was the <p85> month of Dhu'l-Qa'dah, in which fighting was forbidden.

So, Khubayb and Zayd were kept in bonds for two months, before being led to Tan'im, away from the precincts of the House of Ka'bah, to be executed.

Khubayb asked to be allowed to say a prayer of two rik'ahs (prostrations), and this became a tradition; in future, Muslims about to be executed would make the same request.

They tied Khubayb to a cross but offered to spare him if he would renounce

Muhammad.

This he spurned and laid a curse upon them.

So strong were his words that they made the Quraysh tremble.

Abu-Sufyan was there with Mu'awiyah, his younger son, who would recall, when caliph, that his father threw him on the ground, as it was believed that the evil effects of a curse would pass by one lying prone.

Sa'id Ibn 'Amir, later governor of Hims in Syria, was subject to occasional swooning fits.

On one occasion 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (then the second caliph) asked him what had come over him.

Sa'id replied that he was present at Khubayb's death; whenever he remembered that scene and Khubayb's words: 'O God! count them all, slay them all and let none be spared,' he would lose consciousness.

Khubayb was speared to death, exclaiming before he died: 'O God!

For me there is no Apostle save Muhammad, upon whom be peace.

And bear, my God, my salutation unto Him.' Zayd was decapitated by Nastas, a slave of Safwan, to avenge the death of Safwan's father at Badr.

According to Ibn-al-Athir, Muhammad sent two men to Mecca to assassinate Abu-Sufyan, but they were recognized and failed in their mission.

It is also related that the Meccans kept the mangled body of Khubayb on the cross and watched over it.

Muhammad asked for volunteers to go to Mecca to rescue his body.

Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam (a Meccan, well known in his native town) and Miqdad Ibn al-Aswad volunteered and succeeded. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Anas was given the task of eliminating Sufyan Ibn Khalid, who not only had incited men of 'Adal and Qarih to go on a false errand to Medina, thus causing the death of six Muslims, but was now reported to be gathering a force to raid Medina.

Following the tragedy of ar-Raji', another disaster of even greater dimensions overtook the Muslims. 'Amir Ibn Malik, the head of the clan of Banu-'Amir Ibn Sa'sa'ah, who was known as Abu-Bara', came from Najd to Medina to renew his acquaintance with Muhammad.

He was a man advanced in years and wished to be <p86> come a Muslim, but he was concerned about the reaction of his clan.

Perhaps the Prophet would send teachers to propagate His Faith in Najd.

But Muhammad was reluctant to do this because of what had happened recently not far from Medina; Najd was more remote and the desert-dwellers there had shown no inclination towards Islam.

Abu-Bara', however, was insistent and assured the Prophet that the Muslims

would come to no harm, as they would be under his protection.

Muhammad sent forty men, according to Ibn-Hisham; seventy, according to at-Tabari. 'Amir Ibn Tufayl, nephew to Abu-Bara', was sorely displeased at his uncle's initiative, but finding his own people loyal to the pledge of protection, he incited the clansmen of Banu-Sulaym to destroy the emissaries of Muhammad.

En route, the Muslims bivouacked by the side of a well, known as Bi'r-Ma'unah, about fifty miles from Medina.

The men of Banu-Sulaym set upon them in force, and all were killed save two: 'Amr Ibn Umayyah and Ka'b Ibn Zayd.

Making his way back to Medina, 'Amr came upon two men of the Banu-'Amir Ibn Sa'sa'ah and killed them, although they were ignorant of the treachery of their chief's nephew.

When the Prophet was apprised of 'Amr's hasty action He was angry and paid blood-money to their clan, because the murdered men were under His protection.

Ka'b, the other Muslim who escaped, was severely wounded and left for dead, but he recovered sufficiently to reach Medina.

A casualty of Bi'r-Ma'unah was 'Amir Ibn Fuhayrah, the freedman of Abu-Bakr, who had emigrated with the Prophet and his former master from Mecca to Medina.

Within a matter of months, the Prophet had received three grievous setbacks,[1] and the effects in Medina were discernible.

The Munafiqun (Dissemblers) jeered openly at the misfortunes which had befallen the Muslims.

Jews also were jubilant.

According to Ibn-Hisham, the Jews of Banu'n-Nadir plotted to murder Muhammad.

The occasion was a controversy between the Banu'n-Nadir, who are said to have numbered a thousand, and the Banu-Qurayzah, whose numbers have been estimated at seven hundred.

An agreement between them had been repudiated by the latter, who maintained it to be at variance with the Law of the Torah. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, the chief man amongst the Munafiqun, was allied to the Banu'n-Nadir and championed their case.

He went to Muhammad and spoke in a haughty manner <p87> which offended the Prophet.

Two verses in the Qur'an refer to this episode:

[1 Uhud (March), ar-Raji' (May), Bi'r-Ma'unah (July).]

'O Messenger, let them not cause thee sorrow, who hasten to infidelity, either of those who say, "We believe" with their mouths, but whose hearts believe not, or the Jews who listen to lies and to other people, who have not come to thee.

They pervert the words [of the Law] from their places and say: "If this is brought to thee, receive it; but if it be not brought to thee, then take heed [beware of receiving aught else]"; and for whomsoever God wisheth to bring low, thou shalt obtain naught from God.

They whose hearts God doth not intend to cleanse shall suffer humiliation in this world, and severe chastisement in the next -- they who listen to lies and consume the forbidden.

Should they come to thee, judge betwixt them, or turn away from them.

If thou turnest away nothing shall harm thee.

But shouldst thou judge between them, judge justly, for verily God loves the just.' (vv.

45-6:

Surat al-Ma'idah -- 'The Table'.)

Muhammad found that the Banu-Qurayzah were justified in their complaint and gave His verdict accordingly.

But the Banu'n-Nadir were resentful and considered it a deliberate affront.

Huyy Ibn Akhtab, a vindictive opponent of the Prophet, dwelt with the Banu'n-Nadir and persuaded them to attempt the life of Muhammad.

One day, Muhammad had gone to the settlement of this Jewish clan to carry out certain transactions.

Finding Him resting against their wall, they were about to hurl down a piece of rock to crush Him, when He suddenly got up and walked away.

Traditionalists say that the Angel Gabriel informed Him of their evil intent.

In any case, the Banu'n-Nadir were foiled.

Muhammad soon came to the conclusion that the presence of a large colony of Jews, smouldering with hate and discontent, and backed by a relatively powerful body of Dissemblers, constituted a permanent menace to the peace of Medina.

He was also aware that the Banu'n-Nadir had clandestine dealings with the idolaters.

And so an ultimatum was delivered to them to leave Medina and seek a home elsewhere.

Of course 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy was furious and, at the risk of offending the Prophet yet again, tried hard to obtain concessions for his Jewish allies.

He went so far as to encourage them to reject the ultimatum and resist the Prophet with all their strength, promising that he and his men would come to their aid.

Surah lix of the Qur'an -- <p88> Surat al-Hashr ('The Mustering') -- foreshadows and casts light on the course of events:

'Hast thou not observed the Dissemblers telling their brethren -- the people of the Book -- who are unbelievers: "If ye are expelled, we shall go forth with you, and we shall never obey anyone in regard to you; and if they fight you, we shall rise to aid you."

And God bears witness that verily they are liars.

Should those be expelled, they will not go out with them, and should those be fought, they will not aid them.

And even if they give aid to them, they will turn their backs on them, and then those will be left unaided.' (vv.

11-12.)

The Banu'n-Nadir defied the Prophet, but after a fortnight's siege they realized that resistance was useless. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy did not come to their aid; their fellow believers of the Banu-Qurayzah held aloof, for they had been the aggrieved party in their contentions and Muhammad had ruled in their favour.

The Banu'n-Nadir now tried to negotiate favourable terms.

But Muhammad would allow them to take of their goods and chattels only what they could load on their camels.

They asked for additional concessions, but the Prophet promptly refused and, in the end, they had to accept the terms offered in the first instance.

They left Medina with an outward appearance of joy and jubilation, their minstrels playing and singing as they rode out of their oasis.

But two of them, named 'Imran and Binyamin (Benjamin), became Muslims and remained in possession of their property.

After the departure of the Banu'n-Nadir, Muhammad told the Ansar that, if they agreed, He would turn over their houses and groves to the Muhajirun, who would then cease to be a burden to them.

Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh and Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, the chiefs of the Aws and the Khazraj, respectively, gave consent, and even stated that the Muhajirun could still share with them everything they had.

Muhammad gave utterance to this prayer: 'O God!

Show mercy to the An,sar, and the sons of the An,sar, and the sons of the sons of the Ansar.'The Surat al-Hashr ('The Mustering') commends and illumines the generous ways of the Ansar:

And those who made their dwelling in  
the abode, and in belief, before them,  
love whosoever has emigrated to them,  
not finding in their breasts any need <p89>  
for what they have been given, and  
preferring others above themselves, even

though poverty be their portion.

And

whoso is guarded against the avarice  
of his own soul, those -- they are  
the prosperers.[1]

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. (lix, 9, first quotation.)]

However, Muhammad gave a portion to two of the very poor Ansar:

Abu-Dujanah (the hero of Uhud) and Sahl Ibn Hanif.

The expulsion of the Banu'n-Nadir took place in September 625

Abu-Sufyan, it will be recalled, threatened Muhammad at Uhud with another  
encounter at Badr in the coming year.

In April 626, the Prophet took a force of fifteen hundred men to meet the  
Quraysh, but the Meccans did not come.

Instead, the Muslims, who had also brought merchandise with them, participated  
in the annual fair held in the month of Dhu'l-Qa'dah at Badr, and returned home  
much richer than before, having sold all their goods.

In that same year, the fourth of the Hijrah, the Prophet forbade the use of  
wine.[1] An earlier revelation, contained in surah xvi, 69 -- Surat an-Nahl  
(‘The Bee’) -- had not forbidden the use of intoxicants and seemed even to have  
commended them:

[1 Some commentators have put the date as much as four years later.]

And of the fruits of the palms and the vines, you take  
therefrom an intoxicant  
and a provision fair.

Surely in that is a sign for a people who understand.[1]

[1 Translation by George Sale.]

But because Muslims sometimes attended to their daily prayer while inebriate,  
hardly conscious of what they were saying, a warning was given to them, as  
conveyed in surah iv -- an-Nisa' (‘Women’): ‘O true believers, come not to  
prayers when ye are drunk, until ye understand what ye say . . .’ (v.

46.)[1] However, the situation remained unresolved and probably chaotic until  
the Prophet pronounced His interdiction. ‘They will ask thee concerning wine  
and arrow-shuffling;[5] say, “In both there is great sin and profit for the  
people, but their sinfulness is greater than their profit.”’ (Surah ii, 216:  
al-Baqarah -- ‘The Cow’.)

[1 A kind of gambling.] <p90>

Not long after the battle of Badr, Muhammad married Hafsah, the widowed  
daughter of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, whom ‘Umar himself requested the Prophet to  
marry.

Hafsah's husband was one of the fourteen Muslims who fell at Badr.

Following the battle of Uhud, Muhammad was wedded to Zaynab Bint Khuzaymah, another such widow.

Zaynab had only a few more months to live.

Umm-Salamah, who, together with her husband, Abu-Salamah, had emigrated to Ethiopia and was another widow of Uhud, became Muhammad's sixth wife.

But it is Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab Bint Jahsh, in March 627, that has invited harsh criticism from Western scholars.

Zaynab, sister to 'Abdu'llah who died at Badr, was also a cousin of the Prophet.

She had been married against her wishes to Zayd, the adopted son and a freedman of Muhammad.

It is suggested that this marriage was distasteful to her because of Zayd's inferior status.

There is an improbable story that one day Muhammad called on Zayd, who was not at home; finding Zaynab not fully dressed and seeing her thus, it is said that Muhammad fell in love with her, and when Zayd heard of it he divorced his wife that Muhammad might marry her.

It must be remembered that being Muhammad's cousin and married to his adopted son, she had been known to Him over many years.

Certainly, it could not have been 'love at first sight'.

Moreover, Zaynab's youth had long passed and she was only two or three years short of her fortieth year.

Apparently, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy and people of his kind in Medina looked askance at this marriage of the Prophet, chiefly because Zaynab had been married first to His adopted son.

Several verses (36-40) in the thirty-third surah -- al-Ahzab ('The Confederates') -- shed light upon the circumstances of this marriage, and the position of the Prophet in relation to the Muslim community:

It is not for any believer, man or woman, when God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in the affair.

Whosoever disobeys God and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error.

When thou saidst to him whom God had blessed and thou hadst favoured. 'Keep thy wife to thyself, <p91> and fear God,' and thou wast concealing

within thyself what God should reveal,  
fearing other men; and God has better right  
for thee to fear Him.

So when Zaid[1] had accomplished  
what he would of her, then We gave her in marriage  
to thee, so that there should not be any fault  
in the believers, touching the wives of their  
adopted sons, when they have accomplished  
what they would of them; and God's commandment  
must be performed.

[1 Zayd is the only Muslim mentioned by name in the Qur'an.]

There is no fault in the Prophet, touching what  
God has ordained for him -- God's wont with those  
who passed away before; and God's commandment  
is doom decreed;  
who were delivering the Messages of God,  
and were fearing Him, and fearing not any one  
except Him; and God suffices  
as a reckoner.

Muhammad is not the father of any one  
of your men, but the Messenger of God,  
and the Seal of the Prophets; God has knowledge  
of everything.  
(Translation by A.

J.

Arberry.)

A Muslim was allowed no more than four wives, but a special dispensation  
granted to Muhammad alone permitted Him to exceed that number.

It is contained in the same surah -- al-Ahzab: 'O prophet, we have allowed thee  
thy wives unto whom thou hast given their dower, and also [the slaves] which  
thy right hand possesseth, of the [booty] which God hath granted thee; and the  
daughters of thy uncle, and the daughters of thy aunts, both on thy father's  
side and on thy mother's side, who have fled with thee [from Mecca], and any  
[other] believing woman, if she give herself unto the prophet; in case the  
prophet desireth to take her to wife. [This is] a peculiar privilege [granted]  
unto thee, above the rest of the true believers.'[1] (v.

49.)

[1 Translation by George Sale.

Words which Sale italicized are not in the text, and are here shown in  
brackets.]

Sir John Glubb points out that 'It is, however, worthy of note that of all his  
wives, only Aisha was a virgin when he married <p92> her.

Zainab bint Jahash was a divorced wife and all the rest were widows, some of

them, it would seem, not particularly attractive.

Moreover, the Apostle had married Khadija when he was twenty-five and she was a widow considerably older than he was.

He had remained completely faithful to her for twenty-four years until her death.[1] And Sir John further states: 'It is noticeable that the Apostle, when a young man, had six children by Khadija, yet he had no children by the twelve women who followed her, except for a son by Mary, the Egyptian concubine.

Most of his wives, though not in their first youth, were capable of bearing children.

In Medina, Muhammad had less and less leisure time and must often have been mentally and physically exhausted, especially as he was in his fifties and latterly over sixty.

These are not the circumstances under which men are interested in the indulgence of extreme sexuality.[2]

[1 The Life and Times of Muhammad, p.237.]

[2 ibid. p.239.]

Professor Montgomery Watt's comment is: 'Most of Muhammad's own marriages, as well as those he arranged for his daughters and close associates, are found to have political reasons of one kind or another.[1]

[1 Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman, pp.102-3.]

A personal loss for the Prophet in the fourth year of the Hijrah was the death of a grandson -- 'Abdu'llah, the son of 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan.

He was six years old.

His mother was Ruqayyah, the first of the two daughters of Muhammad married to 'Uthman.

Some three months later, in January 626, Muhammad had another grandson:

Husayn was born to 'Ali and Fatimah.

The fifth year of the Hijrah (2 June 626-22 May 627) witnessed the investment of Medina.

But prior to that event, which shattered the morale of the Meccans and assured their total defeat, there were expeditions, led by the Prophet Himself, that had remarkable effects.

In June 626 Muhammad set out on a punitive expedition against the Ghatafan, whose hostility remained unabated.

He went as far as Dhat-ar-Riqah in the Ghatafan territory, some sixty miles from Medina.

But the nomads had no heart for a pitched battle and melted away.

The Muslims returned home with large booty.

The next expedition, in August, to Dumata'l-Jandal (the present-day al-Jawf) was of particular significance.

This oasis is some four hundred miles to the north of Medina. <p93> The news that robbers infested it was the cause of the Prophet's leading an army of a thousand men all that distance from His base, although never before had He mounted an expedition to such a remote place.

The strength of His position was demonstrated by his confidence that he could venture so far from His city, in order to suppress lawlessness and ensure the safety of the trade route.

The intelligence He had received proved to be correct and the robbers were put to flight.

Apart from achieving its objective, this expedition made a deep impression on the nomads of those northern reaches of Arabia.

Within three months the tribe of Muzaynah came to offer its allegiance, as one body, to the Prophet.

The investment of Medina, which took place in April 627, towards the end of the fifth year of the Hijrah, marked the last effort of the Meccans to break the power of Muhammad.

The previous year they had failed to meet the Prophet at Badr, but now they were goaded into action by the dislodged Jewish leaders of the Banu'n-Nadir and others of their co-religionists, who feared that the remnants of their colonies in Arabia might soon be overwhelmed; particularly active among them were Huyy Ibn Akhtab, Kinanah Ibn ar-Rabi' and Sallam Ibn Abi'l-Huqayq.

Some twenty of these Jewish leaders travelled to Mecca and foregathered with a number of prominent Qurayshites in the House of Ka'bah, where they made a pact to fight Muhammad to the bitter end.

Next they visited the intractable Ghatafan and promised them a good share of the date crop of Khaybar, should they join an expedition against Muhammad.

The Ghatafan readily agreed to fall in with their plans.

Further alliances were sought and made with the Banu-Asad, the Banu-Murrah, the Banu-Ashja', the Banu-Aslam and the Banu-Sulaym.

Abu-Sufyan came out of Mecca with four thousand men, and as he led the Meccans towards Medina contingents from various tribes came to join his army, until together they numbered ten thousand.

The strength of the confederates was staggering.

Had Muhammad marched out of Medina to engage them in battle, it is likely the confederates would have won the day.

As it was, time was too short for the Prophet to seek aid from friendly clans and He had to rely entirely on the resources of His own city.

He took counsel with His followers. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, who was <p94> present, gave the same advice he had given before the battle of Uhud, and this time Muhammad complied with it.

He decided not to leave Medina, but to stay within and fortify the city against attack.

Next, Salman the Persian presented a scheme for defence.

Persians, he said, dig moats or trenches around their towns to check the advance of an enemy.

For the Arabs this was a novel idea, but they speedily got down to the task.

Muhammad Himself worked along with His followers.

Implements were borrowed from the Banu-Qurayzah.

That side of Medina which was flanked by this Jewish settlement was left unguarded, because Muhammad counted on the Jews to observe strict neutrality.

It was the month of Ramadan and, although it was springtime, under the circumstances of hard physical labour fasting was onerous.

One day the Prophet, enfeebled and exhausted, was lying prone in the mosque, when He was informed by Salman that in a part of the trench they had come upon a stone which resisted all their efforts.

Bara' Ibn 'Azib of the Ansar, who at the time was no more than fifteen years old, has related that the Prophet came, took a pickaxe and, with three strokes, demolished the stone.

According to Ibn-Hisham, Muhammad told Salman that, at the first stroke, He was given dominion over Yemen; at the second, Syria and the lands beyond in the West were opened up to Him; and at the third, He reached out to the kingdoms of the East.

His followers, He promised, would achieve these wonders after Him, and would conquer these realms.

Dissemblers, hearing that, chuckled and said: 'Listen to this man I He is cornered in Yathrib, is digging a ditch to take refuge behind, but boasts of mastery over Yemen and the dominions of Kisra (Chosroes) and Qaysar (Caesar).' Even as the Dissemblers scoffed and sneered at the Prophet, in this period of rising doubt and uncertainty, He was revealing the following: 'Say, "O God, the Lord of the Kingdom!

Thou givest the Kingdom to whomsoever Thou wilt, and Thou takest away the Kingdom from whomsoever Thou wilt; and Thou exaltest whomsoever Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whomsoever Thou wilt.

In Thy hands Thou holdest that which is good.

Verily, Thou holdest dominion over all things.'" (Surah iii, 26:

Al-'Imran -- 'The House of 'Imran'.)

One incident, which occurred in the very early days of digging the moat, was indicative of the revived hopes of those within Medina who yearned for the Prophet's downfall.

He had placed the women and children in a quarter of the city which was well fortified and protected.

As soon as He went with His army of three thousand men to take positions under Mount Sal', a man named Najdan ran into the quarter of the Banu-Harithah, where these women and children had been lodged, and ordered them out at sword-point.

It was an ugly situation as a motley crowd was gathering, but the intervention of a certain Zafir Ibn Rafi' saved the day.

The intruder was cut down.

There is a story told by Jabir of those days of trench-digging that echoes the story of Jesus and the loaves.

Many traditions are traced back to Jabir of the Ansar, whose father, 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Amr, died at Uhud.

One day, he related, he saw such clear signs of hunger on Muhammad's face that he hurried home, killed a goat which he had, and told his wife to cook it and to bake some bread; he was going to ask the Prophet to have His evening meal with them.

At the close of the day, when the work was over and the men were dispersing, Jabir approached the Prophet to invite Him to his home, together with a few others.

But Muhammad called out to the thousand men who had been engaged in digging and told them that Jabir had prepared a feast for them.

All went, they were all fed, and still some food remained, which the Prophet said should be taken to the people who had not been there.

The task of digging the moat was completed before the confederates arrived at Medina on March 31st.

They must have been amazed by what they saw -- something no Arab had hitherto experienced; a deep moat barred their way and, on the other side of it, archers prepared to shoot whoever dared to jump into the trench, where trespassers would be at total disadvantage and helpless.

Abu-Sufyan's thousand camels and three hundred horses were now of no use to his four thousand men.

Indeed, they were encumbrances.

The idolaters had no choice but to set up camp and lay siege to Medina.

But that proved their undoing.

It is one thing to keep a large body of men and beasts constantly on the move, only halting for a foray; but quite another to hold them in one place, over a period of time, with insufficient provisions and no way of obtaining food and fodder in adequate quantities.

They settled down facing Muhammad and his men, not knowing what next to do.

The easy task of overrunning Medina was now a dream.

In the meantime, Huyy Ibn Akhtab, the Jewish leader before <p96> mentioned, presented himself at the gate of the stronghold of the Banu-Qurayzah.

Ka'b Ibn Asad, the chief of that settlement, shouted at him to take himself off, for he was a man of ill omen who had already led the Banu'n-Nadir into disaster.

Furthermore, Ka'b reminded him, the Banu-Qurayzah had a pact with Muhammad, had no quarrel with Him, and had always found Him just, truthful and loyal.

But Huyy would not go away.

He had come, he declared, with great tidings -- a large army of confederates had arrived who had it in their power to overthrow Muhammad and efface all traces of His work.

Such an opportunity should not be missed.

Still Ka'b would have no truck with him until Huyy resorted to ridicule, attributing his reluctance to open the gate to the thought of having another mouth to feed.

Thus chided and riled, Ka'b let the son of Akhtab enter the settlement and, by so doing, sealed the fate of his own people, which was to be grim indeed.

It was this Huyy who had gone to Mecca with a number of like-minded Jews to scheme the destruction of Muhammad.

When the idolaters of Mecca had asked whether their religion was superior to Muhammad's, the Jews, although monotheists, had replied that it was.

Their abominable statement receives severe condemnation in the fourth surah of the Qur'an -- an-Nisa' ('Women'): 'Hast thou not observed those to whom a Book was allotted, expressing belief in Jibt and Taghut, telling the infidels they are better guided in the path than those who are believers.

These are accursed by God, and for whomsoever God hath cursed, there shall be no helper.' (vv.

54-5)

Despite vigorous protests by such men as Zuhayr Ibn Bata and Yasin Ibn Qays, leading figures among the Jews of the Banu-Qurayzah, Ka'b Ibn Asad yielded to the blandishments of Huyy, decided to repudiate his pact with Muhammad, and threw in his lot with the idolaters.

When Muhammad was apprised of Huyy's visit to the stronghold of the

Banu-Qurayzah, He sent the two Sa'ds, one the son of Mu'adh, the head of the Aws, and the other the son of 'Ubadah, the head of the Khazraj, to warn Ka'b and counsel him not to break his word.

They were accompanied by three other prominent men of the Ansar, but returned to say that the Banu-Qurayzah had gone the way of the 'Adal and the Qarih.

Those clans, it will be recalled, betrayed the Muslims at ar-Raji'.

The defection of the Banu-Qurayzah was not a light <p97> matter.

Relying on their loyalty, Muhammad had left that side of the city totally undefended.

He had to find a way -- some way -- to counter whatever evil designs their chief had in mind.

Would Ka'b give the besiegers a passage into Medina through his settlement?

Would he mount an attack on the Muslims?

These were imponderables, but for the time being it seemed that Ka'b was doing no more than seeing to his own defences.

A man of the Ghatafan, named Nu'aym Ibn Mas'ud, had been converted to Islam only a few days before the arrival of the confederate army outside Medina.

Neither the Jews nor the idolaters knew this, and the Prophet accepted Nu'aym's offer to make use of this fact to cause a rift between them.

Nu'aym went first to the Banu-Qurayzah; winning their confidence, he suggested that to obtain continued support from the idolaters, particularly the Meccans, and to ensure their own safety, they should ask for hostages from the Quraysh, who would not then abandon them to their fate.

Then Nu'aym went to the confederate camp and warned them to be on guard against the trickery of the Jews.

They would ask the Quraysh for hostages, he said, but would hand them over to Muhammad in order to ingratiate themselves with Him and avert His vengeance.

In due course the Banu-Qurayzah were told to attack the Muslims on the south side of the oasis; they asked first for hostages and their demand was rejected.

Mutual suspicion, engendered by Nu'aym, kept the Quraysh and the Banu-Qurayzah apart and the latter out of the war.

The Prophet offered the Ghatafan one-third of the date product of Medina should they break away from the Quraysh and return home.

Their leaders asked for half the harvest.

At this point Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh intervened to enquire whether this was a command from God or the Prophet's own idea to buy off the Ghatafan.

On learning that it was Muhammad's own, Sa'd said that when they were

idolaters, the Ghatafan paid for their requirements; they would not now receive them free.

The whole episode of the investment of Medina -- the Ghazwah of the Trench (Khandaq), or the Ghazwah of the Confederates (al-Ahzab), as Muslim historians have it -- lasted only twenty- five days, but they were laborious days because nothing conclusive seemed to happen.

Almost no casualties resulted from the activities of the archers, and the circumstances of the siege and the inability of either side to bring the other to its knees were frustrating. <p98> The Muslims had to be constantly on the defence, poised for action to repel attacks.

The confederates could not sustain a general assault, continuous enough to be effective, nor could they find any way to penetrate into Medina.

One day 'Amr Ibn 'Abduwud, a giant of a man, accompanied by four other prominent warriors of the Quraysh, managed to make their horses jump the trench at a narrow section.

There was much tumult and great consternation. 'Ali induced the son of 'Abduwud to dismount and fight him in single combat. 'Amr was worsted and his companions fled, one of whom was Hubay-rah, the husband of Umm-Hani, 'Ali's sister.

Nawfal Ibn 'Abdi'llah could not make a getaway, was pelted with stones by the Muslims, and begged to be put out of his misery. 'Ali gave him the coup de grace. 'Ikrimah, the son of Abu-Jahl, made good his escape.

It was on this occasion that Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, the chief of the Aws, was wounded in the arm by an arrow; it was a wound which eventually caused his death.

Like his namesake, the chief of the Khazraj, Sa'd was a pillar of society in Medina and his death was to be a severe blow to the Muslim community.

The total casualties of the Ghazwah of the Trench were only nine: six of the Ansar and three of the Quraysh.

It was the inclemency of the weather which finally shattered the great confederacy against Muhammad.

Already unseasonably cold, one night a tempest raged and played havoc in their camp.

Without hope of action on the part of the Banu-Qurayzah, and having no way to replenish their dwindling food stocks, the Ghatafan gave up.

Despite opposition by such leaders as 'Ikrimah, Abu-Sufyan raised the siege and led his men back to Mecca.

The last attempt of the Quraysh to destroy Muhammad had failed.

The confederates had gone, but the Banu-Qurayzah were still there and secure in their stronghold.

Guilty of betrayal, they could easily have wrecked the work of the Prophet if a

subtle stratagem had not paralysed their will to act.

The course they might take in future contingencies was highly problematical.

What was certain was that they had proved fickle and could not be trusted; the security of Medina demanded their expulsion.

Muhammad turned His attention to them as soon as He was assured by intelligence brought to Him that the confederates had gone for good and that their alliance had dissolved.

The Banu-Qurayzah soon became aware of their predicament.

It was either Huyy Ibn <p99> Akhtab, their evil genius, or Ka'b Ibn Asad, their chief, or the two together, who presented the clan with three possible courses of action: to submit to Muhammad and become converts to His Faith; to defy Muhammad and fight to the last, first killing their women and children to spare them slavery in case of defeat; or to rush out of their fastness on the morrow, which was a Sabbath, and fall upon the Muslims around them.

None of these proved acceptable.

They would not profess belief in Muhammad, they could not put to death their women and children, and they found action on the Sabbath abhorrent.

In the old days, the Banu-Qurayzah had been allied to the Aws, and now they asked Muhammad to send a man of the Aws, named Abu-Lubabah, to visit them.

It is related that this Abu-Lubabah indicated to them, by some gesture, that if they came out of their stronghold Muhammad would exterminate them; then, realizing his disloyalty to the Prophet, he hurried to the mosque and tied himself to a pillar, to do penance. (He was forgiven before long.) However, there is a contradiction here with the facts as they emerged later, because, as we shall see, the extermination of the male members of the Banu-Qurayzah was not decreed by Muhammad but by the dying Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh.

The Banu-Qurayzah sat behind their walls and the Muslims maintained a siege.

Although chroniclers speak of fighting, there do not seem to have been many casualties.

Neither side could achieve victory, but the position of the Banu-Qurayzah was much the weaker, because they were hemmed in and lacked the resources which Medina enjoyed.

At last, they offered to leave Medina as the Banu'n-Nadir had done.

But Muhammad would have no conditions attached to their surrender.

Finally they agreed to come out and abide by the judgement of an arbiter named by Muhammad.

The Prophet appointed Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, the chief of the Aws, to decide their fate.

He had been an ally and a supporter of these Jews.

Now a dying man and too feeble to move, as the result of his recent wound, Sa'd was mounted on a donkey and held by two men.

Thus he was brought to the mosque.

Men of the Aws beseeched him to be gentle in his judgement.

But stern and unbending, Sa'd pronounced the sentence of death on the male members of the Banu-Qurayzah.

Their women and children were to be sold as slaves, and their property divided among the Muslims.

Estimates vary as to the number who perished in that <p100> mass execution; it may have been about seven hundred.

An old man, Zubayr Ibn Bata, had once saved the life of Thabit Ibn Qays Ibn al-Shammas, a follower of the Prophet.

Thabit asked Muhammad to spare Zubayr for his sake and the Prophet granted his wish, but Zubayr preferred to die.

Muhammad married one of the women of the Banu-Qurayzah, named Rayhanah Bint 'Amr.

Professor Montgomery Watt comments thus on the fate of the Banu-Qurayzah: 'Some European writers have criticized this sentence for what they call its savage and inhuman character . . .

'In the case of the Muslims involved in the execution what was uppermost in their minds was whether allegiance to the Islamic community was to be set above and before all other alliances and attachments...

Those of the Aws who wanted leniency for Qurayzah seem to have regarded them as having been unfaithful only to Muhammad and not to the Aws.

This attitude implies that these men regarded themselves as being primarily members of the Aws (or of some clan of it) and not of the Islamic community.

There is no need to suppose that Muhammad brought pressure to bear on Sa'd ibn-Mu'adh to punish Qurayzah as he did.

A farsighted man like Sa'd must have realized that to allow tribal or clan allegiance to come before Islamic allegiance would lead to a renewal of the fratricidal strife from which they hoped the coming of Muhammad had delivered Medina.

As he was being led into Muhammad's presence to pronounce his sentence, Sa'd is said to have made a remark to the effect that, with death not far from him, he must consider above all doing his duty to God and the Islamic community, even at the expense of former alliances.[1]

[1 Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman, pp.

173-4.]

Professor Montgomery Watt further remarks:

'After the elimination of the Qurayzah no important clan of Jews was left in Medina, though there were probably several small groups.

One Jewish merchant is named who purchased some of the women and children of Qurayzah! . . .

'The continuing presence of at least a few Jews in Medina is an argument against the view sometimes put forward by European scholars that in the second year after the Hijrah Muhammad adopted a policy of clearing all Jews out of Medina just because they were Jews, and that he carried out this policy with ever-increasing severity.

It was not Muhammad's way to have policies of this <p101> kind.

He had a balanced view of the fundamentals of the contemporary situation and of his long-term aims, and in the light of this he moulded his day-to-day plans in accordance with the changing factors in current events.

The occasions of his attacks on the first two Jewish clans were no more than occasions; but there were also deep underlying reasons.

The Jews in general by their verbal criticisms of the Qur'anic revelation were trying to undermine the foundation of the whole Islamic community; and they were also giving political support to Muhammad's enemies and to opponents such as the Hypocrites.

In so far as the Jews abandoned these forms of hostile activity Muhammad allowed them to live in Medina unmolested.'[1]

[1 *ibid*, pp.174-5.] <p102>

12 The Truce of al-Hudaybiyyah

With the abject failure of the confederates and the elimination of the Banu-Qurayzah, the Islamic community of Medina attained a degree of security not known before.

It seemed certain that never again would a hostile combination pose a menace to the City of the Prophet.

But within the city itself Dissemblers, although now bereft of massive support, still jeered and snarled.

Muhammad left them severely alone to follow their forlorn course; they could no longer harm the community.

He looked well beyond Medina to areas where other antagonists lurked.

Thus in the sixth year of the Hijrah (23 May 627 to 10 May 628), in the month of July, He set out to punish the Banu-Lihyan for their treachery at ar-Raji'.

But the Banu-Lihyan disappeared into the hills and there was no meeting in the field.

Muhammad visited His mother's grave on this occasion.

During the following months there were a number of expeditions led by such

prominent men as 'Ali, Zayd, Muhammad Ibn Maslamah, 'Ukkashah Ibn Muhsin, 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'Awf and Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah, with varying degrees of success and also setbacks.

The one in which Muhammad Himself was involved had a small beginning: it has been called the Ghazwah of Dhi-Qarad. 'Uyaynah Ibn Hisn, the Ghatafan chieftain to whom, in the days of the Trench, Muhammad had offered a third of the date harvest of Medina, feeling aggrieved that his onslaught on Medina, in the company of the Quraysh, had brought him no gain or advantage, came on a lightning raid and carried away a number of camels that belonged to the Prophet.

In the skirmish some of the herdsmen were killed.

When the news reached Medina a few men hurried to the scene of action and the Prophet followed with a small force.

There was no pitched battle, but in the course of the hit-and-run tactics employed, 'Abda'r-Rahman, the son of the chieftain, and three others of the Ghatafan were killed.

A Muslim was also slain.

Although a number of the camels were retrieved, the raiders escaped with the rest.

The Prophet stopped at a well called Dhi-Qarad -- hence the appellation of ghazwah.

A Muslim woman, who had been abducted with the camels, escaped her captors.

When she reached the camp of the Prophet she approached Him with the plea that she had vowed to sacrifice the camel which she rode, should she ever reach safety.

Muhammad told her, with a smile, that she was relieved from her vow because the camel was His, not hers to sacrifice, and moreover it was a poor requital for a camel that had brought her safely home.

Zayd seems to have been particularly active in that sixth year of the Hijrah.

He led a trading caravan to Syria -- the first ever to start out from Medina.

He also led a successful raid on a Meccan caravan.

In that Meccan party was Abu'l-'As, husband of Zaynab, a daughter of the Prophet.

We have seen that Abu'l-'As was taken prisoner at Badr and ransomed.

As he had promised, he sent his wife to Medina.

And now he managed to reach Medina to seek her help.

Zaynab hurried to her father, before the Prophet had any intelligence of the arrival of a stranger, to say that she had given jiwar -- protection -- to her

husband.

Her word was honoured and Muslims returned the goods belonging to Abu'l-'As.

On this, he went to Mecca, gave his clients the merchandise that was theirs, settled his affairs, and then returned to Medina to give his allegiance to the Prophet.

His conversion must have gladdened Muhammad greatly, for not only was Abu'l-'As his son-in-law, but he had been a favourite nephew of Khadijah.

Zayd's own Syrian caravan met with disaster.

The Banu-Badr, a clan of the Ghatafan, intercepted it, killed a number of the Muslims and carried away the merchandise.

Zayd, himself, fled to Medina.

Muhammad put a force under his command to seek out the raiders.

At Wadi'l-Qura', Zayd overtook them and avenged his rout.

An expedition led by 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'Awf is particularly worthy of note.

His destination was the oasis of Dumata'l-Jandal, where the Prophet Himself had gone the previous year to flush out robbers.

The people of the Banu-Kilab received him in peace.

He stayed three days with them, during which Asbagh, their chief, who was a Christian, together with a number of his clansmen, espoused Islam.

The rest agreed to pay jizyah or <p104> 'tithes'. 'Abda'r-Rahman married a daughter of the chieftain and returned to Medina with his force untouched by warfare.

In December 627, Muhammad came to hear that al-Harith Ibn Abi-Dirar, the chief of the Banu'l-Mustaliq, a clan of the Khuza'ah, was gathering a force and seeking allies to attack Medina.

There appears to have been some uncertainty regarding his plans, however, and Buraydah, who had ridden into Medina with the Prophet's standard on the day He arrived there, volunteered to discover the intentions of the chief.

He approached al-Harith, pretending that he had come to join forces with him for the battle against Muhammad.

Al-Harith was overjoyed and told Buraydah of his preparations, who, in turn, hastened to inform the Prophet.

Muhammad took His army to the area of al-Muraysi', a well which served the people of the Banu'l-Mustaliq.

Their resistance was soon overcome, and large numbers were taken prisoner, including a daughter of al-Harith.

Her captor, a certain Thabit Ibn Qays, led her to the Prophet to discuss her

ransom.

Once in the presence of Muhammad, she announced that she had become a Muslim.

Muhammad offered to pay her ransom, gave her the name of Juwayriyah, and married her.

Seeing that the daughter of al-Harith was now a wife of the Prophet, Muslims felt that her relatives, whom they had captured, ought not to be kept in bondage and freed them all.

Next, al-Harith himself came to the Prophet and declared his belief in Him.

Muhammad gave Juwayriyah the option of returning to her clan with her father or of going to Medina with Him.

She gladly chose the latter.

On the way back to Medina, two events occurred which were of considerable import.

While the Muslims were bivouacked by a well, a Ghifari man in the service of 'Umar and a man related to the Ansar both came to draw water, and there arose a dispute between them.

Sinan, the Juhani ally of the Ansar, was wounded and called on the Medinites to come to his aid.

And finding himself in peril, 'Umar's groom solicited help from the Muhajirun.

Some of the chroniclers say that the two parties fought each other and, even more serious, that blood was shed.

Others make no mention of a passage of arms between the Muslims of Meccan origin and the Ansar of Medina.

They speak only of a man named Ji'al who was creating such a disturbance that a clash seemed inevitable, but others begged Sinan to forgive the aggressive Ghifari groom, which he did.

The matter would have rested <p105> there had it not been for 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, who took Ji'al to task and was rude to him.

Ji'al would not bear meekly the lashes of 'Abdu'llah's tongue and retorted in kind.

Whereupon, the Dissembler became exceedingly angry and told his compatriots that they were now reaping what they had sown: they had let these Meccans into their town, shared their possessions with them, and provided them with houses and occupations, only to make them insolent and arrogant. 'Fatten your dog,' he said, 'just to devour you.' And he uttered a veiled threat that he would expel Muhammad from Medina.

Zayd Ibn Arqam, a youth of the Ansar, apparently under fifteen years of age, heard 'Abdu'llah's threat, and reported his words to the Prophet.

Muhammad was disinclined to accept them as true and told Zayd that he might have misheard what the son of Ubayy had said.

But Zayd was adamant, although a number of Medinites reprimanded him severely for having accused so unashamedly an eminent man of his people. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, impetuous as ever, asked permission to behead the dissembling 'Abdu'llah.

Muhammad refused his request and waited.

Then He received a revelation which testified to Zayd's veracity.

By now 'Abdu'llah was protesting his innocence, and his own son was offering to rid the community of his troublesome father.

Muhammad, however, would not sanction it.

Yet in spite of his loud protestations, 'Abdu'llah soon found another opportunity to deride and belittle the Prophet.

Whenever Muhammad led an expedition, He was usually accompanied by one (and sometimes two) of His wives.

During this ghazwah against the Banu'l-Mustaliq both 'A'ishah and Umm-Salamah were with the Prophet.

On the return journey, at the last halt before Medina, 'A'ishah lost a necklace and went in search of it.

When she came back the army had moved on.

As the curtains were drawn round her howdah, her absence had gone unnoticed.

All that 'A'ishah could do, under the circumstances, was to sit by the wayside and wait for help.

It being still before daybreak 'A'ishah fell asleep.

In the meantime a handsome youth Safwan Ibn Mu'tal, was lingering in the area where the army had bivouacked.

On the instructions of the Prophet, he was keeping an eye on any property left behind, to be collected and restored to its owners.

As Safwan came up, he noticed what seemed to be a bundle, and on approaching the spot, to his astonishment he realized it was a woman sitting on the ground, and of all women <p106> it was 'A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet.

Although highly embarrassed, he had no alternative but to make his camel kneel, dismount and let 'A'ishah ride it.

Holding the halter of the camel, he guided it safely home, to the surprise of the beholders.

Again the matter would have ended there, if gossip-mongers had not been at work -- and chief among them was 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy, 'A'ishah herself was

blissfully unaware of the monstrous insinuations, and could not understand Muhammad's aloofness.

When she learned of them from the mother of Mistah, whose own son had had a hand in spreading rumours, she asked for permission to retire to her father's house.

Muhammad granted her request.

The sneers of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy were particularly wounding.

Muhammad was sad and withdrawn and the situation was tense.

The two main branches of the Ansar, the Aws and the Khazraj, almost took to arms, because 'Abdu'llah the Dissembler was of the Khazraj, and still wielded some power among his people.

Abu-Bakr, highly respected figure as he was, felt deeply hurt and was incapable of any action to clear his daughter's name because of the Prophet's studied silence. 'In the days when we were idolaters,' he said, 'no one dared level such accusations against our House, how much less should they hazard it now that our hearts are illumined by our belief in the one true God.' But still there was no word from the Prophet, until He received a revelation which established 'A'ishah's innocence, admonishing and censuring her accusers:

Those who came with the slander are a  
band of you; do not reckon it evil  
for you; rather it is good for you.

Every man of them shall have the sin  
that he has earned charged on him; and  
whosoever of them took upon himself  
the greater part of it, him there awaits  
a mighty chastisement.

Why, when you heard it, did the believing  
men and women not of their own account  
think good thoughts, and say, 'This is  
a manifest calumny'?

Why did they not bring four witnesses  
against it?

But since they did not <p107>  
bring the witnesses, in God's sight  
they are the liars.

But for God's bounty to you and His mercy  
in the present world and the world to come  
there would have visited you for your mutterings  
a mighty chastisement.

When you received it

on your tongues, and were speaking with your mouths  
that whereof you had no knowledge, and  
reckoned it a light thing, and with God it  
was a mighty thing --  
And why, when you heard it, did you not  
say, 'It is not for us to speak about  
this; glory be to Thee!

This is  
a mighty calumny'?

God admonishes you, that you shall  
never repeat the like of it again, if  
you are believers.[1]

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry, Surata'n-Nur ('Light') xxiv, 11-16.]

The fourth verse of the same surah ordains the administration of eighty strokes  
of the whip to anyone who slanders a married woman and cannot produce four  
trustworthy witnesses to support the contention.

Now, Muhammad brought in the ringleaders and had them whipped.

One of these was Hassan Ibn Thabit, the chief poet of the Ansar; another was  
Mistah.

Ibn Uthathah, a cousin of Abu-Bakr.

Some have maintained that 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy was not chastised, but that  
seems improbable, since no one could or would commit himself, in this instance,  
to his defence.

It is related that the poet satirized Safwan, the handsome youth whose name had  
been coupled with 'A'ishah', and Safwan was so enraged that he stabbed the  
poet; whereat Qays Ibn Thabit got hold of Safwan to punish him, but 'Abdu'llah  
Ibn Rawahah, a prominent man of the Ansar, intervened and took them all to the  
Prophet.

Muhammad asked the poet to forgive Safwan for his rash act.

Hassan complied and the Prophet settled some property on him.

Mistah had been a poor orphan dependent on the generosity of his cousin,  
Abu-Bakr.

As he grew up, Abu-Bakr continued to support him, but now that he had so  
blatantly wronged 'A'ishah, his cousin was loath to keep up that support, and  
swore to withdraw <p108> it.

However, he restored to Mistah all his past favours when he heard the verdict  
of revelation on his decision -- a decision rooted in bitterness:

Let not those of you who possess bounty  
and plenty swear off giving kinsmen  
and the poor and those who emigrate  
in the way of God; but let them pardon  
and forgive.

Do you not wish that God  
should forgive you?

God is All-forgiving,  
All-compassionate.[1]  
[1 *ibid.*, v.22.]

Mistah. was a kinsman of Abu-Bakr, poor and an emigrant.

The Jewish opponents of the Prophet, who were now all gathered in their  
stronghold of Khaybar, to the north of Medina, had not ceased inciting the  
tribesmen.

They were still dreaming of a concerted effort to overthrow the Prophet.

The formation of a new confederacy, directed against Muhammad, was no longer  
possible, but their petty intrigue continued unabated.

Al-Harith of the Banu'l-Mustaliq had, in all probability, received  
encouragement and backing from the emissaries of Khaybar.

Sallam Ibn Abi'l-Huqayq, a man expelled from Medina, was one of those  
inveterate enemies of the Prophet.

Early in 628 he was assassinated.

Muslim historians agree that, having become a very dangerous adversary, the  
Prophet sanctioned his elimination.

One night Muhammad dreamt that He had gone on pilgrimage to Mecca.

On the morrow, He declared that He would immediately undertake this journey and  
called on His followers to join Him.

They would go to Mecca, He announced, as pilgrims, not as warriors equipped for  
battle.

Every man would have only his sword and no other weapons, when they approached  
the precincts of Mecca.

This, however, was the month of Dhu'l-Qa'dah, preceding the month of  
Dhu'l-Hijjah in which the rites of hajj (pilgrimage) take place.

Therefore, this journey of the Prophet could be only for the 'umrah, which is  
the lesser pilgrimage.

On 13 March 628, accompanied by some sixteen hundred men, Muhammad set out for  
Mecca.

He had put on white cloth, the garment of a pilgrim, and had seventy camels to

offer for sacrifice.

A number of His followers had found good reasons not to take <p109> part in this pilgrimage.

This was not jihad against idolaters.

It was not a ghazwah led by the Prophet.

The end of the trail was uncertain.

But a group of the Khuza'ah tribesmen, some of whom may not have been Muslims, accompanied the Prophet.

At 'Usfan, Busr Ibn Sufyan of the Banu-Ka'b informed the Prophet that the Quraysh had decided to prevent His entry into Mecca.

They could not believe that Muhammad had come for a peaceful purpose.

A body of horsemen, under the command of the intrepid Khalid Ibn al-Walid, took positions at Kura'-al-Ghamim to halt His progress.

But the Prophet took a different route and reached al-Hudaybiyyah, only a few miles distant from Mecca.

There He stopped and awaited developments.

Shortly, Budayl Ibn Warqa', a man of standing amongst the Banu-Khuza'ah, arrived at al-Hudaybiyyah to make searching enquiries and report back to the Quraysh.

The Prophet told him what he had already told His followers: it was not His intention to fight, He had come as a pilgrim.

Budayl believed Him; and so did al-Hulays Ibn 'Alqamah, a man of the Banu-Kinanah, who came to al-Hudaybiyyah on a similar errand.

Whereas the Banu-Khuza'ah had been friendly and well disposed towards Muhammad, and Budayl was so inclined, the people of Kinanah had allied themselves to the Quraysh and had taken part in the investment of Medina.

Al-Hulays was therefore deeply hurt when the Meccans rejected his report as coming from an ignorant Bedouin -- he, who had served the Quraysh so well in the past.

Another emissary of the Meccans, Mikraz Ibn Hafs, a Qurayshite himself, brought back the same news, that Muhammad had not come to fight and wished only to visit the House of Ka'bah.

But the Quraysh were dissatisfied and rattled.

The thought oppressed them that Muhammad, with a sizeable force, was no more than a few miles distant.

It was obvious, too, that they had no zest for fighting.

There was a man of the Banu-Thaqif living in Mecca, named 'Urwah Ibn Mas'ud, of

high repute and highly respected.

He offered to go and meet Muhammad.

When talking with Muhammad, his lofty attitude was so patronizing that, according to Ibn-Hisham, Abu-Bakr, always wise and sober in his speech, made a retort which was obscene.

As he spoke, 'Urwah kept pulling the beard of the Prophet; and al-Mughayrah Ibn Shu'bah, who was standing behind Him, kept hitting 'Urwah's hand with the scabbard of his sword. 'Urwah's visit solved nothing, but the man was <p110> so impressed by what he saw that, on his return to Mecca, he informed the Quraysh that, though he had been to the courts of Chosroes, Caesar and the Negus, nowhere had he seen the like or equal of the reverence which Muslims rendered to Muhammad.

There was deadlock.

Meccans were uncertain and tremulous, Muslims fretful and ill at ease.

At last, Muhammad took the initiative.

He sent 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan, His son-in-law, to parley with the Quraysh.

According to Ibn al-Athir, Muhammad intended to give this commission to 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab. 'Umar, however, pleaded that he would no longer carry any weight in Mecca, and as there were hardly any of his clan, the Banu-'Adi, left there, his life would be in jeopardy.

He suggested that 'Uthman should go instead, because he belonged to the influential House of Umayyah and was a cousin of Abu-Sufyan. 'Uthman went, and for a while there was no news of him.

The Muslims were worried and greatly concerned since rumour had it that 'Uthman had been put to death.

Muhammad could not ignore the fear and doubt creeping into His camp, and asked His followers to renew their pledge of fealty to Him, in the same manner as the men and women of Yathrib had done at 'Aqabah, six years before.

He stood under the shade of a tree, and they came, one by one, to touch His hand and affirm their faith and belief and loyalty. 'Uthman was conspicuously absent.

Muhammad raised His right hand, declared that it would serve as 'Uthman's and touched His other hand.

This renewal of fealty is known as the Bay'at-ar-Ridwan -- the pledge of Ridwan (Good Pleasure).

Verse 19 of surah xlvi -- al-Fath ('Victory') -- recalls it:

God was well pleased with the believers  
when they were swearing fealty to thee  
under the tree, and He knew what was

in their hearts, so He sent down the  
Shechinas[1] upon them, and rewarded them with  
a nigh victory  
and many spoils to take; and God is ever  
All-mighty, All-wise.[2]

[1 See p.480.]

[2 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry.]

But 'Uthman did return.

And Suhayl Ibn 'Amr came from Mecca, on behalf of the Quraysh, to negotiate with the Prophet. <p111> He was one of their leading figures, who had been captured at Badr and ransomed.

When it came to drawing up an agreement, and 'All, who was acting as scribe, wrote to the Prophet's dictation: 'This is what Muhammad, the Apostle of God, has agreed with Suhayl Ibn 'Amr,' Suhayl immediately objected: 'If we had recognized thee as the Apostle we would not have barred your way to Mecca'.

The Prophet wished to make peace, and calmly told 'Ali to write: 'Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi'llah' instead of 'Muhammad, the Apostle of God'.

The terms of the agreement were such that they caused dismay amongst the Muslims. 'Umar, bewildered and shaken, went to Abu-Bakr to express his discomfiture.

Abu-Bakr, serene and unperturbed as usual, advised him to speak to the Prophet Himself.

And to 'Umar's expostulations the Prophet replied that He would not deviate from what God had commanded:

He would not fight the Meccans, He would seek peace.

Muhammad had agreed to a ten-year truce with the Quraysh, and to send back to Mecca anyone coming to Him from that city professing Islam, without demanding reciprocal action.

Thus, a refugee from Medina could remain safe and secure in Mecca.

Tribes would be free to join either side in alliance and would enjoy the immunities of the ten-year truce.

The only concession on the part of the Meccans was to allow Muhammad and His followers to come the following year to Mecca, armed only with sheathed swords, and to remain three days to perform the rites of 'umrah.

It is not to be wondered that Muslims felt forlorn and disheartened.

But they had just renewed their pledge of fealty to Muhammad.

It was then that Abu-Jandal, the son of Suhayl Ibn 'Amr himself, arrived from

Mecca in rags, dragging the fetters fastened to his legs.

Because he wished to be a Muslim, this cruel treatment had been meted to him.

Now he had broken loose and had managed to reach a haven, but it was not to be for long.

His father intervened and demanded that his son be returned to him, in accordance with the agreement just signed.

Muhammad asked Suhayl to make an exception in the case of Abu-Jandal, but Suhayl refused to grant the Prophet His request.

Abu-Jandal, crushed by his plight, appealed to the Muslims, who could only stand round, abashed, helpless and enraged.

Muhammad told Abu-Jandal to be patient, God would ease his path; and a member of the Meccan party promised that Abu-Jandal would not be maltreated a second time. 'Umar walked away with the young man, <p112> holding tightly to his sword for Abu-Jandal to see, whispering to him that all these Meccans were polytheists and to shed their blood was of no consequence.

Abu-Jandal took the point, but refrained from acting on it.

As soon as Suhayl Ibn 'Amr and his associates had returned to Mecca, Muhammad instructed his people to shave their heads (part of the rites of pilgrimage) and offer their sacrifice.

He had to repeat this command a second and a third time, and still the Muslims, dazed and disheartened, failed to respond.

When Muhammad complained to Umm-Salamah, His wife, that nothing seemed to move them to action, she suggested that only His own example would have the desired effect.

She had correctly appraised the situation.

After performing part of the rites of 'umrah at al-Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet took the road back to Medina.

But the Muslims were still dejected and felt themselves humiliated.

Half-way between the two cities, the Surat-al-Fath ('Victory') was revealed to the Prophet.

Its opening line is: 'Verily, We have granted thee a conspicuous victory'. (xlvi, I.) Muhammad rejoiced, but the Muslims could not understand what it meant and remained deep in gloom.

Before long, it became evident that the truce of al-Hudaybiyyah was indeed a remarkable victory.

A ten-year truce meant that the Muslim and the idolater could now meet in peace.

This unrestrained association caused men to develop the highest regard for

Muhammad, and greatly weakened the position of the Quraysh.

Within months Meccans of such calibre as Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-'As were deserting Mecca to embrace Islam.

And how were they allowed to remain in Medina despite the terms of the agreement of al-Hudaybiyyah?

The story is soon told.

Muhammad had hardly reached Medina when Abu-Basir -- 'Utbah Ibn Usayd of the Banu-Thaqif -- dashed out of Mecca and covered the distance between the two cities in seven days.

Hard on his heels came two men to take him back to Mecca.

The Prophet handed him over, in accordance with the pact He had concluded.

On the way to Mecca, Abu-Basir killed one of the guards with the man's own sword.

The other guard fled to Medina to seek protection.

Abu-Basir also returned to Medina, but knowing that the Prophet would not allow him to stay, he took himself to Wadi-al-'Ays, close to the sea and on the trade route.

Ere long Abu-Jandal and many others made good their <p113> escape from Mecca and joined him.

Their number rose to seventy and probably more.

Some authorities have even mentioned the figure as three hundred.

There they became the scourge of Meccan trade.

The Quraysh, perforce, sent a deputation to Medina and asked Muhammad to drop from their agreement that item which made the return of Meccan fugitives compulsory, to which Muhammad gave gladly His consent.

Abu-Basir was on his death-bed when He received the Prophet's letter, informing him that he could now come to Medina.

Abu-Jandal buried him, built a mosque over his grave and went triumphantly with his companions to Medina.

God had eased the path of Abu-Jandal, as Muhammad had promised him.

The truce of al-Hudaybiyyah, although dispiriting at the start, had proved, in the end, a boon to the cause of Islam and a mighty victory. <p114>

13 The Call to the Kings

All Muslim historians agree that Muhammad wrote to the rulers of the neighbouring lands, calling them to recognize Him as the Messenger of God.

Historians in the West, on the other hand, have cast doubts on the entire truth of this assertion.

Of course, the archives of the Sasanians of Iran, the Emperors of Byzantium, the Prelates of Egypt, the Amharic Kings of Ethiopia are lost beyond retrieval.

No evidence can be forthcoming from those sources.

And apart from the fact that hardly any contemporary historical work has survived, no historian would have thought to mention a letter from an unknown man dwelling in an insignificant Arabia.

Furthermore, by this time the two giants straddling Eastern Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa had bled each other white.

The Iranians and the Byzantines had been locked in mortal combat for almost a generation.

When their twenty-four-year war began, the Persians had won victory after victory, swept over Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor, raced on to Alexandria, and laid siege to Constantinople.

Then Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, had made a supreme effort and rolled back the invaders to the foot-hills of the Iranian plateau.

Khusraw Parviz (Chosroes II), the Sasanian monarch, who had wantonly prolonged the war when he could have had good terms for peace and had, in his rage, put his defeated generals to death, was dethroned and murdered in A.D.

628.

In lands so ravished and devastated, any chronicler would have turned to the events of the day: defeats and triumphs, miseries and reliefs, rather than to a letter from an obscure Arabian, which would have seemed to him of no significance.

The final victory gained by Heraclius was foreshadowed in the Qur'an.

If the Persians and the Byzantines had little or no interest in the affairs of Arabia (even the Persian colony in Yemen seems <p115> to have been forgotten and left to its own devices), the Meccans, for whom trade was a matter of life and death, had a keen interest in all that transpired in the Byzantine and Sasanian realms.

It is related that when Muhammad's letter reached Heraclius, the Emperor was in Emesa [Hims] to attend to the ravages wrought by the Persians, and Abu-Sufyan was also there to attend to his trade.

Tradition has it that the enormous successes achieved by the Sasanian arms, prior to the rapid reversal of their fortunes, had made the idolaters of Mecca mock at Muhammad, because the followers of Jesus, whom the Qur'an had extolled, were being soundly beaten and humbled.

It was then, it is said, that the Surat-ar-Rum (xxx) was revealed:  
'Rum [the Byzantines] were defeated in the near land.

They, after their defeat, shall be victorious, in a few years.

Command belongs to God, before and after; and on that day the believers shall rejoice in God's aid.

God will aid whomsoever He willeth.

And He is the All-Mighty, the Merciful.

The promise of God:

God faileth not to fulfil His promise, but most men do not know it. (vv.1-5)  
Among the potentates addressed by Muhammad, the Negus, called Najashi by the Muslim historians, was the only ruler familiar with his story.

The emissary of the Prophet to the Negus was a man named 'Amr Ibn Umayyah. (Here one may wonder why a special envoy was dispatched, since there were still Muslims in Ethiopia who had emigrated more than a decade before.) The Negus, it is related, bore witness to the prophethood of Muhammad and sent his own son with three or four score men to attend the Prophet; but the ship bearing the Ethiopian prince to Arabia sank in the Red Sea and there were no survivors.

This may be a legend.

What is certain, however, is the fact that the Negus had friendly feelings towards the Prophet.

Acting upon His request, the Negus arranged marriage to Him, by proxy, of a daughter of Abu-Sufyan, and enabled her to return to her homeland.

This daughter of Muhammad's bitter enemy was Umm-Habibah, the widow of 'Ubaydu'llah Ibn Jahsh.

The latter was a brother of that 'Abdu'llah who fell at Badr, and of Zaynab, whose marriage to the Prophet caused controversy.

While in Ethiopia, 'Ubaydu'llah abandoned his allegiance to Muhammad and became a Christian, but Umm-Habibah did not follow her husband.

By this marriage Muhammad cemented further His ties with the <p116> House of Umayyah.

Some other Muslims also returned from Ethiopia, one of whom was Ja'far, the son of Abu-Talib and a brother of 'Ali.

'Abdu'llah Ibn Hudhafah was the bearer of Muhammad's letter to Khusraw Parviz (Chosroes II), who was reeling under defeat.

It is related that the Sasanian monarch was enraged, tore up Muhammad's letter and wrote to Badhan, his governor in Yemen, to lay hold upon Him and send Him to Ctesiphon.

The Prophet, when apprised of the reaction of the Sasanian, foretold his downfall, or prayed for it.

Badhan commissioned two of his trusted men to travel to Medina to inform Muhammad of the orders of Chosroes.

Should Muhammad refuse to submit, they declared, Chosroes would force His submission and reduce His city.

The Prophet kept them for a while, until, when they asked for a definite answer, He informed them that Chosroes was no more: the night before, his son, Shiruyih, had murdered him.

The story goes that Badhan marvelled at the message brought by his emissaries, and embraced Islam as soon as news from Ctesiphon verified the words of the Prophet.

There can be no doubt that the Persian ruler of Yemen did embrace Islam.

The story told of Heraclius by no less a historian than Ibn al-Athir is indeed hard to credit.

It is averred that when Heraclius received the Prophet's letter he expressed his belief in the truth of Muhammad's claim, questioned Abu-Sufyan, who (as previously stated) happened to be in the same city, regarding the antecedents, the status and the character of Muhammad, and advised Muhammad's envoy to go to Rome and summon the Pope to Islam.

Even more strange is the assertion that this Pope, who can be identified as Honorius I of Campania (A.D.

625-38), testified to the prophethood of Muhammad, but was rejected by the people.

Heraclius, according to this account, was afraid to make public his faith, lest his subjects repudiate him.

It is all very improbable.

The reaction of the ruler of Egypt, whom Muslim historians name as Maqawqis, was apparently equivocal.

He sent back the emissary, Hatib Ibn Abu-Balta'ah, with presents for the Prophet.

Included in Maqawqis's offerings were two female slaves, Mariah (Mary) and her sister, Shirin.

Muhammad took Mariah as His wife, and they had a son whom the Prophet named Ibrahim (Abraham).

The child died in infancy.

Maqawqis also sent a white mule, named Duldul, and a donkey named Ya'fur.

Tradition has it <p117> that Muhammad often rode the mule; then it passed to 'Ali and from 'Ali to Hasan, his son.

Duldul, it is assumed, lived many a year; but Ya'fur, it is said, died within a few years.

Shuja' Ibn Wahb of the Banu-Asad was the bearer of the Prophet's letter to

al-Harith Ibn Abi-Shimr, the Ghassanid prince in Damascus.

Al-Harith was infuriated, and would have raised an army to march against Medina.

Heraclius seems to have dissuaded him.

The Prince of Yamamah, Hawdhah Ibn 'Ali, was a Christian and he received the Prophet's envoy, Salit Ibn 'Amr of the Banu-'Amir, with warmth and open arms.

But what Hawdhah really desired was to share power with Muhammad; he died soon after.

Of all the envoys sent by the Prophet, the one truly successful was al-'Ala Ibn al-Hadrami.

Mundhir Ibn Sawi, who held Bahrayn on behalf of the Sasanian monarch, and most of the islanders, according to Ibn al-Athir, gave their allegiance to Muhammad.

Apart from a host of doubts, the time of the dispatch of these emissaries has been in dispute.

Ibn al-Athir terminates his chronicle of the events of the sixth year of the Hijrah with the account of missions to rulers; when he reaches the end of their story, he writes: 'Opened the year seven'. <p118>

14 Jews and Christians of the North

The seventh year of the Hijrah, which opened on 11 May 628 and closed on 30 April 629, saw the reduction of the last Jewish stronghold in Arabia.

Muhammad had now entered into a ten-year truce with the Meccans, which was proving, in every way, advantageous to Him.

The Quraysh, who had persecuted and spurned Him and forced Him to flee His native town, had, by concluding this truce, explicitly conceded to Him the position of an equal.

The free association of idolaters and Muslims, now made possible, was working to the detriment of the Quraysh.

Their inferiority was becoming much too evident.

The important centres of resistance and opposition to Muhammad had almost ceased to function, with one glaring exception -- Khaybar, the large Jewish settlement to the north of Medina.

The hostility of the Jewish leaders in Khaybar was relentless.

They tried by every available means to injure Muhammad and bring Him into disrepute, cavilling at His words, mocking His utterance, encouraging whoever was bold enough to fight Him.

The situation of this settlement -- being on a route to the north beyond the peninsula, and in proximity to the tribal areas of the Ghatafan and the Banu-Asad -- made the inimical attitude of the Jewish leaders even more dangerous.

It has been suggested by Western writers that Muhammad embarked on the expedition to Khaybar in order to mollify those of His followers who had accompanied Him on the intended 'umrah, and to 'compensate' them for having come back empty-handed.

In reasoning thus they point to the fact that the invasion of Khaybar followed very closely their return from al-Hudaybiyyah, and that Muhammad allowed only those Muslims who had been with Him there to take part in the expedition to Khaybar.

But there are other factors of equal significance to be taken into consideration when searching for Muhammad's motive.

At the <p119> time Muhammad set out on the journey which ended short of Mecca, He had plainly and openly declared that the object of the journey was the performance of the rites of the 'umrah, and at Dhu'l-Hulayfah had made His men divest themselves of all fighting accoutrements except their swords.

And when He prepared to march on Khaybar He announced that whoever would come in the hope of gaining booty should stay at home.

Obviously the conquest of Khaybar would result in obtaining considerable spoils -- that needs no argument.

But the Prophet's object was to destroy a focal point of opposition.

Some Muslim historians, who would lay at the door of the dissembler 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy every manner of covert treachery, have claimed that he sent word to the Jews of Khaybar of the Prophet's designs, urging them not to shut themselves up in their strongholds but to come out and fight in the open.

If 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy did commit such treachery, it would seem very strange that Muhammad should have, in person, recited the prayer for the dead, facing his bier.

The same historians tell us that when Muhammad's army appeared before the oasis, the Jews, engaged in their usual occupation of farming, were mightily astonished and ran back into their fortified homes.

Muhammad had moved from Medina to Khaybar in easy stages; if the Jews had been forewarned of an intended attack, why in reason's name were they unconcernedly busy with their pails and spades in open fields rather than seeing to their defences, especially since their good friends and neighbours, men of the Ghatafan, who lived only a few miles away, had not been in a hurry to come to their aid.

An improbable story relates that 'Uyaynah Ibn Hisn, the Ghatafan chief (whom we have encountered before), had responded to appeals for help from Khaybar, hastening there with his men, but a voice from heaven had warned that their own territory was in peril and so they had hurried away.

Perhaps 'Uyaynah had come but had fallen out with the Jews.

From past events, we know that this Bedouin chieftain was both greedy and unreliable.

Khaybar did not consist of one large fortress surrounded by fields and palm groves.

There were at least five fortified areas which housed the farmers of Khaybar.

Muhammad reduced these forts, one after the other, within a period of less than a month.

It is estimated that the population of the oasis might have been <p120> in the region of twenty thousand.

This may be an exaggeration, but numerically the Jews had the advantage.

Muhammad's army was small, only some fourteen hundred of the men who had been at al-Hudaybiyyah with Him.

There were casualties on both sides, but they were not heavy.

A few of the Jewish leaders lost their lives in single combat, of whom Marhab, a man renowned for his bravery and strength, was one.

He was slain by 'Ali.

By all accounts 'Ali, though ailing, evinced very great bravery at Khaybar.

But miraculous feats ascribed to him, such as wrenching away the iron gate of a fort, using it as a shield, and then holding it as a bridge over the moat for the Muslim warriors to pass over into the fortress, are obvious fabrications.

Indeed it is both deplorable and amazing to read in works that claim to be histories that the Angel Gabriel told the Prophet that, fearing lest 'Ali's mighty blows in the battle should pierce the earth and cut in half the ox that holds it up, he sustained the weight of those blows himself to lessen their impact.

It is ridiculous stories such as these which lower the reputation of Islam.

Equally absurd is another incident which, it is alleged, also occurred during the campaign for Khaybar.

Muhammad, it is related, was lying down with His head on 'Ali's lap, when His countenance indicated the approach of a revelation. 'Ali, noticing this, did not move.

In the meantime the sun set and 'Ali had no chance to say the prayer prescribed for late afternoon.

Whereupon Muhammad prayed for the return of the sun, which did come back, and 'Ali was thus enabled to say the required obligatory prayer.

Authority after authority is quoted in support of this grotesque tale.

Men who originally wrote nonsense of this description had little idea what the

retreat of the earth on its orbit meant.

To repeat it in modern times is unpardonable.

It is certain that a number of the Jews of Khaybar acted as informers for the Muslims.

A Jew it was who showed Muhammad how to capture one of the forts by turning off its water supply.

It was also a Jew who disclosed the whereabouts of the stores of Kinanah Ibn Abi'l-Huqayq, a leading man of Khaybar, who was solemnly declaring in concert with his confreres that their treasures of gold and jewels had been spent.

Because the Jews had surrendered accepting the conditions laid down by the Prophet, and had agreed not to hide any of their possessions, this discovery made the death of Kinanah inevitable.

His wife, Safiyyah, the <p121> daughter of Huyy Ibn Akhtab -- Muhammad's implacable enemy of yore, who brought about the annihilation of the Banu-Qurayzah -- was claimed by a Muslim.

Muhammad ransomed her, she became a Muslim and was married to the Prophet.

Bilal the Ethiopian, while guiding Safiyyah to the safety of the Prophet's quarters, led the way close to a spot where Jews had fallen.

On hearing this, Muhammad reprimanded Bilal for his hard-heartedness.

Muhammad was also distressed when Safiyyah told Him tearfully that His wives had contemptuously called her a Jewess. 'Aaron was my father, and Moses my uncle,' He declared.

Jews were now allowed to remain in Khaybar and follow their pursuits; but a half of what they produced went to the Muslims.

Fadak, Wadi'l-Qura', and Tayma', three other oases belonging to the Jews, in the neighbourhood of Khaybar, also capitulated on terms.

The Jews remained in their former strongholds, leading peaceful lives as farmers, until the days of the caliphate of 'Umar, who compensated them fully and sent them out of Arabia.

By June 628, Muhammad had wrested power completely from the Jews of the north.

A Jewish woman, Zaynab Bint al-Harith, whose husband, Sallam Ibn Mishkam, had died at Khaybar, tried to kill the Prophet by poisoning.

Learning that Muhammad was fond of shoulder of meat, Zaynab roasted a goat, smeared it with poison particularly in the region of the shoulder and made Him a present of it.

The Prophet invited several of His followers to partake with Him of that roasted meat for their evening meal.

The taste of the first morsel was so repellent that Muhammad spat it out and

declared that the food was poisoned; but Bishr Ibnu'l-Bara', one of the Medinites eating with Him, was less fortunate and eventually died of the effects of the poison, apparently a year later.

Zaynab readily confessed to the felony.

She did it, she said, because her relatives had died at the hands of the Muslims.

What happened to Zaynab is not certain, but the strong probability is that she was pardoned.

The rest of the year 628 Muhammad spent in mounting a number of minor expeditions, some of them wholly punitive in nature.

But He did not accompany any of them.

Zayd was sent to villages around Fadak, for the purpose of inviting their inhabitants to embrace Islam.

A man named Mirdas took to the hills with his family and his sheep.

Usamah, the son of Zayd, chased <p122> them.

When nearly overtaken, Mirdas turned round and uttered the words of profession to Islam: 'There is no God but God, Muhammad is His Apostle.' But Usamah took no notice of his declaration of faith and felled him with a lance.

Muhammad censured Usamah for this rash deed: 'Thou hast murdered a man who professed to the Oneness of God and to my apostleship.' Usamah's lame defence was that Mirdas had made that declaration to save his life. 'How didst thou know?' Muhammad retorted. 'Didst thou open his heart to read what it contained?'

'O ye who believe I When ye go out in the path of God, do not act with haste and do not, in the hope of gaining spoils, reject anyone as an unbeliever who salutes you in the way of faith.

With God there is an abundance of spoils.

Such were ye too aforetime.

And God was bounteous unto you.

Then be discerning.

God knoweth well your actions.' (Surah iv, 96: an-Nisa' -- 'Women'.) This is the verdict of the Qur'an on Usamah's impetuosity.

Ibn al-Athir states that the sariyyah, in which Usamah murdered Mirdas, was led by Ghalib Ibn 'Abdu'llah al-Laythi against the Banu-Murrah.

Another sariyyah was led by Abu-Bakr to a place called Dariyyah in the vicinity of Najd, but nothing came of it.

In February 629, Muhammad set out, accompanied by those who had been at al-Hudaybiyyah, to perform the deferred rites of the 'umrah.

Some historians have put the number of pilgrims at two thousand.

If so, obviously others had joined the Prophet for this journey.

Sixty camels went with them, specified for sacrifice.

The Quraysh, on being apprised of the Prophet's approach, evacuated Mecca.

In all probability not everyone left the city.

We know for certain that 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet (presumably a Muslim by this time) and his family, together with others of the descendants of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, remained in Mecca.

One of these was a daughter of Hamzah (martyred at Uhud), named 'Amarah and entitled Amatu'llah (The Handmaiden of God). 'Ali and Fatimah took her with them to Medina.

Subsequently there arose a dispute between 'Ali, his brother Ja'far and Zayd, each of them claiming the right to give her protection. 'Ali and Fatimah had brought her from Mecca; her father and Zayd had been tied as brothers by the Prophet; Ja'far was her cousin and the husband of her maternal aunt.

Muhammad had to settle the issue and decided in favour of Ja'far.

During the three-days sojourn in Mecca, 'Abbas arranged another marriage for the Prophet.

The woman concerned was a widow named Maymunah, the sister of a wife of 'Abbas.

When the three days specified by the terms of the truce had passed and Muhammad had shown no sign of moving out, the leaders of the Quraysh sent Huwaytib Ibn 'Abdi'l-'Uzza, a well-known figure in Mecca, to ask the Prophet to leave.

Muhammad asked what harm it would do if He tarried a while longer to prepare a wedding feast to which they would all be invited.

Huwaytib replied: 'We don't need your food.

Leave the city.' There was no alternative but to depart.

In the days of jahiliyyah (ignorance), before the advent of Muhammad, it was customary at the time of pilgrimage for people, while still clad with the single sheet of ihram, not to use the door of the house for exit or entrance.

Instead, they climbed to the roof and descended from there, and Bedouins used the rear of their tents and not the front.

Whoever broke this rule was reckoned to have sinned.

However, the Quraysh, the Khuza'ah, the Kinanah, the Judaylah, the Banu-'Amir and the Banu-Thaqif were excepted from this rule, being of the brave who need not observe the restriction.

One day during this 'umrah, a man of the Ansar, Rifa'ah Ibn 'Amr, followed the Prophet out of the street door.

Immediately the cry went up that he was a fajir -- a sinner.

Muhammad asked Rifa'ah why he had broken the rule, pointing out that He himself was a man of the Hums (The Brave) and could disregard the restriction.

The Medinite replied: 'I am thy follower and I do as thou doest.

If thou art of the Hums so must I be.' Then came a revelation which abrogated that rule of the days of Ignorance: 'It is not piety to come to the houses from the back of them; but piety is to be God-fearing; so come to the houses by their doors, and fear God; haply so you may prosper.' (Surah ii, 185: al-Baqarah -- 'The Cow'.)

On his return to Medina, Muhammad prepared to take action against the Christian Arabs in the far north, the region which is now Jordan.

Al-Harith Ibn 'Umayr, a Muslim on a peaceful mission to the Governor of Busra, had been wantonly killed by Shurahbil, a Ghassanid prince.

The news naturally spread and Muhammad could not let this deliberate and grave insult go unredressed.

He gathered a force of three thousand men, placed it under the command of Zayd, and specified that Ja'far, the brother of 'Ali, would assume command should Zayd fall, and after him, <p124> 'Abdu'llah Ibn Rawahah of the Ansar.

This army marched away in September 629 (in the eighth year of the Hijrah), and covered over six hundred miles to reach Ma'an.

There the Muslims learned that Heraclius had dispatched a large force to oppose them.

Ibn-Hisham mentions that the Byzantine army comprised two hundred thousand men, an impossible number.

Apart from the Greeks, we are told, there were large contingents from the Christian Arab tribes of Lakhm, Judham, al-Qayn, Bahra' and Balli, all under the command of Malik Ibn Zafilah.

The Byzantine army was centred at Maab (Moab of biblical fame).

Even if its numbers have been grossly exaggerated, it was certainly a force too great for the Muslims to face.

They thought of sending to Medina to seek both aid and guidance, but it was evident that the journey of twelve hundred miles there and back would take much too long. 'Abdu'llah Ibn Rawahah told his compatriots that all they could and should do was to go forth fearlessly to meet the inevitable -- martyrdom.

At a village called Mu'tah, near Ma'an, the opposing armies met.

Zayd, Ja'far and 'Abdu'llah went down in quick succession, and it fell to Khalid Ibn al-Walid, with his superb generalship, to rescue the Muslim side from total annihilation and lead the men back to Medina.

Despite the attempt made by some historians to denigrate the incomparable

Khalid and belittle the part he played, it is plainly obvious that, without his strategy and tactics, all the Muslims would have perished in a terrain unfamiliar to them and amidst hostile hosts.

Khalid, being a latecomer into the fold of Islam, did not wish to undertake the task, but once it was given to him by his fellow believers, he fulfilled it with astonishing ability.

When the Muslim army came home, battered and beaten, Medinites were ashamed, and scorned and scolded the brave men who had suffered so much and now felt deeply their humiliation.

But Muhammad was not displeased either with them or with Khalid.

He praised and comforted them and referred to Khalid as one of the swords of God.

Henceforth that valiant warrior became known as Sayfa'llah -- The Sword of God.

It is related that Ja'far had both arms hacked off while holding aloft the standard.

He is called Ja'far-at-Tayyar -- Ja'far the Flier -- for he is supposed to have been given wings to take the place of his arms.

However, sober commentators have stated that 'wings', in his case, were not such as birds possess, but indicated powers of the <p125> spirit.

What is surprising is the smallness of the number of Muslim casualties recorded.

Ibn-Hisham names only eight, and the utmost number given elsewhere is fourteen.

At Medina, Muhammad went to the homes of His fallen commanders, embraced their children and wept bitterly with their families.

Before the eighth year of the Hijrah reached its end on 19 April 630, there were a number of other expeditions led by 'Amr Ibn al-'As, Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah, Abu-Bakr and others.

All were of a minor character. 'Amr Ibn al-'As, leading a Muslim force for the first time since his conversion, went as far as a well called Dhat-as-Salasil, in the vicinity of Wadi'l-Qura', where some Christians of the Banu-Quda'ah and Banu'l-Qayn had foregathered and been joined by local Bedouins, for what purpose is not known.

There were skirmishes, but nothing substantial was either gained or lost. 'Amr, it seems, was for some reason chary of headlong clashes, although the Prophet had sent him reinforcements at his request. <p126>

15 Mecca and at-Ta'if Fall

The rout of the Muslims at Mu'tah was unexpected -- a blow but not a hard one.

It did not halt the steady march of Islam.

Rather, it increased the fame of Muhammad, that His army could now operate so

far from its base and in alien territory.

And, furthermore, this expedition pointed the way -- until then scarcely, if at all, discernible -- to future conquests in those vast regions to the north of the peninsula.

But for the time being it was within Arabia itself that the climax was slowly and inevitably approaching; and the most brilliant triumph for the cause of Islam was almost within sight.

The truce of al-Hudaybiyyah had been undertaken for ten years.

One adjustment, agreeable to both sides, had been made, as we have seen.

The Prophet had now performed the rites of the 'umrah.

Neither Mecca nor Medina had, in any way, made a breach of the truce.

But the Quraysh had not reckoned with the irresponsible and undisciplined behaviour of their Bedouin allies, and the erratic ways of some of their own leaders.

The Kinanah, allied to the Quraysh, and the Khuza'ah, allied to the Prophet, nurtured feuds of old.

The truce of al-Hudaybiyyah imposed a cessation of hostilities on the tribes that had chosen alliance with either Mecca or Medina.

A quarrel flared up between a man named Anas, of the Banu-Bakr, a clan of the Kinanah, and a youth of the Khuza'ah.

Anas had composed a poem, satirizing the Prophet, and insisted on declaiming it in public.

The Khuza'ah youth told him to stop, but Anas would not, and he was beaten by the angry young man.

Subsequently some of the Banu-Bakr decided to teach the Khuza'ah a lesson.

Thus they reactivated ancient feuds.

They applied to another clan, the Banu-Mudlij, for help, but as no aid was forthcoming from that quarter, they went to the Quraysh for backing.

A number of the embittered among the Meccans, <p127> such as Safwan Ibn Umayyah and 'Ikrimah Ibn were foolish enough to take up arms in support of the Banu-Bakr.

The people of Khuza'ah had gathered around a well called al-Watir, close to Mecca, which belonged to them.

The men of Kinanah and the hot-heads of the Quraysh fell upon them, killing twenty.

The Khuza'ah, worsted and dislodged, fled fighting to the gate of the Ka'bah.

There they met Nawfal Ibn Mu'awiyah, the chief of the Banu-Bakr, and appealed

to him to call off his men that the sacred precincts should not be desecrated.

But Nawfal, in his turn, accused the Khuza'ah of theft in the environs of the Ka'bah.

Clearly, Meccans and their allies had broken the truce of al-Hudaybiyyah. 'Amr Ibn Salim, of the Banu-Ka'b clan of the Khuza'ah, hurried to Medina to inform Muhammad these events and to ask for justice.

Badil Ibn Warqa', who was also of the Khuza'ah and lived in Mecca, did likewise.

Meccans were now alarmed by the fear of what Muhammad might do.

They had no heart for fighting and, of late, both their power and their prestige had dwindled.

To raise a large army to go into battle with Muhammad was a gigantic task.

They were essentially merchants, good at taking caravans to Syria and Yemen.

The truce had given them a breathing space and the chance to carry on their trade.

Giving surreptitious aid to the Kinanah against the Khuza'ah was almost a sport, but to equip an army was an expensive and burdensome undertaking.

And so Abu-Sufyan set out for Medina with a heavy heart.

The action of Safwan and 'Ikrimah and others like them was not at all to his taste.

He had had no previous knowledge of it and he would certainly not have sanctioned it.

He hoped that Muhammad was not too offended and would agree to a renewal of the truce.

Reaching Medina, Abu-Sufyan made his way to the home of Umm-Habibah, his daughter, who was now married to the Prophet.

After so many years Umm-Habibah was not at all pleased to see him, nor would she let him sit on the carpet which was the Prophet's own. 'On this mg,' she said, 'sits the best of men and thou art an unclean polytheist.' Abu-Sufyan left her in disgust and went straight into the presence of the Prophet.

But Muhammad gave no ear to his plea.

Abu-Bakr and 'Umar refused in turn to intercede for him.

Next he sought the aid of Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, but there, also, he drew a blank.

Would either of her sons, he asked Fatimah, plead his case before <p128> their grandfather, and by so doing bring such a boon to the Quraysh as would be gratefully remembered by generations to come?

Fatimah replied that her sons were under age and could not help him.

However, 'All, while declining personal initiative, showed him a way which might gain him some respite.

But when Abu-Sufyan left Medina and turned his face homewards he knew that he had failed.

Indeed, the Quraysh suspected him of treason because his absence from Mecca had been unduly prolonged.

Western writers have also suggested that, in all probability, Abu-Sufyan had obtained guarantees for his own safety and had arrived at a secret understanding to ease the Prophet's way into Mecca.

This is pure surmise and there is no vestige of evidence to support it.

From all that the historians and chroniclers, from Ibn-Hisham onwards, have recorded, the opposite can be concluded.

Those who present this thesis of collusion maintain that almost all the early histories were composed at a time when the 'Abbasids were occupants of the seat of authority, and nothing but the odious could safely be attributed to Abu-Sufyan and to his descendants.

This argument is not totally devoid of virtue; and though circumstances can be so interpreted as to point to Abu-Sufyan's possible double role, we can be certain that Abu-Sufyan was a perplexed and unhappy man when he returned to Mecca.

Muhammad, in the meantime, had resolved to march on Mecca.

He told Abu-Bakr of this and set the seal of silence on his lips.

Calmly, preparations for an expedition were put in hand.

Quietly, emissaries went out to friendly Bedouins inviting them to muster their forces and join the Prophet.

In order to divert attention Muhammad sent a man of the Ansar at the head of a small contingent to deal with a small clan.

No one had rightly guessed what was afoot, with one exception.

This was the same man who had been the Prophet's envoy to Maqawqis of Alexandria.

He wrote a letter to the Quraysh to inform them of the Prophet's intention, and gave it to a woman to carry to Mecca.

Named Sarah, she had wandered from Mecca to Medina some two years after Badr, but had remained an idolater.

Sarah now left in stealth for Mecca with Hatib's letter concealed in her tresses.

Muhammad sent 'Ali and six others (one of whom was 'Umar) to intercept her. 'Ali, under the threat of death, forced her to give up the letter.

In His mosque at Medina, Muhammad told the congregation that one of those present had written to the Meccans to forewarn them. <p129>  
Twice He made that announcement but no one owned up.

When He repeated it a third time, Hatib rose to confess.

He had not recanted, he said, and was still a believer, but not being of the Quraysh and having relations and property in Mecca, he had hoped to ensure their safety in this manner. 'Umar was enraged and asked Muhammad to allow him to behead the traitor.

However, the Prophet forgave Hatib, because he had been at Badr, and because of a revelation indicating that Hatib had retained his faith:  
'O ye who believe I Do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends, displaying affection towards them.

They verily repudiated the truth which came unto you, and expelled the Apostle and you, because you believe in God, your Lord.

If ye go out to labour in My path and obtain My good-pleasure, and show them affection in secret, I am well aware of what ye hide and what ye do in the open.

And whosoever of you acts in that way, he has verily strayed from the straight path.' (Surah lx, 1: al-Mumtahanah -- 'The Tested'.) In that verse Hatib is considered as one who believes and is addressed as such.

The Prophet moved out of Medina on the first day of the year 630.

As He approached Mecca, contingents of the Bedouins joined His army, until the number exceeded ten thousand.

The Banu-Sulaym, who had given the Prophet a good deal of trouble in the past, were represented by a thousand lancers.

It was the month of Ramadan, and the Prophet was fasting until He reached 'Usfan or al-Qudayd, where He called for a bowl of water and broke His fast.

Being told that some of His men were still observing the fast, Muhammad said they were in the wrong.

At Juhfah, He encountered His uncle 'Abbas, who was journeying towards Medina, accompanied by the members of his family.

Muhammad told him: 'You are the last of the Emigrants as I am the last of the Prophets.' 'Abbas remained with his Nephew, while his family proceeded on their way to Medina.

Further on, at Nayq-al-'Uqab, two others of the relatives of the Prophet, with their families, arrived at His encampment.

Both had been extremely hostile to Muhammad in times past.

One of them, Abu-Sufyan Ibn al-Harith, a grandson of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, used to satirize his Cousin in poems that he composed and read to the crowds.

The other, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Umayyah, of the Banu-Makhzum, was also a grandson of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib through his mother, and brother <p130> to Umm-Salamah, a wife of the Prophet.

At first Muhammad turned away from them, but now they were truly penitent and declared that should the Prophet refuse to receive them they would go into the wilderness, to perish from thirst and hunger.

Umm-Salamah pleaded their case; and so they too ranged themselves behind their Kinsman in His triumphal march towards Mecca.

Muhammad went steadily forward until He reached Marr-az- Zahran, some twelve miles from Mecca.

There the army bivouacked.

Muhammad ordered His men to light bonfires across the plain.

Meccans had no intelligence of the movements of the Prophet, and being incapable of gathering a force to engage in combat, were extremely worried.

On this particular evening, Abu-Sufyan in the company of Hakim Ibn Hizam, a noted man of the Quraysh, and Budayl Ibn Warqa', the Khuza'ah ally of the Prophet, had come out of Mecca to reconnoitre.

As they ascended a hillock they saw before them the whole plain ablaze with bonfires: this could only be the army of Muhammad.

Abu-Sufyan ventured forward and, as his luck held, he encountered 'Abbas, who was also feeling uneasy for the fate of the Meccans.

Had Abu-Sufyan ventured further alone, undoubtedly he would have met his death at the hands of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, who was in charge of the watch.

But 'Abbas put Abu-Sufyan under his own protection, and conducted him to the tent of the Prophet, followed by 'Umar who was sorely displeased.

Muhammad asked 'Abbas to take Abu-Sufyan to his own tent until the morning.

At dawn the army was astir; the voice of Bilal the Ethiopian rang through the plain calling men to prayer.

Abu-Sufyan was amazed and his amazement was boundless when he noticed how the Muslims would not let a drop of water, with which Muhammad made his ablutions, reach the ground.

Not even at the courts of the Sasanians and the Byzantines had he seen such devotion.

The morning prayer over, 'Abbas led Abu-Sufyan into the presence of the Prophet.

Muhammad asked him whether the time had not come for him to acknowledge the One

true God.

Abu-Sufyan's wonderment was overwhelming.

He had done so much to harm Muhammad and now Muhammad was addressing him with such gentleness.

He admitted that there could be but one God, the Eternal, the Ancient of Days, for otherwise, had there been deities such as he had believed in, he and the Quraysh <p131> would have received their blessings.

And then, Muhammad asked Abu-Sufyan, again gently, whether the time had not come to recognize Him as the Apostle of God.

Abu-Sufyan seemed to hesitate, but 'Abbas guided him to say: 'I bear witness that verily there is no God but God, and I bear witness that verily Muhammad is the Apostle of God.' At long last Abu-Sufyan, the bitter enemy of Muhammad, the leader of the House of Umayyah, was safe and secure within the fold of Islam.

Now 'Abbas once again spoke for Abu-Sufyan, to remind his Nephew that, as a proud man, he should be accorded some distinction among the Quraysh.

And Muhammad said: 'Whoever enters the house of Abu-Sufyan in the upper regions of Mecca, and whoever enters the house of Hakim in the lower regions of Mecca, he shall be secure; and whoever lays down his arms, he shall be secure; and whoever shuts himself behind his own door, he shall be secure; and whoever enters the Masjid-al-Haram [the Sacred Mosque, i.e., the Ka'bah], he shall be secure.' Abu-Sufyan was on the point of making his way back to Mecca, when a thought passed through the mind of 'Abbas:

Abu-Sufyan should be shown the might of the Muslim arms, lest, once in Mecca, he should be tempted to revert to idolatry.

The Prophet agreed, and as the army broke camp to march into Mecca, 'Abbas stood beside Abu-Sufyan, in a defile, and showed him the transformation which had taken place within the course of two years.

First came the formidable contingent of the Banu-Sulaym, at whose head rode Khalid Ibn al-Walid.

This Khalid was once a bright star in the firmament of the Meccans.

So much and so many of their hopes had resided in his youth, his valour, his mastery of the arts of warfare.

Then these contingents came and passed, one after the other: the Banu-Ghifar, the Banu-Aslam, the Banu-Ka'b, the Muzaynah, the Juhaynah, the Banu-Layth, the Banu-Sa'd Ibn Bakr of the Kinanah, and many more.

The Banu-Sa'd Ibn Bakr were the very people who, but a short while before, had attacked the Khuza'ah, thus breaking the truce of al-Hudaybiyyah; now they marched under the banner of Islam.

Then Muhammad and His escort came within sight.

That formation, at whose heart the Prophet rode, was called al-Qubbat-al-Khadra' -- the Green Dome -- because the green of the men's coats of arms glistened in the sun.

Abu-Bakr rode at the right side of the Prophet, he who had been His companion in His migration from Mecca; <p132> and Usayd Ibn Hudayr, one of the twelve Medinites who had pledged their fealty to Muhammad at 'Aqabah, rode on His left.

At the head of the Green Dome Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, another of those twelve nuqaba', carried the standard of the Ansar.

Sa'd was so overcome by emotion when he saw Abu-Sufyan that he thundered at him: 'O Abu-Sufyan, this is the day of blood-letting, the day when God shall abase the Quraysh.' Abu-Sufyan trembled with fear and begged Muhammad, when the Prophet drew level with him, not to change His mind but to be compassionate towards His people, His kindred.

Muhammad assured him that Sa'd had spoken in haste: 'O Abu-Sufyan, nay, today is the day of mercy.

Today God shall exalt the Quraysh.'

Abu-Sufyan, well assured, hurried towards Mecca to inform its bewildered populace of the approach of this invincible army.

He described to them how and where to seek their safety.

His wife, Hind, was beside herself with rage when she heard of her husband's return and his tidings.

She found unbearable the news that Abu-Sufyan had brought, and rushed out of their house to rain blows on him, intending that the people should kill this 'old, decrepit fool'.

But Abu-Sufyan had not lied, and all could see the thick dust from the hooves of the steeds as the Muslim army drew closer, and the sheen of their armour glinting in the sun.

At Dhi-Tuwa, outside Mecca, Muhammad called a halt.

He put His head on the saddle and gave thanks for the unparalleled, bloodless victory which God had given Him.

Eight years before, a fugitive from His home, He had looked back at the city of His forefathers and exclaimed: 'God knoweth that I love thee.

Had not thy people expelled me, never would I have chosen any other city above thee, nor exchanged any other city for thee.

Separation from thee grieves my heart.' Now, unbelievably triumphant, He was about to enter His beloved Mecca, not as a vengeful conqueror but as a humble son come home.

It was in a cave overlooking this city that He had heard the call which shook

the fibre of His being and sent Him running, terror-stricken, down the hill to His home, to His wife to cover Him with His cloak.

He had been told that God had chosen Him to be His Messenger to mankind, and it was too great a wonder to contemplate, too great a burden to bear.

He was to proclaim the all-encompassing sovereignty of the one All-Mighty God, supreme over all.

But when He had spoken, taunts and jeers and insults, beyond human <p133> endurance, had met Him.

Now He was coming into the Parthenon of Idolatry, to cleanse it, to hurl down Hubal and Taghut and al-Lat from their pedestals in the House of His Father; Abraham.

Muhammad rendered His thanksgiving, raised His head from the saddle and ordered the entry of His men into Mecca.

Az-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam and his contingent of the Emigrants were told to enter by the upper regions in the north.

Khalid Ibn al-Walid, with the Bedouins of the Sulaym, the Juhaynah and the Muzaynah and the rest, were directed to make their entrance by the lower regions.

Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah was to lead a number of unarmed men, both of the Muhajirun and the Ansar.

Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, whose threats had alarmed Abu-Sufyan, had been told to hand over the banner of the Ansar to his son, Qays, who was now to ride at the head of the main body of the Medinites.

The Prophet and His escort, composed of both Meccans and Medinites, moved in by the way of Adhakhir, in the upper part of Mecca.

Khalid was the only commander to meet with resistance. 'Ikrimah Ibn Abi-Jahl, Safwan Ibn Umayyah, Sahl Ibn 'Amr and some others of the irreconcilables gave battle and Khalid had to fight them.

It is said that when Muhammad heard that Khalid was slaughtering the Quraysh, He immediately sent him an order to desist; but somehow his messenger, instead of telling Khalid: 'Irfa' 'anhumu's-sayf' ('Take off the sword from them') said: 'Da' fihimu's-sayf' ('Put the sword on to them').

However, the irreconcilables, having suffered heavy casualties, were soon subdued and their ringleaders fled.

In the meantime, the Prophet, after a period of rest, mounted His horse and, flanked again by Abu-Bakr and Usayd Ibn Hudayr, rode to the entrance of the Ka'bah.

This was not a pilgrimage; and He had not donned the required garb, but was fully clad in His coat of mail.

He had come to end the reign of the idols in that holy place.

It is related that three hundred and sixty idols were ranged around the court of the Ka'bah.

As the Prophet moved from one to the other, to hurl them down, He exclaimed: 'Truth has come and the false has departed, indeed the false has truly gone.' This was the climax, the supreme moment of the mission of Muhammad.

Then Muhammad entered the structure of the Ka'bah.

Inside were human representations on the walls.

He ordered them to be effaced except for those of the Virgin Mary and the Infant Jesus. <p134> The House of 'Abda'd-Dar had the custodianship of the Ka'bah and the Prophet now returned the key of the building to 'Uthman Ibn Talhah and confirmed the right of his House to that custodianship, although 'Abbas coveted that honour.

The Meccans, almost assured that the Prophet did not intend to harm them, came out of their houses and made their way to the Ka'bah.

Among them was Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, he who at al-Hudaybiyyah had refused to allow the Prophet to call Himself the Apostle of God in the document establishing a truce.

To Muhammad's query as to what was passing through their minds and how they thought He would treat them, Suhayl replied that their thoughts turned to His goodness.

He implied that as Joseph had forgiven his brothers, Muhammad would forgive them.

Muhammad was greatly moved by Suhayl's words and it is related that He wept.

After reminding the Meccans of the wrongs they had done to the Prophet, He forgave them and let them go in peace.

Mecca itself He placed under immunity from all manner of transgression.

Next Muhammad went up Mount Safa.

There He had a clear view of the Ka'bah.

And Meccans crowded there to pledge Him their fealty.

Abu-Bakr led his blind father, Abu-Quhafah, to the Prophet, and the old idolater touched the hand of Muhammad to establish his loyalty.

He had held out for a score of years, whereas his son had been the fourth to embrace the Faith of Muhammad.

At that moment, surah cx of the Qur'an -- Surat-an-Nasr ('Help') -- was revealed: 'When comes the help of God and victory; and thou seest people entering God's religion in multitudes, then render thou praise and thanks unto thy Lord, and beseech His forgiveness; for verily He is the Forgiving.' The

Prophet had been so generous to the people of Mecca and had so extolled their city that the Medinites felt anxious lest He choose to reside there.

Muhammad had to hasten to assure the Ansar that He would never abandon them, that Medina would remain His home.

Of the Meccans, there were eleven men and six women whose lives the Prophet had declared forfeit.

Four of these men and three of the women were put to death, but the rest were saved either by their own efforts or by the intercession of a Muslim.

The reasons for the outlawing of these Meccans were mainly of two kinds: accepting Islam and then recanting subsequent to gross misdemeanour, and injuring the reputation of the Prophet by word or deed.

One of them, 'Abdu'l-'Uzza Ibn Hilal (whom Muhammad <p135> had named 'Abdu'llah after his conversion), had murdered his Muslim companion while on a mission for the Prophet and had then fled to Mecca, taking with him the animals consigned to his care for the Muslim community.

He met his death.

Another outlaw was 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sa'd, a foster-brother of 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan.

Which engaged as the Prophet's amanuensis, 'Abdu'llah would add to or subtract from the verses dictated to him. Once this erratic behaviour became known, he ran away to Mecca where he declared that Muhammad was not cognizant of what He was saying, and that he, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sa'd, had written down what was the correct revelation.

Now, he took refuge with his foster-brother.

After the lapse of a few days, 'Uthman led him to the Prophet who forgave him. 'Abdu'llah, however, was incorrigible.

As we shall see, in future years he was to have a disastrous spell of misgovernment in Egypt.

A third outlaw, whose life was spared, was Habbar Ibn al-Aswad, who had caused a miscarriage for Muhammad's daughter, Zaynab, by attacking her with his spear.[1]

[1 See p.

70.]

The three most famous of these outlaws were 'Ikrimah Ibn Abi-Jahl, Safwan Ibn Umayyah and Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr, a giant amongst the poets of Arabia. 'Ikrimah and Safwan, as we have already noted, fought against Khalid Ibn al-Walid on the day the Prophet entered Mecca.

They escaped to the coast, intending to take ship to some other land, but 'Ikrimah's wife who had, in the meantime, pledged her loyalty to the Prophet, followed her husband and brought him back to Mecca.

Muhammad announced that 'Ikrimah was returning an avowed Muslim, and forbade people to speak abusively of his father, Abu-Jahl, although the latter had been an unrelenting enemy of Muhammad.

Safwan was a cousin of the Prophet, highly regarded by the people of the Banu-Jumah.

He too was pardoned by the Prophet through the intercession of a kinsman.

But Safwan remained an idolater, until the day of the battle leading to the fall of Ta'if.

Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr, regarded as a peer of the celebrated poet Imru'-al-Qays,[1] had for long years satirized the Prophet and held Him up to ridicule.

He fled Mecca, but nowhere finding peace of mind, he took the road to Medina and sought out Abu-Bakr to lead him to the Prophet.

[1 He was the most renowned and the most eloquent Arab poet of pre-Islamic times.] <p136>

Two others of those who escaped the sentence passed on them were Hind, the wife of Abu-Sufyan, and Wahshi, who slew Hamzah at Uhud.

Wahshi lived to a ripe old age in Syria.

When, after the passing of Muhammad, Musaylimah, the false prophet, rose up in Yamamah to claim the right of lordship over the Arabians, it was Wahshi who killed him during the battle, just as he had slain Hamzah.

And having dispatched Musaylimah, Wahshi exclaimed: 'In the days of ignorance I slew the best of men, and in the arms of Islam I slay the worst of men.'

Say: 'O my people who have been prodigal  
against yourselves, do not despair of  
God's mercy; surely God forgives sins  
altogether; surely He is the All-forgiving,  
the All-compassionate.' [1]

[1 Translation by A.J.

Arberry.]

That verse, the 54th of Surah xxxix -- Surat-az-Zummar ('The Companies') -- was revealed when Wahshi, having come to the Prophet, despaired of ever being forgiven.

Muhammad, it is related, commented later that for this one verse of the Qur'an He would not exchange the entire world and all that it contained -- 'Do not despair of God's mercy; surely God forgives sins altogether'. 'Ali also commented on this verse, saying, 'In the whole of the Qur'an there is no verse more far-reaching than this.'

The idols of Ka'bah destroyed, Muhammad turned His attention to the pagan temples in the vicinity of Mecca.

Khalid Ibn al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-'As were sent to demolish them.

Then, on a second mission, Khalid put some of the people of the Banu-Jadhimah,

a clan of the Kinanah, to the sword, although they professed Islam.

Muhammad was aghast when the news reached Him and wept.

He called out: 'O God!

I am innocent of what Khalid has wrought', and sent 'Ali to compensate the bereaved most generously.

Khalid's flagrant act was in settlement of a blood-feud arising many years before, when men of this clan had murdered his uncle.

A moving story is told of the sufferings of the Banu-Jadhimah.

Among those whose hands were tied behind their backs was a youth who begged to be taken close to the tent which sheltered the women of the clan.

Here he bade farewell to Hubayshah, whom he loved, after which he was led away and decapitated.

Hubayshah ran out of the tent, threw herself on his <p137> body and died on the spot.

Muhammad, when told of this episode, exclaimed: 'Wasn't there one, merciful, amongst you?'

The people of the Hawazin and the Thaqif, who lived to the south-east of Mecca, were alarmed by the Prophet's successes and decided to challenge Him in the field.

Their evil genius was Malik Ibn 'Awf, the head of the Banu-Nasr clan of the Hawazin.

Qarib Ibn al-Aswad, the chieftain of the Thaqif, and 'Abd-Yalil, another prominent man of the same tribe, gathered their forces to join Malik and his men.

There was an old and blind man of the Hawazin, named Durayd Ibn as-Simmah, whose years have been recorded as one hundred and sixty.

In his younger days he had been a mighty raider and warrior.

Now they brought him in a litter, fastened on the back of a camel.

Durayd objected to Malik's tactics.

Why, he enquired, had the women and the children, the cattle and the sheep, come with a fighting force?

Malik replied that their presence would put heart into his men and make them more determined to win.

Durayd answered that this was a recipe for total disaster.

They were encumbrances and, should the day go against the Hawazin, their families and their property would be irretrievably lost.

Malik thought that Durayd's extreme age had clouded his judgement.

When the Hawazin were beaten and took to flight, Durayd, sitting in his litter, was abandoned on the battlefield.

A Muslim chanced upon him and struck to behead him.

But the old man's skin was too leathery and the Muslim's sword was blunt.

Durayd begged his assailant to take the sword hanging in his litter and relieve him of his misery.

Muhammad soon learned of the dispositions of the Hawazin and the Thaqif.

He had brought ten thousand men with Him, and now Mecca provided Him with two thousand more.

No more than two or three weeks had passed since His entry into Mecca, but Muhammad saw that immediate action was required to crush the alliance of the two great tribes and thus prevent their attracting more adherents.

Although a number of the clans had refused to throw in their lot with the adversaries of the Prophet, there was no telling which clans might waver and make an attack.

The Banu-Sa'd, amongst whom Muhammad had lived in the desert in His infancy and early childhood, had, for that very reason, turned a deaf ear to the pleas of Malik Ibn 'Awf.

A contingent from that clan, however, had already yielded to Malik's blandishments.

Muhammad borrowed a hundred coats of arms <p138> and weapons of different sorts from Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who was still an idolater.

To carry them, Safwan also placed his camels at the disposal of Muhammad and accompanied Him to the valley of Hunayn.

Malik, reaching there before Muhammad, had laid an ambush in the surrounding hills.

The vanguard of the Muslim army approached Hunayn at early dawn with no idea that it was almost surrounded by the enemy.

When the attack came the Muslim ranks were broken.

Men turned back in panic and, in their headlong rush to safety, nearly overwhelmed their companions advancing behind them.

The Prophet and His immediate entourage[1] extricated themselves from the melee and secured a position by the side of the valley.

Abu-Sufyan, the Umayyad, according to Ibn-Hisham, expressed the view that this chaotic flight could only end at the sea.

Safwan upbraided his half-brother for his glee at the prospect of Muhammad's defeat.

Shaybah Ibn 'Uthman, of the House of 'Abda'd-Dar, felt that he had now the opportunity to murder Muhammad, thus avenging the death of his father at Uhud. [1 Ibn-Hisham names them as 'All, Abu-Bakr, 'Umar, 'Abbas and his son Fadl, Abu-Sufyan Ibn al-Harith, a cousin of the Prophet and his son Ja'far, Rabi'ah Ibn al-Harith, brother of the said Abu-Sufyan, Usamah Ibn Zayd, and Ayman Ibn Umm-Ayman Ibn 'Ubayd.]

The day of Hunayn might well have wrecked all that the Prophet had achieved, had not the thunderous voice of 'Abbas come ringing through the valley, telling the Muslims that their Prophet had stood His ground and was calling for their help.

They responded and came back, shaken and ashamed, bent on redeeming themselves.

It was now the turn of the Hawazin and the Thaqif to reel under their determined onslaught.

The men of the Ansar were the first to engage the enemy, but it was the men of Banu-Sulaym, still pagan scarcely a month before, who drove the Hawazin from the field.

Malik Ibn 'Awf made good his escape and reached the safety of at-Ta'if.

The forebodings of the aged Durayd came only too true.

The Hawazin lost all.

The Thaqif sustained heavy casualties, some of their best men dying around their standard.

The battle of Hunayn was fought on 31 January 630.

The disposal of the enormous booty posed many problems.

Muhammad was very generous towards the leading men of Mecca, His former enemies.

They came to be regarded as a class <p139> by themselves -- people whose hearts the Prophet had sought to win.

Safwan, because he was still an idolater, had no right to the spoils of war.

But he had served the Prophet faithfully since the day he was pardoned.

Muhammad found him marvelling at the size of the capture and gave him all the animals there around him.

Safwan was so overcome that he spontaneously uttered the words: 'I bear witness that there is no God but God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is His Apostle.' 'Ikrimah, the son of Abu-Jahl, was also now totally transformed.

He had spent a great deal of money to bring about the downfall of Muhammad, he said, but would spend as much, if not more, to exalt His Faith.

In later years, 'Ikrimah died in Syria while fighting the Byzantines.

Muhammad went on from Wadi Hunayn to besiege at-Ta'if, the stronghold of the people of Thaqif.

This was the delectable town He had visited, so many years before, in the hope of finding refuge.

Instead He had suffered wounds in at-Ta'if, both of the body and the spirit, and had been hounded out.

The Thaqif were, for the moment, well entrenched, and Muhammad came to the conclusion that it was sheer waste of time and men to prolong the siege, because it was certain that, isolated, Ta'if could not hold out indefinitely and would submit to Him of its own accord.

After a fortnight Muhammad marched away.

In the meantime Malik Ibn 'Awf, who was a fugitive inside Ta'if, had begun negotiations for his own surrender.

On the way back from the siege, a man rode his camel close to the Prophet's, in a narrow space, and Muhammad was injured in the ankle.

He hit the man with his whip to drive him away, but the next day sent for him and handsomely compensated him for that lash, which, He declared, was unwarranted.

Within the next few months, before Ta'if recognized the supremacy of the Prophet, elsewhere other events of mighty import came to pass.

The booty and the prisoners taken at Hunayn had been gathered together at al-Ji'ranah, to which the Prophet now repaired.

He spent the last days of February and the first days of March there to attend to the consequences of His victory at Hunayn.

The clan of His foster-mother, some members of which had been rash enough to join the league against Him, came to ask for clemency and for the restoration of their property.

Among the prisoners taken from the Banu-Sa'd was a woman, Shayma, whose husband had died in the battle.

She claimed to be the daughter of Halimah, Muhammad's <p140> foster-mother.

Muhammad was greatly moved by the remembrance of His years of childhood in the desert.

Shayma and her relatives were all set free and given ample gifts, to their great satisfaction.

But the matter of the disposal of the spoils and the distribution of rewards and recompenses was complicated and long drawn out.

In the midst of it all Malik Ibn 'Awf came out of Ta'if and announced his conversion to Islam.

Although defeated, he also expected and received his meed.

There were others of the leading men of Hawazin, who, having embraced Islam, had to be considered.

In His attempt to do justice to the tribe of His foster-mother, Muhammad had to appeal to the Muslims to give to Him the women and children whom they held captive.

The clans of Banu-Tamim and the Fuzarah were, at first, unwilling to comply. 'Abbas Ibn Mirdas of the Banu-Sulaym also objected, but the rest of that clan overruled their leader.

This 'Abbas groaned at the paucity of his own share.

Muhammad told 'Ali to shut the mouth of the son of Mirdas. 'Abbas thought that the Prophet had ordered the cutting out of his tongue, and was mightily surprised when he learned that he was to be given more of the spoils.

Meccans, polytheists till late, such as Abu-Sufyan, the Umayyad, and his sons, and Suhayl Ibn 'Amr and Hakim Ibn Hizam, had received so much of the bounty of the Prophet that some of the young men among the Medinites showed discontent.

Muhammad had to speak to them to pacify them.

Once all the dispositions had been made, Muhammad returned to Mecca, performed the minor pilgrimage, entrusted the administration of Mecca to a young man of the House of Umayyah, named 'Attab, and left Mu'adh Ibn Jabal with him to teach the people the practices of Islam.

Then He departed for Medina.

The eighth year of the Hijrah was now drawing to its close.

Strangely, at Marr-az-Zahran, Muhammad was surrounded by a clamorous group of Bedouins who had not been at Hunayn and yet demanded their share of the booty.

They even went to the length of pushing the Prophet against a tree and pulling off His cloak.

Soon after the Prophet's return to Medina, His daughter, Zaynab, died.

It will be recalled that she was the wife of Abu'l-'As, the favourite nephew of Khadijah, and was rejoined to her husband when he was converted to Islam.

They had a son and a daughter.

The son died before his fifteenth year.

The daughter <p141> was married to 'Ali, after the passing of Fatimah, whose wish it was.

The ninth year of the Hijrah opened on 20 April 630.

Several months later in the early autumn of that year, the Prophet led an expedition to Tabuk, far in the north.

News had come that hostile forces were gathering in those regions.

It is not clear whether the potential enemies were the Christian Arabs of the north, or Greeks of Byzantium.

Sir John Glubb, well acquainted as he is with the area in question, writes:  
'The weather in the Hejaz was still oppressively hot, water and grazing were scarce, and the movements of a large force would be extremely difficult.

Perhaps also memories of the disaster at Mota [Mu'tah] deprived many men of the wish to face the Byzantines again.

'It is not plain from the surviving accounts why the Apostle of God insisted on carrying out the expedition at this unfavourable season, when a delay of two months would have introduced easier conditions.

It is true that a merchant is said to have come from the north and reported that a large Byzantine force had assembled at Tebook.

'This suggestion seems to be extremely improbable.

Tebook itself was divided by two hundred miles of desert from the nearest Byzantine garrison and it would have been quite impossible for a force of Byzantine regular troops to reach Tebook in the late summer, or indeed at any time of year.

Even if by "Byzantines", the Arab tribes of the area are intended, the same difficulties would have confronted them as were experienced by the Muslims -- lack of water or grazing at the end of the summer.'<sup>[1]</sup>

[1 The Life and Times of Muhammad, p.333. ]

There are strong and clear indications that a fairly large number of the Muslims were chary of taking the long road to Tabuk.

Several verses in the ninth surah -- Surata't-Tawbah ('Repentance') -- highlight this strange reluctance on the part of the Muslims: 'O ye who believe!

What is wrong with you that when you are told to go forth in the path of God, you stay where you are tenaciously?

Are ye contented with the life of this world in preference to life in the world to come?

And yet, as compared with the world to come the life of this world is meagre.'  
(v.

38.) Even when the Prophet returned from Tabuk, there were men who went up to Him to say that they had absented themselves from that expedition and begged for forgiveness.

Muhammad had led His men <p142> against greater odds in the past, but such recalcitrance had not been noticeable, except in the case of the Munafiqun (Dissemblers).

In this instance 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy camped outside Medina, but did not remain

with the expedition and returned home.

No battles were fought during the long march to Tabuk and back.

[1]

Khalid Ibn al-Walid, ordered to Dumata'l-Jandal, made; prisoner of Ukaydir Ibn 'Abdu'l-Malik, of the dynasty of Kindah.

Ukaydir was a Christian.

He agreed to pay poll-tax and placed himself and his people under the protection of Islam.

The ruler of Aylah, named Yuhannah (John) Ibn Rubah, who was also a Christian, met the Prophet at Tabuk and submitted to Him on similar terms.

And so also did the Christians of Jarba' and Adhruh.

Muhammad stopped for ten days at Tabuk and then returned to Medina. 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan contributed so generously to the expenses of this expedition, which was the Prophet's last, that He gave him particular praise. 'O God!' He said, 'Be Thou well content with him.' Whatever the reason for the march to Tabuk, it established the supremacy of Islam among people and in territories that had been subject to Byzantium.

Before Muhammad left for Tabuk, a number of Medinites asked Him to visit a mosque which they claimed to have built for the sick and disabled.

Muhammad told them that He was on the point of departure, but on His return He would come to pray at their mosque.

But now, at Dhi-Awan, within hailing distance of Medina, Muhammad sent ahead three men of the Ansar to burn down that mosque.

Surah ix, 108 obviously refers to this doomed mosque which, it is said, had been constructed by the partisans of Abu-'Amir the Hermit:

And those who have taken a mosque in opposition  
and unbelief, and to divide the believers,  
and as a place of ambush for those who fought  
God and His Messenger aforetime -- they will swear  
'We desired nothing but good'; and God testifies  
they are truly liars.[1]

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ]

Ibn-Hisham gives the names of the twelve men responsible for the erection of the mosque, but makes no mention of a link with Abu-'Amir.

According to Ibn al-Athir, Abu-'Amir died, shortly afterwards, in Ethiopia.

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A strange feature of that ninth year of the Hijrah seems to have been the

recrudescence of activity by a variety of people, all of whom are designated as the Munafiqun.

Yet they could not have been all of the same mind, the same intent, the same sympathies.

The convoluted ways of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy and his supporters had been evident ever since Muhammad had come to Yathrib from Mecca.

He had blown hot and cold on several occasions, the last being when he encamped close to the Prophet's quarters and then abandoned the expedition to Tabuk.

Not long after the Prophet's return from Tabuk, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy was taken ill.

Muhammad sat by his sick-bed and granted his wish to have one of His own shirts to serve as a shroud.

And when the Son of Ubayy died Muhammad, in person, performed the burial rites.

It is said that 'Umar protested vigorously, declaring that the dead man was an enemy of God and should not have received the honours accorded to him.

With 'Abdu'llah Ibn Ubayy there died also the hopes of those who had followed his whims over the course of years.

It will be remembered that at Uhud three hundred men followed him when he deserted.

Ibn-Hisham and others tell us of another group of the critics of the Prophet, who used to gather in the house of a Jew named Suwaylim, but apart from the fact that his house was set alight by a Muslim, little is known about him and his associates.

Then we have the story of that other band of the Munafiqun, the people who built a mosque to the detriment of Islam, not for its glorification.

Sh'iah bigots have conjured up still another group of the Munafiqun, through sheer imagination.

Their list includes the names of Abu-Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah, Khalid Ibn al-Walid, Talhah Ibn 'Ubaydu'llah and Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas, who, they have alleged, attempted the life of Muhammad twice, once on His return from Tabuk, and a second time the following year, on His return from His last pilgrimage to Mecca.

These lunatic statements apart, that ninth year of the Hijrah did witness a surprising stir amongst the various factions of the so-called 'false Muslims'.

In vivid contrast stands another feature of the year nine: the growing size and frequency of deputations coming from all over the peninsula to declare their allegiance to the Prophet.

Indeed, so remarkable was the movement towards Medina that the ninth year has become known as the 'Year of Deputations'. 'Urwah Ibn <p144> Mas'ud of the

Thaqif came from Ta'if, in December 630, to talk of peace.

He was totally won over to the side of the Prophet and became a Muslim.

With his newly-found faith and zeal, he went back to Ta'if to proselytize his compatriots.

But opposition there was still strong and 'Urwah was murdered.

Shortly afterwards, the Thaqif realized that they could not withstand the rising tide of Islam any longer.

Bedouins, all around them, were making their way to Medina to submit to Muhammad.

As the Prophet had foreseen, Ta'if could not exist in isolation.

A deputation consisting of six men, one from each clan, took the same road that many others were taking.

The Prophet granted them their requests save one.

They wished to keep their idol, al-Lat, for three years.

On that issue there could be no compromise.

So, the delegation asked for the favour of retaining al-Lat for one more year.

Again they were refused.

Then they asked for six months' grace, and even one month.

Every time the Prophet's reply was a categorical no.

In the end they saw the futility of their plea.

Muhammad commissioned Abu-Sufyan, the Umayyad, and Mughayrah Ibn Shu'-bah to accompany the Wafd (Deputation) back to Ta'if to destroy their cherished idol.

Mughayrah, himself a man from Ta'if, toppled al-Lat with the blow of an axe.

At-Ta'if like Mecca came peacefully into the fold of Islam. <p145>

16 The Farewell

The number of deputations was fast increasing.

Professor Montgomery Watt writes: '...

From the time of Muhammad's return to Medina from Hunayn the trickle of such deputations became a stream.

The strain on Muhammad and his advisers must have been great.

There were dozens of tribes and sub-tribes and smaller groups.

Within a group of whatever size there were usually at least two factions or rival subdivisions.

If a deputation came to Medina from a tribe, as often as not it was from one

section of a tribe trying to steal a march on another section.

To deal with such deputations tactfully Muhammad must have had an extensive knowledge of the internal politics of the various groups.

Not for nothing is Abu-Bakr, his chief lieutenant, said to have been an expert on genealogy, which included a knowledge of the relation to one another of the subdivisions of any group.

That things went so smoothly says much for Muhammad's wisdom in handling these affairs.[1]

[1 Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman, p.213.]

The deputation of the Banu-Tamim who came from the heart of Najd, headed by such prominent men as 'Utarid Ibn Hajib and Aqra' Ibn Habis, challenged Muhammad to a recitation and poetry contest.

The Prophet had never composed a line of poetry.

He was not a poet, He always maintained; the Qur'an was the Word of God revealed to Him.

But His opponents had tried to picture Him as a versifier, passing off His brave show of eloquence as revelations from God.

Arabs possessed a very rich poetry, although of limited range.

They were apt to break into verse -- resonant, mellifluous, exaggerated -- at every turn of their fortune.

There are sheafs of excellent poems, either by His people or His foes, commemorating the battles of the Prophet.

Now, when challenged to a contest He accepted it, listened patiently to <p146> their oratory and then told His poet, Hassan Ibn Thabit of the Ansar, to match their eloquence.

These men of Najd were content with what they heard and admitted the superiority of the Prophet's champions.

Muhammad gave them suitable gifts and sent them home.

The tribe of the Banu-Sa'd Ibn Bakr sent a man named Dimam Ibn Tha'labah to the Prophet to investigate His Cause.

Dimam boldly entered the Prophet's mosque and walked up to a group of people, amongst whom Muhammad was sitting, and enquired which of them was the son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib.

Muhammad said that He was, and Dimam, to make certain, asked whether He was Muhammad.

Having ascertained this, Dimam addressed the Prophet: 'O Son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib!

I shall speak to you with force and vehemence.

Do not be offended.' Then he put a string of questions to the Prophet, the gist of which was whether Muhammad truly claimed to be sent by God with those beliefs, practices and ordinances which He had propounded, and whether He would swear and stand by what He had said.

Having received positive answers to all his questions, Dimam declared himself a Muslim, went back to his tribe, told them to do away with their idols and brought the Banu-Sa'd Ibn Bakr into the fold of Islam.

Hatim of the Tayy was renowned for his generosity.

Today, after the lapse of fourteen hundred years, his name still stands throughout the world of Islam as a byword for that quality, both materially and in the realm of the mind and the spirit.

In the course of centuries historians, chroniclers, story-tellers and poets have lavishly used his name.

By the year ten of the Hijrah, which opened 9 April 631, Hatim was dead and his son, 'Adi, remained unreconciled to Islam. 'Ali had already led a small force into the territory of the Tayy, had demolished their temple and destroyed their idol called Fils. 'Adi, himself a Christian, had fled to Syria, but his sister had been captured and taken to Medina.

Muhammad treated her in the way that befitted the daughter of Hatim.

She was sent back to her people, well escorted and endowed.

Overpowered by the magnanimity of Muhammad, she travelled to Syria in search of her brother and persuaded him to go to Medina and make his peace with the Prophet.

At Medina, 'Adi went straight into the presence of Muhammad, but, as soon as he disclosed his identity, the Prophet arose and walked out towards <p147> His house. 'Adi followed Him.

On the way an old woman, with a petition to make and a problem to resolve, stopped the Prophet and held him in a very long conversation.

Muhammad's meekness, patience and loving-kindness towards her left a deep impression on the son of Hatim.

In His home, Muhammad offered the best seat He had to 'Adi and chose to sit on bare earth Himself. 'Adi, who had come to make his peace with the Prophet, and to offer to pay the poll-tax demanded of the People of the Book, instead offered Muhammad his undying devotion.

In future years he was to play a distinguished part in the affairs of Islam.

The Prophet had good reason to be pleased with the tribe of Hatim.

One of its leading men, Zayda'l-Khayl -- Zayd of the Horses -- who was both chivalrous and brave, had come earlier to test the validity of the position of Muhammad and of His Faith.

In the end Zayd and a large number of His people accepted Islam.

Muhammad called this singularly outstanding man Zayda'l-Khayr -- Zayd of Goodness (or Zayd the Good) -- and remarked that his sterling qualities excelled even the glowing accounts which had reached Him.

Sadly, Zayd did not have long to live after his conversion.

Deputations also came to Medina from Yemen, then in an unsettled state following the death of Badhan, who had held it in the name of the Sasanian monarch but had been converted to Islam.

In Yemen lived the descendants of 'Abd-Kulal and other illustrious Himyarite rulers.

The Prophet sent 'Ali and Khalid Ibn al-Walid, each at the head of a force, to stabilize the situation.

Mu'adh Ibn Jabal, whom the Prophet chose on many occasions to teach various groups of people the principles and practices of Islam, was also sent on that errand to Yemen.

With the deputation of the Banu-Bajilah, whose haunts were in the interior of Yemen, came Jarir Ibn 'Abdu'llah, whom Muhammad held in high regard.

Jarir succeeded in demolishing a famed pagan temple in Yemen.

The Christians of Najran, living to the north of Yemen, were well aware of the fact that Islam was now sweeping over Arabia.

From far and wide, even from the island of Bahrayn, subject to Sasanian rule, deputations were making their way to Medina.

Then came emissaries from Muhammad to Najran, and the priests and dignitaries of the town gathered together to take counsel and to debate the issue.

There was a strong tendency in that meeting to form a confederacy with neighbours such as the Madhhij and <p148> the Saba, to defy Muhammad, for they found it hard to place themselves under His protection and pay the poll-tax.

It is recorded that a very old man (well over a hundred years old), named Husayn Ibn Alqamah, of the Banu-Bakr Ibn Wa'il, who was a Muslim in secret, warned that assemblage not to let their passions guide them, but to consider their situation calmly.

At first his sober words induced an inflammatory harangue from the chieftain of Banu'l-Harith Ibn Ka'b, but in the end he gave way to reason.

It was decided to send a deputation to Medina to parley with Muhammad.

In Medina, there was still talk of offering a challenge to the Prophet, but finally these Christians of Najran submitted to the inevitable and made a pact with Him instead.

It seems that they even requested Muhammad to send them a governor, and the

Prophet appointed Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah to that office.

Included in the deputation of the people of al-Yamamah was one named Musaylimah, who ostensibly became a Muslim.

But on his return to Yamamah he claimed that he, too, was a messenger of God and had the same status as Muhammad.

He began a letter to the Prophet with these words: 'From Musaylimah, the Apostle of God, to Muhammad, the Apostle of God,' and invited Muhammad to divide the world between them.

Muhammad's reply was to the point: 'From Muhammad, the Apostle of God, to Musaylimah, the liar.' As will be seen, after the passing of the Prophet, Musaylimah and the people of Yamamah rose up, in unison with others, to break the power of Islam, but they failed.

In March 631, when the season of pilgrimage arrived, Muhammad decided not to undertake the journey to Mecca.

Certain customs lingering from the past, and apparently still in vogue, seem to have ordered His decision.

He appointed Abu-Bakr to lead the pilgrims, and entrusted 'Ali with the task of conveying to them certain recent revelations concerning the idolaters.

After a period of grace, idolaters were not to be admitted any longer into the Ka'bah.

Authorities such as Ibn-Hisham, at-Tabari and Ibn-al-Athar have maintained that Abu-Bakr kept his position as the leader of the pilgrims, whereas some Sh'iah apologists have taken the view that 'Ali could not have been asked to function under Abu-Bakr.

The argument is specious and childish, but is indicative of a rift intentionally deepened and hardened centuries later, which did not exist in early years. <p149>

The extent of the Prophet's supremacy, established by the close of the tenth year of the Hijrah, can be seen in the diversity of commissions that He gave for the collection of revenues: 'Ali to Najran, Ziyad Ibn Labid of the Ansar to Hadramut, Muhajir Ibn Abu-Umayyah to San'a' in Yemen, al-'Ala Ibn al-Hadrami to Bahrayn.

Muhammad's pilgrimage in the spring of 632 is known as the 'Farewell Pilgrimage': it was His last, for no more than three months of life were left to Him.

His sermon during that pilgrimage indicated this, when He told His people that He would never again meet them in the same place.

He particularly emphasized the fraternity of the Muslim community.

All the blood-feuds of affirmed the right of private property, but condemned

usury.

The months of the year He declared to be twelve, four of them being interdicted[1] months:

Rajab, Dhu'l-Qa'dah, Dhu'l-Hijjah and Muharram; thus the old system of including an additional intercalary month was definitely abolished. (Revelations contained in the Qur'an had already made that provision.) 'You have rights over your women and they have rights over you,' the Prophet declared, and the vast congregation was exhorted to put behind them all vainglory. 'O people,' said Muhammad, 'your God is one God, your fathers are one; you are all of Adam and Adam is of earth.

In the sight of God he is more worthy who is more devoted to Him.' Fear of God and devotion to Him were the measure of the worth of a man, not his lineage and ancestry, not the glories of the group to which he might belong.

[1 Months in which raids and warfare were forbidden (or rather, placed under taboo).]

And when Muhammad came to the end of His sermon He asked His audience whether He had not given them all the guidance they needed, told them all that needed telling, whether He had not completed the mission entrusted to Him.

With one voice they replied: 'By God!

Thou hast.' Muhammad then lifted His face heavenwards and exclaimed: 'O God! bear Thou witness.' The rites of pilgrimage which the world of Islam has observed down the years are exactly those performed by the Prophet during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

Muhammad stayed ten days in Mecca, and then left His native town for the last time.

Sh'iah tradition has it that on the way back to Medina, at urgent <p150> bidding received from God, Muhammad made, all of a sudden, a forced halt by the pool of Khum, a most inconvenient place; had a pulpit raised with saddles, and from this announced 'Ali as His successor, requiring the large body of Muslims who were with Him to pledge their loyalty to 'Ali.

One can look in vain in other sources for any reference to this episode, which looms large in the writings of the Sh'iahs.

They preserve total silence. <p151>

17 The Passing of the Prophet

The eleventh year of the Hijrah, which opened on 29 March 632, witnessed the passing of the Prophet.

On His arrival back in Medina, Muhammad began to prepare for an expedition deep into the Byzantine territory.

This was to redress the debacle at Mu'tah, which resulted in the death of Zayd Ibn al-Harithah.

Now, Muhammad gave command of the force He was raising to Usamah, the son of Zayd.

Usamah, however, was but a beardless youth, inexperienced and untested, and Muhammad had put under his command veterans such as Abu-Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, Abu-'Ubaydah Ibn al-Jarrah and Sa'd Ibn Abi-Waqqas.

Some felt slighted and there were muted complaints.

Preparations became slow and time-consuming.

From the pulpit in His mosque Muhammad urged haste and praised both Zayd and Usamah.

Then He fell suddenly ill.

Shortly before, Muhammad had gone out, in the dead of night, to pray for the dead buried at Baqi'.

One of His freedmen, who accompanied Him to the graveyard, has related that the Prophet's communion was prolonged and intense.

Another night, He had gone to Uhud where He had lost Hamzah, His much-loved uncle, to pray over the graves of His followers who fell there.

It has been suggested that He caught a chill during one of those nocturnal visits.

Sh'iah apologists have hinted that Muhammad's insistence on the rapid departure of the force under Usamah was due to the fact that He knew of the imminence of His passing, and wished men of the calibre of Abu-Bakr and 'Umar to be well away from Medina so that 'Ali, His appointed successor, could quietly assume office, free of hindrance and opposition.

Although the Prophet undoubtedly wished to expedite the departure of Usamah's force, His sudden illness naturally caused considerable delay.

And when Muhammad found it impossible to lead the congregational prayers in the mosque, it was Abu-Bakr, enrolled in that force, whom He asked to deputize for Him.

The Prophet's living quarters opened on to the mosque, and as He lay on His sick-bed, in the room that was 'A'ishah's, He could hear all that transpired there.

One day it was the voice of 'Umar that reached His ears, instead of Abu-Bakr's, and He sent word immediately that no substitution was permitted.

Muhammad did again go into the mosque, but not unaided, to lead the congregation in prayer while seated.

Here again Sh'iah commentators interject grave doubts.

They maintain that since Muhammad was lying ill in 'A'ishah's apartment, she was able to keep her father, Abu-Bakr, fully informed of the Prophet's

condition. 'Ali had been leading the people in prayer, instructed to do so by the Prophet Himself, but as he was much occupied with attendance upon Muhammad, 'A'ishah suggested to her father the idea of deputizing for the Prophet.

When apprised of Abu-Bakr's action, Muhammad rose from His sick-bed and, supported by 'Ali and Fadl, the son of His uncle, 'Abbas, went into the mosque and brushed Abu-Bakr aside.

Muhammad, they state, could not walk and had to be dragged along.

It is alleged that Muhammad denounced Abu-Bakr from the pulpit, at the close of prayer.

Needless to say, such authorities as Ibn-Hisham, at-Tabari, al-Waqidi and Ibn al-Athir report otherwise.

According to Ibn al-Athir, Muhammad sat down beside Abu-Bakr, who led the congregation.

By all accounts Muhammad suffered from severe headache and high fever.

The day that Usamah came to take his leave, the Prophet was unable to speak.

Strangely, there are contradictory views about the nature of Muhammad's illness and its duration.

Could it have been pneumonia?

It has been stated that Muhammad Himself ascribed His malady to the effects of the poison administered to Him by the Jewish woman at Khaybar, thus suggesting that Muhammad died a martyr's death.

Whatever the circumstances, it was soon evident that the Prophet's illness might prove fatal, which was, most probably, the reason why Usamah's expedition failed to depart.

One day Muhammad had fallen into a coma, and the women present at His bed-side thought of a remedy.

With the aid of 'Abbas, His uncle, a few drops of an unspecified oil were poured into His nostrils.

This restorative helped, but, it is reported, Muhammad did not approve of the treatment.

He himself, when His fever was very high, ordered a remedy.

From seven different wells seven vessels were filled with water and poured over Him.

As a result, His fever subsided for a while.

There are indications that the Ansar felt particularly anxious regarding their fate after the passing of the Prophet.

To reassure them, it is related, Muhammad had 'Ali and Fadl, His cousins, help

Him to His pulpit in the mosque, to deliver a sermon.

He specially exhorted the Muhajirun to treat the Ansar with great consideration.

The Ansar, He said, had thrown their homes open to them, had given them succour when they were in dire need, had shared with them all their worldly goods.

There seems to be some agreement that one day towards the end, Muhammad asked for writing material to be brought, so that He might dictate His last wishes.

What exactly happened next is obscured by disputation.

Obviously the Prophet was in extremity, because the Sh'iah tradition holds that 'Umar said: 'The man is delirious, the Book of God sufficeth us.' It is also claimed that after 'Umar's intervention there was such a clamour in the sickroom that Muhammad told everyone to leave at once.

The question arises, if the Prophet had, by the pool of Khum, appointed 'Ali as His successor and told His followers present to pledge loyalty to 'Ali, what need was there for Him to dictate His last wishes?

Sunnis and Sh'iahs alike maintain that during the period of His illness, Muhammad, either aided or unaided, entered His mosque and spoke from His pulpit.

Furthermore, it will be recalled that, at the close of His last sermon in Mecca, Muhammad asked the people whether He had completed His mission, to which they replied that He had.

There is also general agreement that on the day Muhammad passed away, He, to the surprise of His followers, appeared in the mosque at the hour of the dawn prayer, smiled at them, told them to go ahead with their devotions and lingered there a while.

Abu-Bakr, it is related, noticing the sudden turn towards recovery that the Prophet's illness had taken, asked His permission to go and visit his family at Sunh, a quarter on the further side of Medina.

But within a few hours, at noon, Muhammad passed away. <p154>

He had returned to His room, meticulously cleaned His teeth, and sought repose once again on His bed, resting His head against 'A'ishah's breast.

In a moment He was gone, with the name of God on His lips.

It was a Monday in late May or early June.

Historians and chroniclers have not agreed on a definite date.

Professor Montgomery Watt mentions 8 June 632, which corresponds to Rabi'-al-Awwal 13th, of the eleventh year of the Hijrah.

That is the date given by Ibn-al-Athir.

On the other hand, Sh'iahs commemorate the passing of the Prophet on Safar

28th, which corresponds to May 25th.

Monday is the common ground of agreement. <p155>

### 18 What Muhammad Taught

Over and above everything else, Muhammad taught the oneness and transcendence of God.

'Say, God is one God, the Eternal God.

He begetteth not, neither is He begotten; and there is not anyone like unto Him.' That is surah cxii of the Qur'an -- Surat al-Iklas ('Sincerity') -- which is part of the everyday prayer of every devout Muslim.

He repeats it five times a day.

It brooks of no compromise.

The statement is plain, unambiguous, decisive.

The opening of surah xxv -- Surat al-Furqan -- underlines the statement that God 'begetteth not': 'Blessed be He Who hath sent His verses [Furqan] [1] unto His servant [Muhammad] that he may be a warner unto all beings.

He to Whom belongeth the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth, hath not taken a son unto Himself and hath no partner in the Kingdom.

He created all things and disposed of all things as He willed.' And the first surah -- Surat al-Fatihah ('The Opening') -- which is also an ingredient of the salat, the daily obligatory prayer, reads: 'In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate Praise be to God, the Lord of all the Worlds, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgement; Thee alone do we worship, Thee alone do we ask for help.

Guide us unto the straight path, the path of those to whom Thou givest of Thy bounty, not of those who anger Thee, not of those who go astray.'

[1 Furqan is another name for the Qur'an ]

'God is the Light of the heavens and the earth' declares surah xxiv -- Surat an-Nur ('Light'):

the likeness of His Light is as a niche  
wherein is a lamp

(the lamp in a glass, <p156>

the glass as it were a glittering star)

kindled from a Blessed Tree,

an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West

whose oil wellnigh would shine, even if no fore touched it;

Light upon Light;

(God guides to His Light whom He will.)

(And God strikes similitudes for men,

and God has knowledge of everything.)[1]

(v.

35.)

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ]

Scholars can argue, as much as they may, about the antecedents of 'Allah', but none of their arguments has any relevance whatsoever to the 'All-Compassionate', 'All-Merciful', 'All-Powerful', 'All-Embracing' Godhead proclaimed by Muhammad, whose Messenger He claimed to be.

This God is the Creator of the Universe, independent of time and place, well beyond the grasp of the minds of men, supreme over all.

He is nowhere and yet He is everywhere. 'God's is the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God; God is All-Embracing, All-Knowing', declares the Qur'an (ii, log).

He is transcendent, never incarnated and yet, 'We indeed created man,' the Qur'an again declares, 'And We know what his soul whispers within him, and we are nearer to him than the jugular vein.' (Surah 1, 15 -- Qaf.)

'God -- there is no God but He, the Living, the Self-Subsistent.

Slumber seizeth Him not, neither sleep; to Him belongeth whatever is in Heavens and on Earth.

Who is he that can intercede with Him, but by His leave?

He knoweth that which is past, and that which is to come unto them, and they shall not comprehend anything of His knowledge, but so far as He pleaseth.

His Throne is extended over heaven and earth, and the preservation of both is no burden unto Him.

He is the High, the Mighty.'[1] (Surah ii, 256 -- al-Baqarah, 'The Cow'.)

[1 Translation by George Sale (slightly modified). ]

It is a far, far cry from some obscure deity of pagan Arabia, carved in stone, to the Omnipotent Shaper and Ruler of the Universe.

The life of a devout Muslim is theocentric.

As Muhammad taught him, he must be conscious every moment of his life that he has his being in God, that he is moved by the Will of God, from Him he comes and to Him he will return. <p157>

Then Muhammad taught the succession of the Messengers of God.

He revealed a majestic procession, down the ages, from Adam to His own Person: 'Say, "We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down to us, and sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.' (Surah ii, 130.)

God chose Adam and Noah  
and the House of Abraham

and the House of 'Imran[1]  
above all beings, the  
seed of one another;

God hears, and knows.[2]

(Surah iii, 30 -- Al-'Imran,  
'The House of 'Imran'.)

[1 The father of Moses (H.M.B.). ]

[2 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ]

'We formerly delivered the Book of the Law unto Moses and caused Messengers to succeed him, and We gave Jesus the son of Mary evident signs and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit.

Do ye therefore, whenever a Messenger cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, proudly reject him, and accuse some of imposture, and slay others?'[1] (Surah ii, 81.)

[1 Translation by George Sale (slightly modified). ]

Indeed, We sent forth among every nation  
a Messenger, saying: 'Serve you God,  
and eschew idols.' Then some of them  
God guided, and some were justly disposed  
to error.

So journey in the land,  
and behold how was the end of them  
that cried lies.[1]

(Surah xvi, 38 an-Nahl, 'The Bee'.)

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ]

The promise and the warning of the advent of a Day of Judgement and Reckoning -- the Day of Resurrection -- is another constant and recurring theme of the Qur'an.

'O Lord, Thou shalt assuredly bring mankind together on a <p158> day, of which there can be no doubt.

God does not fail His promise.' (Surah iii, 7 -- 'The House of 'Imran'.)

These three principles -- recognition of the unity, the oneness, the transcendence of God; recognition of the Messengership of Muhammad (which by its very nature entails belief, as well, in all the Messengers of the past); belief in the Day of Resurrection -- are accepted by all Muslims, of whatever persuasion, as pillars their Faith; to which Sh'iahs add the Imamate (belief in the legitimate and hereditary succession to the Prophet and the Justness of God.

Sunnis, who maintain that Muhammad did not appoint 'Ali, His cousin and son-in-law, to succeed Him, and that an elective procedure had to be followed to find a head for the realm of Islam, reject the principle of the Imamate and further question why, since Justice or Justness is one of the many attributes of God, the belief in this particular attribute should be made a principle of the Faith, and not any of the others.

As we shall see, there are sound historical reasons for this choice made by the Sh'iahs.

Subsidiaries of the Faith comprise salat -- prescribed obligatory prayer, to be said five times a day (before sunrise, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, in the evening); sawm -- fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan from dawn to dusk; hajj -- pilgrimage, once in a lifetime, to the city of Mecca, by all who can afford the journey, the main rites to be performed on the tenth day of the lunar month of Dhu'l-Hijjah (the last month of the Muslim calendar); zakat -- specified payments to the Common Treasury.

Sh'iahs add to these payments khums (one fifth), which are offerings to the Imam and, in his absence, to those who deputize for him.

Zakat is a prescription of the Qur'an. but not khums.

Jihad (Holy War) is also a subsidiary of the Faith.

In the days of the Prophet and in the years immediately following, this Holy War was directed against pagans and idolaters -- the polytheists -- and was undertaken in defence of the realm of Islam.

With the passage of centuries the sense of jihad was obscured and lost.

On numerous occasions jihad, when declared by a leader in a position of authority, was disregarded or ignored, the most notable case being the rescript of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, during the First World War.

The Faith of the Arabian Prophet must never be designated as Muhammadanism.

It is Islam: the religion of submission to the <p159> Will of God, and it was not imposed by the sword.

Surah ii, 257 declares:

No compulsion is there in religion.

Rectitude has become clear from error.

So whosoever disbelieves in idols  
and believes in God, has laid hold of  
the most firm handle, unbreaking; God is  
All-hearing, All-knowing.[1]

[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ]

And verse 172 of the same surah imparts the essence of the Faith taught by Muhammad:

It is not piety, that you turn your faces  
to the East and to the West.

True piety is this:  
to believe in God, and the Last Day,  
the angels, the Book, and the Prophets,  
to give of one's substance, however cherished,  
to kinsmen, and orphans,  
the needy, the traveller, beggars,  
and to ransom the slave,  
to perform the prayer [salat], to pay the alms [zakat].

And they who fulfill their covenant  
when they have engaged in a covenant,  
and endure with fortitude  
misfortune, hardship and peril,  
these are they who are true in their faith,  
these are the truly godfearing.[1]  
[1 Translation by A.

J.

Arberry. ] <p160>

Postscript

Such were the antecedents, the life, the mission, the labours, the achievements  
of Muhammad, the Apostle of God.

He totally transformed the fortunes of a loosely-associated group of tribes and  
made of them a single, resolute nation.

He banished idolatry from Arabia.

From His time Arabia and her people came into the full light of history.

As long as He bore no responsibility for presiding over the fortunes of men,  
Muhammad, in the face of constant abuse, vilification, physical assault and  
injury, did not raise a finger to defend Himself.

But as soon as the destinies and the security of His followers and indeed of a  
whole town came to rest in His hands, He acted as a ruler should, with tact and  
forbearance, with wisdom and justice.

It was His duty to halt the aggressor, to counter the moves of the adversary,  
to neutralize the efforts of the enemy, and if need be to order his  
elimination.

He had no other choice in a largely lawless land.

At al-Hudaybiyyah, while engaged in negotiating a truce with the implacable  
idolaters, Muhammad gave way to Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, the Meccan envoy, and

instructed the scribe to delete the expression, 'Muhammad the Apostle of God' from the draft treaty and refer to Him simply as 'Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi'llah'.

Even more, He acceded to the demand that a Meccan, who had embraced Islam and gone to Medina, against the wishes of his people, should be returned to Mecca.

But in the matter of the worship of idols, of joining partners with the Supreme Creator of the Universe, Muhammad never compromised, never yielded an inch.

It is untrue to say (as it has been said again and again by those who would denigrate Muhammad) that Islam was the religion of the sword.

It was months after the fall of Mecca that Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who had been outlawed and subsequently pardoned by Muhammad, declared his allegiance to Islam, entirely of his own choosing.

Throughout the long years that 'Abdu'llah <p161> Ibn Ubayy and his associates paid only lip-service to Muhammad and tried to thwart His purpose, never was any force used to wrest a declaration of total allegiance from them. 'Adi, the son of the celebrated Hatim, went to Medina in two minds whether to give recognition to the prophethood of Muhammad or not; he was accorded the honours due to a son of such a renowned father, and became a Muslim under no threat or pressure.

That great work of Sir Thomas Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, admirably recounts the story of the spread of the Faith of Muhammad.

Another malicious lie which the detractors of Muhammad have never tired of reiterating concerns His marriages In the first instance it should be borne in mind that as long as Khadijah lived (who was much older than Muhammad) the Prophet took no other wife.

Arabs were polygamous and there existed no deterrent to Muhammad, should he have wished to marry a woman younger than Khadijah in her lifetime.

Yet He remained monogamous in the prime of His youth.

And after Khadijah had died He did not rush immediately into fresh matrimony.

The story of his later marriages, already related, proves conclusively that the marriages of the Prophet were not those of a voluptuary, as alleged oftentimes by detractors.

The record of the life of Muhammad, cleared of encumbrances laid on it by ignorant Muslims of past times, speaks for itself.

The Apostle of God is vindicated by His achievements -- brilliant, unassailable and enduring. <p163>

PART II The Course of Islam <p165>

19 The Succession

The Prophet lay dead.

As the news spread, confusion prevailed. 'Umar, in his headstrong way, refused

to countenance the fact that Muhammad had passed out of this world.

With drawn sword he stood in the thoroughfare defying anyone who dared to assert the fact of the Prophet's death, until the gentle Abu-Bakr, wise and calm, arrived at the scene and pacified him.

Hearing the shattering news, Abu-Bakr hurried to his daughter's house, approached the mortal remains of the Prophet, pulled aside the robe that covered Him and put his lips thrice on Muhammad's forehead. 'Greater art Thou,' he said, 'than the measure of praise, greater than the reach of lamentation.

Were it within our power, we would have offered our lives for Thy life.' Striving to restrain his tears, he added: 'Were it not that Thou hast forbidden us to weep over the dead, streams of tears would have rained from our eyes as we wept.' Then, after admonishing 'Umar, he ascended the pulpit that had been Muhammad's, as the people, bewildered and dazed, gathered round him, and he addressed them thus:

'Whoever worshipped the person of Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad hath died; and whoever worshipped God, let him know that God doth not die.

Muhammad was the Messenger of God, and other Prophets too, before Him, left this world.

Muhammad has gone from our midst; but keep your faith in Him and worship God.

Should you rebel and break your faith, the loser will not be God.'

'Umar submitted, and those who had gathered, understanding what had befallen them, dispersed.

But dire winds of discord were already blowing.

'Ali, whose right it was to assume the fallen mantle of authority, was engaged, with others of the Prophet's close relatives, in preparing His funeral.

For the time, the succession lay unguarded <p166> and open to seizure.

Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, the leader of the Khazraj, though feeble and bed-ridden, decided to make a bid for the prize.

Unable to walk, his people carried him on a litter to their place of assemblage.

Others of the Medinites gathered there too, including men of Khazraj and of Aws, such as Usayd, the son of Hudayr, and Bashir, the son of Sa'd, who were envious of the Khazrajites.

Although there was no one in their own ranks of sufficient standing to put forward as a rival claimant, they would not accept the Khazrajite leader as their ruler.

Therefore, from the outset, they opposed the very idea that a man of Medina, and an Ansar, could ever succeed the Prophet.

Throughout that fateful day they reiterated, time and again, that Muhammad had come from Mecca and was descended from the Quraysh; of necessity and by reason

of kinship, His successor must be a man of the Quraysh.

Those of the Ansar, who supported Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, maintained as stoutly that the Meccans had persecuted the Prophet, that relatively few of them had believed in Him, that the prominent men of Mecca had plotted and would have put Him to death had they not offered Him refuge in Medina.

They had given Muhammad unquestioned allegiance, and He had found peace amongst them.

The very designation which He had given them testified that their assistance had assured His victory.

They had ungrudgingly shared their homes with the Muhajirun who, driven into exile, had arrived destitute at their doors.

Such deeds, they claimed, entitled one of the Ansar to hold the station of vicar of the Prophet.

But this assumption was fraught with incalculable danger.

None, least of all of the Muhajirun, could dispute that the record of the Ansar was noble and heroic.

In opening their city to Muhammad and declaring their determination to follow Him at all times, they had dared greatly, for they had thrown a bold and unmistakable challenge to the whole of Arabia.

In the darkest hours they had stood firm and unflinching by the side of the Prophet.

All this was evident.

Nevertheless, the tribes and clans of Arabia considered the people of Aws and Khazraj as no greater than themselves; they could never accept a successor to the Prophet chosen from the ranks of the Ansar.

Abu-Bakr was well aware of the impending perils, and that nothing less than the unity of Islam was at stake.

As soon as the news of the gathering of the Ansar reached him, he hastened to the <p167> meeting-place, accompanied by 'Umar and Abu-'Ubaydah, the son of al-Jarrah, another Qurayshite who commanded great respect.

Now the argument was truly joined, and in the ensuing confusion the claims of 'Ali were forgotten.

Muhammad had left neither a will nor any other document to specify a successor.

But he had mentioned orally that His cousin and son-in-law should succeed Him. 'Ali was young.

There were much older men in the ranks of the Muslims, prominent, well-tested and experienced, who believed that their age coupled with their services gave them a valid claim.

There were also many leading figures among the Muslims -- Muhajirun and Ansar alike -- who for a variety of reasons were hostile towards 'Ali.

Thus it was that at the gathering assembled on the very day of the Prophet's death, whatever rights 'Ali did possess were, with no warrant of authority, entirely ignored.

If voices were raised on his behalf they fell on deaf ears.

In spite of strong support, the claims of the Khazrajite leader, at whose instance that gathering had taken place, made little headway.

The Aws, the other clan of the Ansar, would under no circumstances countenance them.

Furthermore, the intervention of Abu-Bakr and his words of warning had introduced a new element.

As the ranks of the Ansar fell into disarray, Abu-Bakr stepped forward, took the hands of 'Umar and Abu-'Ubaydah and said: 'Here are two honourable men; choose either of them that he may rule over you, and I shall be the first to pledge my loyalty to him.' But 'Umar and Abu-'Ubaydah refused to accept nomination and addressed Abu-Bakr: 'You are to be preferred over us -- you, who were the companion of the Messenger of God when He journeyed from Mecca.' Next, 'Umar stretched forth the hand of Abu-Bakr and touched it with his own, as a sign of homage and a pledge of fealty. (The action was known as bay'ah and was the custom then and for centuries to come.) Abu-'Ubaydah followed suit.

Then came Bashir Ibn Sa'd, the leader of the Awsites, who had struggled to defeat the Khazrajite pretender.

In the rush that ensued, as men hastened to join their fellows in pledging their fealty to Abu-Bakr, Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah lay deserted and helpless on his litter, and was almost trampled to death.

Yet pride would not permit him to render homage to Abu-Bakr.

To his last day, not far off, he persisted in his refusal.

There can be no doubt that his success would have set Mecca against Medina, <p168> and unbridgeable rifts would have disfigured the body-politic, at a time when Arabia was reverting to anarchy.

Indeed, the desert was astir once again.

Deluded men and even a woman were claiming to be messengers of God.

And with the Prophet's passing they became even bolder, gaining adherents.

There was Maslamah or Musaylimah (the little Maslamah) in Yamamah, al-Aswad[1] in Yemen, Tulayhah[2] (the little Talhah) amongst the powerful tribe of Banu-Asad.

The lone woman impostor was Sajah, said to have belonged originally to a Christian denomination, who had come into Arabia from the north.

She commanded allegiance among the Banu-Taghlib, and when Musaylimah married her, their combined forces seemed formidable.

[1 It is believed that he was killed prior to the passing of the Prophet. ]

[2 Again, as in the case of Musaylimah, contemptuously called that. ]

Apart from these self-appointed prophets and their substantial following, many tribes throughout the peninsula were seeking their old and discarded gods.

Even beyond Arabia the people of Bahrayn were once more reverting to idolatry.

Mecca, however, remained firm, while once again Medina stood out as the citadel of Islam.

It was because of this sudden reversion to anarchy and idolatry that 'Ali recognized and pledged his fealty to Abu-Bakr.

Schism had to be prevented.

For 'Ali the supreme necessity of preserving the unity of Islam, of stemming the tide of secession, took precedence over the assertion of his own rights.

It is sad that some Sh'iah apologists have lost sight of this fundamental fact, in their attempts to denigrate the immediate successors of Muhammad.

The Rightly-Guided Caliphs

(al-Khulafa' ar-Rashidin - Khulafa' Rashidun

A.D.

632-61

1.

Abu-Bakr Ibn Abi-Quhafah (632-34)

2. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (634-44)

3. 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan (644-56)

4. 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib (656-61)

Abu-BAKR IBN ABI-QUHAFAH (A.D.

632-34)

Abu-Bakr's first act was to send into Byzantine territory the expedition which the Prophet Himself had organized during the last days of His life.

The leader, appointed by the Prophet, was the youth Usamah, the son of that Zayd who had lost his life at Mu'tah.

Now Usamah was to undertake the same errand as his <p169> father and engage in battle the same people.

Although the presence of Usamah's force was much needed in Medina, Abu-Bakr insisted on carrying out the Prophet's plan.

Usamah's dash into Roman domains, although not productive of glittering success, had positive results, unlike the debacle which met his father's foray.

But he did not pursue the advantage gained, because of the urgent need to bring

insurrection within Arabia to an end.

Abu-Bakr gave the task of pacification to Khalid Ibn al-Walid, whose generalship was exemplary, but whose ways were extremely harsh.

Khalid succeeded brilliantly and his feat served as a prelude to the dazzling victories which he was to win in the realms of the Sasanids and the Byzantines.

Within a year of the passing of the Prophet, Muslim armies were moving northwards.

At first the principalities -- those- tributaries to the two great empires -- were engaged, but soon the Muslims came face to face with the Romans and the Persians themselves.

Why did the Arabs, within such a short time, erupt from their homeland to challenge the might of the civilized world?

Many reasons have been advanced, among them the fervid desire to spread the new Faith, love of conquest and love of plunder.

But no single reason serves as sufficient explanation.

It was the combination of a number of factors that made the armies of Islam march into lands beyond the confines of their peninsula.

The energetic and highly successful campaigns to discipline and pacify the rebellious and turbulent tribes had created an efficient military force which required an extension of its activities.

It had also profoundly affected the clans to the north, who stood between the Muslims of Arabia and the declining Empires.

It is well to mark the action of al-Muthanna, the son of Harith, a chieftain of the tribe of Banu-Shayban.

Noticing the altered situation, both within Arabia and in the Sasanid realms, al-Muthanna decided, in 633, to lay hold of the fertile region of Sawad, in the central area of Mesopotamia.

He declared himself a Muslim, invaded the Sasanid territory, and then asked Medina for help.

That help took some time to arrive.

In the meantime, Khalid had forced Hirah to submit.

Thus conflicts grew and engagements widened by degrees.

Given on the one hand the resurgent, vigorous faith of the Muslims, and on the other the overweening pride and arrogance of two war-weary, exhausted and effete Empires, the outcome was inevitable. <p170>

Abu-Bakr had to endure initial set-backs and did not live to witness the resounding triumphs of his armies.

He died on 23 August 634, when he had been Caliph (khalifatu[1] Rasuli'llah --

the vicar or successor of the Messenger of God) for two years and two months.

On his death-bed Abu-Bakr appointed 'Umar to succeed him, an act which nullified the elective principle upon which his own position had been based.

Abu-Bakr was a good and just ruler, a man of deep piety.

But his accession to the seat of authority and the manner in which he named his successor were unrelated to any specific command of the Prophet.

[1 The khalifah appears only twice in the Qur'an (ii, 28 and xxxviii, 25), in different contexts.

And in neither case does it indicate successorship to the Prophet.]

UMAR IBN AL-KHATTAB (A.D.

634 -- 44)

'Umar was stern but just.

He had always resented Khalid's high-handed treatment of adversaries and before long took from Khalid his command in Syria, putting Abu-'Ubaydah, the son of al-Jarrah, at the head of the armies facing the forces of Heraclius.

But before this change, Khalid, still in command, made a swift and triumphal march through Syria to take the Byzantines from the rear near Damascus, which, after a six-months siege, opened its gates in September 635.

Khalid also fought the great battle of Yarmuk[1] when, on a very hot day in August 636, the Byzantines suffered their most crushing defeat.

Jacobite Christians contributed to this profound humiliation of Byzantium.

Heraclius received at Antioch the news of that total disaster.

He knew then that all was lost and that Syria could not be regained.

After attending a service of intercession in the cathedral, he dejectedly took the road to the coast and boarded a ship for Constantinople.

As he gazed on the land he was leaving he broke out in anguished lamentation: 'Farewell, a long farewell to Syria.

What an excellent country is this for the enemy!'[2] He had only recently wrenched that fair land from the grasp of the Persians.

This visitation of the uncouth warriors of Arabia he deemed to be Heaven's judgement upon him, for had he not incestuously married his niece?

[1 The Yarmuk is a tributary of the river Jordan. ]

[2 See Hitti, History of the Arabs, p.152. ]

On the Persian front Sa'd, the son of Abu-Waqqas, had been given command.

The battle of Qadisiyyah, in June 637, opened the way to Ctesiphon, the metropolis of the Sasanid Empire. <p171> Already, Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanians, had fled to the Persian uplands.

There followed the battle of Jalula' at the end of the same year, which made the Arabs masters of the whole of Mesopotamia.

Finally, in 641, the battle of Nihavand[1] ended all hope for the Sasanian monarch.

He was treacherously murdered, a decade later, at Marv in the far reaches of Khurasan.

[1 Near Ecbatana, the present-day Hamadan. ]

Meanwhile, Jerusalem had come under siege with other Syrian cities and held out longer than most.

When the Arabs could no longer be resisted, the Patriarch, Sophronius, sent word to Abu-'Ubaydah that the city would surrender, but to no one save the Caliph. 'Umar came, and entered Jerusalem in February 638.

Although the victor, he was dressed in a simple, travel-stained robe of wool, while the vanquished were arrayed in the utmost finery.

It is related that the Patriarch, struck by the contrast, observed that he could now see why Muslims won battles while they lost them.

At 'Umar's request, Sophronius took him to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to see the places sacred to the Christians. 'Umar was still inside the church when the hour of prayer overtook him.

He asked the Patriarch where he could put down his mat to pray.

But when told he might pray where he stood, 'Umar preferred to go to the porch, since were he to pray within the church, Muslims might, in years to come, claim the spot as their own and thus encroach upon the rights of the Christians. 'Umar's foresight was fully justified.

The porch where he prayed was, in future years, appropriated by Muslims for that very reason.

But the Church of the Holy Sepulchre remained inviolate.

A year after the fall of Jerusalem, an epidemic, variously described as cholera or bubonic plague, swept over Syria and Palestine, taking a heavy toll.

Among its victims was the Arab commander and administrator, Abu-'Ubaydah.

Then 'Umar took a decision which was to have incalculable consequences and change the face and the destiny of Islam.

Two sons of the notorious Abu-Sufyan, the head of the House of Umayyah, named Yazid and Mu'awiyah, had minor commands on the Byzantine front where they had achieved remarkable successes.

On the death of Abu-'Ubaydah, 'Umar appointed Yazid to his post, and when Yazid died he gave the command to Mu'awiyah.

This ambitious man, who became the administrator of Syria, was not devoid of <p172> virtues.

In the Prophet's lifetime, he had been one of His scribes.

He had courage, unlimited patience (which the Arabs call hilm), ability of a high order and a keen sense of governance.

He showed remarkable tolerance towards the non-Muslims in his province and later in his empire.

But he was also treacherous, unprincipled and indifferent to moral law in the pursuit of power.

By the end of the year 639 the great city of Antioch had also fallen and Muslim armies held sway over an area extending from the borders of Anatolia to the borders of Egypt.

The Muslim commander who had wrested the southern regions of Palestine from the Byzantines was 'Amr, the son of al-'As.

Now he wished to push quickly into Egypt, but the Caliph was cautious and would not sanction further exploits.

When 'Amr obtained qualified approval for his plan, he moved in with only four thousand men, a small number for such an undertaking.

But the Copts of Egypt, like the Jacobites of Syria, were also Monophysites, and hated Cyrus,[1] the Patriarch of Alexandria, who was their virtual ruler.

The Son of al-'As achieved brilliant successes from the very start of his Egyptian campaign, and the Caliph sent him reinforcements under the command of az-Zubayr, the son of al-'Awwam.

The famous city of Alexandria was a much coveted prize. 'Amr laid siege to it with twenty thousand men.

Within its mighty ramparts and fortifications there were more than twice that number of Byzantine troops.

Furthermore, Alexandria was a powerful naval base and the Muslims had no ships at all.

Amidst the city's spectacular and magnificent buildings, which 'Amr and his warriors viewed with wonderment, stood two granite needles of the fifteenth century B.C. (wrongly ascribed to Cleopatra in recent times).

One of them stands today by the Thames in the heart of London, and the other in Central Park, New York.

[1 The Arabs call him Maqawqis. ]

The detested Patriarch opened negotiations with the Muslims and Heraclius, horrified, dismissed him.

However, Heraclius died in February 641 and his grandson, Constans II, sent Cyrus back to Egypt, whereupon the Patriarch proceeded to conclude a treaty with the Son of al-'As.

Alexandria thus passed into the hands of the Muslims, without a battle being

fought for its mastery. 'Amr was beside himself with joy. 'I have captured a city,' he wrote to 'Umar, 'from the description of which I shall refrain.

Suffice it to say that I have seized therein 4000 villas with <p173> 4000 baths, 40,000 poll-tax-paying Jews and four hundred places of entertainment for the royalty.[1] 'Umar sent for some dates and bread, and thus celebrated the occasion with the bearer of 'Amr's letter.

[1 *ibid.*, pp.164-5. ]

Four years later, Constans made an attempt to regain Alexandria.

An Armenian general, named Manuel, sailed with a large fleet; he overpowered and put to death the small Muslim garrison left in the city. 'Amr, who had in the meantime been recalled from Egypt, was sent back with great dispatch, and the Armenian Manuel, finding the Copts both apathetic and uncooperative, considered it futile to fight the Arabs and sailed back to Constantinople.

A legend has grown up throughout the centuries that 'Amr, by order of the Caliph, consigned the renowned library of Alexandria to flames.

It is pure legend.

Emperor Theodosius the Great had destroyed that library long before, in his zealous efforts to stamp out pagan thought.

Uthman IBN AFFAN (A.D.

644 -- 56)

'Umar was struck down, in November 644, by the dagger of a slave, whose name has come down as Abu-Lu'lu', also as Firuz of Daylam.

Who his assassin really was -- whether Persian or Ethiopian, Muslim, Christian or Mazdean -- has remained in the realm of conjecture.

Even his fate is uncertain.

Did he commit suicide when cornered?

We do not know.

Some Sh'iah apologists have maintained that he was a Sh'iah, devoted to the cause of 'Ali, for no better reason than that none but an adherent of 'Ali could have wished to be rid of 'Umar.

They have asserted that the assassin made his way to Iran and lived, to the end of his days, amongst people of the same persuasion as himself.

Even a grave in Kashan has been pointed out as his, and has become a revered shrine.

'Umar's arrangement for the succession was yet another departure from the procedure which gave Abu-Bakr rulership in Islam.

He decreed that six men should be candidates for the office of the Caliphate, and that those six should choose one of themselves for elevation to that office.

They were: 'Ali, 'Uthman, 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn 'Awf, Sa'd, the conqueror of Ctesiphon, Talhah Ibn 'Ubaydu'llah, and az-Zubayr, the son of al-'Awwam. <p174>

All were Qurayshites.

But 'Umar commissioned Abu-Talhah, one of the Ansar, to keep watch over their deliberations.

His son, 'Abdu'llah, was to attend the meeting of the six, but with no voice in the election.

They were to conclude their work within three days, and should they divide evenly, the group of three which included 'Abda'r-Rahman was to prevail.

The deliberations of the six followed a labyrinthine course and 'Uthman Ibn 'Affan was elected.[1]

[1 Some Western writers have, in recent years, questioned this traditional account of the elevation of 'Uthman to the office of the Caliphate, but no credible alternative has been suggested.]

'Uthman was an Umayyad, and in the words of Syed Ameer Ali: 'His election proved in the end the ruin of Islam'.[1] Whereas 'Umar was just and impartial, not sparing his own son when the law demanded penalties, 'Uthman was inclined to favouritism.

Nepotism became the hall-mark of his feeble administration.

He was past his seventieth year when he attained the supreme office, and was weak and impressionable.

Umayyads and their clients swarmed round him, receiving not only civil and military commands, but also money and riches from the treasury.

The most conspiratorial of them was Marwan Ibn al-Hakam, a cousin of the Caliph. 'Affan, the father of 'Uthman, and al-Hakam were brothers.

Muhammad had expelled Marwan and his father from Medina, and neither of them was allowed by Abu-Bakr and 'Umar to return.

Now, under 'Uthman, Marwan wielded great power.

He became the Caliph's chief scribe and counsellor and 'Uthman lavished money on him.

[1 A Short History of the Saracens, p.46. ]

During the Caliphate of 'Uthman, which lasted until 656, Muslims reached the borders of the Caucasus, pushed on to the frontiers of India, crossed the Oxus into the plains beyond, and conquered the whole of the northern littoral of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of 'Umman (Oman).

In the Mediterranean they took Cyprus; in North Africa, Tripolitania.

It was a vast dominion which 'Uthman's uncertain hands administered: an amalgam of the eastern domains of Byzantium (with the exception of Anatolia), and the lands of the Iranian Sasanids.

As the yoke of his governors pressed harder and harder upon the peoples of these countries, those who raised their voices in complaint were not primarily the indigenous inhabitants of these regions, but Arabs, <p175> who, in the wake of conquest, had built new cities and founded new homes: cities such as Fustat in Egypt, and Basrah and Kufah in 'Iraq.

Their bitter complaints were of no avail.

Marwan was at the helm.

Eventually they could no longer tolerate the wretchedness of their plight, and sent deputations from 'Iraq and Egypt to Medina to plead with the Caliph.

In reality they were rebels.

While the iron hand of Mu'awiyah as well as his tact and diplomacy kept Damascus quiet, the deputation from Egypt complained vociferously against its governor, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sa'd,[1] because he was not only tyrannical but erratic as well. 'Uthman, besieged in his house, gave way.

He appointed Muhammad, a son of Abu-Bakr, governor of Egypt, and handed his decree to the deputation.

Rejoiced, the members of the deputation and their new governor set out for Egypt.

They had not gone far when they sighted a camel-driver speeding in their direction.

He turned out to be in the service of the Caliph, and a letter was discovered on him, bearing the Caliph's seal and addressed to the replaced governor in Egypt, 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sa'd.

It was an instruction to disregard the decree which the deputation held, and to behead the newly-appointed governor together with the rebel ringleaders.

Maddened with fury the deputation hastened back to Medina, where 'Uthman, presented with evidence of his own perfidy, denied any knowledge of it.

His word can be accepted, for Marwan held the Caliph's seal and always wrote on his behalf.

[1 He was 'Uthman's foster-brother and had incurred the Prophet's grave displeasure.]

The situation was now highly charged and distinctly menacing.

The men of Basrah, Kufah and Fustat took their case to 'Ali, seeking his aid and counsel. 'Ali was greatly perturbed and went to 'Uthman.

The words he addressed to 'Uthman at that hour of peril have been preserved: 'The people who are behind me have made me their envoy and mediator between thee and them.

By God I do not know what to tell thee.

I know nothing of which thou canst be ignorant.

Neither can I guide thee to anything which is not known to thee.

Verily, thou knowest what we do know.

We did not precede thee in coming upon anything to inform thee of it, nor did we find anything in seclusion to bear thee its tidings.

Thou hast seen what we did see, and hast heard what we did hear.

Thou didst keep company with the Messenger of God as we kept company with Him.  
<p176>

Neither the Son[1] of Abu-Quhafah, nor the Son[2] of al-Khattab was better placed to act righteously, because thine is a closer kinship to the Messenger of God.

To thee was given His daughter in wedlock, whereas theirs was not this bounty.

Then, beware, beware of thy station, and take heed thereof.

By God, perception cometh not from the blinded, nor doth knowledge from ignorance.

The path is clear and the standards of faith are firmly established.

Then know thou that of God's servants the best in His sight is that just leader, well-guided, who guideth well, he who upholdeth the precept that is perspicuous, and effaceth the innovation which is obscure.

Verily, traditions and precepts that are right are evident and have signs to indicate them.

And innovations are discernible and have signs to indicate them.

And the worst of men in the sight of God is that leader who is tyrannical and misguided, by whom people are misguided, he who effaceth the accepted precept and reviveth the discarded innovation.

For I did hear the Messenger of God, upon whom and His House be peace, say:

On the Day of Resurrection, they shall bring forth the tyrannical ruler, bereft of helper and plea, and him shall they cast into the fire of hell, there to remain wandering as wandereth the millstone, then to be enclosed in its depths.

I abjure thee by God not to be that leader who needs be slain amongst this people, because it has been said [by the Prophet] that a leader shall be slain amongst this people, by the reason of which the gateway shall be opened upon conflict and contention in their midst, which shall endure until the Day of Resurrection, and that which pertains unto them shall be concealed from the people, and mischief shall persist amongst them; wrong they shall not distinguish from right, and buffeted they shall be by storms.

Take care not to be subservient to Marwan, the son of al-Hakam, lest he beguile thee and move thee whichever way he wisheth, thou who art crowned by age and advancing years.'

[1 Abu-Bakr ]

[2 'Umar. ]

These words of admonition can be found in the celebrated history of Ibn al-Athir[1] entitled Kamil[2] (Perfect), and, more significantly, in the compendium of Discourses and Letters of 'Ali -- entitled Nahju'l-Balaghah (The Perspicuous Path).

Indicative of <p177> the relationship that existed between 'Ali and the first three successors of the Prophet, his words contradict the assertions of some Sh'iah apologists who present a picture of constant, unrelieved animosity.

[1 'Izzi'd-Din Ibn al-Athir (d.

A.D.

1234) ]

[2 The full title of this great work is Kitabu'l-Kamil fi't-Tarikh (The Perfect Book of Chronicles).]

However, 'Uthman was old and weak and Marwan thoroughly dominated him. 'Ali tried time and again to lower the tension.

His eldest son, Hasan, was often by 'Uthman's side offering him any help that was possible.

Other notables of Medina abandoned the Caliph to his fate, nor could 'Ali stem the tide of hostility directed against him. 'A'ishah, the daughter of Abu-Bakr and the widow of the Prophet, left for Mecca to participate in the rites of the pilgrimage, not concealing the fact that she disapproved of the Caliph.

Rebels offered 'Uthman the choice of abdication, which he valiantly rejected.

In the end the besiegers, notably from Egypt, rushed the Caliph's house.

Although his retinue put up some resistance, this could not be sustained because no force of any size was available to buttress their efforts. 'Uthman was indeed deserted.

He sat calmly reading the Qur'an, when he was stabbed to death, and his blood crimsoned the pages of the Holy Book.

His wife, Na'ilah,[1] who tried to shield her husband, had her fingers severed.

It was 17 June 656, and 'Uthman was eighty-two years old.

Marwan, though badly wounded, escaped with his life.

Then all was chaos.

Rebels joined by some of the Medinites would not even allow the slain Caliph a decent burial and his body lay exposed to the whims and insults of every passer-by.

[1 She had been a Jacobite Christian of the tribe of Banu-Kalb. ]

The murder of 'Uthman was a grievous blow from which Islam never recovered.

The door was flung wide to dissension.

Compared with what was to follow, the menace posed by impostors and the resurgent idolatry in Arabia of three decades before, paled into insignificance.

'Ali IBN Abi-TAlIB (A.D.

656 -- 61)

There was now no one to rule over the Muslims and no accepted procedure for obtaining a ruler. 'Ali -- whose efforts to make 'Uthman change his ways and to protect him from the fury of his adversaries had borne no result -- had retired to his house, away from the pandemonium that prevailed.

In the midst of the total breakdown of authority a few remembered that Abu-Bakr had succeeded the Prophet by public acclamation.

But to whom <p178> could they turn of those now left?

Of the six men whom 'Umar chose, 'Ali, az-Zubayr, Talhah and Sa'd had survived 'Uthman, and 'Ali towered over the other three.

His claims were particularly pressed, in the Prophet's mosque, by 'Ammar, the son a Yasir, always his faithful supporter. 'Ammar had governed Kufah in the days of 'Umar and had suffered humiliation in the days of 'Uthman.

For five days, while a motley group talked and talked, 'Ali held aloof from their deliberations.

At last, having agreed that no one but 'Ali could be their ruler, they hurried to his house and asked him to stretch forth his hands for them to pledge their fealty.

But 'Ali replied:

'O people!

Leave me and choose someone other than me.

That which faces me is an undertaking fraught with grave issues hearts will waver, minds will falter, horizons will be dimmed, the right path will be obscured.

And know this that if I respond to your call, I shall command you according to my own lights. shall not give ear to anything which may be said, nor shall I heed any rebuke.

If you pass me over and have another man to command you I shall be as one of you, and it might be that I shal listen to him and obey him more readily than you.

It is better for you that I be your counsellor rather than your ruler.'

But the congregation would have none other.

So 'Ali accepted their offer, but would receive their pledge of fealty only in

the Prophet's mosque, that all might see and also proclaim their allegiance.

In the Prophet's mosque the multitudes hailed him, and one by one they touched his hand, all save a handful.

Among these recalcitrants were Sa'd, the son of Abu-Waqqas; 'Abdu'llah, the son of 'Umar; Usamah, the son of Zayd; and Hassan, the son of Thabit, who had been the poet serving the Prophet. 'Ali did not force them to compromise their consciences.

The next day he ascended the Prophet's pulpit and addressed the congregation in these words:

'When the Messenger of God passed away, people decided that Abu-Bakr should be their caliph, and then Abu-Bakr gave the caliphate to 'Umar who followed his path, and when his own time came 'Umar chose six men that they might take counsel.

They conferred the caliphate upon 'Uthman, but he acted in a manner that made you repudiate him, and he was besieged and slain Then you came to me and called me.

Indeed I am one of you. <p179> What profiteth me profiteth you and what weigheth upon me weigheth upon you.

God indeed joined you to righteousness, but mischief raised its head like a dark night.

None can withstand this ordeal save those who are well-fortuned and who know the truth thereof.

Verily, I guide you in the way of your Prophet.

If you remain firm at my side I will keep you in the ways that He ordained.

And God is the best of helpers.

My worth in the sight of the Messenger of God, after His passing, is the same as it was in His lifetime.

Then, do what you are told to do, and refrain from what you are forbidden to do.

Do not be rash, and tarry until I have expounded matters unto you.

We have reason to abhor anything which is abhorred.

And God, above us in His Heaven, is the All-Knowing.

Verily, I was reluctant to rule over the people of Muhammad until you all agreed upon it, because I heard the Messenger of God say: "Whosoever takes hold of the government of this people after Me, I stand at the place of judgement and angels will open the book wherein his deeds are recorded; if found to have been just God will grant him salvation, and if found to have been a tyrant, he will be cast away."

These words of 'Ali merit pondering.

The author of A Short History of the Saracens writes:

'The husband of Fatima [Fatimah] united in his person the hereditary right with that of election. "One would have thought," says a French historian,[1] "that all would have bowed before this glory so pure and grand; but it was not to be."

From the beginning he was beset with the hostility of the Oumeyades [Umayyads].

With the honesty of purpose which always distinguished him, and disregarding all advice for temporising, immediately on his accession he gave orders for the dismissal of the corrupt governors appointed by Osman ['Uthman], the resumption of his fiefs and estates that had been bestowed, at public loss, by an aged Caliph upon his principal favourites, and the distribution of the revenues in accordance with the rules laid down by Omar Umar].[2]

[1 Emmanuel Sedillot, 1777-1832. (H.M.B.) ]

[2 p.

49 ]

But the first foe 'Ali was to meet was not the governor of Syria, who had refused to accept his dismissal and had made his province dependent of Medina.

Mu'awiyah, crafty as ever, was attempting to sow seeds of dissension in the very heart of Islam, in the cities <p180> that had witnessed the Prophet's labours and triumph.

Soon the cry was raised that 'Uthman should be avenged.

And strangely enough, some of those who were vociferous in demanding condign punishment for the murderers of the late Caliph were guilty either of having encouraged and fomented the rebellion which led to that tragedy, or of having done nothing at all to avert it.

Talhah and az-Zubayr were two of these, whose opposition to 'Uthman was well known.

Both were men of means and influence and both were elderly.

They coveted the governorships of Basrah and Kufah, but 'Ali refused to heed their expectations.

Disappointed, they abjured their pledge of allegiance and, having found a pretext for leaving Medina, betook themselves to Mecca.

There they joined forces with 'A'ishah, who was loudly lamenting the death of 'Uthman and accusing 'Ali of having the blood of his predecessor on his hands.

But Mecca did not provide a favourable climate for rebellion, and so, with what following they could muster, they marched on Basrah.

The governor, appointed by 'Ali, was defeated and the victors put to death a sizeable number of the people of Basrah, whom they dubbed the murderers of 'Uthman.

It was true that Basrah had sent a contingent to Medina to demand redress from

the aged Caliph, but so had the people of Kufah and of Fustat.

The uprising which resulted in the death of 'Uthman was widely based.

In Damascus, Mu'awiyah had the blood-soaked shirt of 'Uthman[1] and the severed fingers of Na'ilah put on display in the mosque, and constantly harangued the people to demand the punishment of those responsible for the death of the third caliph.

[1 In Persian, Pirdhan-i-'Uthman -- the Shirt of Uthman -- has become proverbial for 'vain pretext'.]

Abu-Musa'l Ash'ari (or Abu-Musa al-Ash'ari, of whom more will be heard) was the governor of Kufah; at first, he tried hard to destroy support for 'Ali, but as emissaries went back and forth he began shifting his position to neutrality, exhorting people to keep clear of internecine war in the Islamic domains and not to shed the blood of their brethren.

While Talhah and az-Zubayr were establishing their power in Basrah, the neighbouring Kufah was, thus, in a state of uncertainty and turmoil.

At last, 'Ali had to send his eldest son, Hasan, to pacify Kufah, which was done without a clash of arms.

Abu-Musa withdrew from the city and went into <p181> seclusion, although, as we shall see, he was brought out at a later date with unfortunate results. 'Ali was loath to settle the issue with the violators on the battlefield.

Instead, he sent them letters, messages, missions and intermediaries, but they would not desist and were bent on fighting it out.

Even when the two sides faced each other in battle array and the opposing archers were attacking his men, 'Ali would not order an assault.

At the last minute az-Zubayr turned away, but the battle had already been joined.

Az-Zubayr was killed by one whom he trusted.

When his severed head was taken to 'Ali by the murderer, with the hope of obtaining a substantial reward, 'Ali wept and had him driven away.

Talhah, too, met his death.

Sh'iah writers have ascribed his death to Marwan, maintaining that the Umayyad, who chanced to be present, found an opportunity in the thick of the battle to avenge 'Uthman.

Sunni apologists have asserted that Talhah, in his death throes, asked the man who was tending him to deputize for 'Ali and receive his renewed pledge of allegiance, but Sh'iah apologists reject this claim.

These contentions indicate how deep the rift was to become in the course of time.

This battle, which took place in front of Basrah in December 656, is known as

the battle of Jamal (Camel), because throughout the combat 'A'ishah sat in a howdah on the back of a camel, in the midst of her army.

Her camel became a focus for warriors who stood round it, holding its rein.

When it was mortally wounded and went down, the battle was over. 'Ali left 'A'ishah in the care of her brother, Muhammad, and she was sent to Medina with a retinue and every mark of respect.

A delicate engagement had been won.

Those who had repudiated their pledges had met defeat and were either slain or scattered.

But only three decades after the passing of the Prophet, His followers -- men who had known and loved, served and defended Him -- were fighting one another.

The sword had once again become the arbiter and the peace which Muhammad had given His people was irretrievably lost.

Christendom had already suffered the same fate, on the morrow of Rome's submission to the Faith of Christ, and for three centuries Christians had been fighting each other.

If the instigators of the battle of the Camel had been guilty of violation, Mu'awiyah and his supporters in Damascus had never given their allegiance to 'Ali and their ranks were wide open to all types of malcontents.

Moreover, they were better based and had greater resources at their command.

Circumstances were now forcing 'Ali to abandon the fastness of the Arabian peninsula and the cradle of Islam as the seat of his caliphate.

He needed to be with his army and nearer in person to the disaffected areas.

Thus, he chose Kufah to be his capital city.

Apart from neutrals of Abu-Musa's kind, there must have been many Muslims, who, horrified by the spectacle of civil war, felt uneasy and doubtful.

What, they must have thought, had happened that, within the space of one year, the unity of a theocracy extending from the Hindu-Kush to the southern shores of the Mediterranean lay shattered, seemingly beyond any hope of repair? 'Ali, for his part, was exerting every effort to avoid resort to the arbitrament of the sword, and to help his adversaries realize how damaging their rebellion was.

But he would not compound felony, would not compromise with the fundamentals of his faith and practice.

Mu'awiyah, on the other hand, cared only for dominion and power; chicanery, deceit and treachery were his effective weapons. 'Ali used his authority to serve the ends of justice; Mu'awiyah used his power to aggrandize himself and enrich his accomplices.

How could these forces, such poles apart, be reconciled?

And all the while, the Umayyads cried out to avenge the blood of 'Uthman.

Many must have been beguiled by this travesty of truth, others simply bewildered.

'Ali approached Mu'awiyah just as he had Talhah and az-Zubayr, by sending him letters, messages and emissaries.

But Mu'awiyah was adamant, until 'Ali, his own men growing restive, reluctantly concluded that another battle would have to be fought.

As Mu'awiyah had already started to move towards 'Iraq, with a heavy heart 'Ali crossed the Euphrates.

The two armies met at Siffin, in May 657.

In the ranks of the loyalists, who stood by 'Ali, were many who had stood by the side of the Prophet, decades before, on the day of Badr.

Twenty-five of those veterans fell on this battlefield.

Khuzaymah, the son of Thabit, whom the Prophet had called Dhu'sh-Shahadatayn (Equal to Two Witnesses), such being His high regard for the man's truthfulness, also fought under 'Ali's banner and died at Siffin.

Qays Ibn Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah was another prominent figure amongst the Ansar who rallied to 'Ali's cause.

It will be remembered that it was his father who <p183> first made the bid to succeed Muhammad.

Then both Qays and Khuzaymah had advocated the primacy of the Ansar.

Now, nothing could weaken them in their devotion to the House of the Prophet.

Still another fervent champion in 'Ali's ranks, also one of the Ansar and a companion of the Prophet, was Abu-Ayyub, who at Siffin fought bravely and outlived the carnage and the horrendous times that followed, to take part, during the reign of Mu'awiyah, in the siege of Constantinople and to be buried under its walls.

Only two men of any standing amongst the AnSar had gone over to Mu'awiyah. 'Ali had done everything possible to prevent the disaster of war, but Mu'awiyah continued unyielding.

Finally 'Ali threw him a challenge.

Would he meet 'Ali alone in the field?

Let them try their strength, decide the issue by their combat, and spare the lives of thousands.

Again, Mu'awiyah's response was negative.

Historians' estimates of casualties in the ensuing battle vary widely, but

there can be no doubt that thousands perished on both sides.

Among them was the venerable 'Ammar Ibn Yasir, a devoted follower of 'Ali, who may well have been ninety years old.

Yet he spurred his horse into the thick of the battle and his death greatly saddened 'Ali.

On July 26th Mu'awiyah faced defeat, for he had suffered heavy losses in the night's fighting and his army was collapsing.

Once again he resorted to deceit to save the day.

His mentor was 'Amr Ibn al-'As, the conqueror of Egypt, the governorship of which he had lost and was now craving.

A selected number of men were instructed to hoist copies of the Qur'an on their lances, march to the forefront of the troops and invite 'Ali's supporters to accept the judgement of the Holy Book.

Many of the leaders of 'Ali's army had been killed; now the two who were most prominent took diametrically opposed attitudes.

The warrior Malik Ibn Harith, entitled al-Ashtar, of the tribe of Banu-Nakha', whom the Umayyads had particular reason to detest, favoured the continuation of fighting.

Ash'ath Ibn Qays, of the tribe of al-Kindah, a Himyarite, who had had a chequered career, stood firmly for an end to it.

Ranged with him were many of the 'Pietists', those men whose scarred foreheads testified to the many hours during which they would prostrate themselves on rough earth, and falling on their knees bring their heads low in prayer.

These 'Pietists', or 'Reciters of the Qur'an', pressed 'Ali to submit to the Umayyad ruse, even <p184> threatening him with death. 'Ali warned them: 'I am the living Qur'an amongst you; these men who now come to you with copies of the Holy Book raised on their spears have been sent by conspirators; they have no regard for truth and the command of the Qur'an and their sole objective is to gain time for their nefarious designs.

Do not be deceived by them.' But the more 'Ali entreated the 'Reciters of the Qur'an' the more stubborn they grew.

When 'Ali was forced that day to send word to Malik to stop pursuing the Syrians, Islam received yet another damaging blow.

But how was it all to end?

An uneasy truce ruled, yet no solution was in sight.

Ash'ath asked and received 'Ali's permission to meet Mu'awiyah and ascertain the Syrians' wishes.

He returned with the news that Mu'awiyah proposed the appointment of two men,

one from each side, with full powers of arbitration.

It was the solution they all hoped for, he joyfully assured 'Ali.

But 'Ali knew that here again a devious mind was at work.

To accept arbitration implied that valid and reasonable doubt existed about his position.

Yet, his rights apart, his election to the Caliphate had had the same validity as that of Abu-Bakr, and Mu'awiyah had no reason to question it.

The murder of 'Uthman had already created a grave situation; to make the election of the Caliph the subject of review and reconsideration would inject another element of danger into the body-politic.

But again 'Ali found large numbers of his own men insisting on the acceptance of Mu'awiyah's terms. 'Amr, the son of al-'As, the eminence grise of the Umayyad faction, was named by Mu'awiyah to represent them. 'Ali named his cousin, 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Abbas, a man renowned for his knowledge and perspicacity.

Ash'ath intervened a third time, insisting that Abu-Musa al-Ash'ari be their man.

Only perversity could have dictated so strange a choice, for Abu-Musa had tried with all the eloquence at his command to prevent the people of Kufah from supporting 'Ali.

Failing, he had withdrawn to a corner of Syria in the domain of the Umayyads.

He was not even at Siffin, nor was he known particularly for his intelligence. 'Ali told the howling mob that Abu-Musa did not have his confidence, that he was no match for 'Amr who could easily outwit him.

But Ash'ath, being a man of Himyar, wanted a Himyarite to speak for his side, and Abu-Musa was a Himyarite. 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Abbas, on the other hand, was a Mudarite, as was 'Amr. <p185>

Rivalry between the people of Mudar and the people of Himyar was to plague Islam for several generations.

It inflicted deep wounds as far away as Bactria (Afghanistan), Sicily and Spain, until the passage of centuries made the distinction meaningless.

Mudarites were said to be descendants of Ishmael.

Himyarites claimed descent from Qahtan, whose son Ya'rib was supposed to have given his name to the peninsula.

These two great divisions each contained a variety of subdivisions, clans and tribes, the Quraysh of Mecca being Mudarites.

So Ash'ath and his supporters had their way and Abu-Musa was appointed.

Thus peace was guaranteed for an entire year, while the arbiters would go to

Dumata'l-Jandal, in the vicinity of Medina, and there decide the issue. 'Ali returned to Kufah and Mu'awiyah returned to Damascus.

And now those very men, the 'Pietists', 'Reciters of the Qur'an', who had forced 'Ali to submit to arbitration though he knew it to be wrong and unwarranted, began to shout: 'Arbitration belongs to no one save God, it is not thine, 'Ali '.

And they urged 'Ali to admit his error in accepting arbitration, declare his repentance, denounce the truce, and resume the fighting immediately!

Meanwhile, 'Amr was plying Abu-Musa with flattery and praise, inching his way into Abu-Musa's favour.

Finally he placed his ace.

Was not 'Uthman murdered unjustly, he asked.

Abu-Musa agreed.

Would it not, therefore, be conducive to the welfare of the Muslims if both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah, around whom the entire edifice of contention had been built, retired, so that the people, unhindered, could make their own choice?

Abu-Musa applauded the suggestion and agreement was reached between them.

When the time came to announce their decision, 'Amr played still further on Abu-Musa's vanity. 'You,' he told him, 'must speak first; your station demands it; I must take second place to you, not precede you.' Inflated with pride, Abu-Musa stood up to deliver his disastrous verdict that he and his co-adjudicator had decided to depose both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah.

To drive his point home he pulled his ring off his finger and declared: 'Thus, as I take off this ring, I depose 'Ali.' 'Amr followed him, confirmed the decision by his revered colleague, and then to the wretched Abu-Musa's bewilderment and discomfiture, said: 'Now as I put this ring back on my finger, I reinstate Mu'awiyah.

He is your Caliph.' Then bedlam broke loose. <p186>

The pious men, 'Reciters of the Qur'an', raised anew their fierce and constant cry: 'Government is God's, not thine, 'Ali.[1] Why did you go to arbitration; why, 'Ali, did you appoint Abu-Musa to represent us?' Their fickleness and bigotry, which knew no bounds, created a perilous situation.

Ash'ath was cowed.

Malik was dead from poison.

In Egypt, Mu'awiyah's minions overcame Muhammad Ibn Abu-Bakr, who was bravely loyal to 'Ali to the last, and barbarously put him to death.

That master of perfidy, 'Amr Ibn al-'As now had his reward:

Mu'awiyah gave him Egypt to govern.

Busr Ibn Urtat, another of Mu'awiyah's able but brutal lieutenants, led a raiding party into Arabia, humbled the two holy cities -- most sacred to Islam -- and ranged as far down as Yemen, everywhere spreading terror.

Nor could the menace posed by the 'Reciters of the Qur'an' be overlooked, for they had now taken to murder.

In their tortured minds all other Muslims, 'Ali and his supporters in particular, seemed as infidels deserving death.

Twelve thousand of them, grouped at Nahrawan, not far from the Persian uplands, stood ready to launch a surprise attack. 'Ali, at the end of the year-long truce, was preparing to march once again against Syria, but perforce had to meet the frenzied zealots.

Following his established practice, he first sent them letters, messages and emissaries to explain the enormity of their error, and to beg them not to mn headlong into disaster.

But their retort was always the same: 'Government is God's, not thine, 'Ali.' However, an appreciable number of them withdrew from the field before the rest fought and were annihilated.hey are known as Khawarij: 'Outsiders' or 'Seceders'.

The Khawarij (Kharijites in English) did not die out with their total rout in Nahrawan.

For long they remained a thorn in the side of Islamic society, particularly in North Africa and the Persian Gulf littoral.

Eventually they subdivided into a number of sects, recognizing and revering Abu-Bakr and 'Umar as rightful heirs to the Prophet, but detesting and cursing all who came after them.

One of their subdivisions called Azariqih (after the founder, Nafi' Ibn Azraq) dominated for a time parts of southern Iran, bearing close resemblance to similar groups of pietists in Christendom: the Montanists and the Donatists.

As centuries went by, the burning zeal which drove them from aberration to aberration, <p187> from atrocity to atrocity, was stilled.

Today their remnants are found in the Ibadi sect of 'Umman (Oman).

[1 Only these words are an exact quotation. ]

Next, three of the Kharijites took counsel together,[1] possibly in Mecca, and decided to kill 'Ali, Mu'awiyah and 'Amr, in Kufah, Damascus and Fustat respectively, all in the course of one night, the 19th of Ramadan in the year 40 A.H. (27 January 661).

That night 'Amr was taken ill and sent a deputy to the mosque in his stead, to lead the congregation in prayer.

The deputy fell to the assassin's sword.

In Damascus, Mu'awiyah escaped with injuries from which he soon recovered.

But in Kufah, 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn Muljam, with his accomplices, succeeded in his purpose. 'Ali was mortally wounded.

Two days later, this cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, the second to believe in Him at the tender age of thirteen; 'Ali, the first Imam of the Shi'ites, and the fourth and last of the Caliphs known as 'ar-Rashidin' (or 'ar-Rashidun' -- the Rightly-Guided); 'Ali, most just, most compassionate, most eloquent of men, died.

The blow which, that winter dawn, the poisoned sword of the Son of Muljam dealt to 'Ali was another blow from which Islam did not recover.

The door was now flung open to the calamitous rule of the House of Umayyah.

[1 Professor Philip Hitti throws doubt on this traditional account, 'all of which', he comments, 'sounds too dramatic to be true'. (History of the Arabs, p.

182.)]

The people of Kufah rallied to Hasan, the eldest son of 'Ali, but Kufah was not Medina, the City of the Prophet; and the men of Kufah, who rendered homage to Hasan, were not of the same rank and station as the concourse of the Companions of the Prophet, who gave their allegiance to his father in Muhammad's mosque.

Moreover, there was a quality of instability in the society of Kufah which made itself felt as soon as Mu'awiyah moved his army into 'Iraq.

Hasan was at Ctesiphon when false news of reverses threw his troops into disorder.

Further effort was useless, anarchy threatened, and Hasan found that no course was possible save coming to terms with Mu'awiyah.

He abdicated.

The Umayyad pretender was to occupy the seat of the Caliphate as long as he lived, when it would revert to the House of 'Ali, and go to Husayn, his younger son.

Once the treaty was signed Hasan took the road to Medina, to end his days in the proximity of the tomb of his Grandfather.

According to the great historian, at-Tabari,[1] Mu'awiyah wrote <p188> to Hasan that he was aware of Hasan's superior claims to the Caliphate as a descendant of Muhammad, and would himself pledge his fealty to him, were he certain that Hasan had the right qualities to govern.

With that letter, Tabari states, Mu'awiyah sent a blank sheet which he had signed, that Hasan might write in whatever he wished.

[1 Abu-Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarir at-Tabari, A.D.

839 923, the renowned author of an encyclopaedic history and an equally vast exegesis of the Qur'an.]

Kufah's glory was short-lived.

Henceforth Damascus ranked as the metropolis.

The theocracy which had arisen in Medina entered the first stage of its development as a temporal empire based on cities and lands that had borne the burden of other such empires in the past.

On the very day that Muhammad passed out of this mortal world and before His body was laid to rest, winds of dissension blew through the edifice of His Faith.

Having created a coherent nation out of an agglomerate of contending, restless tribes, and having founded a state with a framework of laws, it is inconceivable that He would not have envisaged who should succeed Him.

Moses had conferred authority upon Joshua, Christ had put the keys of Heaven and Earth in the hands of Peter; yet neither of them had in His lifetime established a realm demanding an administration.

But this was exactly what Muhammad had done.

Of His four immediate successors, each one of whom, as we have seen, reached that position by a different avenue, only the first, Abu-Bakr, died a natural death. 'Umar and 'Ali were both assassinated and 'Uthman fell before the murderous onslaught of a demented mob.

The appalling circumstances attending the death of 'Uthman opened wide the way for usurpers.

Mu'awiyah, the extremely able but totally unprincipled champion of the House of Umayyah, challenged 'Ali and won in the end.

The contest between 'Ali and Mu'awiyah was responsible for the rise of the Pietists -- the Khawarij -- and the awakening of blind fanaticism. 'Ali fell a victim to the sword of one such fanatic.

The stance of the Khawarij and their repeated depredations, through the ensuing years, could result only in anarchy and harsh suppression.

Syed Ameer Ali writes: 'Had Ali been accepted to the Headship of Islam, the birth of those disastrous pretensions that led to so much bloodshed in the Moslem world would have been averted.'[1]

[1 A Short History of the Saracens, p.21. ]

Christianity had fared no better.

Although Simon Bar-Jonah <p189> was the disciple chosen by Christ to be the rock (Peter) upon which He would build His church, it was not Peter, but James, the brother of Jesus, still much attached to Judaism, who became the recognized head of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

Upon his martyrdom in the year 62, he was succeeded by Simeon, the son of Mary Cleophas and cousin to Jesus; Simeon was crucified in the reign of Trajan.

When the fervent zeal of Saul of Tarsus encountered chilling winds of opposition, they blew from the community of Jerusalem over which James

presided.

And when Peter reached Rome (if he ever did), it was the star of Paul that was then in the ascendant.

Although Peter is hailed as the first Bishop of Rome, it was Paul who steered Christian action, and it was the Pauline doctrine that prevailed.

Christendom, too, produced its fiery and unreasoning pietists.

The great Tertullian joined the extremists of his day and raged against the Church.

The Donatists, last of that brand, continued to pillage and murder -- in particular, slaying monks and priests -- even as late as the seventh century.

In Christendom and in the domains of Islam, the sword became and remained the final arbiter.

But despite the feuds and the bitter struggles of potentates, despite the carnage caused by the caliphs and the sultans of Islam and the monarchs and rulers of Christian nations, so overwhelming was the power of the spirit released by Jesus of Nazareth and the Arabian Prophet that their Faiths reared and sustained civilizations of untold splendour.

We cannot avoid the horrendous chronicles of fratricidal warfare, nor overlook the stained records of oppression, tyranny and intolerance.

Of such stuff is history made.

Over them, however, shines the devotion of countless millions, who, through suffering, led mankind in its unceasing march to view more spacious horizons.  
<p190>

## 20 The Yoke of the House of Umayyah

The persecutors of Mahomet usurped the inheritance of his children, and the champions of idolatry became the supreme heads of his religion and empire.

EDWARD GIBBON

Umayyads were usurpers and tyrants.

They broke many bonds and promises.

They widened divisions and accentuated dissensions.

But a few exceptions stand out in their lines.

Their founder, Mu'awiyah, had qualities of strength which recommended him to his contemporaries and to posterity.

He was a very efficient administrator who could be forbearing if the interests of his government demanded it.

He was capable of generosity and showed wisdom and intelligence of a high order.

But he was also vindictive, treacherous and exacting.

One author has characterized him in these words: 'Astute, unscrupulous, and pitiless, the first Caliph of the Ommayas shrank from no crime necessary to secure his position.

Murder was his accustomed mode of removing a formidable opponent.'[1] One notable case was the murder of 'Abda'r-Rahman, the son of the renowned Khalid who, in the days of Abu-Bakr, had invaded Syria and scored notable victories. 'Abda'r-Rahman had faithfully served Mu'awiyah over the years, but because he was fast gaining public respect, Mu'awiyah could not tolerate him.

[1 Cited by Ameer Ali, *ibid*, pp.71-2, from Osborn, *Islam under the Arabs*. ]

Richard Dozy (1820-83), the Dutch orientalist, rightly maintains that the Umayyads, once having power, nurtured the same hatreds and feuds as had moved earlier generations.

They were not truly reconciled to the defeat of their forbears, and their innate antipathy to Islam showed itself when, in the guise of heirs to the Prophet, they set out to desecrate much that was sacred. <p191>

The expansion of Muslim domains had come to a halt at the close of 'Uthman's rule and remained static during the Caliphate of 'Ali, but under Mu'awiyah it was again resumed.

In Asia, Hirat, Kabul and Bukhara were conquered, while in North Africa Muslims drew nearer to the Atlantic.

In the year 669, a Muslim army attacked the very heart of the Byzantine Empire; a decade later, on Mu'awiyah's death, their fleet withdrew, leaving Constantinople still impregnable.

The Umayyad Caliphs

A.D.

661 -- 750

1.

Mu'awiyah I (661-80)

2.

Yazid I (680-83)

3.

Mu'awiyah II (683-84)

4.

Marwan I (684-85)

5. 'Abdu'l-Malik (685-705)

6.

Al-Walid I (705-15)

7.

Sulayman (715-17)

8. 'Umar (717-20)

9.

Yazid II (720-24)

10.

Hisham (724-43)

11.

Al-Walid II (743-44)

12.

Yazid III (744)

13.

Ibrahim (744)

14.

Marwan II al-Himar (744-50)

Mughirah, whom Mu'awiyah had appointed governor of Kufah, was extremely hostile to the cause of the House of 'Ali. 'Umar had given him office, but he had been dismissed under a cloud, believing that 'Ali had been responsible.

During 'Ali's Caliphate he remained on the periphery of public life, as 'Ali had placed no reliance in him.

However, once established as a confidant of Mu'awiyah, he began to plant in the latter's mind the germ of a new idea.

It would be his final act of revenge.

Already he had lent himself to Mu'awiyah's disastrous scheme of fabricating traditions ascribed to Muhammad, maligning and denigrating 'Ali.

And why, he suggested, need Mu'awiyah be bound by his treaty with Hasan, since, by ignoring the rights of Husayn, he could make the rulership of Islam hereditary in his own family?

Mu'awiyah took this idea to an elder, Ahnaf, the son of Qays, one who was greatly respected and had served the Umayyads well.

Ahnaf expressed his emphatic disapproval and refused to countenance such a flagrant breach of trust.

But Mughirah's promptings proved the stronger.

Indeed Mu'awiyah, who had struggled for many years to establish his own power, was loath to deny to his <p192> progeny a prize which he, himself, held so incontestably and cherished so dearly.

And so Yazid, his son, was proclaimed the heir apparent.

But mere proclamation was not enough.

Mu'awiyah had to obtain the consent of a multitude of people.

To quote Ameer Ali once again, Mu'awiyah never permitted 'any human or divine ordinances to interfere with the prosecution of his plans or ambitions -- ...'[1] He flattered, threatened, bribed, until he succeeded in winning over deputations from many clans and tribes.

However, in the City of the Prophet, five men, prominent both by reason of their lineage and by their own standing in the community, refused to give their assent or pledge their personal allegiance.

These were Husayn, the son of 'Ali, whose rights Yazid would usurp; 'Abdu'llah, the son of 'Abbas, the Prophet's cousin and 'Ali's faithful lieutenant; 'Abdu'llah, the son of az-Zubayr -- his mother was a daughter of Abu-Bakr -- who had desired the caliphate for himself since the days of his father's rebellion against 'Ali; 'Abdu'llah, the son of 'Umar, who had declined to side with either 'Ali or Mu'awiyah; and 'Abda'r-Rahman, the son of Abu-Bakr, elderly and retired from public life.

Both Abu-Bakr's and 'Umar's sons believed that they had more valid claims to the caliphate than the profligate son of Mu'awiyah.

Nothing could shake the resolve of these five dissenters, not even Mu'awiyah's visit to the holy cities and his success in enlisting substantial support amongst their inhabitants.

[1 *ibid.*, p.82. ]

A passing reference was made earlier[1] to a nefarious scheme which Mu'awiyah calculated would bring 'Ali into disrepute and besmirch his memory.

Mu'awiyah had already instituted a daily ritual of cursing 'All from the pulpit.

Next, he bribed some of his minions, who had known the Prophet and had been with Him, to engage in blasphemous forgery.

These despicable men, such as Mughirah and Abu-Hurayrah, opened the field, under Mu'awiyah's direction, to the corruption of doctrine, text, belief and practice.

Their deeds were heinous, but their lies can, on the whole, be easily detected.

Unfortunately they had their imitators, until faked traditions flooded an eager market.

In this a number of Sh'iah apologists must bear their share of blame.

There is a vast corpus[2] of genuine traditions that have come down from the <p193> Prophet and from His descendants -- the Imams of the Legitimists, the Sh'iahs -- but there are also a great many which are spurious, some blasphemous, others only ridiculous.

Incitement to forgery is yet another misdeed of the founder of the Umayyad

dynasty.

[1 See p.191. ]

[2 The four great compilations of traditions are: the Sahih of al-Bukhari (d.

870); the Sahih of Muslim, a native of Nishapur in the province of Khurasan (d.

875); the Sahih of at-Timidhi (d.

892); and the Sahih of an-Nisa'i (d.

914).

As-Sahih means the 'Genuine'.]

Mu'awiyah died in 680.

Although Yazid's succession was assured, Muslims in the holy cities as well as in Kufah were having second thoughts. 'Abda'r-Rahman, the son of Abu-Bakr, was dead, and 'Abdu'llah, the son of 'Umar, although highly esteemed, lacked the calibre to pose any danger or become the mainspring of revolt.

Only Husayn and 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr could attract a following large enough to oppose Yazid and cause concern.

Walid, the governor of Medina, was therefore instructed to force them to submit, whereupon both men quietly moved from Medina to Mecca, where the Umayyad power was weak and the populace determined to disown the tyrant of Damascus.

The people of Kufah wrote to Husayn to offer their allegiance; they urged him to hasten to their city and sent Hani, the son of 'Urwah, to plead on their behalf. 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Abbas, wise with years, advised caution. 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, who wanted Husayn out of Hijaz so that he might have the cradle of Islam entirely to himself, advised immediate departure.

Husayn took a middle course.

He sent his cousin Muslim, the son of 'Aqil and grandson of Abu-Talib, to take the pulse of Kufah.

Even during the lifetime of Mu'awiyah the leaders of that city had invited him to assume the reins of government.

But Husayn, honouring the treaty which his brother had concluded, would not contest Mu'awiyah's rule under any circumstance.

It was not Husayn who broke that treaty, but Mu'awiyah.

His death, followed by Yazid's reign, released Husayn from any further obligation to abide by the system which Mu'awiyah had designed.

Nu'man Ibn Bashir, the governor of Kufah, was an unhappy man.

He held office under Yazid, yet he was loath to ruin the chances of the House of the Prophet.

Therefore he took no action against Muslim, who moved freely about Kufah.

Thousands thronged to Muslim and pledged their allegiance to Husayn.

Yazid immediately dismissed the reluctant governor and sent a messenger of a man to take his place.

The new governor, 'Ubaydu'llah Ibn Ziyad, was one who would use any means to attain his ends.

He killed mercilessly.

Both Muslim and Hani were decapitated, and their corpses were subjected to indignities.

The fickle men of Kufah, forgetting their vows and protestations, just melted away.

By then, Husayn had left Mecca and was on his way to Kufah, accompanied by the members of his family and a number of devoted adherents.

When the news of Muslim's death reached him, he spurned the road back which might have led to safety and resumed his march.

Estimates vary, but it is certain that his entourage, women and the very young excepted, was barely seventy in number. 'Ubaydu'llah dispatched a force of four thousand men, under 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, to bar his way. 'Umar's father was that Sa'd who had humbled the might of the Sasanids, at the battle of Qadisiyyah in June 637.

Qadisiyyah, where Sa'd gained his laurels, was by the Euphrates; and now on the banks of the same river, at Karbila, his son stood in the path of the grandson of the Prophet.

Husayn had not come to fight, but he would not accept abject surrender.

He suggested to 'Umar three possible courses which he, Husayn, might take: to return to Medina and hold vigil by the side of the tomb of his Grandfather; to go to a frontier-line of the domains of Islam and help to keep at bay enemies without; to proceed to Damascus and hold parley in person with Yazid. 'Umar did not want the blood of the Prophet's grandson on his hands, and urged the tyrant in Kufah to come to terms with Husayn.

But 'Ubaydu'llah would have none of the options and insisted that Husayn should either acknowledge publicly and on the spot the supremacy of Yazid, or be carried a prisoner to Kufah.

A second time 'Umar pleaded with 'Ubaydu'llah, begging him to relent.

But the governor would not yield an inch; instead he sent Shimr Ibn Dhi'l-Jawshan, famed for his piety and attachment to devotional exercise, to replace 'Umar, whom he considered half-hearted and procrastinating, and to deal with Husayn.

Shimr's arrival convinced 'Umar that combat was the only alternative, since the grandson of the Prophet would never submit to the dictates of 'Ubaydu'llah.

Denied access to the water of the Euphrates and called upon to surrender, Husayn knew that death was his only exit.

The heroic men who were with him he freed from their allegiance, that they might leave him to his fate but save their own lives.

The enemy, he said, desired solely to humiliate and destroy him, not to harm them.

But not a single man defected, although they also knew that they could <p195> win only the crown of martyrdom.

Husayn then appealed to his opponents to spare the women and children the horror of thirst and slaughter, to deal with him alone; but the pious Shimr and the timorous 'Umar turned deaf ears to his plea.

It was the year 680 in the month of October, which corresponded that year to the month of Muharram, the first of the lunar calendar of the Muslims.

The year after Hijrah was 61.

If it be asked why this detailed attention to dates, the answer lies in the enormity of the event.

It was a watershed, an unparalleled disaster which unleashed passions not again to be contained.

From Karbala a wave of horror swept over the world of Islam which has never receded, and Muharram 10th -- the 'Ashura -- is a date never to be forgotten.

The first act on that morning of Muharram 10th was a deed of unexpected bravery.

Hurr, the cavalry commander who had first arrested Husayn's march to Kufah, forcing him to halt a score of miles away, was no longer able to still his pangs of conscience.

He, with thirty others, broke ranks and joined the small band standing unflinchingly around the grandson of the Prophet.

These men excelled in individual combat, but the massed onslaught of the enemy mowed them down.

That day the House of Muhammad suffered heavily, for many of the slain were related to the Prophet: amongst them were Husayn's eldest son, together with his brothers, his nephews, and his cousins.

Husayn, at last, was the sole survivor; as the sun moved westward he sat at the door of his tent with an infant in his arms.

He was wounded, an arrow pierced his jaw, and another transfixed his child.

And he was now alone, but for the women and children and the only son left to him -- a youth who languished in high fever on his bed, unable to stir.

Warriors dared not approach the grandson of the Prophet, until Shimr,

apprehensive that the one person he had been especially sent to destroy might escape the doom envisaged for him, once again took control, upbraiding his bewildered men for dereliction of duty and charging them with cowardice.

So Husayn was cut down by thirty-three strokes of swords and lances, and decapitated by Shimr.

His clothes were torn from him and his naked body was trampled to pulp by the hooves of horses.

While Shimr saw to the decapitation of all the slain, others were busy gathering booty and driving the women and children before them.

Shimr, victorious and jubilant, carried the head of <p196> Husayn to Kufah and laid it before 'Ubaydu'llah, who, with rough humour, brought down his cane on its mouth.

At this, an old man sitting nearby cried out in horror and pain: 'Alas, on these lips have I seen the lips of the Apostle of God!'

'In a distant age and climate,' says Gibbon, 'the tragic scene of the death of Hosein will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader.'<sup>[1]</sup>

[1 The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. v, pp.462-3]

The captives were taken across the inhospitable waste of the Syrian desert to the capital city of the Umayyads.

With the heads of the slain raised on lances preceding them, they were ushered into Damascus and paraded in the streets.

Men and women, misguided, misinformed, misled, thronged the route to the palace of Yazid and heaped abuse upon them. 'You are seceders,' they shouted; 'you have put yourselves outside the pale.' 'Ali, the only surviving son of Husayn who had escaped the massacre because he was fever-ridden, replied: 'Nay, by God, we are His servants who believed in Him and His proofs.

Through us the gladsome visage of Faith was revealed and the signs of the merciful God shone forth.' But the people retorted: 'Did you not forbid what God made lawful; did you not make lawful what God forbade?' And 'Ali answered: 'Nay, we were the first to follow the commandments of God.

We are the root of this Cause and its origin.

We are the sign of God, His word amidst mankind.'

It is related that when Yazid faced the captives, and beheld the head of Husayn, he wept at the sight of the stark reality before him, bitterly blaming the Son of Ziyad for the tragedy of Karbila.

But Yazid would not censure, let alone dismiss, his lieutenant in 'Iraq, because the security of his throne depended upon the strong arm of 'Ubaydu'llah.

Ample proof of Yazid's own viciousness is provided by the events of the next two years of his reign, which he personally shaped through another monstrous

instrument:

Muslim, the son of 'Uqbah, who gained the title 'the accursed murderer'. 'Ali, the son of Husayn, was sent to Medina; as soon as the inhabitants of the holy cities came to learn the full story of the wicked deeds of the Umayyads, their latent unrest erupted into violence.

Only one man in the cradle of Islam, 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, could turn the situation to his own advantage.

When Yazid heard that Medina was on the point of revolt, he hurriedly dispatched a new governor to calm the fears of the Medinites, but he could do no more than obtain agreement that a deputation should go to Damascus to hear what the Caliph had to say.

This visit was disastrous for the cause of the Umayyads.

The members of the deputation were aghast at what they saw in Damascus and on their return, vociferously denounced it.

Open revolt flared up Yazid's authority was defied, allegiance to him renounced, and his governor was expelled.

Members and clients of the clan of Umayyah found themselves besieged in their homes.

But the angry and outraged men of Medina had no one of sufficient stature to lead them.

When Yazid sent an army under Muslim Ibn 'Uqbah[1] to quash their rebellion, the result was a foregone conclusion.

Nevertheless, the Medinites refused to submit to the power of Yazid and marched out to meet the Syrians.

In August 683, battle was joined at Harrah, not far from the city of the Prophet.

Muslim was a butcher, but a good general.

He outflanked the Medinites and surrounded them.

Eighty of the remaining companions of Muhammad and seven hundred 'Readers' of the Qur'an (those who knew by heart the whole of the sacred text) died when Medina fell.

The city of the Prophet was given over to rapine; the barbarity displayed and the desecration wrought was past belief.

Not even the mosque of the Prophet was spared, and its precincts became a stable-yard.

Many more were put to the sword within the enclave of Medina while others fled the city.

Those who escaped death were forced to hail Yazid not only as their caliph, but

their master and liege.

Whoever resisted this indignity was branded.

Only the surviving sons of Husayn and 'Ali Ibn 'Abdu'llah Ibn 'Abbas[2] were exempted from subjection to this humiliation.

Medina never recovered from this assault, which took place just over fifty years after the passing of the Prophet.

[1 Muslim's father, 'Uqbah Ibn Nafi, had commanded the army of North Africa and was killed fighting the Berbers.]

[2 This 'Abbas was the uncle of the Prophet. ]

After the sack and degradation of Medina, Muslim Ibn 'Uqbah turned southwards to invest Mecca, where 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr held sway.

He did not reach it, for within three days he was dead.

He is reported to have said on his death-bed that two things had made him happy: uttering the creed of his Faith and <p198> ravishing Medina. 'The accursed murderer' was succeeded in his command by Husayn Ibn Numayr, who invested Mecca and inflicted severe damage upon it.

The most sacred fane, the Ka'bah, crumbled under the weight of the stones hurtling down from the Syrians' mangonels and the roof caught fire.

The shame brought upon Islam by the House of Umayyah had come full circle.

Nothing remained undefiled.

At this juncture Yazid died.

He was thirty-eight years old and had ruled for forty-four months.

Those European writers who have tried to whitewash Yazid have ignored the fact that he was a very bad ruler.

Obviously he had certain merits.

He appreciated music and wrote good verse, rode well and distinguished himself in the hunting field.

He was fond of open spaces and loved the freedom of the desert.

In appearance he was extremely handsome.

But he was very cruel and treacherous and cared little for the Faith over which he presided.

Yazid's sickly son, aged only thirteen, succeeded his father as Mu'awiyah II.

It was apparent that he disliked the power thrust upon him as his birthright, and he died soon after his accession.

His brother, Khalid, was too young; and Marwan, the son of al-Hakam, now an old man, was prepared to go to Mecca and acknowledge 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr as the rightful caliph of Islam.

But before he could do this, another contender reached Damascus and prevailed upon Marwan not to take the road to Mecca.

This was 'Ubaydu'llah, son of Ziyad, who had failed to secure the caliphate for himself in 'Iraq, and had fled the territory he had governed.

So Marwan proclaimed himself Caliph and received the acclamation of the Syrians.

Supporters of Ibn-az-Zubayr were by then threatening Damascus.

Marwan went out with six thousand men to meet them at Marj Rahit, in the vicinity of the capital.

A battle ensued and Marwan emerged victorious.

This was in July 684.

Next he marched upon Egypt and conquered it; thus he held Syria and Egypt as Mu'awiyah had done in the beginning.

Hijaz and 'Iraq, however, owed allegiance to 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, as they had to 'Ali.

Marwan had insinuated his way into the supreme office by making promises to Yazid's widow, which he did not intend to keep.

He married her to silence her, but had no intention of handing over the caliphate to her son, Khalid.

This office he had promised to a cousin, 'Amr, who had helped him to power, but meant to disappoint him, as well.

It was his own son, 'Abdu'l-Malik, whom he named to succeed him.

At this, Khalid's mother had had enough, particularly as Marwan added insult to injury by holding him up to ridicule.

That night Marwan was smothered in his sleep.

Throughout his long life of more than eighty years Marwan had consistently played an ignoble part in the affairs of Islam.

Sunnis do not recognize Marwan, because 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr was, during the same period, in possession of the holy cities.

Incidentally, Khalid, the dispossessed son of Yazid, lived to be an erudite scholar and writer of note.

'Abdu'l-Malik took up the reins of government in Damascus, but his position was far from secure. 'Ubaydu'llah had been given the task of regaining 'Iraq, and was building up a force for that purpose.

But Kufah was, by then, in great turmoil.

Ever since the martyrdom of Husayn those who had deserted his cause, not daring to stand by their pledges to him, had timidly kept to their homes, but they

were overcome by remorse and shame.

They resolved to redeem themselves.

As long as 'Ubaydu'llah ruled over them, they had little opportunity to take counsel together and plan an uprising, except in strict secrecy.

But when 'Ubaydu'llah's bid for the caliphate failed and he fled to Damascus, these men who called themselves at-Ta'ibin -- the Penitents -- found the chance to organize themselves into a fighting force.

Their immediate object was to storm Damascus. 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr had the same end in view and they considered joining hands. 'Abdu'llah's governor in Kufah put no obstacle in their way, since their common purpose was to destroy the Umayyads.

The Penitents, however, were as rudderless as the Medinites who fought the battle of Harrah.

Their leader, Sulayman Ibn Surad, had only one thought: to hurl himself and his people against the hordes of the ungodly to atone for their cowardice.

After weeping throughout one night by the tomb of Husayn, they rushed across the desert, refusing to combine forces with the supporters of Ibn-az-Zubayr, who, after their rout at Marj Rahit, had taken refuge within the walls of Qirqisiya (the ancient Circesium).

Dashing headlong into battle at a place called 'Ayna'l-Wardah, they met and were cut down by a force far superior to their own, which was under the command of an experienced warrior, Husayn Ibn Numayr, he who had invested Mecca.

Some, who were persuaded by Rifa'ah, the son of Shaddad, to <p200> save their lives, managed to beat a retreat into the desert.

Others plunged deeper into the melee, totally oblivious of the consequences, and were slaughtered to the last man.

Even those who had sought the safety of the desert wished to return and immolate themselves.

One did, caught up with the triumphant Syrians within sight of Damascus, and died.

The bedraggled remnants of the Penitents of Kufah, who dragged themselves back to their own region, came upon their compatriots from Basrah and Mada'in (Ctesiphon) who were moving towards Syria, and told them their sorry tale.

Broken in spirit, they all dispersed.

But already a new champion of the House of the Prophet had appeared on the scene.

His name was Mukhtar.

To understand his position, it is necessary to see what had been happening,

meanwhile, in Medina.

Following the sack of Medina, 'Ali II, the son of Husayn -- who is generally known as Zaynu'l-'Abidin (the Adornment of the Devout), and who is the fourth Imam of the Sh'iahs -- left the city and went into seclusion.

His uncle, a younger son of 'Ali (the first Imam), known as Ibna'l-Hanafiyyah, or just the Hanafiyyah -- referring to the tribal origin of his mother -- put forth the claim that after his brother, Husayn, the Imamate devolved upon him.

Whether he stood by that claim to the end of his days or not is a moot point.

Some Sh'iah writers have maintained that Muhammad the Hanafiyyah eventually acknowledged that the Imamate belonged by right to his nephew.

However, a sect known as the Kaysaniyyah grew up around his claim.

That over a long period he considered himself the rightful Imam is shown by the fact that during the season of pilgrimage,[1] in A.D.

688, eight years after the martyrdom of Husayn, four men led their followers at Mecca through the prescribed rites.

One of these was Muhammad the Hanafite; the others were 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, who held Mecca; 'Abdu'l-Malik, who ruled from Damascus; and Najdah, the Kharijite chieftain.

The Kaysaniyyah believe that the Hanafite has not died, but has taken his abode in a cave in the neighbourhood of Mecca, and in the fullness of time will emerge to establish the rule of righteousness.

[1 This was a period of truce. ]

Mukhtar, who raised the standard of revolt in the year 685, with the declared intention of avenging the death of Husayn, <p201> called upon the people in the name of Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah. 'Ali II, Zaynu'l-'Abidin, the fourth Imam, had no connection at all with Mukhtar, and there was even a time when the Hanafite would not lend him his authority.

Because Mukhtar succeeded where the Penitents had failed some of the Sh'iah apologists have idolized him.

He put to death both the murderous Shimr and 'Umar, the son of Sa'd. 'Ubaydu'llah, the son of Ziyad, also perished.

But Mukhtar, in spite of his impeccable declarations, was an adventurer.

Sponsoring the cause of the House of 'Ali would obviously win him support in 'Iraq, particularly in the wake of the disaster which had overtaken the first attempt at bringing the butchers of Karbila to book.

There are indications that Mukhtar once tried to switch his loyalty to 'Abdu'llah, the son of az-Zubayr, who, although an implacable opponent of the detested Umayyads, had no love for the House of 'All.

When the Arabs made their first moves against the Sasanid Empire, during the

early days of the Caliphate of 'Umar, a Muslim commander on that front was Abu-'Ubaydah, the son of Mas'ud of the Banu-Thaqif.

He was killed in the battle of the Bridge near Hirah, in November 634.

Mukhtar was a son of this Abu-'Ubaydah.

At first he carried everything before him.

Centring his power on Kufah, he established some semblance of authority over a portion of the Iranian uplands.

But at Kufah itself his position was precarious, particularly as it had become known that the letters which he purported to have received from members of the House of the Prophet were not genuine.

Many of his supporters were non-Arab Muslims who were called Mawali or the 'Clients'. 'Ali, the first Imam, had never allowed any distinction between the Arab and non-Arab elements amongst the Muslims, nor had Abu-Bakr or 'Umar.

One of the stalwart adherents of 'Ali was the celebrated Salman, the Persian companion of the Prophet.

The Umayyads, on the other hand, although not suppressing the non-Arabs, were decidedly selective.

Mu'awiyah had non-Muslims in his service, Christians as well as Jews, who served him well and were treated well.

But of the Muslims, the Mawali stood little chance of advancement under Mu'awiyah and his immediate successors.

Another factor which counted in favour of the House of 'Ali amongst the Persian Mawali was the fact that a daughter of Yazdigird III, the last Sasanid monarch, was married to Husayn, the third and martyred Imam; and 'Ali II, <p202> Imam Zaynu'l-'Abidin, was thus of Iranian lineage.

When Mukhtar's rule was challenged, the non-Arabs suffered at the hands of the Arabs.

Mukhtar overcame his opponents, and it was then that he put to death all the men who stood guilty of offences at Karbila.

Kufah was subdued, but danger loomed large in the north as 'Ubaydu'llah, the son of Ziyad, drew near with an Umayyad army.

The redoubtable Ibrahim, son of Malik -- the loyal and brave general of 'Ali, the fourth Caliph -- was sent at the head of a considerable force to stop the Syrian army.

The two armies met outside Mosul.

Not only 'Ubaydu'llah Ibn Ziyad, but also the infamous Husayn Ibn Numayr, who had wrecked the Ka'bah, lost their lives, and the Syrians were routed.

This was the high-water mark of Mukhtar's success.

The year was 686.

Mukhtar had next to contend with 'Abdu'llah, son of az-Zubayr, and 'Abdu'llah's formidable brother, Mus'ab.

While 'Abdu'llah kept to the fastness of Mecca, Mus'ab roamed the land and fought the battles.

In April 687 he defeated Mukhtar, who met his death bravely when emerging from the besieged castle of Kufah with drawn sword to give battle to the foe.

The rise and fall of Mukhtar, like a meteor in its brilliance and doom, presaged many similar careers in the course of Islamic history.

He was then in his sixty-seventh year.

But more tragic even than his death was the massacre of his men, who surrendered in a vain hope of clemency.

Muslim shed the blood of brother Muslim even after the struggle had ceased.

The man responsible for this barbarity was Muhallab, the son of Abu-Sufrah, who had previously overthrown the Kharijites in Basrah with similar severity.

The shame of fratricide, for which the Umayyads must in a large measure bear the onus, remained a permanent blot on the polity of Islam, just as it disfigured the polity of Christendom. 'Abdu'l-Malik, the son of Marwan, who after the death of Mukhtar was the sole contender left to face 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, now went to the length of killing his cousin, 'Amr, with his own hands, in full view of his sons and courtiers, while 'Amr's partisans were gathered outside the Caliph's palace. 'Amr's severed head was hurled down into their midst.

Cowed into submission, they went home.

It will be remembered that Marwan had employed the ruse of a confidence trickster with this ill-used cousin.

Divisions and wars amongst the Muslims persuaded the Byzantines <p203> that the time was ripe for reclaiming some of their lost territories.

As 'Abdu'l-Malik was more concerned to settle the issue with the sons of az-Zubayr than fight the Byzantines, he undertook to pay them a yearly tribute, and the heirs of the great Constantine preferred gold to military glory.

Then 'Abdu'l-Malik led his men eastwards.

Mus'ab was the adversary he wished to meet rather than his brother, who remained immured in Mecca.

Once again Ibrahim, the son of Malik, was in the vanguard of an army challenging the might of the Umayyads.

He had accepted service under Mus'ab because for him the enemy was forever the House of Umayyah.

He gained a brilliant victory, but fell on the battlefield.

Other commanders in Mus'ab's army had already sold out to 'Abdu'l-Malik. 'Isa, the young son of Mus'ab, appalled by such betrayal and too proud to accept the proffered terms of the enemy, dashed into the very midst of the massed ranks of the Syrians.

He was killed while his father looked on helplessly.

Next, Mus'ab himself was stabbed to death, the murderer shouting: 'Revenge for Mukhtar'.

An oft-told tale relates that as 'Abdu'l-Malik sat in the citadel of Kufah to receive the homage of the notables of that city, whose loyalties had shifted many times within the span of a single decade, he had in front of him the severed head of Mus'ab.

A Muslim of an earlier generation is reputed to have warned the Umayyad to beware the strange turns of fortune. 'In this very chamber,' he said, 'I saw the head of Husayn laid before 'Ubaydu'llah, and then it was the head of 'Ubaydu'llah that Mukhtar had placed before him; in a short while Mus'ab had the head of Mukhtar brought to him, and now I behold the head of Mus'ab at your feet.' It is said that 'Abdu'l-Malik had that chamber pulled down, lest one day his own head should lie on a platter there in front of another potentate.

It was the latter half of the year 691 which witnessed the re-establishment of Umayyad rule in 'Iraq and Iran.

The time had now come to deal with 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr, still secluded in the holy city of Mecca. 'Abdu'l-Malik entrusted this task to one whose name has become synonymous with horrific tyranny, al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf of the tribe of Banu-Thaqif.

Mukhtar had been a scion of the same tribe.

The siege of Mecca took the best part of the year 692, during which rocks from mangonels set on the surrounding hills rained down upon it.

Food became scarce while the Umayyad army feasted. 'Abdu'llah's <p204> men, even two of his sons, began deserting him.

When all hope was lost, 'Abdu'llah turned to his aged mother, Asma', for advice as to what to do.

She was that daughter of Abu-Bakr, who, seven decades before, had carried food in the dead of night to the Prophet and her father, as they lay hidden in a cave close by the city.

So much had happened, so much changed, during those seventy years, that for Asma' the world she once knew had ceased to exist.

Her advice, at this hour of peril, was simple: 'If you believe your cause to be just, keep on; otherwise, surrender.' How could the son of az-Zubayr now renounce a claim which he had nurtured for so long?

Many years before, when his father had quailed at the thought of opposing 'Ali, he had steeled his resolve.

He could not surrender.

So he walked out of the city, sword in hand, going on and on until the hail of stones brought him down.

He was decapitated and his body was impaled.

Hajjaj had no regard for valour.

So once again Mecca was invested, the holiest city of Islam desecrated.

At long last the House of Umayyah held undisputed sway; and 'Abdu'l-Malik, the treacherous son of a treacherous father, was supreme in the world of Islam.

The symbol of 'Abdu'l-Malik's power was Hajjaj, who for twenty-two years terrorized Arabia and 'Iraq and Persia.

Without taking into account those who died in battles which he conducted or engineered, it is estimated that the number of people who suffered death at the instance of this infamous tyrant was 120,000. 'Abda'r-Rahman, the grandson of al-Ash'ath,[1] was leading an army against Rutbil, the non-Muslim ruler of Kabul, when Hajjaj grossly insulted him for his slow progress.

He was so incensed that he led his army all the way back to Kufah to overthrow Hajjaj, as well as the Caliph in Damascus.

The inhabitants of Kufah, true to their tradition, rallied to his banner.

But it was not only the fickleness of the people of Kufah that provided 'Abda'r-Rahman with massive support.

Hajjaj, who had no love for non-Arab Muslims (nor for the Arabs, for that matter), had ordained that they should pay the same poll-tax (jizyah) as the Dhimmis -- that is, the people of the Book enjoying the protection of Islam.

This was because of his concern at the falling revenues, caused by decrease in the number of the Dhimmis, while the number of the Mawalls was increasing.

The Mawali, recently converted to Islam, therefore joined the forces of 'Abda'r-Rahman, because of the exactions of tax-collectors.

So widespread was the revolt that the Caliph was ready to parley with the rebel leader.

However, the battle went against 'Abda'r-Rahman, and he fled for asylum to the ruler of Kabul.

Rutbil had no hesitation in putting him to death, and making a gift of his head to Hajjaj.

Although insurrection did not cease, the rebellion of 'Abda'r-Rahman was the only upheaval of appreciable magnitude during the rule of the House of Umayyah, until the birth of that movement which brought about their downfall.

[1 The commander in 'Ali's army, who, at Siffin, insisted that 'Ali should cease fighting Mu'awiyah and enter into a truce.]

Through the remaining years of the Caliphate of 'Abdu'l- Malik Muslim armies gained remarkable victories in North Africa.

Kahinah, a woman chieftain of the Berbers, who had held up the Muslim advance, was at last defeated and, sad to say, her head was carried away as a trophy.

This repugnant custom of parading severed heads, which the Umayyads revived, has persisted right to the present day.

Christendom, too, was once similarly afflicted.

In the year 705, 'Abdu'l-Malik was succeeded by his son, al-Walid I, and a new commander, the celebrated Musa Ibn Nusayr, was appointed to North Africa.

Musa brought under control the area that we know today as Morocco, extended the Muslim Empire to the waters of the Atlantic, and even looked beyond to another continent, venturing to send men to cross the sea to an unknown land.

Byzantine power was totally swept out of Africa.

It cannot be doubted that 'Abdu'l-Malik gave Islam the system of government and the administrative structure which it needed to control its vast domains.

He created departments of state, appointed officials to conduct them, and introduced a system of accounting in Arabic for the exchequer and other governmental records.

The Caliph himself became a monarch.

These changes had a profound effect on society, and dependence on non-Arabs and non-Muslims decreased.

'Abdu'l-Malik, having had the people of Iranian origin ranged time and again against him and his House, had reason enough to dislike them.

One day he entered the Mosque of 'Umar,[1] which stands on the site of the Temple of Solomon, to see how the <p206> beliefs and practices of the Faith were being taught.

To his disgust and astonishment he found that most of the teachers there were Mawali of Iranian descent.

He called the leading men of Quraysh into a conclave to upbraid and chide them for this. 'You made so light of this faith of Islam,' he told them, 'that the sons of Furs[2] came to override you.

I have never seen the like of these people.

From earliest times until the appearance of Islam they reigned, and not for an instant had they any need of us.

Today we rule over them, and not for an instant are we not in need of them.' Another shock awaited 'Abdu'l-Malik when he learned that in many towns and cities of the far-flung Muslim Empire, men in authority, both judges and

administrators, were Mawali.

The process could not be entirely reversed, but it could be retarded.

It is paradoxical that the same order, which provided the Empire with organs of government and stability, sowed the seeds of disruption.

Stress on Arabism awakened the racial pride of the conquered peoples, and particularly of the Iranians.

The Dihgans or Dihgans of the Iranian plateau, who were owners of huge estates, in order to safeguard their inheritance and keep their possessions had thrown in their lot with the conquerors, whether they had embraced Islam or not.

Although they had not remained uniformly immune from expropriation they were not, in general, found in the ranks of malcontents and dissidents and contenders with the Umayyad power.

These came from classes below them.

It should be emphasized that the Sasanid polity had sustained a rigid caste system not unlike that which still besets Hindu society.

Of course the Faith of the Prophet Muhammad could not countenance such a stratification of society, but Umayyad tyranny and arrogance certainly bred racism and unmerited privilege.

[1 Both the Dome of the Rock (Qubbata's-Sakhrah), erroneously styled the Mosque of 'Umar by Europeans, and the Aqsa Mosque (al-Masjid-al-Aqsa), close by, were built by 'Abdu'l-Malik.

The enclave (most sacred to the Muslims after the holy sites of Mecca and Medina) within which these two mosques stand, is known as al-Haram ash-Sharif -- the Noble Sanctuary.]

[2 The Name that the Arabs applied to Iran. ]

The reign of al-Walid I (A.D.

705-15) marked the zenith of the fortunes of the House of Umayyah.

Musa, the son of Nusayr, who governed the whole stretch of North Africa from the borders of Egypt to the Atlantic, having received the Caliph's conditional approval to dispatch an exploratory expedition across the narrow straits that opened into the western sea, and having mounted a raid to ascertain the possibilities of success, decided to extend further the domains of Islam.

He gave the task of exploring the unknown to his freedman, Tariq Ibn Ziyad.

The name of Tariq is enshrined in the name of the Rock where, in April 711, he landed and established his command:

Gibraltar -- Jabal Tariq, or Mount Tariq.

Roderick, the Visigoth ruler of Spain, had traitors in his army, who were sons of the former king, Witiza.

And Count Julian of Ceuta, who had induced Musa to attempt the conquest of

Spain, was actively aiding the invaders.

The encounter with the Visigoths was ghastly.

Renegades betrayed their king and Roderick's army was wiped out.

Of the king himself nothing was ever seen.

Roderick was not well liked, and once he and his army were annihilated Tariq not only met with feeble resistance but, more astonishing, was received with joy and open arms by many, particularly by the Jews who were oppressed by both Church and State.

When Tariq took Toledo he made Oppas, brother of King Witiza, governor of the city, and gave him a garrison composed of Jews and Muslims to buttress his authority.

Serfs also rejoiced at the downfall of their Christian overlords.

Meanwhile, leading clerics, who were no less detested, made for Rome and safety; and Tariq moved northwards, entirely on his own authority, to win fresh victories.

Musa could not allow him all the glory of achievement.

He too crossed the straits into Spain with a powerful army.

Seville fell to him, and he pushed on to find Tariq, who had returned to greet him in Toledo, far from pleased.

Tariq was a Berber and most of his men were Berbers.

Within months, they had won remarkable victories and given a strife-ridden Spain, racked by tyranny and extortion, a new social fabric. <p207>

The Umayyad Caliphs

A.D.

661-750

Umayyah

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Abu'l-'As

Harb

|

Al-Hakam

Abu-Sufyan

|

4.

Marwan I

1.

Mu'awiyah I

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Yazid I

| | |  
Muhammad 5. 'Abdu'l-Malik 'Abdu'l-Aziz 3.

Mu'awiyah II

| | |  
| | 8.'Umar

14.Marwan II

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| | | |  
6.Al-Walid I 7.Sulayman 9.Yazid II 10.

Hisham

| | |  
| | 11.

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Al-Walid II Mu'awiyah

| | |  
12.Yazid III 13.Ibrahim 'Abda'r-Rahman I

|  
Umayyads of  
Al-Andalus

<p208>

Musa came with an army composed of Arabs, many of them boasting illustrious descent.

Could they abandon the field to the Berbers, the people whom they had fought for years and tamed and civilized?

Moreover, Tariq had been a slave in the service of Musa.

So, Tariq was punished, in order to be reminded of his origin and his duty to his overlord.

But once Musa had made his point he let Tariq go ahead with his conquests.

With his freedmen he moved steadily over the peninsula, and within two years from his landing on the Rock, they were masters of the entire kingdom of the Goths, apart from pockets of resistance in the remote mountains of Galicia which Musa was hammering.

In the south, Musa's son, 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, was providing a sound system of government, when summons reached Musa and Tariq to repair to Damascus.

Walid was frightened by the success of his viceroy, but when Musa and Tariq reached the capital Walid <p209> was on his death-bed.

Sulayman, his brother, succeeded him, and Sulayman would not forgive slights.

Musa was publicly degraded, mulcted of his wealth, and sent to end his days in a village near Medina.

But the cruellest blow was yet to come, when Sulayman sent hired assassins to

Spain to murder 'Abdu'l-'Aziz and send his head to his aged father.

Tariq was sent back to Africa to a menial task.

Thus did the Umayyads flourish.

Sulayman's reign was glittering but short, a bare two years.

His successor was his cousin, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Aziz Ibn Marwan -- the shining light of the House of Umayyah.

He stood apart from all the monarchs of the dynasty founded by Mu'awiyah and Marwan, with the exception of Mu'awiyah II, who was a sickly youth and died very young. 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Aziz was just, merciful and discriminating.

He put an end to the ritual of cursing 'Ali, the first Imam and the fourth Caliph, which Mu'awiyah had instituted.

Unlike his immediate predecessors, 'Umar attached more importance to the well-being of his Faith than to the state of the exchequer and other financial considerations.

He ordained that anyone who had embraced Islam must be exempted immediately from the payment of the poll-tax.

His officials were alarmed, and one of them wrote to the Caliph from Egypt that should the trend continue there, before long not a single Christian would be left and the financial loss would be incalculable. 'Umar replied that he would be delighted, remarking that God sent His Prophet as His Apostle amongst men, not as a collector of taxes.

The governor in Khurasan was even more perturbed, because so many Persians had come into the Faith to escape the payment of the poll-tax, but had not bothered to be circumcised.

The Caliph's answer was simple and terse: 'God sent the Prophet to reveal true faith to men, not to circumcise them.'

Ironically, the policy pursued by this honest and just Caliph led to fresh troubles.

The treasury suffered, the Arab element smarted, and soon his liberal policy was reversed by his successors.

About a year after 'Umar's accession his forces in Spain crossed the Pyrenees into France and captured Narbonne.

Two years later, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Aziz died, at the age of thirty-nine, and the caliphate reverted to the sons of 'Abdu'l-Malik.

Yazid II, who reigned till 724, did nothing of note, but Hisham, the last son of 'Abdu'l-Malik to reign, whose rule lasted nineteen years, provided a new measure of stability by careful administration and attention to his finances.

So attentive was he to his accounts that he was considered niggardly.

It was in his days that Muslim expansion into the heart of Europe was stemmed, and the tide began slowly to recede.

In October 732, a hundred years after the passing of the Prophet, Charles Martel defeated the Muslims at Poitiers, near Tours. 'Abda'r-Rahman, the Arab commander, lost his life on that fateful battlefield.

The Muslim debacle was not due wholly to the prowess of Frankish arms.

Internal dissensions made a major contribution to that defeat.

The Berbers were also restive, and Kharijite agitation was rife in the Berber homeland.

Indeed, at one time, it seemed as if North Africa from Qayrawan[1] to the Atlantic was slipping from the grip of the Umayyads.

The battle of Tours, although it was not an engagement of vast proportions or a titanic trial of strength, became a landmark in the history of the world, but the victorious Franks were too exhausted to follow up its immediate advantages. [1 A famous city in Tunisia, regarded as holy. ]

It was also during the reign of Hisham that another clash occurred between the House of 'All and the House of Umayyah.

Zayd, a son of the fourth Imam, went to Damascus to seek redress.

He was insulted and denied elementary justice.

His pride bruised and his sensibilities outraged, Zayd made his way to Kufah, the notorious home of the fickle and the malcontent, to attempt a stand against the tyranny of the Umayyads.

His relatives warned him not to put his reliance upon the word of the people of Kufah.

More than twenty thousand had pledged him their support, but when he showed his hand his following melted away and only some three hundred remained faithful to him.

Zayd was killed, but his opponents did not allow his death to close this sad chapter.

They searched for his grave, found it, disinterred his body, decapitated it to present his head to the Caliph, had the corpse stretched on a cross, then burned it and threw away the ashes.

A fresh wave of horror swept over the land.

Zayd's son, Yahya, a boy barely seventeen years of age, fled to Khurasan to find refuge.

He was imprisoned, and when set free was so hounded that he had to turn and fight.

Both Yahya and his brother perished, and for months their bodies were left

hanging upon gibbets.

By then Khurasan was seething with unrest, but the focal point of revolt was not the House of 'Ali. <p211>

In A.D.

712 the Imamate had passed from 'Ali II, the fourth Imam, to his son Muhammad, known as al-Baqir.

After him, in A.D.

734, his mantle rested on his son Ja'far, who was surnamed as-Sadiq -- the Truthful.

The sixth Imam, like his father and grandfather, resided in Medina and kept aloof from plots and intrigues.

The fame of his immense learning was well spread, and round him gathered earnest disciples -- not only from the ranks of those who believed in his apostolic succession.

Although he wished Zayd well and supported him when Zayd was only pressing a lawsuit, he gave his uncle no encouragement to resort to insurrection.

There came a break, and Zaydis became a distinct sect standing apart from the Shi'ites.

To this day they are centred in Yemen.

But the revolt which shattered the power of the Umayyads stemmed from the House of 'Abbas.

Muhammad al-Hanafiyah, the son of 'All, the first Imam -- whose mother was not Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet -- entertained claims which, after his death, his son, Abu-Hashim upheld.

It is said that Abu-Hashim was poisoned on the instructions of Sulayman, the Umayyad caliph.

However, before he died he transferred the authority which he claimed to Muhammad, the great-grandson of 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle.[1] This Muhammad lived in Syria, in a village named Humaymah, whence, in the reign of 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l- 'Aziz, a deputation came to acknowledge Muhammad and to offer him allegiance.

That was the beginning of the movement which destroyed the Umayyads.

[1 Muhammad was the son of 'All, the son of 'Abdu'llah, whose father was 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet.] <p212>

21 Revolt and its Roots

The revolt which broke the Umayyads was essentially the revolt of the non-Arab Muslim.

Previous attempts at dispossessing the usurpers, although supported by

non-Arabs, had had only leaders of distinguished Arab descent at the helm.

The movement which thrived on the magic of its name, the Hashimite, achieved its objective, in spite of initial failure, under directors of non-Arab lineage.

Most prominent in the Hashimite movement were the Mawali, whom the Umayyads had spurned.

As the first century of the Hijrah drew to its close, expectations ran high that with the passage of a hundred years the hand of Providence would bring low those who wielded power not rightly theirs, and that the legitimacy of power would be restored.

This belief was widespread and firmly held.

So it was that in the first year of the new century, Hayyan the Druggist, Abu-'Ikrimah the Saddler, Maysarata'l-'Abdi and Muhammad the son of Khunays -- men of humble pursuits and no particular renown -- made their way to an obscure village of Syria, where Muhammad, the head of the House of 'Abbas, had a modest establishment.[1] He received their homage unobtrusively, after which they went away to fire others with their zeal.

Hence they and their like were known as the du'at (callers),[2] in other words, missionaries.

Calling, as they did, upon the people to rally to the cause of the House of Hashim, they could enlist the sympathies of supporters of the House of 'Ali.

Because Khurasan was an area badly disaffected, they brought their persuasion to bear particularly on that province.

The governor, hearing of their dubious activities, summoned them and demanded to know what they were doing in his domain.

They were merchants, they said, mindful of their own business; whereupon <p213> they were released and continued to travel throughout Khurasan in that guise.

In due course they repaired to the Syrian village to give the great-grandson of 'Abbas (the uncle of the Prophet) the tidings that the ground had been well and truly laid for revolt.

[1 See p.211. ]

[2 Plural of da'i -- the 'one who calls'. ]

As long as Hisham, the son of 'Abdu'l-Malik, reigned the Hashimite movement had to remain underground.

Hisham's rule was partly beneficent and his grasp was firm.

Abu-'Ikrimah and Hayyan lost their lives because hostile propaganda was traced to them.

The 'missionaries' were then cautioned not to show their colours until the person who Was wooed had taken a solemn and binding oath.

And so the work went on in stealth.

The death of Hisham, in 743, brought to the throne a man so profligate that even the partisans of the House of Umayyah shuddered in horror.

He was al-Walid, the son of Yazid II.

Hisham dreaded his nephew's succession and tried to debar him from the throne.

He planned to bequeath the caliphate to a son of his own.

But Yazid II had laid the notables of his court under an oath of allegiance to al-Walid; thus his inheritance was assured and his accession inevitable.

Al-Walid II was a drunkard, who, when in his cups, dared even to practise archery on a copy of the Qur'an.

As yet, the protagonists of the Hashimite cause were not strong enough to channel popular disgust and topple the Umayyads from their seat of power.

But Yazid, the son of Walid I, led the people of Damascus against his cousin and brought about his death after a reign of little over fifteen months.

Yazid III was by far a better ruler, but the House of Umayyah itself had become a divided house.

Marwan Ibn Muhammad, a great-grandson of Marwan I, and a seasoned soldier who had earned the nickname of al-Himar (the Ass) because of his stamina and reserves of endurance, had lived away from the court, fighting battles on the periphery of Muslim domains or governing outlying provinces.[1] Now he moved with his army towards the capital and declared that the caliphate rightly belonged to the two sons of the murdered Walid.

Yazid III had no desire to fight his own kinsman.

When he died within six months of his accession, his brother, Ibrahim, assumed the Caliphate, and Marwan pressed forward.

The force which <p214> Damascus could muster under the command of Sulayman, a son of the Caliph Hisham, was routed.

Ibrahim had to flee, after a rule of only two months, although he returned later to offer his submission to Marwan.

However, before abandoning the capital, he ordered the death of the two boys, sons of Walid II, who languished in prison.

By the end of November 744, Marwan the Ass occupied the seat of the Caliphate.

[1 Marwan had defeated the Khazars, a Turkish clan in the area of the Caspian Sea, who preferred to embrace Judaism so as to be free of obligations to the Muslims and Christians around them.]

Marwan II was in the saddle, but the whole Empire was in turmoil, and the members of the House of Umayyah had fallen out amongst themselves.

Contesting with one another for power, they had butchered their innocent

kinsmen in cold blood.

The Kharijites were astir once again, and Mecca, Medina and Kufah fell to them.

Old enmities between Himyarites (Yemenites) and Mudarites (Qaysites) were reawakened.

Marwan favoured the Mudarites, but southern Iran declared for the Himyarites and refused to recognize Marwan.

The strangest spectacle of all was the defection of Sulayman, the son of the Caliph Hisham.

At first acknowledging the overlordship of Marwan, he suddenly moved to gain the caliphate, then unexpectedly joined forces with the Kharijites, the inveterate foes of the House of Umayyah.

Marwan had fought and won many battles, but now it seemed he was facing impossible odds.

Nevertheless, he laid siege to the Kharijites in Mosul, where a young kinsman of his own named Mu'awiyah, a nephew of the renegade Sulayman, fell into his hands.

Mu'awiyah's plea for his life met with disdain; he was led out and, within sight of both armies, had his hands chopped and his head struck off.

Eventually, the Kharijites were defeated in Iraq and in the Arabian peninsula, and once again they went to ground in the broad lands of the Iranian plateau.

Whether advanced age, after years in the field, was telling on Marwan, or for a cause unknown, the Caliph did not pursue his advantage to subdue the people of the plateau, left the affairs of the administration to his two sons, 'Abdu'l-Malik and 'Abdu'llah, and sought respite in the fortress of Harran in the northern confines of Syria.

Damascus with its ornate palaces and luxuries was abhorrent to him.

Now was the moment for the partisans of the House of the Prophet to arise.

On the death in 743 of Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, head of the House of 'Abbas, his son, Ibrahim, had succeeded him.

His supporters -- <p215> with their well-planned organization, fully equipped with secret cells and furtive missionaries -- were active but supremely discreet.

The du'at or da'is spoke on behalf of the Ahla'l-Bayt -- 'People of the House', meaning the House of the Prophet.

In the minds of many, the 'House' could be none but the House of 'Ali, whereas the Da'is, without saying so, were really paving the way for the advent of the House of 'Abbas.

While Marwan II had been fighting in Syria and Iraq to consolidate his

position, a remarkable man, one of the most remarkable of all time, had appeared on the scene in Khurasan.

He was a native of that province which was the nursery of the 'Abbasid movement.

Friend and foe agree that this man, Abu-Muslim, possessed such singleness of mind, such firmness of resolve, such mastery of his faculties and emotions that neither success nor defeat, neither joy nor sorrow, could affect his demeanour or deflect him from his purpose.

For him the end always justified the means.

The triumph of the 'Abbasid cause owed its stratagem, its impetus and achievement more to him than to any other human being.

Yet, as late as the year 742, he had been a menial servitor in the Castle of Kufah, seeing to the needs of the prisoners -- partisans of the House of the Prophet -- whom the governor of Kufah had put under arrest.

While attending them, Abu-Muslim was attracted by their talk, showed sympathy towards their cause and wept over their plight.

Bukayr, a prominent member of the pro-'Abbasid hierarchy, who happened to be in Kufah, witnessed this young Persian's zeal for the Hashimite cause, and bought him from the authorities for four hundred dinars.

Within a few years, Abu-Muslim rose to become the acknowledged leader of the Messianic movement in his homeland.

But he bided his time until the middle of the year 747.

Then having received orders from Ibrahim (generally known as Ibrahim the Imam) to mobilize his forces, Abu-Muslim directed his men to come into the open, dressed in black, and to side publicly with the Himyarites against the governor of Khurasan, Nasr Ibn Sayyar, who was a Mudarite.

Henceforth they became known as the 'Musawwidah' -- the Black-robed -- and black became the colour of their banner and the colour of the House of 'Abbas. (The Prophet's standard had been black.)

Nasr, an octogenarian, was well aware of the dangers threatening the very existence of the Umayyads.

He sent warning after warning to the Caliph, and the verses which in despair he addressed to Marwan have deservedly attained high fame.

I see amidst the embers the glow of fire, and it wants but little to burst into a blaze,  
And if the wise ones of the people quench it not, its fuel will be corpses and skulls.

Verily fire is kindled by two sticks, and verily words are the beginning of warfare.

And I cry in amazement, 'Would that I knew whether the House of Umayya were awake or asleep!'.[1]

[1 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol.

I, p.

241.

Translation by E.

G.

Browne.]

His pleas went unanswered until he was routed, had to abandon his province and retire to Ray (ancient Rhages),[1] to see Abu-Muslim proclaimed the ruler of Khurasan.

By the year 748, Abu-Muslim stood supreme in the Eastern Marches.

When Marwan moved to send aid to the hard-pressed Nasr, it was too late.

[1 Its ruins are close to Tihnan. ]

While Khurasan was bursting into rebellion, a letter from Ibrahim to Abu-Muslim fell into the hands of Marwan.

Until then the Umayyad Caliph had no knowledge at all that this scion of the House of 'Abbas, who lived quietly in a Syrian village, was the fount-head of the forces which threatened his life and his throne.

Not only did Marwan and his men not know of the position which Ibrahim the Imam occupied; there were very few among the hundreds of thousands of Ibrahim's own avowed adherents who had any intimation of his identity.

Upon discovering the prime mover of the revolt, Marwan had Ibrahim taken to the fortress of Harran, where he was poisoned.

The 'Abbasid succession, at Ibrahim's death, devolved upon his young brother, Abu'l-'Abbas 'Abdu'llah, who came to be known, before long, as as-Saffah, the Shedder of Blood.

Abu'l-'Abbas and his brother, Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur, together with other prominent members of his family, fled to 'Iraq.

There they were given sanctuary at Kufah, unbeknown to the governor, Yazid Ibn Hubayrah, who was a bulwark of the Umayyad power and had shattered the forces of the Kharijites.

It was Abu-Salmah Hafs Ibn Sulayman, a <p217> Persian and a native of Hamadan, who provided safety at Kufah for the 'Abbasid fugitives.

Abu-Salmah, who was later to become the first vizier (wazir) in the Empire of Islam, was originally an adherent of the House of 'Ali.

He wrote to three of the most outstanding members of that House, inviting them to put themselves at the head of the anti-Umayyad movement.

His first choice was the sixth Imam of the Shi'ite persuasion, Ja'far-as-Sadiq; his second, 'Abdu'llah-al-Mahd, a grandson of Hasan, the second Imam; and his third, 'Umar-al-Ashraf, a son of Zaynu'l-'Abidin 'Ali II, the fourth Imam.

Ja'far-as-Sadiq not only left Abu-Salmah's letter unanswered and refused to associate himself by word or deed with schemes of violent action, but also prevailed upon his kinsmen to do the same, asking his uncle, 'Umar-al-Ashraf, what he knew of the people of Khurasan to cause him to put trust in them.

Abu-Salmah and his collaborators, whose sympathies lay with the House of 'Ali, were, however, too deeply committed to rebellion to be able to pull back.

Perforce, they cast in their lot with the House of 'Abbas.

Abu-Muslim, too, attempted to win the support of Imam Ja'far-as-Sadiq, only to learn in no uncertain terms that the Imam stood above all contention.

So it was that the army of Khurasan set out to strike at the heart of the Umayyad power.

Abu-Muslim himself remained in Khurasan, giving the command to an Arab general, Qahtabah, the son of Shabib.

It must not be assumed that this army was wholly composed of the Mawali, or non-Arabs, for many Arabs, particularly of the Himyarite faction, marched behind the Black Standard.

These Arabs were mostly people with Persian forbears, who knew no homeland but the highlands of the Iranian plateau.

Already the process of assimilation had begun.

In Syria the Arabs had almost absorbed the local population, but in Iran the reverse had occurred.

Qahtabah moved steadily westwards.

The aged Nasr left Ray and died soon after; no aid had reached him from Marwan.

In May 749, the army of Khurasan captured Nihavand, the scene of that great battle and victory, Fath-al-Futuh (Victory of Victories), which, in the year 641, had sealed the fate of the Sasanid Empire.

Then Qahtabah descended onto the plains of 'Iraq, bypassing the Umayyad forces under the command of Yazid Ibn Hubayrah, the governor of Kufah.

Battle was joined in August, and although <p218> Qahtabah was killed, his army won the day.

Yazid withdrew to Wasit,[1] and Kufah fell to Hasan, Qahtabah's son.

The city which, time and again, had defied the Umayyads, sometimes bravely, sometimes timorously and sometimes treacherously, was free from the rule of the 'accursed'.

Many were the Shi'ites of the House of 'Ali in Kufah who rejoiced and looked

for a descendant of 'Ali to come forth and ascend the pulpit in the mosque.

They had a rude awakening, for it was not a scion of the House of 'Ali who made his appearance, but Abu'l-'Abbas 'Abdu'llah, the head of the House of 'Abbas, who came out of hiding and rode in great pomp to the mosque associated with 'Ali, the first Imam and the fourth Caliph.

Abu'l-'Abbas led the congregation in prayer and then addressed the people.

The iniquities of the Umayyads, he said, condemned them out of hand, and now the House of Hashim, the House of the Prophet, had come to wipe out all traces of their transgressions, to let the light of religion shine, to cover the face of the earth with justice and equity and righteousness.

His uncle, Dawud, following him, made the pronouncement that the House of the Prophet would hold the reins of affairs and keep the sacred trust until the Last Day, to be handed over to Jesus, the Son of Mary, on his second coming.

The bewildered people of Kufah had no choice but to make their way to the Mosque of 'Ali, there to swear fealty to the head of the House of 'Abbas.

[1 As its name 'In-between' indicated, this was a town built mid-way between Basrah and Kufah. by Hajjaj.]

The next battle, which finally shattered the power of the Umayyads, was fought in January 750 on the banks of the river Zab, which runs into the Tigris about eighty miles to the south of Mosul.

Another army had by then reached 'Iraq from Khurasan, also under the command of an Arab general, 'Abdu'l-Malik of the Himyarite tribe of Azd.

Here Marwan, at last, took to the field in person.

He was decisively beaten.

The battle of Zab changed the course of the Empire of Islam.

City after city opened its gates to the 'Abbasids.

Only at Damascus was some resistance shown. 'Abdu'llah, the uncle of Abu'l-'Abbas, overran it, put many to the sword, and raised the black banner of his House on the citadel where Mu'awiyah, almost a century before, had first laid his plans to build himself a kingdom.

Marwan the Ass became a wanderer, tried to recoup his fortunes in Egypt, but one night was surprised in a church and killed.

Those Umayyads who <p219> had escaped with their lives in Damascus, ostensibly amnestied, were called to a banquet by 'Abdu'llah, the uncle of Abu'l-'Abbas, who had been appointed governor of Syria by his nephew.

As-Saffah had ordered him to exterminate the Umayyads.

When they came to the banquet and sat down, they were set upon and slaughtered.

Some ninety of them perished.

Dawud, another uncle of Abu'l-'Abbas (he who had spoken in the mosque of Kufah), was given the holy cities of Arabia to govern, and there too the scions of the House of Umayyah were to be destroyed.

Swift and ghastly retribution overtook them, guilty and innocent alike, and the graves of their caliphs in Damascus were desecrated.

But the grave of 'Umar Ibn 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, the just and compassionate caliph, was spared.

Yazid Ibn Hubayrah, the Umayyad general who had lost the battle for Kufah and fled to the safety of Wasit, agreed, after a month of siege, to surrender to Abu-Ja'far, the brother of the Caliph, having received solemn assurance of safety for himself, his family and his men.

But as-Saffah would have none of it and instructed his brother to kill the son of Hubayrah.

Not daring to disobey the Caliph, Abu-Ja'far had to break his bond.

Even Abu-Salmah, the first vizier of the world of Islam, who had made Kufah safe for the 'Abbasid fugitives and had proclaimed as-Saffah caliph on the day of victory, did not survive the blood bath with which the 'Abbasids inaugurated their reign.

No wonder that the poet, Abu'l-'Attar, wished for the return of the 'oppression' of the House of Marwan and the consignment of the 'justice' of the House of 'Abbas to the nether world.

It is said that Abu-Muslim could not tolerate a rival and encompassed Abu-Salmah's death.

Be that as it may, the assassination of Abu-Salmah had the blessing of as-Saffah.

A modern Iranian historian[1] has written:

[1 The late 'Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani. ]

'These people of Khurasan, who (after the death of Muhammad Bin[1] 'Ali, the Imam, in the year 124 [A.D.

742]), turned their garb into black, and became known as the Musawwidah, were mostly the Dihqans [land owners] of that region and the descendants of the nobility of Iran.

They, at last, with the aid of Abu-Muslim of Khurasan and Abu-Salmah Hafs Bin Sulayman-i-Khallal of Hamadan, brought down the rule of the Umayyads in <p220>the year 132 of Hijrah; and at the battle of the Zab, proved the dominance of the Iranian element over the Arab, and proclaimed the inauguration of a new era in the history of the Islamic caliphate and civilization.'[2]

[1 The same as Ibn (the son of). (H.M.B.) ]

[2 Khanidan-i-Nawbakhti, p.65 (Jep 41) ]

Historians have differed over the truth of this bold assertion and will continue to differ.

But a few facts are ascertainable.

There were, as we have seen, Arabs in the ranks and at the head of the anti-Umayyad forces.

Others of the Mawali, besides Persians, joined the anti-Umayyad movement.

But, as the above-quoted historian states, it was the men of Khurasan, a province profoundly Iranian in spite of the large influx of Arab settlers, who took up arms to overthrow the Umayyads, and it was the strategy and tactics of Abu-Salmah and Abu-Muslim which achieved that end.

Abu-Muslim had at his elbow, as close adviser and collaborator, an eminent Persian, Khalid, the son of Barmak, the forbear of the celebrated family of the Barmecides.

It can also be pointed out that another close adviser of Abu-Muslim was Muhammad al-Ash'ath, a man of illustrious Arab descent, whose grandfather, 'Abda'r-Rahman, had contended with the cruel Hajjaj and the Caliph 'Abdu'l-Malik.

Another fact is of paramount importance.

The advent of the 'Abbasids meant the extinction of the Byzantine successor-state in Syria.

The centre of the Muslim Empire shifted eastwards to 'Iraq, where formerly the Sasanids of Iran had had their famed metropolis.

This transference of the fulcrum of power brought the 'Abbasid Caliphate into proximity with its Persian supporters, who subsequently rose to high positions in the administration and service of the state.

As-Saffah, although raised to power in Kufah, had no love for it and chose Anbar, on the Euphrates, as his capital.

His reign was short-lived; he died of small-pox in 754, and his brother, Abu-Jaf'ar al-Mansur, succeeded him.[1]

[1 Because of the strict attention he paid to the accounting of money, Abu-Ja'far Mansur became known as ad-Dawanaqi.] <p221>

22 Ferment of Thought and Belief

All Western scholars have concluded that Muhammad did not name His successor, and that the mode of election, which created the office of the caliph and enabled Abu-Bakr to assume the caliphate, was in line with the normal traditions of the people of Arabia.

It is a fact that the Prophet did not leave a written testament.

It is also a fact that the Qur'an is silent on the question of succession.

Some apologists have alleged that there were verses in the Qur'an which extolled 'Ali, but these were suppressed by 'Uthman, when he confiscated the divergent versions[1] of the Qur'an, and sanctioned the text that had been

confided to the care of Hafsa, a widow of the Prophet, by 'Umar, her father.

This assertion is manifestly untenable.

There is no indication at all that either 'Ali, or any other of the Imams, ever contested, by a single word, the authenticity of the text which 'Uthman adopted.

The 'tradition' which has been labelled 'democratic', and cited to provide the legal basis for the institution of the caliphate, if it ever existed, must have had only a tenuous hold on the people.

It was not in evidence in subsequent decades.

Arabs were certainly not unacquainted with the hereditary principle.

They had their own monarchs, and chieftainships were decided by processes of selection and not election.

[1 Four versions are known to have existed. ]

Unlike Christ, Muhammad had, in His lifetime, founded a society subject to the prescriptions of His Revelation.

Scholars in the West have dwelt on the theme that Muhammad was fundamentally a preacher, thereby inferring that He was not particularly concerned with administration which had to be contrived by those who came after Him.

The society which the Prophet brought into being was still an infant when He passed away, and obviously required organs of government to serve its needs as it grew.

It is absurd to imagine that Muhammad, who had created a totally new polity, had no thought for its future administration.

When the inordinate ambition of Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, the Khazrajite leader, precipitated a crisis which was resolved by the elevation of Abu-Bakr to the rulership of the Islamic society, there were a few men who stoutly maintained that the position of command amongst the Muslims had been specifically conferred upon 'Ali by the Prophet.

Of their number were 'Ammar Ibn Yasir; Miqdid Ibn al-Aswad; Abu-Dharr al-Ghifari; Salman the Persian; az-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam, whose mother was the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib; [1] Khalid Ibn Sa'id, who was a prominent member of the House of Umayyah and cousin to 'Uthman and Marwan.

But 'Ali himself, considering the unity of Islam to be of prime importance, agreed to acknowledge Abu-Bakr; and those who regarded him as the rightful successor to the Prophet followed his example.

It was in later times that they came to be reckoned as the first of the Sh'iahs.

Sh'iah means a 'faction', and this term was applied to the adherents of the House of 'Ali, although, for a while, the partisans of the House of 'Abbas were also known as Sh'iahs.

The majority of the Muslims, who accept as correct the elevation of Abu-Bakr to the office of the caliphate, are known as the people of Sunnah -- 'Tradition' -- or Sunnis.

But it must be emphasized that in the early days such terms and divisions were unknown.

Even after the rebellion of Talhah and az-Zubayr and open defiance by Mu'awiyah, no sectarian line was drawn in the community of Islam.

The first decisive rift on points of belief and practice came with the defection of the Kharijites from the ranks of the supporters of 'Ali.

A combination of bigoted pietism, frustrated idealism and blind obduracy gave the Kharijites a doctrine that would never brook toleration, and made them a menace which Islamic society, in its turn, could not tolerate.

[1 Thus az-Zubayr was a cousin of 'Ali.

His separation from him, when 'Ali was at last the ruler, stands out in strange contrast.]

The secession of the Kharijites was linked with the ruses of Mu'awiyah, and it was Mu'awiyah's disregard of his pledged word and the subsequent disaster of Karbala which created rifts and divisions.

We have seen that 'Ali II, Zaynu'l-'Abidin, the son of the martyred Husayn, withdrew from the world around him, choosing <p223> to live in strict seclusion.

However, there were adherents of the House of 'Ali who regarded him as heir to the Prophet, the immaculate Imam.

Imam means the 'Leader'.

The person who leads the congregation in the mosque, in prayer, is called the imam.

The fourth, the fifth and the sixth Imams all lived in Medina or close to it, and took no part whatever in the affairs of the Empire.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, had a circle of students drawn from many backgrounds.

His discourses were not concerned with matters which agitated the minds of the discontented.

The position which the Imams held was purely spiritual, and in no way temporal.

As we have seen, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq refused to lend his name to the movement against the Umayyads which was increasingly gathering momentum, but very different was the conduct of other members of the House of 'Ali.

Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah stood with 'Abdu'l-Malik, the Damascene caliph, and Ibn-az-Zubayr, the Meccan ruler, at the head of their respective adherents during the season of pilgrimage, proclaiming by this act his claim to a seat of

authority.

Based on his assumptions the Sh'iah sect of the Kaysaniyyah came into existence, and the Imamate of his line passed to the House of 'Abbas.

The next division occurred as a result of the stand which Zayd, a son of the fourth Imam, took against the Umayyads.

The Zaydis have greater affinities with the Sunnis, but they are classed as a Sh'iah sect.

From A.D.

864 to 928 a Zaydi kingdom had an independent entity in Tabaristan,[1] but with its fall the sect seems to have died out there, to flourish only in Yemen.

[1 In Iran by the Caspian Sea, comprising parts of the provinces of Gilan and Mazindaran.]

Belief of an entirely different kind, which was at variance with the fundamentals of Islam, had been gaining ground from early times.

It originated with a man named 'Abdu'llah, who stated that 'Ali was God incarnate. 'Ali himself had this 'Abdu'llah put to death, but the strange belief persisted and manifested itself in a variety of cults.

Some of these went to the length of repudiating Muhammad, for having usurped, as they said, the station of 'Ali.

The Angel Gabriel, others of them maintained, made a mistake when he came to Earth as the bearer of revelation from God: to 'Ali he should have gone, not to Muhammad.

Most of these cults, collectively called Ghulat (those who exaggerate or the Extremists), have faded out with the passage of time.

Only two esoteric sects, <p224> which can be traced back to them, have survived the extravagances of their progenitors, and have settled down to a quiet, meditative existence: the Nusayris of northern Syria and the Ahl-i-Haqq[1] of Iran.

In their day, the Ghulat, because of their particular and peculiar attachment to 'Ali or his descendants, not only caused confusion and heart-searching amongst devoted Sh'iahs, but brought also upon the head of the Sh'iahs much adverse and undeservedly bitter comment from rival denominations.

However, notions of 'Return', 'Reincarnation', 'Transmigration', 'Anthropomorphism' and the like, which the Ghulat had taken over from pre-Islamic cults and schools of thought, were passed over from pre-Islamic cults and schools of thought, were placed by them in diverse ways to others in Islamic society.

[1 'The People of Truth' -- the name which they apply to themselves.

Others have called them 'Aliyu'llahi -- those who equate 'All with God.

They are known for their tolerance, charity and compassion.]

Thus in spite of active disengagement by the Imams of the House of 'Ali and their discouragement of fissiparous tendencies, a number of cults and sects, some politically-oriented, some nightmarishly inventive, were forming round the House of the Prophet; but the bulk of the Muslims, who provided the backbone of the Umayyad power, were inclined to move in step with the kaleidoscopic turns of fortune.

They argued that any man raised to power by the consensus of general support should be acknowledged at the rightful ruler of the people, whoever he might be; and that the fate of the transgressor ought not to be dragged into debate, but left to the Day of Judgement, when all would be made clear.

They were for a quiet life, undisturbed by partisan passions and speculations.

Their attitude towards passing sentence on the state of a Muslim earned them the designation Murji'a -- 'those who postpone'.

This problem, as to whether a Muslim placed himself beyond the pale by committing a sin, was made the subject of fierce controversy, and was, as will be seen, bound up with the fundamental appraisal of values and beliefs.

At one end of the spectrum were the Murji'a, and at the other the Azariqih, a powerful group of Kharijites who condemned any Muslim to apostasy for any act deemed sinful, relegating him to the ranks of idolaters who richly deserved the penalty of death in this world and consignment to hell-fire in the next.

His wives and children were also to be put to death.

They even considered any non-Muslim who had been guilty of a sin, no matter how trivial, to be equally an idolater.

To this category they assigned both 'Ali and Mu'awiyah.

The Christian Church, as briefly mentioned before, has also had its share of similar crises.

Tertullian (c.

155-222), one of the greatest apologists of the Christian Faith, who had battled with heathens, Jews, Marcionites and Gnostics alike, and was the first to formulate the doctrine of Trinity, broke away from the Church about A.D.

220 and joined the Montanists, because Pope Calixtus (Callistus) refused to turn his back on those Christians who had fallen short of grace.

Then he mounted a virulent campaign against the Church.

He and the Pope both died about the same time.

Following the persecutions initiated by Diocletian in 303, the sect of Donatists sprang up, which waged war against those Christians who had handed over copies of the Scriptures to their persecutors.

They dubbed such Christians Traditores,[1] and set about slaying priests and monks.

[1 The word 'traitor' is thereby derived. ]

Eventually, from the masses of the Murji'ites, who after the downfall of the Umayyads lost both their designation and raison-d'etre, the people of Sunnah emerged, under the tutelage of four eminent jurisconsults:

Abu-Hanifah Nu'man Ibn Thabit (d.

767), Malik Ibn Anas of Medina (715-95), Muhammad Ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i (787-820), Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d.

855).

All have the appellation of Imam.

Their schools of jurisprudence are known after them, respectively, as the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali.

The most liberal and tolerant was the Hanafi school, the most orthodox and unbending, the Hanbali.

Later we shall examine the distinctive features of these four great schools.

From the early days of the Islamic society the question of free will began to exercise and perplex the minds of men.

A tradition, the authenticity of which is very much doubted, was circulating to the effect that Muhammad had said: 'The proponents of free will are the Magians of my people'.

Opposed to free will is rigidly-enforced predestination.

Those who maintained that man is chained to a fate decided for him by Providence, incapable of free choice, were known as Mujabbirah or Jabriyyah -- believers in forceful fate'.

When we speak of a river flowing, they said, we are speaking figuratively, because the river, in truth, has no will of its own to flow.

By the same token when we ascribe action to man, it is figurative. <p226>

During the Caliphate of 'Abdu'l-Malik, there lived a man named Ma'bad Ibn 'Abdu'llah al-Juhani, who knew intimately an Iranian, Sanbuyih by name.

It is not at all clear who this Persian was, nor whether he was a Mazdean, a Manichaeon, or a convert to Islam.

It is claimed that he came from the nobility of Iran.

From him Ma'bad learned a great deal, and one idea which Sanbuyih implanted in his mind was that man is invested with free will.

A German scholar, Alfred von Kremer, has posed the thesis that the notion of free will, and similar notions which later came into prominence, were hammered out by Christian theologians in Damascus, particularly by St.

John the Damascene.

However, there is agreement that Ma'bad learned his ideas from a Persian.

We shall see later the significance of this injection of ideas from Persian sources.

Ma'bad, then, challenged the Jabriyyah. 'Abdu'l-Malik had him put to death in 699, although it may have been Hajjaj who ordered his death.

Whichever the case, the Umayyads would have no truck with new ideas at all.

Later others took up where Ma'bad had been silenced.

Not long after, Ghaylan the Damascene, Ja'd Ibn Dirham and Yunus al-Aswari were talking and spreading the same doctrine of free will, quoting verses from the Qur'an in support of their view.

Yunus belonged to the Asavirih, a Persian group of noble descent who had settled in Basrah.

It has been hinted by some historians that this Yunus and Sanbuyih, the mentor of Ma'bad, were the same person.

Once again the Umayyad Caliph and his agents intervened.

Hisham sent Ghaylan to his death, and Khalid<sup>[1]</sup> Ibn 'Abdu'llah al-Qasri, the governor of 'Iraq, condemned Ja'd to the gallows.

By then the orthodox were thoroughly alarmed.

The Qadariyyah -- proponents of the doctrine of free will -- were denounced, and it was proclaimed that a true Muslim should not salute the Qadariyyah, should not participate in the prescribed prayer at their funerals, nor even visit their sick.

[1 Khalid later suffered humiliation at the hands of Hisham for misappropriation funds.]

The scene was now set for the birth of one of the most outstanding intellectual movements in the realm of Islam, indeed in the whole domain of thought, which had wide repercussions and paved the way for the advent of the golden age of the Islamic civilization.

In Basrah there lived and taught one revered for his knowledge, <p227> wisdom and piety.

In his youth he had been a disciple of 'Ali, the first Imam.

But in time he broke off all connection with the House of the Prophet, and outlived all the tribulations which overtook 'Iraq.

Hasan al-Basri died during the reign of Hisham, at the age of eighty-seven.

His large circle of pupils and disciples included both the recluse and man of action.

At a later stage Sufis put forth a dubious claim to him.

When the status of the sinner had become a burning question in more senses than

one, and the Kharijites had divided into three groups over the theory which had severe practical application, Hasan al-Basri declared that anyone who committed a major sin was a hypocrite, and a hypocrite was worse than a heathen who openly confessed his unbelief.

Abu-Hudhayfah Wasil Ibn 'Ata', a Persian disciple of Hasan al-Basri, had become familiar with the views of the so-called[1] Qadariyyah and could not accept his teacher's dogmatic assertion.

The perpetrator of a major sin, Wasil maintained, was neither of the category of unbelievers, nor of the rank of true believers; he stood somewhere between.

The story goes that Wasil took some of the pupils of Hasan aside, to another part of the mosque, to expound his ideas to them.

Hasan pointed him out to others and said: 'Tazala 'an-na' -- 'he has taken himself away from us'.

Hence, the name Mu'tazilah (Seceders) was given to the school of thought founded by Wasil Ibn 'Ata' with the collaboration of 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd, another Persian disciple of Hasan al-Basri.

Gradually it developed into the semblance of a religious denomination.

The ideas of the Mu'tazilite school not only found widespread acceptance in their totality, but fertilized the thoughts of others as well.

At the very outset, the tables were turned on orthodoxy, because Yazid III, the Umayyad Caliph, whose reign was no longer than six months, readily assented to the five points which Wasil Ibn 'Ata' and 'Amr Ibn 'Ubayd formulated as the basis of their belief.

[1 So-called' because they themselves, having in mind the spurious tradition ascribed to the Prophet, rejected the label of Qadariyyah. (See p.

225.)]

The Mu'tazilah preferred to be known as the 'People of Unity and Justice', since these qualities formed the bedrock of Mu'tazilite doctrine.

God is Just, He does not bind human beings to a wheel turning inexorably, endlessly, dragging men in spite of themselves to the bliss of heaven or the torture of hell-fire.

Men are endowed with free will, which betokens justice.

All power <p228> comes from God, but man determines the use that power is put to, because God, although omnipotent and capable of forcing human beings to act, does not do so.

God is not corporeal, not an essence, not an element, not an 'accident', rather the Creator of all and above any concept of limitation.

The particular stress laid upon the unity and the transcendence of God carried with it the refutation of two points in orthodox belief.

The orthodox maintained that the attributes of God were coeval with Him, and the Qur'an was 'uncreate'.

The Mu'tazilites retorted that making even abstract notions part of the Godhead or equivalent to Him was shirk (joining partners with God); as for the Qur'an, how could it be co-existent with God?

Ja'd, who had been put to death, had said the same of the Qur'an.

Not only was the notion of the Holy Book being 'uncreate' tantamount to joining partners with God, it would impose, as well, total rigidity on law and society, leading to a social pattern forever frozen and immutable.

Before long, Mu'tazilites too had their own divisions.

While controversy about the status of sinners faded into the background, a battle, heated, vigorous and merciless, raged over the pre-existence of the Qur'an.

Had it not been for the political upheavals which had begun to rack Islamic society, the sudden emergence of the Mu'tazilite school would have produced yet more violent reaction, and caused more immediate mutations in patterns of thought.

In the event, a few decades had to elapse before the Mu'tazilite catalyst could work effectively; but dividing lines were already appearing.

Mu'tazilite thought was close to the Sh'iah doctrine taking shape under the guidance of the sixth Imam, but, of course, there were points of difference.

Mu'tazilites were not particularly concerned with the question of the caliphate.

On the other hand, the spiritual authority of the Imam had become a cardinal principle of Sh'iah belief.

Until the latter part of the eighth century (the middle of the second century of Hijrah) this principle remained unargued and largely unexpressed, although belief in it was implicit in adherence to the rights of the House of 'Ali.

But as soon as controversy and argument on a rational plane came into vogue, the learned amongst the Shi'ites took to the pen.

Mu'tazilites had been pioneers in this field, and now through the diligence and the literary ability of these two groups, the Mu'tazilah and the Sh'iah, 'Ilma'l-Kalam (Scholastic Theology) was developed and became an integral part of the <p229> culture of Islamic society.

It is interesting to note that none of the apostolic Imams ever wrote or compiled a book.

But their prayers, discourses, aphorisms and directives have been gathered into books, the most famous of which are Nahju'l- Balaghah, the eloquent discourses and letters of 'Ali, the first Imam; and Sahifatu's-Sajjadiyyah, the moving

prayers of 'Ali II, the fourth Imam.

Every group, every school of thought, every denomination, naturally went to the Qur'an to find evidence for its own viewpoint.

In the Holy Book there are verses that speak of beholding the visage of the Lord.

Mu'tazilites, with their vehement emphasis on the incorporeality of God, could not admit that the Qur'an promised men the possibility of encountering God face to face.

Such a supposition was sheer blasphemy to them.

Their opponents, while allowing that God could not have human form, and therefore the face of God could not be a human face, insisted that the wording of the Qur'an must be taken literally: people must one day gaze on God.

Argument over these incompatibilities was fierce and relentless.

It is claimed that Muslims were the first to write on the history and philosophy of religions and creeds.

The pantheon of the ancient world of Greece and Rome did not lend itself to doctrinal and philosophical treatment.

Jews, who were custodians of monotheistic thought, had a horror of everything they considered pagan, and, in spite of the fact that their thought was undoubtedly influenced by the Faith of Zoroaster, had too little interest in other systems of belief to write about them.

Christians, harrowed by persecution, in need of constructing a framework of organization which their Founder had not given them, in constant battle with heresy, perforce holding aloof from intimate contact with followers of other Faiths except when attempting to preach the Gospel, had neither the leisure nor the inclination to write about any religion other than their own.

And much of what they wrote was in refutation of creeds and heresies which seemed to threaten the infant Faith they were nurturing in face of immense odds.

Patristic writings were concerned with the statement and restatement of the gradually developing creed, which might be termed the official viewpoint of a church burgeoning into an institution.

And when Christians turned to consider other Faiths, the Jews <p230> had discreetly retired behind the protective barriers of racial separateness; moreover, Islam was militantly at their door.

Although converts could still break into the citadel of Judaism, as the Turkish Khazars of the Caspian area did at a later date, Jewish proselytizing had reached its end, particularly in the Mediterranean basin where the Faith of Israel had grown and flourished.

Christians, dominant in the lands where the Jews had suffered, forgetting or ignoring the counsel of their tolerant Master, were making life heavily burdensome for them, driving them into a closed world of their own, where they were always at the mercy of their oppressors.

Intellectual communication between Jews and Christians was impossible.

Wherever Muslims overcame Christians, notably in Spain, the Jews welcomed them as deliverers.

And Judaism, throughout the expanse of Europe, turned more devoutly and eagerly and haughtily than ever before to Messianic hope.

Christian treatment of Islam in book lore belongs to the period when the peak of Islamic civilization had passed.

The recrudescence of a vengeful Christianity in Spain coming in the wake of Muslim decline and demoralization; the arrival of Turkish bigots on the Islamic scene which made Islam in the West synonymous with the detested religion of the Turk, and the name of Muhammad eponymous for idols and false gods in the form of Maumet and Mammet and Mahound; the degeneracy of Byzantium accelerated by its defeat (Manzikert, A.D.

1071) at the hands of Alp-Arslan, the Saljuq (Seljuk) monarch, and by the repeated depredations of fellow-Christians from the West, who, in the guise of Crusaders, sought land, money and fortune; the bitter hatreds which the Crusaders engendered and which ricocheted all round -- all these were factors which gravely distorted the image of the Faith of Muhammad.

When Christians came to write about Islam they were terribly handicapped.

Muslims, it seems, were the first to undertake a systematic and scholarly study of the Faiths of mankind.

But two reservations ought to be made.

Their studies were not comprehensive enough, and when they came to deal with divisions within their own ranks they were seldom fair.

However, the breadth of the vision and understanding of Muslim writers can be gauged by their reference to the Scriptures of the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans, in the great encyclopaedic work. *al-Fihrist* (The Index), by Muhammad Ibn <p231> Ishaq, known as Ibna'n-Nadim (Ibn an-Nadim) who flourished in the tenth century of the Christian era and composed his celebrated book in A.D.

987-8.

Section II of the First Discourse, which deals with the Scriptures of other Faiths, is thus introduced by Ibna'n-Nadim: 'On the names of Books of the Law revealed to the different sects of Muslims and the different sects of those who follow them'.<sup>[1]</sup> All Faiths are of Islam.

[1 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol.

I, p.384. ]

In another chapter we shall come back to the theme of this chapter on the ferment of thought, idea and belief.

But later developments can best be understood in the light of events associated with the caliphate of the 'Abbasids.

We must now turn, therefore, to the year A.D.

754, when Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur succeeded his brother, as-Saffah. <p232>

## THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

### 23 The New Society

It is true that 'Abbasids waded 'through seas of blood'[1] to supreme power.

But it is also true that their triumph dealt the death-blow to racialism entrenched under the Umayyads.

The face of Islamic society changed perceptibly.

This change eventually destroyed the hegemony of the Empire of Islam.

It produced a belated reaction, sterile and vainglorious, amongst non-Arabs against Arab pride.

But over and above everything else, it opened every channel of intellectual communication, and aided the birth of a culture, which, for centuries, was the only shining light amidst the darkness of the human condition.

Soon came a time when one writ, the will of one overlord, was no longer operative from the foothills of the Himalayas to the waters of the Atlantic; but notwithstanding the rise of principalities and kingdoms, petty and mighty, notwithstanding the efflorescence of a new Persian tongue, enriched by the wealth of Arabic, far more expressive, far more mellifluous than its Parsik forbear, thoughts and ideas and peoples moved freely and associated fruitfully over the vast area of the globe that recognized Muhammad as the Messenger of God.

That was the glory of Islamic civilization.

[1 An expression used by E.G.

Browne in A Literary History of Persia, vol.

I, p.245.]

## AL-MANSUR (A.D.

754 -- 75)

Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur had to rely on the army of Khurasan, and Abu-Muslim stood at the head of that army.

The Caliph did not trust him, although the 'Abbasids owed everything to him, and although he had secured the succession of al-Mansur by the decisive defeat which he inflicted on Mansur's treacherous uncle, 'Abdu'llah, the victor of the Zab.

Abu-Muslim, perhaps sensing danger, announced that he was retiring to Khurasan, despite the fact that the Caliph had offered him the governorship of Syria, and had summoned him to his presence.

Then, Mansur enticed him with solemn assurances; but once Abu-Muslim was entrapped within the Caliph's palace, he was rushed upon and stabbed to death.

Thus died the man who was known as Amin-u-Al-Muhammad (the Trusted One of the House of Muhammad).

Mansur must have felt secure to have dared to encompass the death of so powerful a man.

Undoubtedly Abu-Muslim had raised legions of enemies amongst the Arabs, and from the Persians, as well.

Mansur counted on their support, and he was proved right.

The 'Abbasid Caliphs

A.D.

750-861

'Abbas

|

'Abdu'llah

|

'Ali

|

Muhammad

|

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1.

As-Saffah (750)

Ibrahim

2.

Al-Mansur (754)

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3.

Al-Mahdi (775)

|

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4.

Al-Hadi (785)

5.

Ar-Rashid (786)

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6.

Al-Amin (809) 7.

Al-Ma'mun (813) 8.

Al-Mu'tasim (833)

---

| |  
9. al-Wathiq (842) 10.

Al-Mutawakkil (847)

Dates are those of accession to the Caliphate

Violent death plucked Abu-Muslim away at the prime of his life and achievement, in the year 755; and the mode and manner of his death provided the milieu for his apotheosis.

Before long a sect variously called Muslimiyyah or Khurramiyyah was flourishing.

They believed that Abu-Muslim had not died, but had turned into a dove when imperilled by Mansur's treachery.

He had flown away, they maintained, to take his abode in celestial realms, from which he would emerge at the appointed time to rule the world with justice.

<p234>

People who were disenchanted and disillusioned with the 'Abbasids were many.

The rise of the Muslimiyyah group foreshadowed the appearance of many more of various guises, forms and pretences.

But before we turn to the story of the heresiarchs and the founders of new movements, four points ought to be made and stressed.

Firstly, both Abu'l-'Abbas as-Saffah and Abu-Ja'far al-Mansur had belied the promise which their propagandists had made on their behalf and in their names.

Mansur was chiefly responsible for making the division between legitimists and defenders of consensus marked and permanent.

He dogged and persecuted the House of 'Ali.

So badly did he treat the descendants of Hasan, the second Imam, that two of them -- Muhammad, known as an-Nafs' az-Zakiyyah (The Pure Soul), and his brother, Ibrahim -- fearing to present themselves before the Caliph, challenged whether Mansur's assurances were of the same kind he had given to his uncle, 'Abdu'llah, and to Abu-Muslim.

Perforce, they raised the banner of revolt, Muhammad in Medina and Ibrahim in Kufah.

Both were defeated and lost their lives, while their aged father, 'Abdu'llah, was publicly flogged; and he had been one of the three prominent members of the House of 'Ali, to whom Abu-Salmah had offered, in the first instance, the

leadership of the anti-Umayyad movement.

Syed Ameer Ali writes:

'...'

Saffah's cruelty was due to vindictive frenzy; his successor's bloodshed sprang from calculation.

Cold-blooded, calculating, and unscrupulous, he spared none whom he thought in the least dangerous to himself or his dynasty.

His treatment of the descendants of the Caliph Ali forms the darkest page in Abbasside history.

Suyuti[1] says that "Mansur was the first who occasioned dissensions between the Abbassides and Alides, for before that they were united." [2]

[1 Jalalu'd-Din as-Suyuti (1445-1505) was a distinguished historian and writer on many subjects, such as philology, philosophy, law and tradition. (H.M.B.)]

[2 Short History of the Saracens, p.

213. ]

Strangely enough, one of the new groups that sprang up, called the Rawandiyyah, believed in the divinity of Mansur himself, and by its devious antics endangered his life.

Mansur dealt with it as harshly as he dealt with others.

The second point which needs to be emphasized is that much is unknown about many of these groups and movements.

Nothing <p235> of their writings, if there were any, has survived, nor have they left any adherents to tell us the truth about their beliefs, no matter how mistaken and deluded.

Thirdly, a good deal of what has been written about them is slanted and distorted.

Some commentators have written with evident malice, some purely for the purpose of refuting them, while others, having no particular interest to seek out the truth, have recorded mere hearsay.

It is astonishing that writers of high eminence such as Shahrastani, the author of Kitabu'l-Milal-W'an-Nihal (Book of Religions and Philosophical Sects) considered all of them to have been from the same stable.[1] Nizamu'l-Mulk, the distinguished vizier (vazir) of Malik-Shah, the Saljuqid monarch, takes the same view and writes with exceeding hostility.

He was an able administrator, a man of highest integrity, a devoted servant of the realm, but when he came to evaluate, judge and narrate the rise and spread of tenets which were heretical and repulsive to him, he did not deign to check his data, confused his terms and nomenclature, and sadly failed to do justice to historical truth.[2]

[1 Muhammad Ibn 'Abdu'l-Karim ash-Shahrastani flourished in the twelfth century

A.D.]

[2 In the Siyasat-Namih, his famous polemic on the art of government. ]

The last point that ought to be borne in mind is the fact that, contrary to popular belief, Islam was not forced upon recalcitrant subject races at the point of the sword; for decades vast numbers in conquered lands remained in the fold of their existing affiliations.

The entire area north of the Elburz (Alburz) range on the shores of the Caspian was still Mazdean in the reign of Mansur.

Side by side with the followers of Zoroaster lived, although under cover, people who cherished the memory and the teachings of Mani[1] and Mazdak.[2] Manichaeans, who had already played havoc in the Christian camp, were even more numerous.

Gnosticism in its later manifestations had its roots in Manichaean thought.

The great St.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, had, in his youth, trodden that path.

To a greater extent the followers of Mani, to a lesser extent those of Mazdak, contributed to the upheavals that came in the wake of the murder of Abu-Muslim.

[1 Mani, an Iranian, attempted a synthesis of Christian and Mazdean Faiths.

He was put to death by the Sasanian monarch, Bahram I (A.D.

273-76).]

[2 Mazdak was put to death by Chosroes I, in A.D.

529.

What he really taught is veiled in falsifications.

It is said that he advocated the communal sharing of wealth and wives.

He certainly mounted devastating attacks on the Mazdean priesthood.

Zoroastrians, Christians and Muslims alike have done their best to denigrate him.] <p236>

Close upon his murder, the Empire of Islam experienced a novel type of uprising.

From the assassination of 'Uthman to the accession of Mansur, rebellions were initiated and fostered by people proud to call themselves Muslim.

Now, a man named Sinbadh, who has been described as 'the Magian', led a revolt.

From his home in Nishapur, in the province of Khurasan, he moved west to Ray.

The startling fact is that Abu-Muslim had succeeded in winning the affection of the Mazdeans.

Sinbadh, having announced his intention to avenge Abu-Muslim's death, gathered round him a motley of men:

Muslim and non-Muslim, the discontented and the disillusioned.

His stand lasted no more than seventy days, and had already been suppressed when one named Ishaq (and called 'the Turk' for no reason at all), preached in Transoxania a religion in which both Zoroaster and Abu-Muslim featured.

Again, little that is reliable is known about him.

He failed as Sinbadh had, and as Yusuf al-Barm did after him, a man about whom still less is known.

A legend, quoted by Nizamu'l-Mulk, assumed that following the death of Mazdak, his wife, supposedly named Khurramah, fled from Ctesiphon to Ray and preached his religion in its environs.

Hence the label of Khurramiyyah[1] accorded to the partisans of Abu-Muslim.

Ray was contiguous with the areas of Tabaristan and Daylaman (present-day Mazindaran and Gilan), the inhabitants of which, even after embracing Islam, continued to be at variance with the caliphate of the 'Abbasids and its tenets.

The very name Daylaman became synonymous with heterodoxy and heresy.

Eventually from the Daylaman land arose the first powerful Sh'iah dynasty: the Buwayhids (A.D.

932-1062).

[1 Others have stated that Khurramah was a locality in Adharbayjan. ]

There had also been a pseudo-prophet, sprung from the loins of the Mazdeans.

It seems that one Bihafaridh, the son of Mahfurudhin, had accepted Islam under the guidance and influence of Abu-Muslim, but afterwards had reverted to his own claim.

One authority makes Abu-Muslim responsible for his death.

Mazdeans, according to Shahrastani, detested him.

His doctrines, so far as is known, had affinity with those of the Ghulat.

The influence of Neo-Platonism and Indian thought was becoming increasingly felt.

The development of Tasawwuf or Sufiism, at a later age, also owed much to Neo-Platonism. <p237> Al-Andalus and North Africa

While Iran was showing disenchantment with the 'Abbasid deliverers, a bold bid to dismember the Empire was meeting with unexpected success at the western extremity of Islamic domains. 'Abda'r-Rahman, a grandson of the Caliph Hisham, had escaped with his life in the holocaust which overtook the House of Umayyah.

Across the long trail of North Africa, he found his way to the safety of al-Andalus.

Yusuf al-Fahri, the Arab governor of Spain, was a Mudarite, and the Himyarites were only too willing to lend their support to the fugitive Umayyad prince, in

order to oust their governor. 'Abda'r-Rahman was soon in possession of an army, and had no difficulty in occupying Seville.

In May 756, he defeated Yusuf al-Fahri, and the way was open to Cordova.

It still took some years before 'Abda'r-Rahman could firmly establish his authority, but Spain was irretrievably lost to the 'Abbasids, and the Umayyad caliphate was reborn in a far-off land.

It is interesting to note that as late as 777 some of the leading figures amongst the Arabs of Spain, in their hatred of 'Abda'r-Rahman, resorted to the great Charlemagne and offered him help, should he come to conquer their adopted country.

One of them was a son-in-law of Yusuf al-Fahri, another the governor of Barcelona, and a third a descendant of Sa'd Ibn 'Ubadah, the Khazrajite chief who had hoped to become the successor to the Prophet.

In fact, it was the last, Husayn Ibn Yahya, who realized, at the eleventh hour, how appalling their conduct was, and refused to hand Saragossa over to Charlemagne, when the Emperor of the Franks arrived at its gates.

Charlemagne was preparing to take Saragossa by a long siege, but news came that Wittekind, the Saxon king, whom he had defeated and driven to Denmark, had returned to lead his people once again.

The Emperor had to raise the siege and make posthaste for the Rhineland.

In the defiles of the Pyrenees, at Roncevalles (Roncevaux) his rear-guard was isolated and annihilated.

The sound of Roland's horn did not reach those who had gone ahead.

It is claimed that the Basques were responsible for the massacre.

Muslims claim responsibility too.

Perhaps both had a hand in achieving a minor victory, which, in 778, gave the world the legend of Roland and his song.

'Abda'r-Rahman concluded a treaty with Charlemagne, and when he died, two years later, leaving the throne to <p238> his saintly son, Hisham, the fair land of al-Andalus was at peace.

North Africa, from the borders of Egypt to the Atlantic, also went through tumultuous years, following the downfall of the Umayyads in the East.

Berber spirit of freedom and Kharijite zeal and intransigence kept the area on the boil.

Eventually, by the year 800, three independent principalities, and one more, self-governing but owing allegiance to the 'Abbasid Caliph, occupied the area.

At the western end, where we find Morocco today, was the Idrisid Kingdom of Maghrib.

Its founder, Idris, was a brother of Muhammad, 'the Pure Soul', a descendant of 'Ali.

Finding life in Medina intolerable under the 'Abbasids, he fled in 788 to the furthest boundary of Islam, and the Berbers gave him a home and a haven.

The long arm of the 'Abbasids reached him even there.

He was poisoned by an emissary who posed as a physician.

Although his son, Idris II, was born after his death, the Berbers nurtured him as their ruler.

The other two independent principalities, both Kharijite in faith, were also inhabited by Berbers.

They were situated around the foothills of the Atlas mountains.

One was centred on the town of Sijilmasah on the edge of the Sahara, an important trading-post to which valuable merchandise came from the coastal regions of West Africa.

Guinea was so named because Arabs called it Balad al-Ghina' -- the Land of Riches.

The other Kharijite principality, extending to the waters of the Mediterranean, was founded by a Persian named Ibn-Rustam.

The province called Ifriqiyah (Africa), which became self-governing under Ibrahim Ibn al-Aghlab in the year 800, covered the territories which we know today as Libya and Tunisia and parts of Algeria.

Thus in the first fifty years of the 'Abbasid Caliphate a large portion of the Empire of Islam tore itself away from the body of the empire.

A task which occupied much of Mansur's time and attention was the search for a capital.

To Damascus he would not go, and the town of Anbar on the Euphrates, chosen by his brother as the seat of his government, was not suitable.

Mansur decided to have a capital built.

He reconnoitred for an ideal site, found it by the Tigris, and supervised in person the construction of the new metropolis which he called Da'ra's-Salam -- the Abode of Peace.

It was to become known as Baghdad, derived from the Persian <p239> name of a village that stood where Mansur built his capital.

The site which the Caliph chose was near Mada'in (Ctesiphon), and Mansur decided to pull down the buildings of the Sasanian monarchs, and use their materials in the construction of his own city.

He asked the opinion of Khalid the Barmecide.

Khalid advised against it, and Mansur told him that being a Persian, he did not wish to see the glories of his kings removed.

He went ahead with his project, but found the cost of demolition excessive.

It is related that Khalid then advised him not to desist, because people would remark that the Caliph was incapable of pulling down what the monarchs of yore had built.

Baghdad was a magnificent creation.

The depredations of centuries yet far distant, the descent of Mongol hordes in the thirteenth century on the domains of Islam, the battles which were fought by kings and chieftains in and around 'the Abode of Peace', and the pathetic misrule of the Ottoman Turks who eventually became the masters of Arab lands -- all combined to obliterate the beauties and the grandeur of that Baghdad which Mansur and his successors brought into being.

Establishing his capital where he did, the second 'Abbasid Caliph showed perspicacity of a high order.

He began the construction of Baghdad in the year 763.

In the year 757, a Persian, 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Muqaffa', was put to a painful death by the order of Mansur.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa' had once had access to the person of the Caliph, and had suggested to him that he should undertake a detailed examination of the various schools of jurists in the diverse parts of his far-flung Empire, to try to introduce some measure of uniformity and co-ordination.

Mansur declined to interfere with the work and the formulae of the jurists, who maintained that diversity, both of theory and administration, was God's bounty to man.

The real name of 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Muqaffa' was Dadhbih, and his father's name Dadhjushras.

He was a native of the province of Fars, well-versed and well-informed, a master of Arabic which was not his mother tongue.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa' outwardly professed Islam and welcomed the advent of the 'Abbasids.

Secretly he was a devout Manichaeon.

It became his lifelong task to diffuse the doctrines of his arcane Faith.

It could not be done openly, but he found the right milieu: translating such texts as scholars would deem useful.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa' was also intensely patriotic and anxious to keep alive in the minds of his compatriots the thought <p240> of the achievements of their forefathers.

The language which the Iranians used in the days of the Sasanians was undergoing profound change and would soon become unfamiliar.

The Persian we know today was evolving from it, chiefly in the province of Khurasan.

Arabic had become the language of learning, of commerce and of communication.

Ibn-al-Muqaffa', proficient in these languages, put his hand to translation with a vengeance.

He translated the Fables of Bidpay (or the Kalilah-wa-Dimnah),[1] amending it, adding to it a chapter here, allusions there, to present under a cloak his own personal beliefs.

He translated other Iranian texts as well, all of which are lost.

Not even his translations of them have survived except the Kalilah-wa-Dimnah (Kalilah and Dimnah).

He went even further and rendered into Arabic works of Marcion and Bardesane.[2] Ibn-al-Muqaffa' paid with his life for his devotion to the religion of Mani, but so subtly had he served it that before long it was gaining adherents in unexpected quarters, and the term Zindiq[3] (plural:

Zanadiqah) had passed into common usage, by which a Manichaeen was meant.

Arabs too were embracing the religion of Mani and the doctrines of Marcion (Arabic:

Marqiyun) and Bardesane (Arabic:

Ibn-Daysan), and following poets such as Muti' Ibn Ayas and Salih Ibn 'Abdu'l-Quddus, and writers such as Hammad al-'Ajrud and Yahya Ibn Ziyad.

In the reign of the celebrated Harun ar-Rashid, an officer was specifically appointed with the title of as-Sahiba's-Zanadiqah (the Controller of Heresy) to seek out the Zindiqs and destroy them.

The Caliph Mahdi, Harun's father, is reported to have said that no book of the Zindiqs ever came into his hands that could not be traced to 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Muqaffa'.

[1 It is believed to have have been brought originally from India, in the days of Chosroes I.

However, Ibn-al-Muqaffa' has been suspected of having compiled the book himself.]

[2 Bardesane (A.D.

154-222) or Bar-Daisan was a Parthian born in Edessa.

He embraced Christianity in 179 and battled with the Gnostics, but was eventually declared heretical by the Church.

Later Christian apologists have sprung to his defence.

His disciples could be found as far away as China.]

[3 From the Persian word:

Zandik, meaning the 'follower of Zand'.

In 1842, it appeared in English in this form:

Zendic.]

As it happened, the proliferation of Zindiq literature coincided with the dissemination of Greek thought and philosophy, again through copious translations.

These translations were undertaken with the approval and even under the patronage of the Caliphs.

Mu'tazilites and others who were engaged in rational argument <p241> welcomed and used the store of knowledge thus opened up.

But the orthodox had no taste for Greek philosophy, and tried to equate it with the thoughts of the Zindiqs.

A result of this verbal inaccuracy was the draining of the original meaning from the term 'Zindiq'.

It was used wildly and indiscriminately to such an extent that the hunt for the Manichaeans and the Marcionites became confused.

The efflorescence of a new culture, the shapings of a new society, and fresh controversies, all helped to play down the impact of Manichaeism and halt the search for its adherents.

Manichaeism did not die out.

It went underground and lived on, an esoteric sect thriving on secrecy.[1] But its imprint on Islamic society was unmistakable.

[1 The author recalls meeting a Welshman in London in the late thirties, who was very much interested in the mystical aspects of religion.

One day he mentioned that he was a Manichaean.

To the author's eager queries he would only say that their order consisted of several grades, and that he had not sufficiently progressed to reach higher echelons and higher mysteries.]

AL-MAHDI (A.D, 775 -- 85)

Mansur managed to set aside the order of succession laid down by his brother, and disinherited his nephew, 'Isa Ibn Musa, who had played a conspicuous part in defeating the pretenders of the House of 'Ali.

And so, when he died in 775, his son, Muhammad al-Mahdi followed him into the seat of the caliphate.

Al-Mahdi's reign had its quota of rebellions and civil disturbances, and Khurasan continued to be a hotbed of unrest.

The uprising of Yusuf al-Barm was a minor affair, but of greater proportion and harder to defeat were the insurrection and the pretensions of the 'Veiled Prophet of Khurasan'.

This is how al-Muqanna' (the Veiled One) appears in Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh*.

Veiled he was, and the incarnation of the Divine he claimed to be.

Hashim, the son of Hakim,[13] was a native of Marv, and had connections with the followers of Abu-Muslim.

Because the 'Abbasids sported black garments as the emblem of their House, this impostor ordered his followers to don pure white and hoist white standards.

Thus they gained the name al-Muhayyadah -- the White Clad.

There had also been the Red Clads -- al-Muhammirah -- who were identified with the Khurramiyyah.

But why did Hashim hide his face behind a veil?

According to his detractors, because he was repulsive of countenance, and according to himself, because <p242> human eyes could not bear to gaze at his resplendent visage.

In his case, too, there is a good deal of confusion and reliable data is meagre.

He must have been a man of considerable learning, because there is general agreement that he had contrived an artificial moon, which issued forth from a well at night to illumine the countryside. 'The Moon of Nakhshab'[2] has lived on in literature.

The end of the 'Veiled Prophet of Khurasan' is also wrapped in mystery.

Hitler seems to have emulated his stratagem of disappearance.

The body of Al-Muqanna' was not found when the forces of the Caliph Mahdi entered his stronghold.

Some of his close associates, too, were not to be found.

Whether immolated in fire, or dissolved in a tank of corrosives, as Thomas Moore imagined, al-Muqanna' had left a legend behind.

He had gone the way of Abu-Muslim and would come back in the fullness of time.

[1 Authorities differ over his name and that of his father. ]

[2 Mah-i-Nakhshah, in Persian. ]

In Mahdi's reign the hunt for the Zindiqs began, but more lustre was shed on his reign by his patronage of learning.

The victories which his son, Harun, won against the Byzantines, were noteworthy as well, and Harun imposed an annual tribute on the Empress Irene.

Mahdi's rule lasted ten years.

He was succeeded by his eldest son, Musa al-Hadi.

Mahdi had decreed that his second son, Harun, should inherit the Caliphate, but Hadi tried immediately to change the order of succession in favour of his own son, and to further his design he threw Yahya Ibn Khalid, the Barmecide, into prison.

Yahya was the champion and the protector of Harun, and had been a second father to him.

But Hadi lived not more than a year and, in 786, the most famous and the most glamorous of all the 'Abbasids ascended the throne.

Harun ar-Rashid was only twenty-two years old, but had already proved his worth on the battlefield, and had shown considerable wisdom and forbearance when subjected to his brother's taunts and persuasion to divest himself of his right.

He left the affairs of his government in the hands of Yahya the Barmecide (al-Barmaki) to do as he wished.

The process begun under Mansur which had brought more and more of the Persians into the administration of the Empire, tilting the scale to the disadvantage of the Arabs, gathered momentum with the rapid rise of the House of Barmak.

When Yahya was too old to fulfil his functions as vizier, his place was taken by Ja'far, his son, whom we also meet in the pages of the Arabian Nights.

Another son of Yahya, named Fadl, also held <p243> high office, and others of the Barmecides (Barmakids) occupied important posts.

In all probability, they were devout adherents of the Imams of the House of 'Ali, and yet they served the 'Abbasid Caliphs faithfully.

They did their best to extend protection to the descendants of 'Ali, wherever required.

There were also other Shi'ites in the ranks of the government, who served both the interests of their persuasion and the interests of the State.

Harun AR-RASHID (A.D.

786 -- 809)

The reign of Harun is considered to have marked the zenith of the Golden Age of Islam.

In another chapter we shall examine the rise and the development of the Islamic civilization and note its contributions to the world at large.

Here it suffices to say that Harun ar-Rashid furthered, by his patronage, the growth of that civilization; but it was left to his son, 'Abdu'llah al-Ma'mun, to become personally involved in discussions and exchanges that widened the horizons of the minds of the people.

In the year 800, Harun reached an understanding with Ibrahim Ibn al-Aghlab that was to set a precedent of mighty consequences.

In effect, it was that should Ibrahim succeed in calming the disturbed province of Ifriqiyah, without asking the Caliph to aid him with troops, he could hold its government in perpetuity, and Ibrahim would, in return, unreservedly acknowledge the overlordship of the Caliph.

Ibrahim did succeed, and founded a dynasty that ruled Ifriqiyah for a century.

The brilliance of Harun's reign was overshadowed by his erratic and unjustified attitude towards Musa'l-Kazim (Musaal-Kazim), the seventh Imam of the main body of the Shi'ites.

We have noted, on several occasions, the total withdrawal of Ja'far as-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, from all temporal commitments, in spite of contradictions in the behaviour of many members of his family.

Although it was apparent to the Caliph Mansur that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq would never, in any way, contest his power and authority, he held the sixth Imam in suspicion and under surveillance.

After the passing of this Imam, in 765, there came another break in the ranks of the Sh'iahs.

The Imam had first named his eldest son, Isma'il, to succeed him.

For reasons which are not clear, he revoked the appointment and gave the succession to his next son, Musa, whose mother was a slave.

Isma'il died in the lifetime <p244> I of his father, and notwithstanding the fact that his body was shown to the populace, just before his burial, the legend was born and believed that Isma'il had retreated from the world and would come forth as the expected Mahdi -- the Deliverer -- at a time decreed by God.

But there were others who maintained that the Imamate had passed to his son, Muhammad, and that this Muhammad was the seventh Imam and the Mahdi of latter days.

Mahdi -- 'the One Who Is Guided' -- or Mihdi, is the name applied by Sh'iahs and Sunnis alike to the One whose appearance, in the fullness of time, is expected by them, the promise of whose advent is enshrined in Scripture and Tradition.

With the claim made for Muhammad, the son of Isma'il, came the cleavage that produced the most powerful branching of the main Sh'iah persuasion.

The Isma'iliyyah sect is one of the most maligned in the world.

It was, at one time, a very effective force in the body-politic -- a militant group which made many enemies and inflicted deep injuries on its adversaries, had amazing turns of fortune, suffered from splintering and from the excesses of its zealots, and established one of the most enlightened, tolerant and

benign regimes in Islam.

Its meteoric rise will be considered later.

Although the breaking away of the Isma'ilis proved to be the most significant, the passing of the sixth Imam caused other schisms, of lesser magnitude, amongst the Sh'iahs.

A group called the Nawusiyyah denied the obvious: the death of the Imam, and asserted his corporeal disappearance.

He was the Mahdi to come, they claimed.

A second group gave their allegiance to 'Abdu'llah, known as al-Aftah, another son of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq.

Hence they were called the Aftahiyyah.

Still others looked to Muhammad, another son of the sixth Imam, as his successor.

But the greater number of the adherents of Ja'far as-Sadiq upheld the Imamate of his son, Musa'l-Kazim, who followed in the footsteps of his father and remained completely detached from temporal concerns.

Harun was uneasy, however, and had the Imam brought from Medina to Baghdad and handed into the charge of Sindi Ibn Shahik, the governor of the metropolitan prison.

Imam Musa'l-Kazim was lodged in the house of Sindi's sister, where he was kept a prisoner, and in all probability poisoned.

He passed away in 799.

Immediately, a number of the Shi'ites declared that Musa'l-Kazim had not suffered death, but had retired behind a <p245> veil, to issue forth at the time decreed, as the Mahdi.

The notion of corporeal disappearance or occultation had become contagious.

Abu-Muslim had flown away as a dove, Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah was awaiting the appointed time in a cave near Mecca, 'the Veiled Prophet of Khurasan' was coming back.

Subsequent to the passing of the seventh Imam, his adherents divided into five groups.

The majority hailed his eldest son, 'Ali ar-Rida, the eighth Imam.

It is said that the man responsible for introducing the idea of occultation was 'Umar, the second Caliph.

Refusing to accept (as he did at first) the fact of the mortality of the Prophet, he kept repeating, qad ghaba Rasulu'llah -- 'Verily, the Messenger of God has gone from our sight'.

Another blot on the reign of Harun was his treachery towards the House of Barmak.

From the day Abu-Muslim unfurled the black standard in Khurasan the House of Barmak had served the 'Abbasids faithfully.

Harun owed his life, his education, his throne to Yahya the Barmecide.

There must have been many an occasion when the loyalty of the members of this House was severely tested by the unjust, inhumane deeds of the 'Abbasid caliphs.

Yet they never betrayed their trust.

The first seventeen years of the reign of Harun were particularly distinguished by the good administration of the Barmecides.

A legend has been fostered to the effect that Harun, being extremely fond of the company of Ja'far, his vizier, and 'Abbasah, his own sister, and wishing to have both in his company at the same time, sought a way out of the dilemma, and arranged a marriage between them with the injunction that their marriage should never be consummated.

When he went on pilgrimage to Mecca, in the year 802, he accidentally discovered that Ja'far and 'Abbasah had disobeyed him and a child had been born to them.

He cloaked his wrath until he was back in Baghdad, and then vented it on the Barmecides.

No less an authority than Ibn-Khaldun[1] vehemently repudiates this legend.

Incidentally, on that pilgrimage Harun was accompanied by his sons, Muhammad al-Amin and 'Abdu'llah al-Ma'mun, whom he required to pledge in the 'House of God'[2] to abide by the plan he had devised for the succession.

[1 The fourteenth-century historian ranking amongst the greatest in the world.]

[2 'Baytu'llah -- the Ka'bah. ]

No one knows truly why Harun ar-Rashid destroyed the people who wished and served him so well.

Glimmers of truth can be <p246> discerned in some of the reasons advanced, but that is all.

Ja'far was beheaded and indignities were heaped on his corpse.

The aged Yahya and his other sons, Fadl and Musa, were thrown into prison and their vast properties were confiscated.

All the Barmakis were shorn of office.

Yahya and Fadl died in prison.

People bitterly mourned the downfall of the House of Barmak, because the Barmakis had been generous and just, but even those who mourned them were punished.

The House of Barmak was destroyed in the year 803.

Nicephorus, the Byzantine Emperor, who had deposed the Empress Irene, wrote imperiously to Harun ar-Rashid, not only refusing to pay the annual tribute, but demanding back all that Irene had paid.

Harun was incensed, wrote back calling Nicephorus the 'Roman dog', took the field in person in the year 805, and decisively defeated and humiliated the vainglorious Emperor of Byzantium.

Harun came back from Asia Minor with thousands of slaves and much booty.

He might have been able to take Constantinople, had he tried, but he was not interested in conquest.

The crusading spirit of early years had abated and Harun had no quarrel with Christians.

He and Charlemagne sent gifts to each other and exchanged envoys.

Harun ar-Rashid had reigned for twenty-three years, and was not more than forty-five years old, but he was worn out and weary.

Nearly six years had passed since the time he had cruelly dispensed with those who would, as the years advanced, have stood him in good stead.

He had abandoned Baghdad and had made his home in the Syrian town of Raqqah on the Euphrates.

But Khurasan, turbulent as ever and suffering from the misrule of its governor, called him.

He was forced to undertake the long journey, which taxed him greatly, and he died at Tus, in March 809.

He was buried in the same city.

History has few ironies to compare with this, as we shall see.

AL-AMIN (A.D.

809 -- 13)

According to Harun's dispositions, the throne was now Amin's, and Ma'mun, left autonomous in the governorate of Khurasan and other realms of the East, was to succeed him.

Ma'mun, who was at Marv, the capital of Khurasan, declared his submission and all seemed well.

However, Ma'mun's mother was a Persian, and his entourage almost totally Persian, whereas Amin's mother was Zubaydah, a princess of the House of 'Abbas.

Amin's vizier was <p247> Fadl Ibn Rabi', of renowned Arab descent, a well-known opponent of the Barmakids in the past and of cosmopolitanism at all times.

Contemplating with horror the prospect of Ma'mun ruling over the concourse of

the faithful, Fadl began to plant in the mind of the weak, impressionable Amin the germ of an idea, by no means novel:

Amin should set aside his father's will, and name his own son the heir-apparent.

Amin demurred at first, but his mother was no less insistent.

The first step he took in response to his mother and his vizier was to dispossess another younger brother Mu'tamin, to whom Harun had given the governorship of Jazirah.[1] Next, he began to intervene in the affairs of Ma'mun's domains, though he was expressly forbidden to do so by his father.

Ma'mun was inclined to temporize, but his Persian vizier, also named Fadl, the son of Sahl, warned him of impending dangers.

Once again an army took the road to the west from Khurasan, under the command of Tahir, the son of Husayn, another Persian, to meet Amin's army moving towards Khurasan, under 'Ali Ibn 'Isa Ibn Mahan, the discredited ex-governor of that province.

Amin's general was killed and his army routed.

Tahir captured a town here and there until he reached the gates of Baghdad.

Under siege Amin showed total ineptitude.

The civil war went on from 811 to 813, and when it was over Amin was dead.

It was tragic that his reign should have ended in that fashion, because fresh suspicions were engendered and the Arab element was further pushed from the centre of affairs.

[1 The area bounded by the northern reaches of the Euphrates and the Tigris. ]

AL-MA'MUN (A.D.

813-33)

Ma'mun would certainly have spared his brother's life had he been there in person to receive his surrender, but he lingered on in Khurasan, screened from the outside world by his vizier.

Hasan, a brother of Fadl Ibn Sahl, was dispatched to 'Iraq as governor, and Tahir (who is known as Dhu'l-Yaminayn, the Ambidextrous) was ordered away to Raqqah.

But the whole area west of the Iranian plateau was now in great turmoil.

In Syria, a scion of the House of Umayyah rose in revolt.

Members of the House of 'Ali and their kinsmen followed suit in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, in Yemen, in Kufah and Basrah.

In Baghdad, Mansur, the son of al-Mahdi, an uncle of Ma'mun, was proclaimed Caliph, but he refused the honour and agreed to serve <p248> as a deputy-governor for his nephew.

Hasan Ibn Sahl fled to Wasit.

All this while, Ma'mun had no knowledge of what was transpiring beyond Persia.

In the year 815, he called the eighth Imam, 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida (generally known as Imam Rida) from Medina to Khurasan, and offered him succession to the throne.

Oaths of allegiance were taken, the black standard of the 'Abbasids was discarded and the green of the House of 'Ali was made the colour of the Empire.

The 'Abbasids in Baghdad were outraged and set about searching for another caliph.

Mansur would not be one, but another uncle of Ma'mun, Ibrahim, obliged.

However, he was a man of no consequence, and Baghdad fell into disorder.

The city had suffered much in the last months of Amin's reign and many of its fine buildings had been torn down.

Now robbers and brigands and blackmailers infested its streets and markets.

Nor was the surrounding country immune from such depredations.

No tax could be collected.

Soldiers could not be paid.

At last the heir-apparent, 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida, opened Ma'mun's eyes to the realities of the situation.

Ma'mun woke up as from a dream.

More than four years after his accession to the throne, he moved out of Marv, in the direction of Baghdad.

Just then, in February 818, the vizier, Fadl Ibn Sahl, who, for purposes of his own, had kept Ma'mun in the dark, was stabbed to death in his bath.

The assassins were put to death.

Some historians have imputed the murder of Fadl to Ma'mun's instigation.

Others refute this allegation.

It is not in keeping with what we know of Ma'mun's character to have compounded a felony of that nature.

He could easily have dismissed his vizier.

Hasan, the brother of Fadl, continued in the service of the Caliph.

At a later date, Ma'mun married his daughter, Puran.

The eclat of the nuptials was truly dazzling.

The account faithfully recorded by the historians is an index to the scale of wealth in the court of the 'Abbasids.

Europe of the time in its wildest dream could not have known anything approaching it.

Yet, Ma'mun led a simple life.

He wore a robe until it nearly fell apart.

Ma'mun halted at Tus, where his father lay buried.

There, in October, his heir-apparent passed away.

Imam 'Ali Ibn Musa'r-Rida had partaken of grapes just before his death occurred.

It looked certain that he had been poisoned.

Again suspicion has rested on Ma'mun, and again it is difficult to reconcile such a <p249> heinous deed with his character.

There were others amongst the 'Abbasids who hated to see the caliphate pass to the House of 'Ali.

Around the magnificent tomb of the eighth Imam has sprung up the city of Mashhad (Meshed) -- the crown of Khurasan.

Tus has long been forgotten.[1] Other splendid cities of Khurasan have suffered eclipse.

But Mashhad flourishes, the cynosure of the devout Sh'iah.

The pilgrim prostrates himself at the Shrine of Imam Rida, and pauses to cast a glance at the grave of Harun, close by.

Throughout the centuries, he has accompanied that glance with execration.

Such has been the fate of the resplendent Caliph of the Arabian Nights.

[1 The name Mashhad has replaced the name Tus because the tomb of Imam Rida is situated there.

Mashhad means the place of martyrdom.]

The passing of the eighth Imam caused further rifts amongst the Sh'iahs.

The majority gave their allegiance to his son, Muhammad, known as al-Jawad (the Generous) and at-Taqi (the Pious).

Ma'mun's journey to Baghdad was unhurried, and it was not until September 819 that he entered the city which both he and his father had neglected.

He was dressed in green and the green standard led his cavalcade.

But very soon all that changed, and the black colour of the House of 'Abbas was restored.

Under Ma'mun, Baghdad took a new lease of life.

Its wounds were healed, and it became truly a centre for liberal learning, a forum for rational discussion.

Here the Mu'tazilites came into their own; they surrounded the Caliph and the most eminent amongst them, Ahmad Ibn Abi-Du'ad, was held in high regard by Ma'mun.

In the next reign, he was elevated to the office of chief justice.

Abu-Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn al-Sayyar an-Nazzam and Abu'l-Hudhayl Muhammad Ibn al-Hudhayl al-'Allaf, Mu'tazilite scholars of high repute, were the Caliph's constant companions.

At the start, Ma'mun made no attempt to impose the Mu'tazilite doctrines which he embraced on those who rejected them.

Indeed, his favourite saying was that he liked a position to be gained and superiority established by argument and sound proof, and not by the use of force; because once force was removed, the superior position could disappear with it, whereas supremacy based on sound proof remained inviolable and immovable.

But towards the end of his reign, the controversy over the nature of the Qur'an had reached such a high pitch that Ma'mun was swayed into promulgating the Mu'tazilite belief by compulsion.

When away on his wars with the Byzantines, he sent a decree to the governor of Baghdad, instructing him to test the views of all the judges and theologians of note, and make them declare that only the Mu'tazilite doctrine was valid and true.

The tolerant had in turn become the intolerant.

All the outstanding judges and theologians of Baghdad submitted to the inevitable, except Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, the last of the four great Sunni jurisconsults.

He stuck steadfastly to the orthodox view, and only Ma'mun's timely death saved him.

From the year 830 to 833, Ma'mun led his armies thrice into Byzantine territory.

For years, as far back as the days of Ma'mun's sojourn in Marv, another Persian heresiarch, named Babak, had been terrorizing areas in the neighbourhood of Tabaristan.

His haunts were the ravines of the Elburz (Alburz) range, where he had his hunting-ground and stronghold.

Our knowledge of his antecedents is meagre and cannot be trusted in every respect.

As usual, it is said of him that he was a Khurrami (whatever that may mean), that he claimed to be God incarnate, that he taught transmigration.

What is certain is that he had a large following, that he broke several

generals sent against him and formed an alliance with the Byzantines.

Babak was still infesting Northern Iran, when death came suddenly upon the Caliph in the vicinity of Tarsus.

He had already humbled the Greeks of Byzantium.

AL-MU'TASIM (A.D.

833-42)

Ma'mun was succeeded by his brother, Muhammad, who took the title of al-Mu'tasim-Bi'llah.[1] He is referred to as al-Mu'tasim.

Although he kept the Empire together, overcame rebellions and defeated the Byzantines, his reign marked the decline of 'Abbasid power.

He abandoned Baghdad and moved his capital to Samarra, which he built as a garrison town, in 836, well to the north of Mansur's city.

Mu'tasim's new capital was manned by Turkish troops.

These Turks were for the most part freed slaves, brought originally from Transoxania.

But as Mu'tasim and his immediate successors put their whole trust in the protection afforded by the Turks, they were sought out in their homelands <p251> and offered service in the Caliph's army.

Their officers attained high rank and had palaces to live in at Samarra, which was given the additional name of Surra-Man-Ra'a (Anyone Who Sees It Is Delighted).

They became professional soldiers, and knew nothing but soldiery.

At first al-Mu'tasim was strong enough, and they subdued enough, for him to enforce his bidding.

But once becoming sure of themselves, they tried their strength and, discovering it, set about to make a mockery of the Caliph and the Caliphate.

They succeeded only too well.

[1 All the 'Abbasids from al-Mansur onwards adopted an official title, by which they are known.

Until al-Mu'tasim adopted his, which in full means 'He Who Is Steadfast in God', these titles were simple in construction and meaning, but, as time went on, they became, with some exceptions, rather involved.]

At last in 838, Haydar al-Afshin, a renowned general serving Mu'tasim, got the better of Babak, not in the open field but through a ruse, and took him captive.

The treatment that Babak received in Surra-Man-Ra'a was savage, but he himself had done nothing but create havoc and engage in slaughter.

Afshin was of princely descent, his ancestors having ruled Transoxania, and he

was not a Turk, but an Iranian.

Witnessing the rise of the Tahirids[1] in Khurasan as hereditary rulers, envy and jealousy possessed him.

In Tabaristan, Mazyar, another prince of illustrious lineage, unconverted like Afshin to the Faith of the Arabs, was in revolt, chafing at the imperiousness of 'Abdu'llah the Tahirid.

Afshin made advances, in secret, to the Prince of Tabaristan.

Mazyar lost his battle, and Afshin's dealings with him became known.

For a long while the corpses of Babak, Mazyar and Afshin remained gibbeted in a row in the garrison city, open to public gaze.

[1 Tahir Ibn Husayn, the Ambidextrous, was given the viceroyalty of Khurasan by Ma'mun in the year 820.

He died two years later, to be succeeded first by one son, Talhah, and then by another, 'Abdu'llah.]

In A.D.

835, the third year of the reign of Mu'tasim, Imam Muhammad at-Ta'qi, the ninth Imam, passed away while visiting the Caliph.

He was accompanied on that visit by his wife, Ummu'l-Fadl, who was a daughter of Ma'mun.

It has been asserted that his death was engineered by his wife and her uncle, and effected by poison.

He was buried beside his grandfather, the seventh Imam, round whose shrine the town of Kazimayn (or Kazimiyyah) stands today.

His son, 'Ali IV, entitled both an-Naqi (the Distinguished) and al-Hadi (the Guide), was hailed as the tenth Imam by his adherents. <p252>

AL-WATHIQ (A.D.

842 -- 47)

Mu'tasim died, seven years later, in A.D.

842.

Victorious in his campaigns, he ruled with a firm hand, but his harshness was mollified by the liberalism of his Chief Justice, the Mu'tazilite Ibn-Abi-Du'ad.

His son Harun, bearing the title of al-Wathiq-Bi'llah (He Who Has His Trust in God), was benevolent and learned, and well-disposed towards the House of 'Ali.

It has even been said that he was a Sh'iah.

In his short reign of less than six years he tried to rekindle the flame that had nearly gone out a decade before.

The last three years of Ma'mun's reign had been spent in wars with Byzantium.

Mu'tasim had little learning of his own, and was much occupied with wars and rebellions.

Wathiq, by contrast, was an accomplished poet and musician, intensely interested in science, and his court at Samarra was open to all who had anything to offer in the field of learning and culture.

He left the affairs of state in the hands of Ibn-Abi-Du'ad and Muhammad Ibn 'Abdi'l-Malik az-Zayyat, and he fought no wars.

Thus the Mu'tazilites were strongly entrenched.

In one respect Wathiq particularly emulated his father.

He added to his Turkish retinue and soldiers.

With the death of Wathiq died all that had been good and beneficent and splendid in the 'Abbasid dispensation.

The curtain came down upon its glory.

Wathiq's brother, Ja'far, entitled al-Mutawakkil-u-'Al'-Allah (He Who Puts His Reliance in God), who succeeded him in August 847, has been called 'The Nero of the Arabs': an epithet richly deserved.

The orthodox have lauded him just as they have tried to besmirch the character of Wathiq.

Mutawakkil put Muhammad az-Zayyat to death, threw Ibn-Abi-Du'ad into prison, interdicted rational argument, gave power to men narrow in mind and small in their sympathies.

He showed particular venom towards the House of 'Ali.

His parvanimity was reflected in all he did.

The Shrine of the martyred Husayn was levelled to the ground, the earth was ploughed, the river was let loose on the site, pilgrimage to Karbila was forbidden.

A jester in his court used to tie a large pillow to his midriff, and strut about in a grotesque manner, pretending to be 'Ali, the first Imam and the fourth Caliph.

This was the depth of degradation that Mutawakkil <p253> touched.

And this is the man whom the orthodox have extolled for his devotion to religion.

The non-Muslims too -- Jews, Christians, Sabeans and Mazdeans alike -- were dealt heavy blows by Mutawakkil.

They were barred from offices they had hitherto held.

They had to humble and humiliate themselves in diverse ways, wear clothes and

badges that set them apart.

Their places of worship were desecrated and destroyed.

Mutawakkil was killed in December 861, at the instance of his Turkish general, Bugha.

With his death, the effective power of the 'Abbasids also expired.

Occasionally a caliph would show a semblance of authority and no more.

Power was in other hands.

The Turks, having once tasted the fruits of success, would not peacefully give up the positions which they had attained, and killed one caliph after another.

The person of the caliph was no longer sacrosanct.

He could be made and unmade to suit the ends of contenders for power.

And the Empire steadily declined, while independent kingdoms and emirates and principalities within it multiplied.

To end this chapter we shall note that the tenth Imam, 'Ali an-Naqi, passed away in 868; his son, Hasan II, surnamed al-'Askari,[1] succeeded him.

[1 The origin of this surname is from the fact that Imam Hasan II lived all his life in Samarra which was a garrison town.

Askar means 'army'.

He and his father have adjacent shrines in Samarra.] <p254>

24 Divisions of Thought and Belief

The apostolical Imam Hassan al-Aaskari died in the year 260 A.H.,[1] during the reign of Mutamid.[2] Upon his death the Imamate devolved upon his son Mohammed, surnamed al-Mahdi (the Conducted), the last Imam of the Shiahs.

The story of these Imams of the House of Mohammed is intensely pathetic.

The father of Hassan was deported from Medina to Samarra by the tyrant Mutawakkil, and detained there until his death.

Similarly Hassan was kept a prisoner by the jealousy of Mutawakkil's successors.

His infant son, barely five years of age, pining for his father, entered in search of him a cavern not far from their dwelling.

From this cavern the child never returned.

The pathos of this calamity culminated in the hope -- the expectation -- which fill the hearts of Hassan's followers, that the child may return to relieve a sorrowing and sinful world of its burden of sin and oppression.

So late as the fourteenth century, when Ibn Khaldun was writing his great work, the Shiahs were wont to assemble at eventide at the entrance of the cavern and supplicate the missing child to return to them.

After waiting for a considerable time, they departed to their homes, disappointed and sorrowful.

This, says Ibn Khaldun, was a daily occurrence.

When they were told it was hardly possible he could be alive, they answered that as the prophet Khizr was alive, why should not their Imam be alive too?

Upon this, Ibn Khaldun remarks that the belief about Khizr being alive was an irrational superstition.

The Imam is therefore called the Muntazzar [Muntazar], the Expected One, -- the Hujja [Hujjah or Hujjat] or the Proof (of the Truth), and the Kaim [Qa'im], the living.'

[1 A.D.

873 (H.M.B.) ]

[2 Al-Mu'tamid-u-'Al'-Allah (870-92), the fifteenth Caliph of the House of 'Abbas. (H.M.B.)] <p255>

The author of the lines above quoted, taken from A Short History of the Saracens (p.

295), is Syed Ameer Ali, the most prominent and erudite Sh'iah Indian of recent times.

He died in 1928, a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

However, anyone who might be called an orthodox Sh'iah would not present the case of the twelfth Imam in this manner.

Equally divergent from the orthodox view is this more recent statement: 'After the death of the eleventh Imam his son succeeded him.

The twelfth Imam is known by several titles, of which one of the best known is the Arabic title Imam Zaman [Imam-i-Zaman], the Imam of all time.

According to Shi'a, the twelfth Imam, who was born in the year 255 (A.D.

869), is still living; but he is invisible.

As the Prophet and others prophesied, when the earth is full of cruelty he will appear and bring justice.

'After he became Imam he learned that the Caliph planned to kill him, so he disappeared.

The disappearance is known as the absence, and the Imam Zaman had two absences -- the short absence and the long absence.

For sixty-nine years the twelfth Imam spent his time in hiding, communicating through four great Shi'ites, and through them guiding the people and answering their questions.

As this was a short time and communication was carried on during this time, it is known as the short absence.

The men through whom he communicated were known as the ambassadors, or specifically appointed deputies.

During this time there were four ambassadors who guided the Shi'ites, and it was the fourth ambassador who was assigned the duty of giving the people the news of the Imam's bodily death through a letter from the Imam.

The Imam said that after his bodily death no one was to be the Imam's ambassador and that there would be a long absence.

And this took place.[1]

[1 'Shi'a' by Mahmood Shehabi, University of Tehran, p.

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STRAIGHT PATH -- Islam Interpreted by Muslims, edited by Kenneth W.

Morgan.

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When the eleventh Imam, Hasan al-'Askari, passed away, it was obvious that he had no children.

His brother, Ja'far, whom the Sh'iahs have styled al-Kadhah (The Liar) asserted that the Imam had died childless.

A slave of the Imam, named Sayqal, claimed that she was with child.

The 'Abbasid Caliph had her removed to his own palace, to be kept under close surveillance. <p256>

The wives of the Caliph and of the Chief Justice, Ibn-Abi'sh-Shawarib, watched over her.

Eventually her claim was found to be fictitious.

But for years the poor woman was fought over by various factions.

Ja'far, who had from the start assailed her veracity, made matters worse by persecuting her in diverse ways.

She was abducted from the palace of the Caliph Mu'tamid, when Ya'qub-i-Layth-i-Saffar,[1] the Persian claimant to the Iranian uplands, was approaching Baghdad with a large force.

Ya'qub had succeeded in establishing an independent kingdom which stretched across Iran; and it is clear that he had Sh'iah tendencies.

[1 Reigned A.D.

867-79 ]

In the meantime another dispute had broken out between Ja'far and the mother of the eleventh Imam over his property.

Once the Caliph was satisfied that there was no child to inherit from the Imam, he decided, after a bitter litigation which lasted seven years, that both the brother and the mother of Imam Hasan al-'Askari should be his heirs.

More than twenty years later, quarrels over Sayqal were still raging so fiercely that the Caliph al-Mu'tadid, the nephew and successor to al-Mu'tamid, ordered her removal, once again, into protective custody.

She languished in the palace until her death in the reign of al-Muqtadir, the next Caliph, who himself had Sh'iah leanings, and whose viziers were followers or partisans of the Imams of the House of 'Ali.

Whether this woman's name was Sayqal or not is a moot point.

The importance of the nomenclature lies in the fact that the 'Twelvers', who constitute the majority of the Sh'iahs, maintain that she was the mother of the twelfth Imam:

Muhammad, the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari.

Rayhanah, Susan and Narjis are other names by which she is known.

A legend has it that Narjis was the daughter of an emperor of Byzantium.

Greek slaves, male or female, were not uncommon in Muslim lands.

The mother of the Caliph al-Wathiq was Greek.

But to return to the day when the eleventh Imam passed away: there was bewilderment in the ranks of his followers, and authorities agree that no less than fourteen groups were formed amongst them.

The meticulous and reliable Mas'udi,[1] who wrote not long after in the tenth century A.D., put their number at twenty.

Only two of them demand consideration -- one, due to the turmoil it caused, and the other because it formulated the doctrine that held <p257> the field, becoming the recognized belief of the vast majority of the upholders of the Imamate.

[1 Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali (d.

A.D.

957), author of two highly-reputed works. ]

Ja'far is said to have claimed the Imamate for himself.

Whether he had a large following or not is a matter of conjecture.

It is also problematical whether he ever thought that his claim could be considered seriously.

There is no shred of evidence that his brother had ever named him to don the mantle of the Imamate.

Today there is not a single soul amongst the Sh'iahs who reveres Ja'far as the twelfth Imam.

But overshadowing any claim which Ja'far laid to the spiritual station or worldly goods of his brother was his fierce contention with that body of the Sh'iahs who maintained that the twelfth Imam lived, hidden from the eyes of

men.

Through thick and thin he asserted that his brother had died without issue.

However, there was an eminent follower of the eleventh Imam, Abu-'Amr 'Uthman Ibn Sa'id al-'Umari, who claimed that Muhammad, the five-year-old son of the deceased Imam, had chosen to withdraw from the sight of men, and that he himself had been invested with authority to act as his deputy, and establish a link between the infant twelfth Imam and the body of the faithful.

He stated that epistles from the Hidden Imam were transmitted through him.

The ensuing confusion amongst the Sh'iahs can be well imagined.

Abu-'Amr 'Uthman was succeeded by his son, Abu-Ja'far Muhammad, who stood firmly by the assertion that the office of 'deputy' had the sanction of the Imam, with whom he held communication by means which he could not and would not divulge.

These two deputies, father and son, held sway for wellnigh forty-five years, during which time the controversies did not abate.

The 'Abbasid Caliphate was now far gone into decline.

The Caliph al-Muqtadir, who succeeded to the throne in the year 908, was well-disposed towards the Sh'iahs; he was also hopelessly incompetent.

He had Sh'iah ministers, and his court was manned by prominent Sh'iahs.

The third deputy of the Hidden Imam, Abu'l-Qasim Husayn Ibn Ruh, came from an eminent Persian family, the House of Nawbakht, whose members were highly influential in governmental and academic circles.

In the opening years of Muqtadir's caliphate, he lived in Baghdad in circumstances of affluence, surrounded by his disciples, a revered figure in the capital of the 'Abbasids.

Next, we find him a fugitive and, later on, a prisoner.

Turns of fortune, on such a scale, had lost their <p258> oddity.

The strange whims and the capricious nature of Muqtadir, who every now and then was wont to change all his ministers and courtiers, were undoubtedly responsible for the incarceration of Husayn Ibn Ruh.

It has been assumed that he was accused of withholding and evading certain governmental dues.

But that was a common enough accusation constantly brought against officials who had fallen out of favour.

Now we hear of a certain Abu-Ja'far Muhammad Ibn 'Ali, a native of the village of Shalmaghan, in the region of Wasit, therefore known as ash-Shalmaghani.

It becomes clear amidst the confusion of biased accounts and vitriolic attacks on his reputation that Shalmaghani was a close confidant of Husayn Ibn Ruh,

who, in the period of the latter's enforced seclusion, maintained contact for him with his people.

Apparently, during the same period, he withdrew his support from the third deputy of the Hidden Imam and preached a doctrine which it is impossible to ascertain, except for one fact, that he would no longer give credence to the belief that Muhammad, the infant son of the eleventh Imam, lived in a corporeal body, away from the sight of men.

However, even trustworthy commentators and historians, not to mention those whom he had directly challenged, have laid at his door charges from which the rational mind flinches.

It is suggested that Shalmaghani claimed to be God incarnate, while community of wives, that hoary favourite of calumniators, is included in the list of gross deviations attributed to his supporters. From what is known of Shalmaghani's antecedents, it is impossible to accept as true what has been said of him, unless one concedes at the same time that he had lost his senses.

This was the man whose books the Twelvers studied for knowledge of their own doctrines, and to learn how to defend them.

His adversaries denounced him before the Sunni doctors of law, their own avowed opponents, and thus they encompassed his destruction.

For a while Shalmaghani enjoyed the protection of the Amir Nasiri'd-Dawlah, the Hamdanid ruler of Mosul (A.D.

929-69).

But disturbances there drove him to Baghdad, where he was discovered and arrested.

During the Caliphate of ar-Radi (A.D.

934-40), Shalmaghani and Ibrahim Ibn Abi-'Awn, one of his prominent supporters, were put to death and their bodies were consigned to the flames.

Another 'deviant' whom the Twelvers destroyed during this <p259> period was the highly-famed or notorious (depending on one's viewpoint) Husayn Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, whom the Sufis extolled in a later age.

Hallaj was a native of Bayda in the province of Fars, of Persian (Magian) descent.

By all accounts he was a devoted Sh'iah.

Again, in his case, we come up against imponderables and it is almost impossible to separate fact from fiction.

Certain it is that Hallaj took a stand which put him beyond the pale.

It is also certain that his deviation consisted of choosing 'the mystic way'.

For the rest, one has to resort to conjecture because contradictions abound.

Sufi leaders and poets who, in subsequent years, waxed eloquent in his praise, totally ignored the question of the Imamate and deputyship of the Hidden Imam, on which Sh'iah scholastics have based their condemnation of Hallaj.

These words of Hallaj: 'Ana'l-Haqq' -- 'I am the Truth' (i.e.

God) -- have come ringing down the ages, to be intoned ecstatically by some, or quoted with horror by others.

Hafiz, the greatest lyric poet of Iran, more than four hundred years later, exonerated Hallaj: 'That friend, who adorned the gallows, died for the crime of revealing secrets'.

The giants among the Sufi poets, including Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi (thirteenth century),<sup>[1]</sup> the greatest of them all, have unfailingly sung his praise.

But there can be no doubt that Hallaj, who by some accounts was a man bereft of learning and much too boastful, posed a menace to the security and the integrity of the Twelvers.

Otherwise he would not have been denounced with such vehemence.

As mentioned before, the third deputy of the Hidden Imam was a member of the eminent Sh'iah House of Nawbakht.

Over several generations, the Nawakhtis had established themselves in the favour of the caliphs of the House of 'Abbas.

They had been exceedingly wise and cautious.

Unostentatiously they had helped many who shared their beliefs to find positions of trust in the court.

Now Hallaj was threatening to nullify the patient work of decades.

His challenge to the third deputy of the Hidden Imam was a challenge to the House of Nawbakht, which, in turn, was a challenge to the security of the Sh'iah brotherhood -- a small group of legitimists, overwhelmed and hemmed in by the might of the vast multitudes <p260> of Muslims who did not believe in the primacy of 'Ali and the Imams of his House.

Sh'iahs, no matter how pervasive their influence, had no standing in the courts of law.

Within these precincts only four systems of jurisprudence, and no others, were recognized: the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, the Maliki and the Hanbali, all pillars of the Sunni orthodoxy.<sup>[2]</sup> About the time the Twelvers had to face the question of the occultation of the twelfth Imam, a doctor of law, Abu-Bakr Muhammad Ibn Dawud, a native of Isfahan, devised a fifth system to which the name Zahiri (Literalist) was given.<sup>[3]</sup> Jurists among the Twelvers and jurists who had accepted the fifth system of jurisprudence arrived at an understanding, which made it possible for the Twelvers to carry the new label and obtain a measure of civic recognition.

[1 He was a native of Balkh and lived in Asia Minor (hence styled Rumi), being

highly esteemed by the Saljuq rulers.

His great work, entitled Mathnavi, remains peerless in its quality, range, volume, intensity, depth and rapture.]

[2 Differences between the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence lie in the varying degrees of emphasis put on the four sources of the Law.

These sources consist of the text (i.e. the Qur'an), supreme at all times; the Sunnah (practices and traditions attributed to the Prophet); the Ijma'al-Ummah (consensus of opinion); and the Qiyas (analogy).

The Hanafi school of 'Iraq became dominant in areas which eventually formed the enclave of the Ottoman Empire, as well as in India and Central Asia.

The Maliki school of Medina came to flourish in North Africa, particularly Morocco.

The ultra-orthodox Hanabali school captured the ground in Central Arabia, which, in recent times, has become the stronghold of the Wahhabis.

The Shafi'ite school of Egypt established itself in Lower Egypt, Palestine, western and southern regions of Arabia, parts of India, and in the islands comprising present-day Indonesia.

It has been estimated that today there are 180 million Hanafis, 105 million Shafi'is, 50 million Malikis and 5 million Hanbalis.]

[3 This school of jurisprudence did not endure, nor did the Twelvers remain associated with it for long.

The Malikite school eclipsed it in North Africa.]

It is a fact that the leader of the Zahiri school issued a verdict against the very troublesome Hallaj, and condemned him to death.

Did the Twelvers make an appeal to Abu-Bakr Muhammad Ibn Dawud, and induce him to pronounce against Hallaj?

Most probably they did.

In any case, Abu-Sahl, a prominent member of the House of Nawbakht, whom Hallaj had tried unsuccessfully to win over to his view, was on friendly terms with the Caliph Muqtadir's celebrated vizier, Ibn-al-Furat, who himself had Shi'ite tendencies.

The fate of Hallaj was thus sealed.

He fled to Ahvaz, in south-west Iran, but the Caliph's men traced and arrested him.

After languishing for eight years in a Baghdad prison, he was subjected to a prolonged and protracted trial.

The death sentence was eventually confirmed; and Husayn Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj became one of the most celebrated martyrs of all time.

Was he an illiterate impostor, a mere adventurer?

Was <p261> he a clear-sighted mystic?

Was he a victim of circumstances beyond anyone's control?

Who knows?

The fourth and last deputy of the Hidden Imam was Abu'l-Husayn 'Ali Ibn Muhammad as-Samarri, who held office for a bare three years and died in the year 941.

He did not name a successor, but stated that he was the last deputy, that after him no direct link would be maintained between the Imam and his people.

His own death, he said, would inaugurate the period of major occultation, whose length no man could gauge or guess, and during which the world would be deprived of the direct personal guidance of the Imam.

In the fullness of time, Muhammad, the son of Hasan al-'Askari (the eleventh Imam), would step forth to regenerate the world and restore righteousness to it.

He would be the Qa'im (He Who Arises), the Mihdi (Mahdi -- the Rightly-Guided), whose advent was promised by the Prophet.

Now, but for a brief interlude, the curtain descends on the Twelvers.

From the coastal regions of the Caspian, the home and hunting-ground of the Daylamites, emerged the family of Buwayh (Buyih) -- Sh'iah and Twelvers by persuasion.

In Iran, three brothers of the family, 'Ali, Hasan and Ahmad, built a kingdom out of the ruins of the realms of the Saffarids (A.D.

873-900) and the Samanids (A.D.

875-999).

Those two dynasties of Persian descent had brought to an end the direct rule of the Caliph on the Iranian plateau.

The youngest brother, Ahmad, marched on Baghdad and entered the 'Abbasid metropolis in the year 945 The Caliph, al-Mustakfi, the twenty-second of his line, was helpless, and although he conferred the title of Mu'izzi'd-Dawlih (He Who Gives Might to the State) on the Daylamite conqueror, and made no effort to assert his own authority, he was soon deposed.[1] However, another caliph of the House of 'Abbas had to be installed in the same office, although the Daylamites were Sh'iahs, in no way bound by allegiance to a Sunni Caliph.

The stark fact was that the vast majority of Muslims could not and would not forgo an institution which had been firmly established on the morrow of the passing of the Prophet.

And the Imamate, which the Twelvers upheld, had reached its apogee in the major occultation of the <p262> twelfth Imam.

The successful Shi'ite polity, which flourished in North Africa and was about to capture Egypt, was heretical in the eyes of the Twelvers, for it was founded on the belief that Isma'il and his line inherited primacy from Ja'far as-Sadiq, the sixth Imam.

The House of Buwayh could not possibly acknowledge the Fatimid Caliphs of North Africa.

And so the Muslim world from the borders of Egypt to Central Asia was presented with a Sunni Caliph commanding fealty by the choice, dictate and toleration of powerful Shi'ite overlords.

[1 At the same time 'Ali, the eldest of the three brothers, was given the title 'Imadi'd-Dawlih (the Mainstay of the State), and the next brother received the title Rukni'd-Dawlih (the Pillar of the State).]

For a hundred years the Buwayhids dominated Baghdad and the Caliph was their puppet.

The great Mahmud of Ghaznah (reigned A.D.

998-1030), the monarch who extinguished the Samanid rule in Khurasan, and with the sword took Islam to India, overcame the Buwayhids in Ray, but Baghdad remained in their hands.

Sultan Mahmud was a Turk, the descendant of a slave, whose father had risen to high office under the Samanids and had served them faithfully.

Under his patronage Persian poetry flourished.

Firdawsi, the epic poet of Iran, whose work is unmatched, dedicated his celebrated Shah-Namih (The Book of Kings) to him.

Later, he fell out with Sultan Mahmud and satirized him savagely, partly because of the Sultan's miserly reward, but chiefly because of Mahmud's fanaticism.[1] He was an exceedingly fanatical Sunni, but apart from rendering homage to the 'Abbasid caliphate in the same way mediaeval Christian monarchs would and did vis-a-vis the Supreme Pontiff in Rome, Mahmud of Ghaznah did nothing to restore the temporal power of the House of 'Abbas.

Should he have found it imperative, Mahmud would not have hesitated to overthrow a caliph, and replace him with another more agreeable to his own purposes.

But he was not subjected to that test of loyalty, although he once showed his peevishness over the matter of a title.

[1 Although the great scientist Abu-Rayhan-i-Biruni stayed with Sultan Mahmud, served him and accompanied him to India, the equally great Abu-'Ali Ibn-i-Sina (Avicenna) could not abide the narrow-mindedness of Sultan Mahmud and shunned his court.]

The Saljuqs (A.D.

1038-1194), also Turks and also fanatically Sunni, came in the wake of the Ghaznavids (977-1186).

Their empire extended from Transoxania to the heart of Asia Minor.

In the middle of the eleventh century, the Saljuqs terminated the paradox of a Sunni Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-Mu'minin) <p263> nestling under the wings of a Sh'iah potentate by their defeat of the Buwayhids in Baghdad.

Thus they restored a measure of dignity to the office of the caliph, but also made it evident that power resided with them and they meant to exercise it.

With the extinction of the Buwayhids, the brief interlude ended for the Twelvers.

Henceforth, almost total obscurity surrounded them until the Safavids (the 'Great Sophy' of the Elizabethans) rose to power in Iran, half a millenium later.

True, there were principalities, groupings and individuals of that persuasion, who occasionally showed their colours; but with rare exceptions, the range of their influence in the body-politic was negligible, and the general rule for the Twelvers was taqiyyih (prudential concealment of opinion).

In Egypt, however, the star of the Fatimids was shining brightly.

Theirs was one of the most enlightened regimes that the world has ever known.

And the Isma'ilis or the Seveners are one of the most maligned group of people. <p264>

## 25 The Bright Star of the Fatimids

In recent years when a sudden awareness of the use of cannabis has caused new panic, and the media of communication have vied with one another to provide information (at times half truth, on occasions erroneous), two men in Britain, eminent in their disciplines, were heard to denounce the drug by resting their case on the 'abominable practices of the Assassins'.

The word 'Assassin' is understood to be a corruption of the Arabic term 'hashshashin' -- users of hashish -- of which their adversaries accused Isma'ilis: users of the drug en masse.

Today that palpable lie is perpetuated unashamedly in the Western world!

There was a time when the Isma'ilis struck terror into the hearts of their foes.

But their practices were no more abominable than those of the world around them, Islamic and Christian alike.

If they engaged in the reprehensible act of eliminating their antagonists, their adversaries also killed and destroyed in the exercise of power.

The Crusaders who suffered at the hands of the followers of 'the Old Man of the Mountain' were only receiving their meed.

Furthermore, the number of those who fell by the dagger of the so-called 'Assassins' has been grossly exaggerated.

However, a clear distinction must be made between the extremists known as the Qaramitah or the Carmathians, and the other Seveners.

As we have seen, a considerable number of the followers of the sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq, refused to recognize the Imamate of his son, Musa, and stoutly maintained that the rightful Imam was Muhammad, the son of Isma'il, who was the eldest son of the sixth Imam, and had predeceased his father.

Their belief and firm stand marked the appearance of the Isma'ili order, which proved, in the long run, to be the most effective and the most significant breakaway group of the Sh'iah branch of Islam -- its largest offshoot.

So far the historical record is clear, but thereafter we run into myth, legend and fabrication. <p265>

The celebrated Nizamu'l-Mulk, vizier to Malik-Shah the Saljuqid, makes out that the Isma'ili movement had nothing to do with the descendants of Muhammad himself, that it was the product of the wiles of a native of Ahvaz, named 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun, and the cupidity of a freedman of Muhammad, named Mubarak.

This Mubarak, Nizamu'l-Mulk states, was an accomplished calligrapher, excelling in a style known as muqarmat.

For that reason he was entitled Muqarmatwayh.

Thus the appellation Qarmati (pl.

Qaramitah) and its westernized form, Carmathian, are derived from the name of the style of calligraphy which Mubarak used competently.[1] According to Nizamu'l-Mulk, after the death of Muhammad Ibn Isma'il, his freedman, Mubarak, was beguiled by the man of Ahvaz into believing that he, 'Abdu'llah, son of Maymun, had been entrusted with the secrets and the esoteric doctrines of Mubarak's master.

In that fashion, these two devised a new heresy between them.

From that starting point Nizamu'l-Mulk builds up a story of successors to the two men, and relates an amazing account of their reverses and their conquests: one section active in Transoxania and Khurasan and the inevitable Daylam territory, and another turning its attention to Syria and Egypt.

At times the great Nizamu'l-Mulk hopelessly confuses his terms.

And he maintains that the one who appeared in North Africa, in the territory of the Aghlabids, called himself 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Husayn and was, in fact, Sa'id, a grandson of that crafty native of Ahvaz: 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun al-Qaddah (the Oculist).

[1 Others have ascribed the origin of 'Qarmat' to the nickname of Hamdan Ibn al-Ash'ath, who was so called because of his short body and legs.

Hamdan was a lieutenant of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun.]

Nizamu'l-Mulk was a contemporary of the formidable Hasan-i-Sabbah, and in deadly conflict with him.

The imagination of Western romantics was once captured by the story of this Hasan, said to have been a fellow-student of Nizamu'l-Mulk (whose name was also Hasan) and 'Umar-i-Khayyam.[1] Though bright and accomplished, they were poor and penniless, and made a pact that whichever of them first achieved wealth and position would amply share the benefits of his good fortune with the other two.

It made a good tale, but was pure moonshine.

This story went on to suggest that Abu-'Ali Hasan Ibn 'Ali, having become the mighty and all-powerful Nizamu'l-Mulk and risen high in the service of the great Saljuqs -- Alp-Arslan and his son Malik-Shah, remembered the two friends of his youth. 'Umar, the retiring poet, scientist and sceptic, was content with enough to keep him in his modest way of living; the other Hasan was overwhelmingly ambitious.

He was given a place in the court, but he coveted the highest seat of authority, bit the hands that fed him, betrayed Nizamu'l-Mulk, fled the court and rose in rebellion.

[1 Omar Khayyam.]

Indeed Hasan-i-Sabbah, who was of the Isma'ili persuasion, challenged the might of the Sunni Saljuqs, and in the gorges and on the heights of the Elburz mountains founded a realm and a refuge from which to sally forth and effect the utmost damage to the reputation and the solidarity of the Saljuqid Empire.

And Nizamu'l-Mulk was a very staunch, a very prejudiced Sunni.

Even more he was an Ash'ari, a believer in the discipline of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, whose role in the development of Islamic theology we shall duly examine.

Suffice it to say here that al-Ash'ari introduced a rigidity of thought and belief into Islamic society which blighted both mind and spirit.

Nizamu'l-Mulk was a great, an able and sagacious servant of the State, but he could not escape the coils of his own prejudices.

What is surprising, however, is the easy acceptance by eminent orientalist of some of these stories woven around the origins of the Isma'ilis and the Fatimid caliphs, who upheld and promulgated the tenets of the Isma'ili Faith.

#### The Relationship of the Caliphates

Quraysh

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'Abd-Manaf

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|

'Abd-Shams

|

Hashim

|

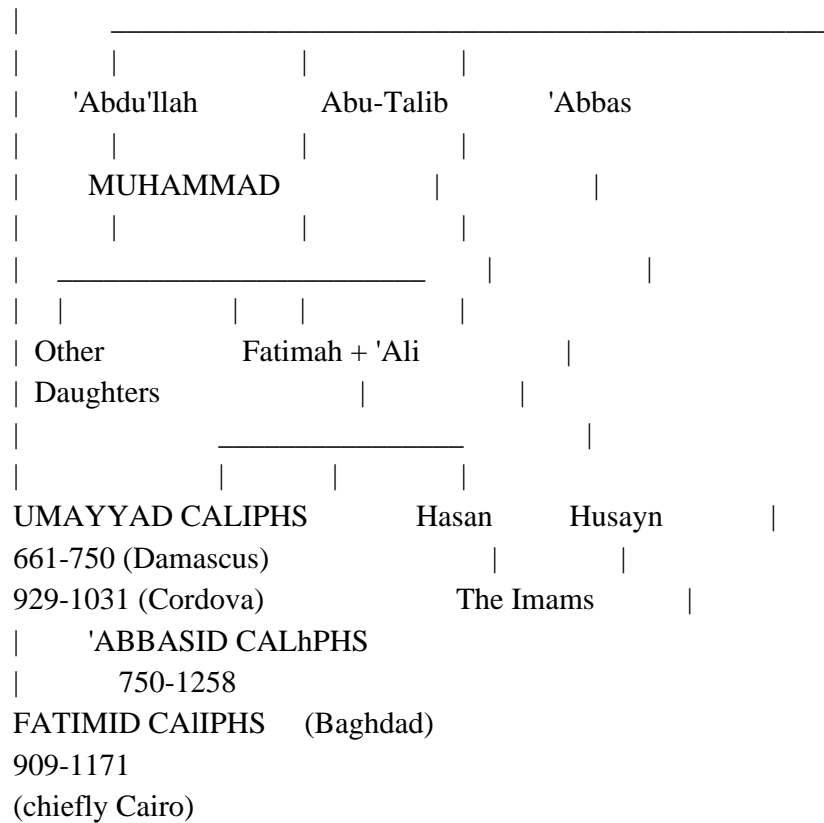
Umayyah

|

'Abdu'l-Muttalib

|

|



Dates are A.D.

The chief seat of the three Caliphates are shown.

In the year A.D.

909 a man, who called himself 'Ubaydu'llah al-Mahdi, reached North Africa from Syria and proclaimed that he was a descendant of Muhammad Ibn Isma'il, the grandson of the sixth Imam.

He is the same man whom Nizamu'l-Mulk identified as Sa'id, the grandson of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun of Ahvaz.

He went to Egypt on the assurance of his da'i (missionary), Abu-'Abdu'llah ash-Shi'i, that the moment was ripe for his arrival.

In this, the Isma'ilis were following almost the same pattern as that set by the 'Abbasids, some two hundred years before, when their da'is, or du'at, were constantly moving from region to region and secretly calling upon people to rise and support the House of 'Ali.

The supremacy the Isma'ilis questioned was that of a Sunni caliph, for the 'Abbasids had lost their temporal power almost completely.

Yet their spiritual overlordship was so well entrenched that even the Buwayhids of the Daylam territory, Twelvers though they were, could not dispense with it.

The Turks, who as soldiers and officers in the service of the 'Abbasids had reduced the caliphs of Baghdad to impotence, had also injected an element of obstinate fanaticism into the body politic.

Of course the rebels, the heresiarchs and the pretenders who had tried to overthrow the 'Abbasids in the past, were also intensely fanatical, but theirs was a fanaticism of a different sort, one of desperation.

The kind of fanaticism with which the polity of Islam became imbued, and which a man of the calibre of Nizamu'l-Mulk betrayed in his writings, took its source from those great and single-minded warriors who came flooding in from the territories beyond the river Oxus.

This was the fanaticism which would make the life of the Christian pilgrim so onerous, rouse the Supreme Pontiff to utter his call for action, drive Europe into frenzy, and give the younger sons of feudal lords and impoverished knights of France and Italy their pretext to seek fame and fortune under the cloak of an unmistakably devout desire to free the city of Christ's death and triumph from the impious grasp of the <p268> infidel.

Neither the Arabs at the height of their racism, nor the Persians at their hour of revenge, had known and exercised the kind of fanaticism that the Turks now presented to the Islamic society.

'Ubaydu'llah al-Mahdi, in that year 909, was throwing down his gauntlet to the whole Sunni confraternity which swarmed over the realm of Islam.

Since the Twelvers considered him a heretic in any case, it was immaterial to them whether he was a scion of the House of 'Ali, a Fatimid, or not.

Moreover, Sh'iahs had found positions of influence and trust in the courts of the 'Abbasid caliphs and maintained their precarious existence, nay even thrived, under the shadow of the protection thus procured; and this in spite of the fact that the death of every single one of the Imams, from the sixth to the eleventh, and the reason for the minor occultation of the twelfth, were imputed by their scholastics and apologists to the malice of these very rulers.

In an Islamic world shaped and ordered by Sunni discipline, the rebellion of the militant Isma'ilis could only inflict injuries upon the Sunni polity.

Therefore, only fierce reaction to 'Ubaydu'llah al-Mahdi could be expected from the Sunnis.

It must not be assumed, however, that the Twelvers did not add some quota of denunciation.

And there were also the Kharijite Rustamids of Tahart in North Africa, although early Kharijite passions were by now stilled.

For them it was immaterial whether the newcomer to their continent was a descendant of the sixth Imam or not, for they had decided long ago that 'Ali, the progenitor of all the Imams, was an inmate of hell.

Then there were the Idrisids of Fez., Shi'ites of sorts, but their influence upon the affairs of Islam was nil.

The Umayyads of Andalus and the 'Abbasids of Baghdad declared that they had examined the pedigree and scrutinized the parentage of 'Ubaydu'llah al-Mahdi,

and had satisfied themselves that his claim was false; he was none other than a descendant of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun, the oculist of Ahvaz.

Since then, historians in the East and the West have clung to the pronouncement of these Sunni caliphs of Andalus and Baghdad.

Even Ibn-Khaldun, who accepted the genuineness of 'Ubaydu'llah's claim, refers to the dynasty he founded as 'Ubaydiyyun, rather than Fatimiyyun, scions of the daughter of the Prophet.

It is said that 'Adudi'd-Dawlih (reigned 949-83), the son of Mu'izzi'd-Dawlih and the <p269> greatest of the Buwayhids, made investigations and reached conclusions similar to those of the Sunni caliphs.

But 'Adudi'd-Dawlih was a Twelver and the parentage of al-Mahdi could not have swayed him one way or the other.[1]

[1 No one has ever been able to refute conclusively the claim made by the Fatimids.

Their opponents, by deliberate proliferation of names, attempted to make an unclear situation even more confused.

It must be said, however, that the Fatimids could not produce documentary evidence to establish their claim beyond any shadow of doubt.

And a further question to pose is whether it would have been possible to produce such documentary evidence.]

In the event, 'Ubaydu'llah overcame both the Aghlabids and the Rustamids and made the Idrisids his tributaries.

Sunni bitterness against the Fatimids must also be regarded in another context, that of events preceding the arrival of 'Ubaydu'llah at Ifriqiyyah, and to these we must give due attention.

In the year 869 the Negroes who had been brought over from East Africa to work the saltpetre mines on the Euphrates broke into bloody rebellion.

They were led by a man of obscure origin, named 'Ali Ibn Muhammad, who claimed to be an Alawi, that is, a descendant of the first Imam; but apparently, before long, he showed certain Kharijite tendencies.

This 'Ali Ibn Muhammad became known as as-Sahiba'z-Zanj (the Master of the Zanj). (Zanj is the arabicized form of the Persian word Zangi -- Negro.) For fourteen years these Negroes successfully fought off the armies of the 'Abbasid caliphs.

They could not be dislodged from the marshlands; and they killed mercilessly and indiscriminately.

They ranged as far as Ahvaz and Wasit, ravaging both these towns and Basrah as well.

At last al-Muwaffaq, the brother of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid, took the field, and defeated the Sahiba'z-Zanj.

In the ninth century A.D. the town of Jannabi stood on the Iranian shores of the Persian Gulf, where the town of Ganavih stands today, close to the port of Bushihr (Bushire).

A native of this town, Abu-Sa'id Hasan al-Jannabi, a miller by trade, established in the year 899 a principality of his own on the opposite shore of the Persian Gulf, and made al-Ahsa his capital.

At one time, he had been closely associated with Hamdan Qarmat, that lieutenant of 'Abdu'llah Ibn Maymun whose nickname is said to have been the origin of the term Qarmati or Carmathian.

To Hamdan is also attributed the founding of the Batini sect, which is only another name for the Isma'ilis.

It is assumed that the <p270> Qarmatis, or the Carmathians, branched from the Batinis.

Al-Jannabi and his supporters had also had some connection with the rebellious Negroes of the Lower Euphrates and their mysterious leader.

But whoever al-Jannabi and his Carmathian supporters may have been, and whatever the position he held as a religious guide and mentor, there is certainly a wide gulf separating them from the Isma'ilis who rose to prominence in North Africa and established the Fatimid Caliphate.

Could they be even accounted Muslims when it is an established fact that the Carmathians under Abu-Tahir Sulayman, the son of al-Jannabi, overran Mecca in the year 930, and wrenched apart the sacred Hajar al-Aswad -- the Black Stone -- from the structure of the Ka'bah?

Every Muslim sect and denomination has held the Black Stone in awe and reverence.

For decades, these Carmathians based on Bahrayn and the Arabian shore of the Persian Gulf terrorized the realm of Islam as far away as Khurasan, killing, as the Kharijites of earlier generations and the Negroes of the Lower Euphrates had done before, indiscriminately and ruthlessly.

Professor Hitti writes: 'The Qarmatian [Carmathian] movement with its communistic, revolutionary tendencies developed into a most malignant growth in the body politic of Islam.' [1]

[1 History of the Arabs, p.445. ]

Nasir-i-Khusraw (11th century), hailed as one of the greatest of the great classical poets of Persia, was a native of Balkh, holding a minor office in Marv, under the Saljuqs.

Feeling dissatisfied with his life, and having had a vision of the Prophet in a dream, he gave up his post, set out on pilgrimage to Mecca, and decided to roam at leisure over the realm of Islam.

He was to see the Carmathians at close quarters, berating them for having led

the people away from Islam.

But he first visited Egypt.

Jawhar, the Fatimid general, had, in the year 969, captured Fustat, and ousted the last of the Ikhshidids, the Turkish rulers of Egypt, who, themselves, had overthrown the Tulunids in 935.

The founder of the Tulunid dynasty, Ahmad Ibn Tulun, also a Turk, whose magnificent mosque still graces the capital of Egypt, had made himself independent of Baghdad, during the tormented years of the rise of the Sahib'az-Zanj.

While based on the province of Ifriqiyyah, the Fatimids had built themselves a capital which they had named al-Mahdiyyah.

Becoming at last the masters of Egypt, they set <sup><p271></sup> about constructing a new capital: al-Qahirih -- the All-Victorious -- a city of world fame, which is Cairo.

It was his visit to Cairo and what he witnessed there which made the sensitive, discerning Persian poet acclaim the Isma'ili doctrines with zeal and fervour -- such zeal and fervour that he was elevated, before long, to the high position of the Hujjat (Proof) of Khurasan.

The Isma'ili hierarchy had several grades.

The self-effacing da'i served under a Hujjat.

The testimony of Nasir-i-Khusraw is fortunately preserved in the record of his travels, and is of prime importance.

Nasir-i-Khusraw, who was in Cairo during the reign of al-Mustansir,[1] the eighth of the Fatimid caliphs, found a country thoroughly at peace with itself and with the whole world.

[1 Al-Mustansir had a long reign, from 1036 to 1094. ]

In a lucid, enchanting language, Nasir-i-Khusraw describes the condition of Egypt.

He was particularly impressed by the soundness of the administration and the prosperity of the people.

The army, nearly a quarter of a million strong, he found to be composed of men of many nations and races, with weapons peculiar to them and with commanders of their own ethnic groups:

Arab, Persian, Turk, Negro and others.

These men had their regular dues, and no exaction was ever levied by them or their superiors on the population.

The court was frequented by princes of Georgia and Daylam and Turkistan, by poets and jurisconsults, by men of high learning and accomplishments, who all received their apportionments regularly from the Treasury.

In the bazars, tradesmen did not have recourse to false claims, and their customers trusted their word.

When any one of them broke the code, he was put on the back of a camel and made to go through the streets, ringing a bell and announcing that he had broken the rules of trading and deserved opprobrium.

The inhabitants of Egypt, Nasir-i-Khusraw goes on to relate, knew that the Sultan did not covet their goods and would not give ear to calumniators.

He writes: "Then I met a Christian, who was one of the wealthiest in Egypt, and it was said that the worth of his ships and properties was immeasurable.

One year the waters of the Nile proved insufficient and the price of corn went up.

The vizier called on this Christian and told him: "The year is bad and the Sultan is very much concerned about the plight of the people.

How much corn can you give us, either to be paid for or on a lending basis?"  
<p272> The Christian replied: "August be the fortunes of the Sultan and the Vizier; I have as much corn as to provide Egypt with bread for six years."

At this time there were, no doubt, five times as many people in Egypt as in Nishapur,[1] and whoever is acquainted with measures would know how great must be a man's holdings to have that much corn.

How secure must be the governed and how just must be the Sultan, that in their day there could be such conditions and such wealth; neither would the ruler tyrannize over and impose on anyone, nor would the subject keep anything hidden and concealed.'

[1 Nishapur. ]

Nasir-i-Khusraw recalls that he had seen the grandeur of the court of such mighty kings as Mahmud of Ghaznah and his son, Mas'ud, and wished to witness the court of al-Mustansir.

One of the officials took him there on the concluding day of Ramadan, the month of fasting, to see the preparations made for the following day: the Festival of al-Fitr.

And he gives a dazzling description of the scene.

Nasir-i-Khusraw travelled south as far as the boundaries of Nubia, then turned towards the Red Sea, took ship to Arabia, and went once again on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Thence he proceeded to the further coast and the domain of the Carmathians.

They disgusted him.

He returned, after more journeyings, to his home.

His travels had taken seven years, and he was now raised to an exalted station in the ranks of the Isma'ilis.

Before long he met with such fierce persecution that he had to seek refuge, first in Mazindaran, and then in Tukharistan and Badakhshan, in the region of the river Oxus.

The Amir of Badakhshan, Abu'l-Ma'ali 'Ali Ibn Asad Ibn al-Harith, himself a poet and a savant, became an adherent of the Isma'ili doctrine, and gave the fugitive Hujjat of Khurasan sanctuary -- to end his days in peace.

The French historian, Guyard, writes: 'The (Isma'ili) doctrines were publicly taught at Cairo in universities richly endowed and provided with libraries, where crowds assembled to listen to the most distinguished professors.

The principle of the ;: sect being that men must be converted by persuasion, the greatest tolerance was shown towards other creeds.

Mu'izz (the fourth Fatimid Caliph, reigned A.D.

952-75) permitted Christians to dispute openly with his doctors, a thing hitherto unheard of; and Severus, the celebrated bishop of Ushmunayn, availed himself <p273> of this authorisation.

Out of the funds of the Treasury Mu'izz rebuilt the ruined church of St.

Mercurius at Fustat, which the Christians had never hitherto been permitted to restore.

Certain Musulman fanatics endeavoured to prevent this, and on the day when the first stone was laid a Shaykh, leaping down amongst the foundations, swore that he would die rather than suffer the church to be rebuilt.

Mu'izz, being informed of what was taking place, caused this man to be buried under the stones, and only spared his life at the instance of the Patriarch Ephrem . . .'[1]

[1 Cited by Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol.

I, p.

399, footnote, from Un grand Maitre des Assassins.]

Another French historian, Renee Dussaud, in his Histoire et Religion des Nosairis (Paris 1900), remarks: '. . . the disappearance of the Fatimids, who brought about the triumph of the Isma'ili religion in Egypt, concludes an era of prosperity, splendour, and toleration such as the East will never again enjoy.[1]

[1 *ibid.*, p.

395, translated by E.

G.

Browne. ]

Gustave E. von Grunebaum writes: 'The documents found in the genizah, the "archives" of a Jewish synagogue in Cairo, mainly of the ninth to twelfth century and the most extensive collection of their kind from mediaeval Islam, give an impressive picture of the economic activity of the time; they throw a

light too on the situation in the Jewish community, whose position under the Fatimids was more favourable than at any time in the first thousand years of Muslim history.' Next, von Grunebaum makes this strange comment: 'Their treatment went far beyond mere tolerance and probably arose in part from the indifference of the inner circle of the Isma'ilis towards the externals of religions, an attitude which facilitated their foreign propaganda in non-Muslim circles and created a suitable psychological climate for the peace concluded in 1040 with the Byzantium.'"[1]

[1 Classical Islam, p.

147. ]

It is now an established fact that al-Hakim, the sixth Fatimid caliph (reigned 996-1021), made extravagant claims.

He declared, it is said, that he was God incarnate.

The origin of the Druzes is usually traced back to him, and it is assumed that the Druzes revere al-Hakim as the Deity.

But here we enter the realm of speculation.

Al-Hakim was not a very good ruler.

Christians and Jews suffered at his hands, whereas they had held high offices in <p274> the state under his predecessors.

Yet he had remarkable achievements to his credit, such as the institution of a great library.

C.

E.

Bosworth tells us that 'Egypt and Cairo enjoyed under the Fatimids an economic prosperity and cultural vitality which eclipsed those of contemporary Iraq and Baghdad.

Trade links were maintained with the non-Islamic world, including India and the Christian Mediterranean countries . . .

It is from the workshops of Egypt at this time, too, that some of the finest products of Islamic art were turned out.'[1]

[1 The Islamic Dynasties, p.48. ]

The world-famed theological college of al-Azhar in Cairo, which flourishes to this day, was founded by the Fatimids.

From it well-trained da'is went forth to other Islamic lands.

Fatimids made no attempt to impose their own beliefs on the people of Egypt, who, by and large, remained Sunni.

The cultural standards of Cairo were considerable, surpassing, at times, those of Baghdad.

No distinction was ever made (apart from the interval when al-Hakim reigned)

between the diverse Faiths and ethnic entities, in the common search for knowledge and the common effort to widen horizons of learning.

The orthodox grip, which, in the Eastern domains of the realm of Islam, threatened time and again to fetter thought and knowledge, was absent in the Fatimid Egypt, which had also extended its power over Palestine and Syria.

Then, after the long reign of al-Mustansir, a serious cleavage appeared in the Isma'ili community.

He had named his eldest son, Nizar, to succeed him, but the army put the next son, al-Musta'li, on the throne, and Nizar died in prison.

It was outside Egypt that Nizar's cause found supporters, chiefly in Iran and Syria.

Hasan-i-Sabbah, who in the year 1090 had seized the Castle of Alamut, in the heart of the Elburz range, and had established an Isma'ili principality, surrounded on all sides by the Saljuq domains, was a supporter of Nizar.

When al-Mustansir died, the Fatimid territory to the north of Egypt had dwindled to the limits of Ascalon ('Asqalan) and Jerusalem had gone to the Turks. <p275>

#### 26 Sufis and Sufiism

Much has been said and written about the Muslim mystics, styled Sufis, which is sheer nonsense.

Of the diverse ethnic elements within the polity of Islam, Iranians eventually became more prominent in unfolding and promulgating the tenets of Sufiism, albeit Arabs, both in early and latter days, and Turks also, at a later period, produced eminent Sufis.

Some of the ardent reformers and iconoclasts of modern times in Iran have gone to the absurd length of blaming Sufis and Sufi thought for every conceivable ill that befell their land and their culture.

Whereas in the Western world, jaded as it is by crass materialism, anything and everything carrying the label of Sufi has been acclaimed by the eager and the bemused as the quintessence of wisdom and spirituality.

Such Persian poets of unsurpassed eloquence as Sa'di (thirteenth century) and Hafiz (fourteenth century) have been hailed erroneously as Sufis.

Even stranger has been the attempt to make of 'Umar Khayyam a Sufi 'guide'.

It would have amused mightily this versatile mathematician-astronomer of Nishapur.

Alas for western acolytes Sufiism has never been what many of them have imagined it to be.

Fantastic theories put forth by earlier occidental scholars, to explain the nomenclature of these mystics, have all been discounted.

It is now established beyond doubt that the word Sufi is derived from suf, which is the Arabic word for 'wool'.

The immediate successors of the Prophet, who lived frugal lives, wore garbs of rough wool.

For that matter John the Baptist had 'raiment of camel's hair'. 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph, was particularly noted for the coarseness of his garment.

Jami (fifteenth century), the last of the outstanding Sufi poets of Persia, states that the term 'Sufi' was first applied, in the eighth century, to a Syrian named Abu-Hashim.

Why he, specifically, was called a <p276> 'Sufi' we do not know.

Was being a man of great piety, detached from the world, synonymous with being a Sufi?

The great Sufi poet, Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar (twelfth century), in his 'Memorial of Saints' (Tadhkiratu'l-Awliya'), seems to indicate by implication that men very different in their outlook all have a niche in his gallery of the elect -- men such as Uways, who died fighting for 'Ali, the first Imam and the fourth Caliph, at the battle of Siffin; and Hasan al-Basri, who gave no support to 'Ali at all, and whose disciple, Wasil Ibn 'Ata', founded the Mu'tazilite school; and Ja'far as-Sadiq, the sixth Imam; and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, whose school of jurisprudence is the most rigid of the four Sunni disciplines, and whose intolerance is most marked.

There can be no doubt that 'Attar himself was a mystic, and that many among his 'Saints' were undoubtedly delineators of the mystic path.

But, can it not be argued that, by casting his net so wide, Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar was doing no more than making his choice of saints from a long list of men whose lives were considered to have been exemplary, and their thoughts and precepts to have been sublime?

Nevertheless, Sufiism, both by name and practice, belongs to a later age.

Sufiism or Tasawwuf, as the appellation is in the original, did certainly have a beginning which cannot be pinpointed.

For whatever influences were at work to mould the thought of early Muslim mystics, those who are regarded as the pioneers of Sufiism were a number of men and a most remarkable woman, who were repelled by the worldliness which had come upon people in high places.

They were quiet, gentle and self-effacing, not firebrands like the Kharijites.

To such a man as Sufyan ath-Thawri (d.

777) the pomp and luxury of the Umayyads and the Abbasids were anathema.

He chose a life of seclusion, to pray and meditate, but not to establish a new

school of thought or a new discipline.

The word 'Sufi' has become a portmanteau word, but not all Sufis have been of the same genre.

Wide indeed is the gulf which separates that remarkable woman, Rabi'ah (eighth century), from a mystic such as Bayazid-i-Bistami (ninth century).

She it was who prayed thus: 'O God!

Were I to worship Thee for the fear of Hell, consign me to that Hell, and were I to worship Thee in expectation of Paradise, deny me that Paradise, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not from me the Eternal Beauty.' And it was Bayazid who exclaimed: 'Verily, I am God, there is no God but me.' There is a like contrast between Fudayl Ibn 'Iy.d, <p277> who, in the middle of the eighth century, gave utterance to such thoughts: 'He who fears God, all things fear him; and he who does not fear God, fears everything'; and Hallaj, who said: 'I am the Truth'.

It must be stressed that the Prophet had repudiated asceticism as practised by Christian monks. 'There is no asceticism in Islam,' is a saying of Muhammad, generally accepted.

But mortification of the flesh is not the same as detachment from the world.

The people of the calibre of Ibrahim-i-Adham and Sufyan ath-Thawri did not fly to the desert, as Christian monks had done before, once the fever of other-worldliness had gripped them.

They were devout Muslims and had no code of worship or mode of conduct other than those followed by everybody else.

They cherished no esoteric beliefs, did not attempt to create a new discipline, to systematize a way of living, to express views at variance with those commonly held.

Hasan al-Basri was a teacher with his pupils and disciples but, apart from aphorisms ascribed to him, nothing has come down to indicate any innovation.

But the way Wasil Ibn 'Ata' broke away from his circle points out that Hasan held what might be termed orthodox views.

The men who thought little of the vanities of the world and preferred a life of contemplation and quiet worship were not monks and hermits.

No Muslim monastery is known ever to have existed.

And when eventually 'Retreats' and 'Hermitages' were established they bore little resemblance to Christian monasteries.

What was the extent, if any, of the influence of Christian mysticism on the development of Islamic mystic thought?

This is a vast and uncertain area of conjecture.

Sometime or other, groups of people emerged who considered themselves 'Treaders' of the 'Path' (Tariqat), who adopted a distinct style called Tasawwuf, and who inaugurated and perpetuated certain spiritual disciplines.

None can give a definite date and say when it all happened.

It was a gradual and imperceptible process.

Although Sufis have attempted to trace their tradition back to the Prophet Himself, their thesis is manifestly untenable.

Apart from being Muslims, the only common denominator of the inaugurators of Sufi disciplines was the very broad aim of God-seeking.

They never were, nor could ever be a cohesive body.

They reacted, at different times and in diverse ways, to their environment and to the climate of thought.

The view prevalent in the Western world, <p278> amongst the devotees of mysticism, that the Sufis formed a large and compact group of enlightened Muslims, does not stand up to investigation.

Those high-minded and God-fearing men who detached themselves from the concerns of the world around them, in the two centuries that followed the passing of the Prophet, went their individual ways.

They could certainly find comfort and encouragement for their attitude in the Qur'an, and in the life, the sayings and the precepts of the Prophet.

But that is not the same as claiming that Muhammad Himself had formulated the Sufi doctrine.

Malik-i-Dinar and Ibrahim-i-Adham and Sufyan ath-Thawri made no such claims.

In any case the word Sufi meant nothing to them.

However, once the orthodox ties were loosened and liberal thought permeated Islamic society, the alien influences that came pouring in included Indian pantheism and Greek Neo-Platonism.

As we have seen already, the Zindiqs, that is to say the Manichaeans as well as the Marcionites and the proponents of the views of Bardesane (Ibn-Daysan), were also active.

Their beliefs could not but find receptive minds, if not multitudes of converts.

Some orientalists -- notably Edward Granville Browne, who had a marked antipathy towards matters Indian in the earlier years of his distinguished career -- have rejected the suggestion that Indian thought could have seeped through to the Muslims in the formative years of Islamic civilization.

They point out that it was not until the eleventh century that the great Abu-Rayhan-i-Biruni (al-Biruni)[1] made a detailed and painstaking study of

India and her peoples to write his famous treatise on that subcontinent.

By then Sufi doctrines were well formulated and well established.

But this argument does not hold water.

The coming of Islam had not blocked the communication and interchange between Iran and India which had always flowed through a number of channels.

[1 This is the name by which his compatriots, the Persians, know him.

Arabs know him as Abu-Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Biruni.]

Another view, as exemplified by Professor Zaehner's rigid insistence on clear-cut definitions and exact differentiations between 'nature mysticism' and 'spiritual mysticism', 'monistic' and 'theistic' mystics, is also questionable.[1] In the seething cauldron of thought, Christian or Muslim, many ingredients were admixed. <p279> Of course it is possible to decide on a particular line of mystic experience as the only true one, as Professor Zaehner very ably does, and show how unsound and unreliable all the others are, particularly when one can find solid support among the findings of Freud and Jung.

Some scholars do not give enough attention to the environment, the climate of thought and the political and social conditions by which people are surrounded, when dreaming weird dreams and experiencing ecstasies, 'sacred and profane'.

True, one can be caught in the Marxist trap of economic determinism, and accept with too great a fervour the mechanistic orderings of overzealous economists and highly imaginative sociologists.

[1 In *Mysticism -- Sacred and Profane* (Oxford University Press, 1957) Prof.

R.

C.

Zaehner brought his great erudition and vast knowledge to defeat Aldous Huxley's thesis in *The Door of Perception*.

He used a sledge-hammer to crack a tiny nut.]

It is strange to say that if a man finds himself in harmony with the beauties of nature, truly sees God in nature, his is not a true spiritual experience, but mere 'nature mysticism'.

The celebrated Sa'di of Shiraz, who, although labelled Sufi by zealots, was as much a Sufi (taking another poet at random) as Lord Byron, wrote these lines:

Green leaves of trees in the sight of the sagacious;  
Each one is a book that bears the knowledge of God.

The reaction of the early Muslim mystics, such as Ibrahim-i-Adham and Ahmad Ibn Khidrawayh and Dhu'n-Nun of Egypt, as we have already remarked, was against luxury-loving and worldliness which riches of an empire naturally engendered.

But when the Mu'tazilite peak had passed and dissensions had appeared amongst them; when the intolerance of the Hanbalites and the bigotries of the

Ash'arites began to throttle thought and blunt the edge of feeling; when uncouth Turks made a mockery of the heritage of Harun and Ma'mun; when such a fanatical Caliph as Mutawakkil could evoke paeans of praise -- it was time for another reaction.

In the field of rational thought, the Ikhwan-as-Safa (Brethren of Purity) came forth to redress the balance, and in the realm of metaphysics it fell to the Sufis to restore the joy of belief.

The first poet of calibre who wrote, in Persian, verse which can be termed mystic, was Abu-Sa'id Ibn Abi'l-Khayr.

He flourished in Khurasan in the eleventh century.

Bayazid-i-Bistami (whose grandfather was a Mazdean) and Junayd-i-Baghdadi, both Persians, had already, in the course of the previous century, made a discipline of mysticism.

Bayazid had spoken wildly of Deity and <p280> himself, had uttered words which, mingled with the accruing legends of following centuries, can be construed in a variety of ways.

But the point to note is that whereas earlier mystics had quietism as their keynote, their successors had ecstasy as their theme.

Their aim was to escape from the rigidity imposed on Islamic society.

It cannot be overstressed that no matter what exaggerations and profligacies were given currency, throughout the centuries, in the name of Sufi thought and practice, such shining lights in the firmament of Sufiism as Sana'i (twelfth century), the first of the great Persian mystic poets; Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar (d.

1230); the celebrated Arab poet, 'Umar Ibn al-Farid. (d.

1235) of Egypt; the illustrious Andalusian, Muhyi'd-Din Ibn al-'Arabi (d.

1240);[1] and the incomparable Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi (d.

1273), never deviated from the discipline of Islam.

The story is told of Rumi, who, riding through the town one day surrounded by his disciples, encountered a Greek who was a Christian.

The Greek, overawed by Rumi's procession, fell prostrate on the ground to render his homage.

Rumi immediately dismounted and did the same.

The Christian, still more overwhelmed, repeated his act of homage, which Rumi reciprocated.

Why, a disciple asked, did a man of his station bring himself so low as to put his forehead to the ground before a Christian?

Rumi replied that were the Christian's humility not matched by a Muslim's,

Muhammad would have been shamed before Jesus.

[1 Author of two outstanding books on mysticism:

Futuhata'l-Makkiyyah and Fususu'l-Hikam.

Ibn-al-'Arabi has been called the greatest of all Islamic mystics.]

The earliest work, in Persian, on Tasawwuf that has come down to us is Kasfu'l-Mahjub by 'Ali Ibn 'Uthman al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri.

It was excellently translated into English by Professor Reynold Nicholson and published in 1911.

In his preface the translator writes: 'I conjecture, then, that the author died between 465 and 469 A.H. [A.D.

1072-3].

His birth may be placed in the last decade of the tenth or the first decade of the eleventh century of our era, and he must have been in the prime of youth when Sultan Mahmud died in 421 .A.H. (1030 A.D.).'

Thus, by the time the very orthodox and fanatical Mahmud of Ghaznah died, Sufiism had been so established and consolidated, possessing its own arcane terminology, that a whole book could be written about it in modern Persian, a language itself young and <p281> fast developing.

It behoves anyone particularly interested in the evolution of mysticism within the Islamic fold to read Hujwiri's book with diligence and patience (it is not an instant manual nor an easy book to read), and discard a good many of the volumes written in the West.

Unfortunately, the West has been subjected to a spate of useless, misleading and even dangerous literature on the subject of Sufiism.

Of course this is not meant to cast a slur on the works of such eminent authorities as Reynold Nicholson, A.

J.

Arberry and Father Cyprian Rice.

Another outstanding service (unequaled in the vast range of western oriental studies) rendered by Reynold Aleyn Nicholson to a proper appraisal and understanding of Islamic mysticism, was the correction and editing of the text and the translation into English of Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi's monumental Mathnavi, a work to which he devoted decades of his life, 'which occupied him day and night into the small hours when the silence of Cambridge is only disturbed by the mad periodic chiming of clocks'.[1] Rumi has justly been hailed as the greatest mystic poet of all time.

A.

J.

Arberry, who sat at the feet of Reynold Nicholson, in his turn made invaluable

contributions to the study of Islamic mysticism.

His translation of the mystical odes of Ibn-al-Farid is particularly noteworthy.

[1 Arberry, Oriental Essays, pp.224-5. ]

A few quotations from Hujwiri's book in Nicholson's translation will clarify many misunderstandings and will show how Sufiism looked to a devotee in the years of its efflorescence.

Even when Hujwiri was writing his book the legend had grown that the birth of Sufiism was conterminous with the birth and the growth of Islam itself.

'Knowledge of the Divine Essence involves recognition, on the part of one who is reasonable and has reached puberty, that God exists externally by His essence, that He is infinite and not bounded by space, that His essence is not the cause of evil, that none of His creatures is like unto Him, that He had neither wife nor child, and that He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that your imagination and intellect can conceive.' (p.

14.)

'Knowledge of the Divine Attributes requires you to know that God has attributes existing in Himself, which are not He nor a part of Him, but exist in Him and subsist by Him, e.g.

Knowledge, Power, Life, Will, Hearing, Sight, Speech, etc.' (p.

14.) <p282>

'Knowledge of the Divine Actions is your knowledge that God is the Creator of mankind and all of their actions, that He brought the non-existent universe into being, that He predestines good and evil and creates all that is beneficial and injurious.' (pp.

14-15.)

'Knowledge of the Law involves your knowing that God has sent us Apostles with miracles of an extraordinary nature; that our Apostle, Muhammad (on whom be peace 1) is a true Messenger, who performed many miracles, and that whatever he has told us concerning the Unseen and the Visible is entirely true.' (p.15.)

'Muhammad b. [Ibn] Fadl al-Balkhi says: "Knowledge is of three kinds -- from God, with God and of God."

Knowledge of God is the science of Gnosis ('ilm-i ma'rifat), whereby He is known to all His prophets and saints.

It cannot be acquired by ordinary means, but is the result of Divine guidance and information.

Knowledge from God is the science of the Sacred Law ('ilm-i shari'at) which He has commanded and made obligatory upon us.

Knowledge with God is the science of the "stations" and the "Path" and the degrees of the saints.

Gnosis is unsound without acceptance of the Law, and the Law is not practised

rightly unless the "stations" are manifested.

Abu 'Ali Thaqafi [native of Nishapur, died 328 A.H.] says: . . . "Knowledge is the life of the heart, which delivers it from the death of ignorance: it is the light of the eye of faith which saves it from the darkness of infidelity".'

(pp.

16-17.)

And here is a perceptive comment by Nicholson:

'When speaking of the various current theories as to the origin of Sufiism, I said that in my opinion they all contained a measure of truth.

No single cause will account for a phenomenon so widely spread and so diverse in its manifestations.

Sufiism has always been thoroughly eclectic, absorbing and transmuting whatever "broken lights" fell across its path, and consequently it gained adherents amongst men of the most opposite views -- theists and pantheists, Mu'tazilites and Scholastics, philosophers and divines.

We have seen what it owed to Greece, but the Perso-Indian elements are not to be ignored.

Although the theory "that it must be regarded as the reaction of the Aryan mind against a Semitic religion imposed on it by force" is inadmissible -- Dhu'l-Nun, for example, was a Copt or Nubian -- the fact remains that there was at the time a powerful anti-Semitic reaction, which expressed itself, more or less consciously, in Sufis of Persian race.

Again, the literary influence of <p283> India upon Muhammadan thought before 1000 A.D. was greatly inferior to that of Greece, as any one can see by turning over the pages of the Fihrist; but Indian religious ideas must have penetrated into Khurasan and Eastern Persia at a much earlier period.'[1]

[1 A Literary History of the Arabs, pp.389-90. ]

Finally, this comment of Father Cyprian Rice ought to be noted: 'This Sufi movement was not itself an order or a sect.

Many confraternities, based on Sufi principles and ideals, did arise in course of time and, in a number of cases, still survive, although the times are against them.'[1]

[1 The Persian Sufis, p.19. ]

We have seen how the Mu'tazilites, at the height of their power, deviated from their noble principles, abused their power and replaced persuasion by brutal force; how the tolerant became intolerant in the face of obstinate intolerance.

Imam Ah. mad Ibn Hanbal almost died, while tortured to give his assent to Mu'tazilite doctrines.

And when the brief reign of al-Wathiq, which had heralded a brighter dawn of liberalism, ended in 847, dark days of orthodox reaction came in with the accession of al-Mutawakkil, and the Mu'tazilites paid the penalty of their intemperance.

Henceforth, their influence was steadily on the wane, but still greater humiliation awaited them.

Hanbalites, now holding the field, made life unbearable in Baghdad.

They even went to the length of denying at-Tabari burial according to the rites of Islam.

Al-Ash'ari's renunciation of Mu'tazilite beliefs and his fierce attacks on them was the worst blow.

Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Isma'il al-Ash'ari (873-4 to 935-6) was a descendant of that Abu-Musa who allowed 'Amr Ibn al-'As to dupe him in the matter of arbitrating between 'Ali and Mu'awiyah.

He is a highly controversial figure.

Up to his fortieth year he was a disciple of the Mu'tazilite leader, al-Jubba'i (d.

915).

Then he broke away and from the pulpit of a mosque in Basrah declared it to be his intention to expose the falsity of Mu'tazilite doctrines.

He carried out that intention with a vengeance.

His polemical output, in condemnation of Mu'tazilite beliefs, was enormous.

The Qur'an, he asserted, was uncreated; it had existed coeval with God.

This asseveration particularly pleased the followers of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

Al-Ash'ari's categorical insistence that all the allegorical verses of the Qur'an bore literal truth, and ought to be accepted as such, *bila kayf* (without asking how), was certainly an impediment to free thought and speculation.

Although the so-called scholastic theology of the Ash'ari school gained ascendancy over the Mu'tazilite system, it must not be assumed that it received universal acceptance immediately.

Sh'iahs of various denominations were decidedly opposed to the orthodoxy of al-Ash'ari and there were still powerful survivors and pockets of resistance amongst the Mu'tazilites.

Ibn-al-Athir relates that as late as 456 A.H. (A.D.

1063-4) 'Amidu'l-Mulk al-Kunduri, the vizier of the Saljuqid Alp-Arslan, with the approval of the king, ordered that the Rafidis[1] (Sh'iahs) as well as the Ash'aris should be publicly denounced from the pulpits of Khurasan.

As a result, prominent Ash'aris such as Abu'l-Qasim al-Qushayri and the Imam al-Haramayn Abu'l-Ma'ali al-Juwayni migrated from the province.

However, the next vizier of the Saljuqs, the celebrated Nizamu'l-Mulk, was a

dedicated and unrelenting Ash'ari, hence his particular antipathy to the Isma'ilis.

It was to promote the Ash'ari school that Nizamu'l-Mulk established his famous college, the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad.

[1 This term which means 'deserters' or 'those who have cast away' was generally applied to the Sh'iahs by the Sunnis.]

Resistance to the rigidities of the Hanbali jurisprudence and the Ash'ari theology led to the formation, in the middle of the tenth century, of a fraternity known as the Ikhwan as-Safa -- Brethren of Purity or Sincerity.

The Society originated in Basrah and then a branch sprang up in Baghdad.

These Brethren were encyclopaedists and tractarians, and issued fifty-two tracts (Rasa'il) in all, covering a wide field: ethics, mathematics, astronomy, geography, philosophy, music -- prerequisites of knowledge for any cultivated and cultured man.

The fifty-second risalah sums up the ideals, the aims and the intents of the previous fifty-one.

There is still a good deal of mystery surrounding these Brethren.

Who were they?

It is obvious that they were men out of sympathy with the prevailing moods and views of the day -- Mu'tazilites, Shi'ites (Isma'ilis in particular), free-thinkers, perhaps Manichaeans and even other brands of Zindiqs.

Two outstanding men, whom orthodoxy has severely condemned as heretics -- Abu-Hayyan at-Tawhidi and the most celebrated Syrian poet, Abu'l-'Ala al-Ma'arri -- have been named as associates of the Brethren.

Names of a number of lesser men have come down to us as the authors of those rasa'il:

Zayd Ibn Rifa'ah, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Harun az-Zanjani, <p285> Abu-Sulayman Muhammad Ibn Nasr al-Busti known as al-Maqdasi, and Abu-Ahmad al-Mihrajani.

However, soon the rise of the Buwayhids changed or at least modified the climate of thought.

But before long Mahmud of Ghaznah became all too powerful, and he was a fanatical upholder of extreme orthodoxy.

Despite Mahmud's machinations Ibn-Sina (Avicenna) managed dexterously to keep out of the way and the clutches of the Ghaznavid monarch, although Abu-Rayhan-i-Biruni, another great savant, accepted service under him.

The works and thoughts of the Ikhwan as-Safa were introduced to al-Andalus (Spain) by Abu'l-Qasim Muslim Ibn Muhammad al-Majriti (d.

1004-5), a native of Madrid, whence they exerted influence over the West.

The scholastic theology of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari would have kept Islam within

a very rigid mould, had it not been for the spiritual odyssey of one man -- Abu-Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali of Tus (1058-1111), whom the West knew as Algazel.

Although al-Ghazali has had his detractors as well as balanced and learned critics, it is impossible to exaggerate the position that he came to occupy (and still occupies) in bringing together the various strands of Islamic religious thought to form a broad, generally acceptable pattern.

Al-Ghazali was well-versed in scholastic theology.

He was a lecturer at the Nizamiyyah College of Baghdad, appointed by Nizamu'l-Mulk himself.

Furthermore, al-Ghazali was well acquainted with the works of Muslim philosophers, which means with the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic thought.

He had a good knowledge of Christian Scriptures, good enough to write a refutation of St.

John's Gospel.

He taught for four years, but as time went on he became restless.

Theology no longer satisfied the yearnings of his soul.

In his remarkable autobiography *al-Munqidh Min ad-Dalal* (Deliverance from Error), which has been likened in some respects to St.

Augustine's *Confessions*, al-Ghazali writes:

'Ever since I was under twenty (now I am over fifty) . . .

I have not ceased to investigate every dogma or belief.

No Batinite[1] did I come across without desiring to investigate his esotericism; no Zahirite, without wishing to acquire the gist of his literalism; <p286> no philosopher,[2] without wanting to learn the essence of his philosophy; no dialectical theologian (*mutakallim*), without striving to ascertain the object of his dialectics and theology; no Sufi, without coveting to probe the secret of his Sufism; no ascetic, without trying to delve into the origin of his asceticism; no atheistic *zindiq*, without groping for the causes of his bold atheism and *zindiqism*.

Such was the unquenchable thirst of my soul for investigation from the early days of my youth, an instinct and a temperament implanted in me by God through no choice of mine.[3]

[1 Isma'ili. (H.M.B.) ]

[2 Neo-Platonist. (P.

K.

Hitti.) ]

[3 Cited by Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp.431-2. ]

Al-Ghazali almost lost his faith -- all was darkness with no glimmer of light.

Theology and philosophy were equally barren, verbal dexterity and intellectual arrogance were equally futile, disputation and labyrinthine reasoning were equally unavailing.

He gave up his post in Baghdad.

Wracked in soul and mind and body, he went wandering over the face of the earth.

Then he turned to mysticism, to Sufi life and practice.

And his soul found peace.

He went back to Baghdad after a long absence, and wrote his monumental works:

Ibya' 'Ulumi'd-Din (The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion) in Arabic and Kimiyay-i-Sa'adat (The Alchemy of Felicity) in Persian.

He also wrote Maqasid al-Falasifah (The Intentions of the Philosophers), Tahafut al-Falasifah (The Inconsistency of the Philosophers) and al-Iqtisad Fi'l-I'tiqad (The Golden Mean in Belief).

Al-Ghazali brought the Shari'at (Religious Law) and the Tariqat (The Mystic Path) together, harmonized philosophy with religious belief, and ironed out the rigidities of the Ash'ari and the Hanbali systems.

Henceforth, the Sufi path, cleared of extravagances, became respectable, philosophy could be countenanced by the theologian, and jurisprudence (fiqh) found its proper level.

Latin translations of al-Ghazali's works made a deep impression on European thought, and it is claimed that St.

Thomas Aquinas was influenced by them. <p287>

27 The Civilization of Islam

'Arab scholars were studying Aristotle,' writes Professor Philip Hitti, 'when Charlemagne and his lords were learning to write their names.'

Scientists in Cordova, with their seventeen great libraries, one alone of which included more than 400,000 volumes, enjoyed luxurious baths at a time when washing the body was considered a dangerous custom at the University of Oxford.'[1]

[1 The Arabs, p.2. ]

Endless argument has gone on as to the correct name of the civilization that grew up in the wake of the establishment of the Faith of Muhammad.

It has been called Arab.

It has been called Saracenic.

Persians have boasted that they civilized the Arabs and led the way into a new era.

Even the grammarians and the philologists and the lexicographers who told the

Arabs what their language was like, how it was constructed, what its possibilities were, and what it could convey, were Persians, the compatriots of those great and learned men have exclaimed triumphantly.

Turks, who came into the realm of Islam decades later, have, in their moments of unbridled nationalistic fervour, claimed as their own all and sundry who blazed the trail (Zoroaster included).

Indeed, al-Farabi, one of the most illustrious and formidable figures in the galaxy of pioneers, was a Turk.

But he seems to have been a solitary figure in the early days.

To Arabs must certainly belong the pride of having released the impetus and the dynamic which a new civilization must needs have; of providing a language immeasurably rich in its achievement and its potential to link men of diverse nations and backgrounds in common purpose and pursuit and common understanding.

Again in the words of Professor Philip Hitti: 'Few peoples in history seem to have been as susceptible to the influence of the word, spoken or written, as the "sons of Arabic", the Arabs' favourite designation of <p288> themselves.

It was only in the field of verbal expression that pre-Islamic Arabians distinguished themselves.

The extent to which they developed their language is surprising; it was out of proportion to the development of their political, social, and economic institutions.

How illiterate camel breeders living in scattered tribes, with no political cohesion to unite them, could develop a refined, richly worded means of expression remains a mystery.[1]

[1 Islam, A Way of Life, p.25. ]

Arabs must not forget, however, that it was not 'Arabism' in any way which moulded and shaped the Islamic civilization.

Persians too must not forget that when the Arabs conquered them and brought them the gift of Islam they were decadent, that culturally they were spent, and socially were slaves of a caste system, that the Sasanian dynasty was no longer fit to govern.

They must also not forget that many of them (in earlier years) still looked back to a dead past for comfort and some of them tried wantonly to wreck rather than to build.

But modern vauntings and tendencies apart, the haughtiness and the race-consciousness of the Arabs, at its height when the House of Umayyah ruled, led to the rise of a movement, chiefly literary, which aimed at denigrating the Arabs and glorifying non-Arabs, particularly the Persians.

Those who followed that line were called the Shu'ubiyyah, deriving their name from a verse in the Qur'an: 'O people!

Verily we have created you from a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know that the noblest of you in the sight of God is he that feareth God the most.

Verily, God is the All-Knowing, the Best-Informed.' (Surah xlix, 13.) Shu'ub is the plural of sba'b, the word which Arabs use today in the sense of 'nation'.

It was believed that in the Qur'anic verse the term qaba'il (tribes) indicated 'Arabs' and shu'ub referred to others.

Of course the modern notion of 'nation' did not then exist.

The Caliph Hisham ordered his men to throw Isma'il Ibn Yasar into a pool, because he had expressed in a poem his pride in his ancestors.

At the other end of the scale was Abu-Tarmam, another poet, taken to task by the vizier for likening the Caliph al-Mu'tasim to Hatim (celebrated for his generosity).

He was asked: 'Dare you compare the Commander of the Faithful with those uncouth Arabs?' Abu-Dulaf al-'Ijli, a courtier attending al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim, had no hesitation in extolling his own <p289> style as Kisratwi (like unto Chosroes).

Since Arabs were renowned and praised for their hospitality, books began to appear commending miserliness.

These were called the 'Books of Misers' (al-Kitabu'l-Bukhala').

One such book was written by a librarian in the service of al-Ma'mun, another by the celebrated al-Jahiz (d.

839), a master of graceful Arabic prose, who was also a prominent Mu'tazilite.

On the other hand Zamakhshari (d.

1144), the last eminent Mu'tazilite, noted for his commentary on the Qur'an, and himself a Persian, thanks God in his introduction to his great work for being free from the proclivities of the Shu'ubis.

Such historians of the first rank as al-Baladhuri (d.

892) and Ibn-Qutaybah, a contemporary of the former but of Iranian descent, parted company with the Shu'ubis; whereas a man as accomplished as al-Biruni (d.

1048), hailed as the greatest of the savants of his age, leaned towards them.

Shu'ubi philologists went to the length of challenging the power of Arabic.

The historian Hamzah of Isfahan (d. circa 961), a profoundly learned man whose contribution to knowledge is indisputable, was ingeniously, but also childish, inventive in finding origins for Arabic words in Persian.

His devious etymology is similar in its infantilism to Mirza Aqa Khan-i-Kirmani's[1] flights of fancy, in the nineteenth century, who found the

origin of the French word *histoire* in the Persian word *ustwar*, the meaning of which is 'firm'.

Shu'ubism never became a political force in the earlier centuries, but endured in different guises, and could be encountered in later times.

[1 He was put to death in Tabriz, in July 1896.]

The civilization of Islam was neither Arab, nor Persian, nor Syriac.

It had all those elements within its fold, and many more:

Egypto-Coptic, Indian, Greek, Spaniard, Berber and Turkish.

Jews, Christians, Muslims, Mazdeans, Sabeans, even Pagans, were equally proud to bear its burden and rear its structure.

Never before in the experience of mankind had monotheistic thought and pagan speculation found a congenial home in which to exist side by side, neither infringing on the other, neither sanctioning the other, neither assimilating the other.

Centuries later, when the pagan thought of ancient Greece trickled back to the West, through the medium of Islamic culture and Arabic translation, the first reaction of the Church was to repudiate and denounce it.

Then the genius and the logic of St.

Thomas Aquinas gave birth <p290> to the system known as Scholasticism, which, in spite of its great and undoubted merits, carried one serious defect, inasmuch as it accorded the sanction and the approval of the Church to a science which was bound to suffer from the ravages of time.

Aristotelian and Pythagorean theorems were thrown into a rigid, immutable cast.

This was the reason why Roger Bacon was frowned on, Copernicus was not favoured and Galileo was persecuted.

On the other hand, when, in the years of decline in Islamic lands, new science was condemned, the culprit was the conglomeration of myths and superstitions, not an officially-blessed Aristotelian system.

The Umayyads, despite their dislike for non-Arab elements in Islamic society, did not differentiate on grounds of creed.

Christians and Jews, if they had any outstanding talent to offer, found posts under the Caliphs, although not in the area of government.

They gravitated towards arts and sciences.

Art, in those early years, was represented solely by poetry, and the science which was eminently desirable was medicine.

However, these disciplines had strict, immediate and practical application.

Poetry was amatory and laudatory and pleased the Caliph and his court.

It was also a double-edged weapon.

In Arabic poetry the abstract was relatively meagre but Arab wit was extremely mordant.

The Prophet is quoted as saying that science has two aspects: the science of religions and the science of human bodies.

The latter is of course medicine.

Galen and Hippocrates[1] stood supreme in that field.

Sh'iahs and Mu'tazilites, as we have already seen, had pioneered in the area of scholastic theology.

Healing provided by medicine is always in demand.

Disciples of Galen were naturally well-received, no matter what their creed.

But search for new horizons, either in the science of healing or any other, did not characterize the period of Umayyad rule.

Theological argument was then gathering momentum, and the establishment of the organs of government was of prime importance.

[1 Jalinus and Buqrat in Arabic. ]

Arabs had already produced in the very early years of Islam a distinguished physician, in the person of al-Harith Ibn Kaladah, who has been styled 'the doctor of the Arabians'.

Al-Harith, who lived on to the days of 'Umar, the second Caliph, received his training in Persia.

He was married to a sister of Aminah, the mother of the Prophet, and so his son, an-Nadr, another physician <p291> of high merit, was a cousin of Muhammad.

During the reign of Marwan I, a Persian Jew named Masarjawayh translated a book on medicine from Syriac into Arabic.

It was the very first of a long line of translations that opened the way for the advent of Islamic civilization and shed lustre upon it.

Although many of the eminent translators were not Muslims, they who set themselves to the pursuit of learning had the words of the Prophet Himself to guide and inspire them. 'Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave', 'Seek knowledge be it even in China', 'The ink from the pen of the scholar is more worthy than the blood of the martyr', 'He who leaves his home in search of knowledge, walks in the path of God' were clear, unhedged, emphatic statements by Muhammad.

And the Qur'an had declared:

'Are they equal: those who know and those who know not?'

(Surah xxxix, 12.)

Baghdad became the cynosure of the world of savants when the Caliph al-Ma'mun established his House of Wisdom (al-Bayt al-Hikmah).

Men came to Baghdad to partake of the liberality of the Caliph and to converse

on themes close to their hearts.

Al-Ma'mun's astronomers computed the circumference of the earth and concluded that it must be a globe.

But many years before al-Ma'mun threw open his court to the savants, listened to their discourses and became an active partner in their discussions, men of learning had reached Baghdad and enjoyed the patronage of the Caliph.

An early arrival was that of Jurjis (George) Ibn Bakhtishu', a Nestorian Christian, who was in charge of the hospital at Jund-i-Shapur.[1] When Nestorians were finding it hard to practise their Faith in Byzantium, Chosroes I, the Sasanian monarch, who had his trials of strength with Justinian, gave them refuge, instituted a College of medicine and philosophy in Jund-i-Shapur (in the province of Khuzistan), and appointed a number of the learned amongst the Nestorians to staff it.

Al-Harith Ibn Kaladah had been trained in that institution.

[1 Or Gundishapur.]

The Caliph al-Mansur summoned Jurjis to Baghdad in the year 765, to attend him during an illness which had proved beyond the competence of his own physicians to cure.

Jurjis remained in the 'Abbasid capital, still a Nestorian.

His son, Bakhtishu', and the latter's son, Jibra'il (Gabriel) rose to great eminence under al-Mansur's successors, and indeed, for some two hundred and fifty years, the gifted descendants of Jurjis Ibn Bakhtishu' dominated the medical scene in Baghdad.

Some six years after the arrival of Jurjis from Jund-i-Shapur, an Indian came to Baghdad with a book on astronomy -- a Siddhanta.[1] The Caliph wished it to be translated.

Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al-Fazari undertook the task, and earned the distinction of being the first astronomer in the realm of Islam.

The celebrated Muhammad Ibn Musa al-Kharazmi, at the bidding of al-Ma'mun, took the work of al-Fazari a stage further, brought together the Indian and the Greek disciplines of astronomy, and produced the Astronomical Tables (Zij), based on al-Fazari's, which gained great fame.

Abu 'Abdu'llah Muhammad Ibn Jabir Ibn Sinan al-Battani (d.

929), known in the West as Albategnius, was the author of another set of Astronomical Tables, which in its Latin version provided the groundwork of astronomy in Europe for several centuries.

The pioneering work and the contributions of al-Kharazmi cannot be overrated.

He was a Persian and a native of Baghdad.

Although his part in the development of astronomy was significant, far more important was his work in the field of mathematics.

It was he who adopted Indian numerals and made use of zero, which facilitated calculation to an extent hitherto unknown and prepared the way for great scientific advance.

The word 'zero' comes from the Arabic *sifr* which means 'empty'.

In all probability either he or some other savant in the area of the Islamic civilization evolved the very concept of zero.

When the Indian numerals reached the Western world, to oust the Roman, they came to be known as 'Arabic numerals'.

Al-Kharazmi was also the originator of algebra, which attained its highest development within the pale of the Islamic civilization, at the hands of the celebrated 'Umar Khayyam. 'Algebra' comes from the Arabic word 'al-Jabr', meaning the renovation of something broken.

Trigonometry, both plane and spherical, is another branch of mathematics that owes its inception to the scientists of the Islamic civilization.

The term 'sine' (L. *sinus*), used in trigonometry, is the Latin translation of the Arabic word 'Jayb' which means an 'opening'.

[1 Sindh in Arabic. ]

The following list of the names of stars and scientific terms, by no means exhaustive, will suffice to indicate the measure of the indebtedness of Western civilization to the civilization of Islam: <p293>

Stars:

Betelgeuse -- Bayt al-Jawza' (The House of Twins); Altair -- at-Ta'ir (The Flyer); Pherkad -- Farqad (Calf); Acrab -- 'Aqrab (Scorpion); Algedi -- al-Jadi (Kid).

Scientific Terms:

Alembics -- al-Inbiq; Alkali -- al-Qili; Arsenic -- Zarnikh; Azimuth -- as-Sumut; Nadir -- Nazir; Zenith -- Samt ar-ra's.

Al-Kharazmi, whose name appeared in Europe as *Algorism* or *Algorithm*, signifying decimal notation, made use primarily of Indian sources.

But by then, Greek sources were being copiously translated into Arabic and made available to scholars.

For over a hundred years translators transmitted in Arabic to the world of Islam gems of Greek philosophy and science, which Christian Europe had neglected and even repudiated.

Many of these works were first translated into Syriac and then into Arabic.

Those eminent translators came mainly from two groupings of people: the Nestorian Christians and the pagans of Harran (who eventually claimed to be Sabeans and people of the Book).

Christians of the Jacobite persuasion also contributed their share.

So did the Jews.

And so did the Muslims.

Hunayn Ibn Ishaq (809-73), known to the West as Joannitius, is hailed as the doyen of that distinguished host of translators.

He was a Nestorian from Hira, and served under the physician Jibra'il Ibn Bakhtishu', in Baghdad, rising eventually to such eminence in the field of medicine as to obtain appointment as the Caliph's personal physician.

But before al-Mutawakkil accorded him that highly-coveted honour, Hunayn was, under al-Ma'mun, the director of the Caliph's Academy and his duties entailed the work of translation.

He wrote in Syriac, and his son, Ishaq, who was a better master of the language, rendered his Syriac translations into Arabic.

Hunayn had other able assistants, including his nephew, Hubaysh.

Befitting his high standing in his profession, Hunayn turned his attention, in particular, to the works of Galen and Hippocrates, but he also translated Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Categories and Physics.

The originals of seven books on Anatomy by Galen are irretrievably lost, but Hunayn's work has saved them from total loss.

It is sad to relate that a man of the calibre of Hunayn committed suicide, because Bishop Theodosius excommunicated him.

The man who led the field amongst the pagans of Harran was Thabit Ibn Qurrah (836-901), who even amended and improved the translation of Euclid made by Hunayn.

Sinan (d.

943), the son of Thabit, proved as talented a translator as his father, and this tradition of excellence continued within the family of Thabit Ibn Qurrah.

Two grandsons, one named after him and another named Ibrahim, as well as a great-grandson, Abu'l-Faraj, made noteworthy contributions, both as translators and savants.

Qusta Ibn Luqa (Costa, son of Luke, d.

922), a Christian of Ba'labakk, was another accomplished translator.

No matter how significant, important and far-reaching the pioneering work of Hunayn Ibn Ishaq was in the area of translation, one must not overlook his stature as a physician and his own original contributions to learning, particularly in the sphere of medicine.

It is said that he wrote nearly a hundred books, mostly on his own subject.

His Ten Treatises on the Eye (al-'Ashr Maqalat Fi'l-'Ayn) is considered to be the oldest systematic work extant on ophthalmology.

He was also the author of Questions on the Eye.

Hunayn scientifically explained the structure of the eye and the brain and the connection between the two.

He also gave an accurate description of the prevalent diseases of the eye and remedies available.

As we have seen, the Jews and the Christians were the first to gain distinction in the discipline of medicine.

But it was not long before Muslims came to attain equal eminence. 'Ali Ibn Sahl Rabban at-Tabari, a Persian Christian from the shores of the Caspian Sea, embraced Islam during the reign of al-Mutawakkil and while attached to his court wrote, in the year 850, an encyclopaedia, which he termed Firdaws al-Hikmah (The Paradise of Wisdom).

Dealing chiefly with medicine, 'Ali at-Tabari treated in that book of astronomy and philosophy as well.

The hold of the savants of the world of Islam on the science of medicine and the art of healing was astonishing, a hold which they maintained for several centuries and which was consolidated in the Western world by the medium of the Latin translations of their works and by the rise of institutions in the West modelled on theirs.

Anyone entering the chapel of Princeton University should not be surprised to find on a window panel the figure of a turbaned oriental holding a scroll on which Arabic characters are inscribed.

This figure represents Abu-Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariyya' ar-Razi (865-925), known as Rhazes in the West, a Persian, native of the city of Ray, considered by an impressive body of authoritative opinion to have been the greatest of all the physicians of Islamic civilization.

The inscription on his parchment is the title of his magnum opus:

Kitab al-Hawi, which translated into Latin was given the title of Continens, signifying that the whole science of medicine was contained therein.

And in the great hall of the Medical School of the University of Paris, amongst the portraits of the eminent men of science, one encounters Rhazes and also Abu-'Ali Ibn Sina (980-1037), whom the West knows as Avicenna, another formidable figure of the civilization of Islam.

Avicenna was also a Persian, a native of Balkh.

These portraits, placed as they are in a venerable and ancient institution, itself raised on the pattern of Islam's distinguished centres of learning bear witness to the high regard which the West has had for those benefactors of the world of humanity.

Ar-Razi composed another all-embracing medical work in ten volumes, which he named Kitab at-Tib al-Mansuri (The Book of Mansuri on Medicine), after the

Samanid Amir, Mansur Ibn Ishaq.

Liber Almansoris is the title of its rendition into Latin, which was published in Milan, in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

Even in recent years sections from Kitab al-Mansuri have appeared in both French and German versions.

Ar-Razi's particular distinction lies in the fact that he was the first physician to give an accurate clinical description of smallpox and measles.

His monograph on the subject, entitled al-Judari w'al-Hasbah, was printed as late as 1848, in London, in an English translation by W.

A.

Greenhill.

Ar-Razi was a profound philosopher and alchemist as well.

His alchemy laid the foundations of modern chemistry.

Sirr al-Asrar (The Mystery of Mysteries, Secretum Secretorum in Latin), his book on alchemy, has the great merit of dispensing with legend, to rely on laboratory techniques and clear scientific analysis.

He used instruments and methods previously unknown.

In this field ar-Razi was preceded by Jabir Ibn Hayyan (Geber to the West):

Although Jabir was primarily an alchemist, it was he who first crossed the borderline from the murkiness of his ancient craft to the clarity of scientific precision.

Jabir was a native of the city of Tus and rose to fame in Baghdad.

There he enjoyed the patronage of the House of Barmak and became a follower of the sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq.

The fall of the Barmecides forced Jabir to abandon Baghdad for Kufah.

It is believed that he died in his native city <p296> in the year 815.

Many are the works attributed to Jabir Ibn Hayyan, but modern research has indicated that Isma'ili scholars of a later period had a hand in composing many of them.

Translated into Latin, Jabir's works had a certain vogue in the West and were even preferred to ar-Razi's Book of Mysteries.

We shall return later to examine the standing and the achievements of both ar-Razi and Avicenna as thinkers and philosophers.

However, great as ar-Razi's attainments were in the field of medicine, it was the al-Qanun fi't-Tibb (Canon of Medicine), the encyclopaedic work of Avicenna, which, over several centuries, set the standard of medical knowledge in both the East and the West.

In the course of the last three decades of the fifteenth century, Avicenna's Canon, consisting of five books, was printed fifteen times in its Latin version.

And in the seventeenth century it was still used in the universities of the West.

The genius of Shaykhu'r-Ra'is Abu-'Ali Ibn Sina, was a rarity amongst men.

By the age of eighteen he had mastered all that was to be learnt of human knowledge.

Barely twenty years old, he was ministering to the sick, writing tomes and treatises, instructing pupils.

Sana'i, a leading mystic Persian poet of the twelfth century prays fervently that God may grant him, at all times, such wisdom and understanding as would excite envy in the soul of Abu-'Ali Ibn Sina.

And the poet who thus prayed was himself held in such high regard that the great Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi wrote: 'Attar[1] was the light and Sana'i his two eyes; we came following their trail.'

[1 Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar, see p.

276. ]

Avicenna went on to become a king's[1] minister.

During the day he transacted affairs of state.

At night he taught and wrote.

And he wrote the greatest of his works without using any notes or books of reference, totally impromptu.

The range of his writings is breath-taking.

He wrote on all branches of science, on music, logic, metaphysics, mysticism, philology and prosody.

[1 Shamsi'd-Dawlih, the Buwayhid ruler in Hamadan. ]

The Prophet Himself, as we have seen, had focused attention on the art of healing.

The blind fanaticism of the Byzantines which caused the closure, in 489, of the school maintained by the Nestorians in Edessa, and made Justinian ban, in 529, the school kept in Athens by the Neo-Platonic philosophers, redounded to the advantage of the Sasanians and enriched their colleges and institutions <p297> at Jund-i-Shapur[1] by the inflow of Christian expatriates who were received with open arms.

These flourishing establishments in the south-west corner of Iran, in the land of ancient Elam and the cradle of the Achaemenians, which soon became part of the realm of Islam, greatly benefited both the study and the practice of medicine amongst the Muslims.

Next, the rise of eminent disciples of the art of healing, Jewish, Christian, Mazdean and Muslim, within the realm of Islam, induced favourable conditions for the rapid development and extension of institutions where the means of healing could be dispensed with efficiency.

When in the West the practice of medicine was still primitive, over the realm of Islam, hospitals known by the Persian designation of Bimaristan (Home for the Sick) were appearing, all well ordered and systematized.

[1 Gundishapur. ]

These hospitals had ample endowments for their maintenance.

The Bimaristan of Baghdad, one of the largest, was named al-Adudi, after its founder and benefactor, Adudi'd-Dawlih, the most renowned of the Buwayhid rulers.

Al-'Atiq of Cairo had the great Salahi'd-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin) as its founder.

In the midst of all his battles and preoccupations, that remarkable man, whose generosity of spirit and liberality never flagged, found time to attend to the establishment of a bimdristan.

The bimaristans had separate wards for various branches of medicine such as internal diseases, ophthalmology and orthopaedics; and there were further divisions for specific ailments, such as fevers, diarrhoea and diverse afflictions of the mind.

Furthermore, the bimaristans had well-equipped departments of pharmacy, under competent heads, to provide the patients with all their needs.

The freedom which the physicians enjoyed in carrying out useful experiments was phenomenal.

Physicians wrote down the accounts of their clinical observations and the results of their experiments to which the public at large had full access.

Allied to the art of healing is the knowledge of drugs, the discovery of new substances which have remedial qualities and experimentation with them -- which is pharmacology.

This science too was diligently pursued with outstanding results.

A book by Abu-Rayhan al-Biruni[1] ought to be mentioned in this connection.

This is Kitab al-Saydal fi't-Tibb (The Book of Drugs in Medicine).

It is a pharmacopeia which richly details the advances made. <p298> Many of the substances, included in Abu-Rayhan's book, were naturally superseded in later times, but this fact does not detract from the value of the work of those pharmacologists of the realm of Islam.

[1 Abu-Rayhan-i-Biruni. ]

Abu-Rayhan (973-1048) was himself a man of considerable achievement.

Familiar with Sanskrit, Syriac and Hebrew, he drew upon several sources to

enrich his own keen and precise observations in the field of natural sciences.

In three profound volumes he surveyed systems of calendars throughout the ages, dealt with the rotation of the earth on its own axis, worked out latitudes and longitudes and systematized all that was known of the various branches of mathematics and astronomy and astrology.

Accompanying the Ghaznavid conquerors to India, he fell in love with the spirit of that land, prolonged his stay, and wrote the first comprehensive book about India.

As already remarked, a significant contribution by the savants of the Islamic civilization was the use they made of laboratory techniques and the invention of instruments which facilitated measurements and computations.

The three sons of Musa Ibn Shakir -- Muhammad, Ahmad and Hasan -- set up an observatory in their own home in Baghdad, which rivalled the observatory that the Caliph al-Ma'mun had built in the capital.

These enterprising men took the young Hunayn Ibn Ishaq under their wing and sent him to search in other lands for manuscripts, the works of ancient Greece.

Al-Ma'mun did the same, sending his emissaries to seek out manuscripts.

The learned sons of Musa Ibn Shakir also took part in the delicate and important operations (already referred to) which aimed at measuring and determining the size of the earth and its circumference, taking it for granted that the earth was round.

Jund-i-Shapur had achieved the further distinction of possessing the first observation post, equipped with adequate and up-to-date instruments, to take measurements of the earth and the stars.

Next the honour fell to al-Ma'mun to extend the scope of celestial observations; and it was as an adjunct to his Bayt al-Hikmah -- the House of Wisdom -- that the first observatory was established in Baghdad.

Later, on a hill close to Damascus, this enlightened Caliph raised a second observatory.

The Buwayhid rulers were no less enthusiastic in promoting astronomical studies.

Rukni'd-Dawlih, in Ray, and Sharafi'd-Dawlih, in Baghdad, gave their patronage to celebrated astronomers and <p299> provided them with observatories.

Of the invaluable contributions made to astronomical knowledge throughout the realm of Islam, in places as far apart as Shiraz and Samarqand, the work of al-Battani (Albategnius to the West), noted earlier, and of 'Umar Khayyam, ought to be particularly underlined.

Al-Battani came from Harran -- the home of pagans who paraded as Sabeans.

Al-Battani was Sabean before his conversion to Islam.

He dominated the closing decades of the ninth and the opening decades of the tenth century.

Al-Battani carried a good deal further the work of Ptolemy and corrected some of his calculations. 'Umar, whom Edward Fitzgerald has immortalized in his brilliant renderings of the *Ruba'iyyat*, was by far a greater mathematician and astronomer than poet.[1] The whole of Khayyam's quatrains, which are of uncertain number, pale into insignificance beside the scientific work of this sage of Nishapur.

Under the patronage of the Saljuqid Jalali'd-Din Malik-Shah and Nizamu'l-Mulk, that monarch's highly accomplished minister, Khayyam, with the assistance of other astronomers working in the observatory provided for them, devised a new calendar, which Iran has now officially adopted.

Named *Tarikh-i-Jalali*, after the Saljuq king, it is much more accurate than the Gregorian Calendar.

The latter goes wrong by one day in 3330 years, whereas Khayyam's calendar makes that error only in 5000 years.

[1 Recent attempts to decry Fitzgerald's translation, and to make of Khayyam a Sufi murshid are risible.]

The science of optics, which, in later times, came to have close association with astronomy, was also assiduously cultivated by the savants of the realm of Islam.

The name that stands out most prominently in this connection is that of Ibn-al-Haytham (Alhazen in the West).

It has been said that ar-Razi, Abu-Nasr al-Farabi, Abu-'Ali Ibn Sina and Ibn-al-Haytham were the four pillars sustaining the edifice of the civilization of Islam.

Ar-Razi and Avicenna, as we have seen, were Persians, al-Farabi was a Turk and Ibn-al-Haytham (Hasan Ibnal-Haytham) was an Arab of Basrah.

But one must not forget the paramount importance of the pioneering work of Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (801-73), hailed as the 'Philosopher of the Arabs'.

In the words of Professor Hitti: 'The harmonization of Greek philosophy with Islam begun by al-Kindi, an Arab, was continued by al-Farabi, a Turk, <p300> and completed in the East by ibn-Sina, a Persian.' [1] More of al-Kindi's works have survived in Latin rendering than in their original Arabic, thanks to the labours of Gerard of Cremona (1114-87), the most prolific and the most accurate of a host of Latin translators of works in Arabic.

[1 History of the Arabs, p.371. ]

Al-Kindi's book on optics, translated into Latin under the title of *De Aspectibus*, which undoubtedly influenced Roger Bacon (1214-94), had the final word on the subject until Ibn-al-Haytham began his investigation and experiments, and wrote on 'Light' and its properties.

We shall come back to the work and the achievement of al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn-Sina, the three who did more than any others to promote the knowledge and the understanding of music.

These Muslim savants looked at music as a branch of mathematics.

Ibn-al-Haytham had an early failure which nearly caused him to lose his life.

Al-Hakim (reigned 996-1021), the Fatimid Caliph in whose service Ibn-al-Haytham had enrolled, commissioned him to devise a system of controlling the annual rise of the waters of the Nile.

He failed, and just escaped with his life.

Ibn-al-Haytham can be rightly acclaimed as the progenitor of the art of photography and ultimately the cinematograph, for it was he who first demonstrated the principle of the camera-obscura during an eclipse.

However, it took three centuries before another Muslim scientist, Kamali'd-Din al-Farisi (d.

1320), took that principle and its application a stage further.

Ibn-al-Haytham's work on optics provides another vivid example of the attention to observation and experiment which the savants of the Islamic civilization increasingly displayed.

He used a variety of lenses and mirrors for his experiments, and studied the refraction of light.

His investigation of the atmospheric refraction enabled him to measure the height of the atmosphere.

Ibn-al-Haytham's book, *Kitab al-Manazir* (The Book of Optics), had a wide range of influence in the West.

Yet another instance of the considerable success of the Muslim scientists, in developing new instruments and gaining fresh insight and knowledge by their use, is provided by Biruni's determination of a number of specific gravities.

We hear of those three indefatigable sons of Musa Ibn Shakir writing the first book about mechanics, in the year 860, which contained descriptions of various appliances then in common use.

Some of the items described are not particularly remarkable, but there are also a number, new to the experience of mankind and exceedingly effective.

Although instituting libraries, open to scholars, was not a measure specific to the civilization of Islam and had impressive precedents in Hellenistic and pre-Hellenistic times, the scope, the range and the number of libraries within the realm of Islam greatly added to the splendours of that civilization.

From al-Ma'mun's Bayt al-Hikmah came many of the great advances of Islamic civilization.

And it was the library attached to this House of Wisdom which became the model institution.

Al-Mu'tadid (892-902), the sixteenth caliph of the House of 'Abbas, opened an academy in his newly-built palace, fully equipped with books and all other appurtenances of learning, staffed by competent teachers to serve the needs of the students.

Incidentally, this Caliph had a Christian at the head of his department for the army.

In Baghdad, men of ample means, collectors of books who owned sizeable libraries, were not tardy in emulating the caliphs and providing the student and the scholar with every amenity.

When Avicenna was summoned to attend the Samanid Amir Nuh II (976-97), who lay seriously ill, he was given the freedom of the royal library. 'I entered a building,' he writes in his short autobiography, that had many rooms.

In these, trunkfuls of books rested on top of one another.

In one room there were books on linguistics and poetry; in another, books on jurisprudence and so on.

I looked up the catalogue of the books of the Greeks, and asked for those I required.

I found books there even the names of which are unknown to most men, compositions that I had not encountered before and have not encountered since.

I read those books and realized what the position of each author was in various branches of knowledge.

Thus by the time I had reached my eighteenth year I had mastered all those sciences.

My memory was better then, but now I am more experienced.

My knowledge is exactly what I garnered in those days.' That peerless library of the Samanid ruler had a sad fate.

His rebellious troops set fire to it, and Avicenna's enemies averred that it was he who was responsible for that act of arson, in order to deny others the benefits of the royal collection.

Mosul possessed a Dar al-'Ilm (House of Knowledge), established <p302> by its citizens, which had a fine library.

Scholars pursued their studies there free of charge.

They were even given all the paper they required.

The Buwayhid ruler, 'Adudi'd-Dawlih, founded in Shiraz a Khizanat-al-Kutub (Treasury of Books), well known and well organized.

Ray boasted a vast Bayt-al-Kutub (House of Books), the catalogue of which,

alone, was in ten volumes.

The Fatimid al-Hakim established a library in Cairo, the Dar-al-Hikmah (Home of Wisdom), which excelled all the rest because of the opulence of material and facilities, and the munificence of the benefactor.

Not only were there well-paid, deeply-versed librarians at the service of the public, but those who wished to follow a line of study were given a stipend to enable them to concentrate on their work.

Thus, literary pursuits were encouraged from Bukhara and Marv and Kharazm, at one end of the realm of Islam, to Cairo and Fustat and Qayrawan and the magnificent institutions of Moorish Spain, at the other, culminating in the superb library of Cordova, founded by the Umayyad Caliph, al-Hakam II (961-76), which housed 400,000 volumes, with a catalogue in forty-four volumes.

#### AL-ANDALUS

Moorish Spain provides a dazzling example of the civilizing power of Islam.

Out of the desolate Visigothic wilderness, rampant with hate and oppression, Muslims fashioned a land of peace and plenty, brought equity and justice and tolerance to reign, and lit a torch of culture in the fair land of al-Andalus that illumined the continent.

When their political fabric gave way to accumulating stresses, that brilliant torch blazed the brighter, overshadowing the darkness of internal disorder and anarchy.

And when the Christian reconquest was completed and only the architectural glories of al-Andalus remained, then bigotry, intolerance and the Inquisition held dominance over Spain.

Flushed with victory, the Christian conquerors sailed across the Atlantic in search of their El Dorado, destroyed ancient civilizations, built an empire and gathered riches, but Spain never again rose to the heights she had attained under the Muslims.

Her eclipse in the course of the subsequent centuries provides a salutary lesson.

We discontinued the story of Moorish Spain at the point when 'Abda'r-Rahman, a scion of the Umayyads of Damascus, escaped from the 'Abbasid blood-bath and established himself as the <p303> master of al-Andalus.[1] The Emirate set up by him, although naturally independent of the 'Abbasids who had exterminated his family, was not a rival to their dominion. 'Abda'r-Rahman did not claim the title of caliph.

His mother was a Berber, which won for him the whole-hearted support of those natives of North Africa who constituted the majority of the Muslims in al-Andalus.

Arabs, though not too numerous, held the reins of power.

They were of two factions:

Yemenites or Himyarites and Mudarites or Qaysites.

The latter opposed 'Abda'r-Rahman, while the Himyarites rallied to him.

For the Muwalladun, that is the Spanish Muslims, it was immaterial who the new ruler was and what claims he had to that position.

The Umayyad Amir of al-Andalus was wise, patient and efficient, a contrast to the last members of his family, occupants of the seat of authority in Damascus.

But he had been severely tested in the crucible of adversity.

[1 See p.237. ]

'Abda'r-Rahman ruled al-Andalus from 756 to 788.

His death in that year did not shake the foundations which he had laid, and by the time 'Abda'r-Rahman II came to the throne in 822, the Umayyad Emirate was well consolidated.[1] The second 'Abda'r-Rahman reigned for thirty years over a land tranquil and prosperous, but the following six decades were turbulent ones in the life of al-Andalus.

The three Amirs who succeeded 'Abda'r-Rahman II were weak, and at least one of them, 'Abdu'llah (888-912), was rather subservient to Malikite jurists.

Unruly notables were many, the most dangerous and the most powerful of whom was Ibn-Hafsun, a Spanish Muslim, one of the Muwalladun.

Eventually, Ibn-Hafsun went to the Christian fold, although there was a time when it seemed that he was prepared to acknowledge the supremacy of the Fatimid Caliphs.

His conversion caused many to abandon him, but he and his sons after him were, for years, a source of grave embarrassment to the State, a pernicious force to be reckoned with.

In those decades of instability the cultural life of al-Andalus did not suffer decline.

On the contrary it gained further strength.

The celebrated musician, Ziryab, came from Baghdad during those years, to set up a vigorous tradition of his art in al-Andalus.

The talented poet, Ibn-'Abd-Rabbih (860-940), whose great fame rests on his compilation of a literary <p304> encyclopaedia, al-'Iqd al-Farid (The Peerless Necklace), also flourished at this time.

[1 'Abda'r-Rahman I was succeeded by his son Hisham I (788-96), whose son al-Hakam I (796-822) was the father of 'Abda'r-Rahman II.]

'Abda'r-Rahman III (912-61), a grandson of 'Abdu'llah, succeeded him at the age of twenty-one.

His long reign and the shorter one of his son, al-Hakam II, covering between them the best part of the tenth century, witnessed the zenith of Umayyad power

in Spain and constituted the golden age of al-Andalus.

Father and son were both patrons of learning, and to their courts came savants and poets and artists, men of many talents, to bask in the sunshine of their liberality.

Al-Hakam II, who founded the great library of Cordova, the greatest in the realm of Islam, was himself a scholar, a man of deep erudition.

In the days of this father and son al-Andalus could boast of four hundred flourishing towns and cities, seventeen colleges and universities, and seventy well-stocked libraries.

Cordova alone had six hundred mosques, nine hundred public baths and eighty schools.

'Abda'r-Rahman III found himself confronted by the menace of the rising power of the Fatimids, which, for a while, extended over the whole of North Africa, reaching the environs of Spain.

And a time came when all that was left to 'Abda'r-Rahman of his North African possessions were the two cities of Ceuta and Tangier.

But once the Fatimids turned to the East to conquer Egypt and then move southwards, their pressure on North Africa eased considerably, and 'Abda'r-Rahman's successors regained much of the lost territory.

However, to safeguard his position in al-Andalus, 'Abda'r-Rahman, in the year 929, proclaimed himself Caliph and also Amira'l-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful), styling himself An-Nasir Li-Dini'llah (Defender of the Faith of God).

The 'Abbasid Caliphate was, by then, only a pale ghost of what it had been, and by establishing another Sunni Caliphate, 'Abda'r-Rahman provided a bastion to ward off the onslaught of the Fatimids.

When al-Hakam died his son, Hisham, was a minor, and soon intrigue developed around him.

In the contest for power a certain Ibn-Abi-'Amir emerged the victor and ruled wisely in the name of the boy-Caliph.

He took the title of al-ManSur (the Victorious).

After him his son, 'Abdu'l-Malik, entitled al-Muzaffar (the Triumphant), guided the destinies of the Umayyad Caliphate with similar wisdom and circumspection.

Unfortunately he had only six years as the administrator of the state, and died in 1008, in circumstances that have remained obscure and unexplained.

His younger brother, 'Abda'r-Rahman, entitled al-Ma'mun, who succeeded him, was foolish and possessed of vaulting ambition.

He forced Hisham to transfer the Caliphate to him.

This event caused the Umayyads to revolt.

Six of them occupied the throne in quick succession.

There were also three members of a half-Berber family, the Hammudids, who donned the mantle of caliph.

By the year 1031 the Caliphate was extinct and al-Andalus plunged into total anarchy.

Out of that welter gradually a number of petty kingdoms took shape, the most brilliant of which was the Kingdom of Seville, founded by a judge, the Qadi Muhammad Ibn 'Abbad.

And yet in that maelstrom arts flourished and poetical expression bloomed afresh.

The Qadi's son, al-Mu'tadid, and his grandson al-Mu'tamid, kings of Seville, were both eloquent poets.

The petty kingdoms into which al-Andalus had split were ruled by three ethnic groups:

Berbers, Andalusians (a fusion of Arab and Spanish stock) and the Saqalibah, that is to say Slavs (a composite group, newcomers to al-Andalus).

The breakdown of the unified al-Andalus gave ample scope and opportunity to the Christian principalities of Castile and Leon, Aragon and Navarre, outgrowths of the mountain fastnesses of northern Spain, to make further and further inroads into Muslim domains.

This was the time when the legend of El Cid was born.

Cid is the same as Sayyid in Arabic, which means lord and master.

The celebrated Cid -- Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar -- was a Castilian nobleman who broke away from Alfonso VI of Castile, in or around 1081, and entered the service of the Muslim ruler of Saragossa.

His reward was dominion over Valencia, a town almost entirely inhabited by Muslims.

In 1085, the same Alfonso VI wrested the very important centre of Toledo from the Muslims, and the much-praised city never again reverted to them.

Then it was that al-Mu'tamid of Seville decided to seek aid from the Berbers of North Africa to stem the onrush of the Christians.

North Africa, at this point, was in the grip of al-Murabitun: a body of the Sanhajah tribes of the Berbers.

A certain 'Abdu'llah Ibn Yasin, invited by an elder of the Sanhajah to teach his people and meeting with opposition, had retired to an island on the River Niger.

There disciples had rallied to him and from his ribat (cloister) a religious revival had ensued.

Hence the name al-Murabitun given to his body of disciples, which in European <p306> languages has become Almoravids.

When al-Mu'tamid's plea for help reached North Africa the Amir of al-Murabitun was a man named Yusuf Ibn Tashufin.

Yusuf was the founder of the renowned city of Marakish (Marrakesh).

He responded to al-Mu'tamid's call, led his warriors into Spain, inflicted a crushing defeat on Alfonso at Zallaqah (near Badajoz) and returned to North Africa.

However, the chronic disunity of al-Andalus allowed Alfonso to retrieve the situation, and before long the Malikite jurists who held sway in al-Andalus, as well as al-Mu'tamid and other potentates, were begging Yusuf to return.

This time, having repelled Alfonso once again, he stayed and took over the petty kingdoms, one by one.

In a short while, al-Mu'tamid, the accomplished poet-king of Seville, found himself a prisoner in Yusuf's hands.

Al-Andalus had three Almoravid rulers (who had the title of Amira'l-Muslimin -- the Commander of the Muslims) from 1064 to 1145.

But then the Almoravid kingdom crashed.

The rot set in with the fall of Saragossa to Alfonso I of Aragon in 1118.[1] Next, in 1133, Alfonso VII of Castile found himself in a position to take the offensive.

Popular discontent, rumbling for a while, broke into open revolt in 1144, and the Almoravid rule could not survive the convulsion.

[1 It is interesting to note that this was the year when, as predicted by astrologers many rulers died.

See pp.

322-3.]

In the meantime, North Africa was swept by yet another religious revival: that of al-Muwahhidun (Unitarians), or Almohads in European jargon.

Exponents of the new religious outlook were the Masmudah group of Berber tribes.

The Muwahhidun apparently had Zahirite tendencies which made the dominant Malikite jurists of al-Andalus detest them.

Matters were made even worse when Ibn-Tumart, the fount-head of the new movement, claimed in about the year 1121 to be no less a person than the Mahdi -- the Deliverer.

But the Murabitun, backed though they were by the Malikites, were fast losing ground.

The Muwahhidun conquered the city of Marakish in 1147, and soon they spread over al-Andalus.

Ibn-Tumart died on the battlefield in 1130.

He had, in his lifetime, given the command over his people to 'Abdu'l-Mu'min, the most distinguished of his lieutenants. 'Abdu'l-Mu'min intended to invade al-Andalus, but it was left to Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf I, his son who succeeded him in 1163, to cross the sea. <p307> Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf went so far as to lay siege to Toledo, a daring but unsuccessful enterprise.

Still pursuing his campaigns against the Christians, he was fatally wounded while besieging a fortress near Lisbon.

His death, in 1184, was a great loss, as he was both a just and efficient ruler.

Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub, his son, had to call a halt to the military operations in al-Andalus, because there were urgent matters in Algeria to engage his attention.

But when he could turn once again to the almost constant struggle against the Christians, this third Caliph of the Almohads heavily defeated Alfonso VIII of Castile, at Alarcos in 1195, nearly half-way between Toledo and Cordova.

Within four years of his signal victory, Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub was dead, to be succeeded by a son, Muhammad (entitled an-Nasir), who was unequal to the tasks which lay ahead.

On the other hand, smarting under the serious reverse at Alarcos, the Christian camp was particularly active and agitated.

Ecclesiastics took the matter hard, preached a Crusade, and began to mend fences between the contending Christian principalities.

A herculean effort was demanded to turn the tide.

It all bore fruit, because in the year 1212, Leon, Castile, Aragon and Navarre, making common cause, crushed the army of Muhammad an-Nasir at Las Navas de Tolosa.

This defeat spelled the end of the rule of Almohads in al-Andalus.

Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf II, who succeeded his father a year later, at the age of fifteen, carried on precariously for ten years, and when he died in 1223, the power of al-Muwahhidun died with him.

Leon and Castile were united in 1230 and the Castilian Ferdinand III vigorously pressed his advantage over the almost leaderless and broken Muslims.

He conquered Cordova in 1236 and Seville in 1248.

It seemed then that the end had come for Muslim rule in Spain, but a man of Medinite origin, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ibn Nasr had carved out, in the year 1235, a kingdom for himself round the city of Granada.

This Nasrid kingdom endured to the end of the 15th century.

The amazing vitality of the Islamic civilization in al-Andalus is evidenced by the fact that not only did it not wilt and wither when exposed to the harsh strains of encroachment from without and disorders from within, but it became even more productive, more fruitful.

The joie de vivre which pervades the work of the poets and the men of belles-lettres in those decades of darkening horizons, such as Ibn-Hazm (994-1064), Ibn-Zaydun (1003-70) and Ibn-Khafajah (1050-1139), is unbelievable.

Ibn-Hazm, who composed *The Ring of the Dove* (Tawqa'l-Hamamah),<sup>[1]</sup> a book on love, was a theologian.

When hemmed in within the enclave of Granada, Muslim genius defiantly gave birth to the wonder and the beauty which is the Alhambra:

Al-Hamra' -- the Red Palace.

And three of the most brilliant minds of any age belong to this period:

Ibn-Rushd (1128-98), whom the West knows as Averroes, hailed as the greatest philosopher of Islam; Muhyi'd-Din Ibn al-'Arabi (1165-1240), perhaps the greatest of all the Muslim mystics; and Ibn-Khaldun (1332-1406), the most penetrating of all the Muslim historians.

[1 Translated by A.

J.

Arberry (1953). ]

Ibn-Tufayl (c.

1105-85), Abubacer in the West, was another noted philosopher of al-Andalus.

He it was who, befriending Ibn-Rushd, took him to the court of Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf.

Ibn-Tufayl was Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf's personal physician and eventually became his vizier.

The book on which Ibn-Tufayl's fame rests is the story of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (*The Living Son of the Awake*).

Avicenna had also written a treatise bearing the same title.<sup>[1]</sup> Whereas Avicenna, philosopher par excellence, had a purely mystic theme to unfold, Ibn-Tufayl expounded a philosophic theme in the allegorical story of Hayy, who is nurtured on a desert island by a gazelle.

Hayy by his own contemplation, and not by human instruction, becomes aware of the world around him, of nature and its laws, and finally attains belief in God, the Creator of all things.

Another young man, who has decided to withdraw from the world to pass his time in meditation and contemplation, comes to Hayy's desert island.

They meet and talk and find themselves in agreement, having reached the same conclusion by different routes.

The Latin translation<sup>[2]</sup> Of Ibn-Tufayl's allegory, entitled *Philosopbus Autodidactus*, had a profound influence in the West.

Indeed, the inspiration of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* can be traced to the influence of Ibn-Tufayl's book.

*Risalat Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* has been translated into the main European languages time and again.

[1 He wrote this during a short imprisonment. ]

[2 In the latter part of the fifteenth century. ]

The effect of the works of the philosophers of Islam on the minds of the Europeans was such that Dante would not consign Avicenna, Averroes and Saladin to Hades.

He placed them in limbo. <p309>

Professor Arberry states in the introduction to his translation of the treatise on self-discipline by ar-Razi -- *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*<sup>[1]</sup> -- that in the field of natural sciences the influence which the works of ar-Razi exerted in the West was perhaps unmatched, but in the realm of philosophy his views went largely unnoticed because they were considered heretical.

Even Abu-Rayhan-i-Biruni, who devoted a monograph to the works of ar-Razi and listed 164 books, was highly critical of his philosophy.

Among others, Ibn-Hazm wrote to refute it.

[1 *The Wisdom of the East Series* (London, John Murray). ]

As noted before, the three great figures who substantially shaped the discipline of philosophy in the realm of Islam were al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn-Sina (Avicenna) -- an Arab, a Turk and a Persian.

And they were men who were polymaths.

They shone and excelled in many fields, including mathematics and medicine.

They, like the Greeks on whose philosophy their minds were nurtured, treated music as a branch of mathematics, and wrote brilliantly and authoritatively on that theme.

At least one of them, Abu-Nasr al-Farabi, was himself an accomplished performer and is reputed to have invented new instruments.

They took their theorems of music and sound and their computations beyond the stage reached by the Greeks and borrowed the word *Musiqi* (Music) from them.

Unfortunately much of what al-Kindi wrote has been lost.

But we still have some of his writings on music.

Al-Farabi's most famous work is *Kitab al-Musiqi Kabir* (The Great Book of Music).

Avicenna devoted long sections of his encyclopaedic work 'ash-Shifa' (Cure) to music.

Although there is not a single verse condemnatory of music in the whole text of the Qur'an, all the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence forbade it, a ban which was largely ignored.

The Caliphs -- Umayyads and 'Abbasids alike -- led the way in keeping alive the glorious tradition of Arab song (ghina').

Kitab al-Aghani (The Book of Songs), in twenty-one volumes, by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahani (c.

897-967) shows how very rich that tradition was.

We read of later developments and of the superb players, Ibrahim al-Mawsili and his son Ishaq, Persian by descent, who adorned the courts of the 'Abbasids from the days of Harun ar-Rashid to the days of al-Mutawakkil; and of Ziryab, their brilliant pupil, who went to al-Andalus and left an indelible mark on the culture of Spain.

The Persian and Indian musical heritages, both <p310> immensely rich, not to speak of the invaluable contributions from the Greeks, which the great philosophers discovered and developed, added to the immense vigour and the bewitching beauty of Arab song, producing new forms and new instruments.

We are told that the musical powers of Abu-Nasr al-Farabi could wring the hearts of his audience.

At one moment, he could induce tears of sorrow, at another transports of sheer delight and ecstasy.

He could make the audience fall into slumber or leap for joy.

The story is often told of the blind poet Rudaki (d.

940), the most eloquent of the pioneers of Persian poetry, and the Samanid ruler, Nasr Ibn Ahmad (914-43).

Amir Nasr had his capital in Bukhara.

It was customary for him to spend the summer elsewhere and return in the winter.

One year he visited Hirat and was so enchanted by its beauties and the bounteous gifts of nature there that he prolonged his sojourn into winter and beyond.

His retinue, chafing at separation from their homes and families, begged the blind poet, who was an accomplished minstrel as well, to incline the Amir to return to his capital.

One morning Rudaki took up his harp, and began to sing to the Amir:

The Ju-yi-Muliyān we call to mind,

We long for those dear friends long left behind.

The sands of Oxus, toilsome though they be,  
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.

Glad at the friends' return, the Oxus deep  
Up to our girths in laughing waves shall leap.

Long live Bukhara!

Be thou of good cheer!

Joyous towards thee hasteth our Amir!

The Moon's the Prince, Bukhara is the sky;  
O Sky, the Moon shall light thee by and by!

Bukhara is the Mead, the Cypress he;  
Receive at last, O Mead, thy Cypress-tree! [1]  
(Translation by E.

G.

Browne)

[1 Cited by Browne, A Literary History of Persia, Vol.

I, p.

16. ]

So moved was NaSr Ibn Ah. mad that, not even waiting for his riding-boots to be brought to him, he mounted his horse and set his face towards Bukhara; nor did he stop until he had reached his capital.

Orthodoxy failed utterly to banish all that joy and exhilaration and when the Sufis not only gave their approval, but went further <p311> to add positive encouragement, the triumph of the proponents of music was well-assured.

The celebrated Egyptian Sufi, Dhu'n-Nun, a model of piety, declared that when one listens to music with the ear of the spirit one is drawn nearer to God; it is only when one listens purely sensuously that one falls into error.

Finally, the verdict of the great Abu-Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali left no doubt that the opinion of the jurisconsults could not prevail.

In its hour of political decline, when at the same time the realm of Islam was exposed in the East to the intolerable strains of the Crusades and was soon to be rocked to its foundation by the onrush of the Mongols, al-Andalus did not bow to adversity.

Furthermore, it became the channel for the bright gifts of the civilization of Islam to pass to a Europe still engirdled by the gloom and obscurantism of the Middle Ages.

To her renowned universities still came students and scholars from the West, as they had done in the past.

One of these scholars, a brilliant Frenchman, Gerbert of Aurillac, ascended the papal throne as Sylvester II in 999.

And those flourishing universities of al-Andalus became models for the great universities that were to be raised in Christendom:

Pisa, Paris, Oxford.

Even those Christian rulers who were struggling to reconquer Spain were appreciative of the boon of Islamic culture.

King Alfonso X of Castile and Leon, enchanted by the excellence of that culture, commissioned the translation into Spanish of the famous tale of Kalilah-wa-Dimnah.

This book, it will be recalled, was the medium by which that master of stratagem, the Persian 'Abdu'llah Ibn al-Muqaffa', tried subtly to disseminate his Manichaeian beliefs.

Two new poetical forms which had had their beginnings most probably in the eastern areas of the realm of Islam, both originating from popular songs, had attained literary status and reached perfection in al-Andalus.

These were the muwashshah and the zajal (provider of cheer), and of the two the latter, in particular, had a characteristic Andalusian flavour.

Ibn-Quzman (Abenguzman), who lived into the second half of the twelfth century, became the exponent of zajal, and as he was a minstrel moving from place to place with his song, zajal verse became widely known, evoking a ready response from Spanish-speaking Christians.

The Castilian popular style of villancico was greatly influenced by the zajal verse, and since this Castilian verse form features much in Christmas songs, zajal left a permanent mark on the life of Spain. <p312> France was next to be affected by it, resulting in the rise of Provençal poetry.

Arab bards, too, following the example of Ibn-Quzman, moved from Spain into France and then into Italy, taking with them a variety of new musical instruments.

Two such instruments especially, the lute and the rebec, greatly helped the musical development of the western world.

The rebec was a stringed instrument, the precursor of the viol.

Troubadours of France and Italy learned their art from those Arab minstrels and zajal singers and emulated their example.

## SIX GREAT MEN

Al-Kindi

Abu-Yusuf Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (801-73), 'the Philosopher of the Arabs', was of noble descent, a scion of that Ash'ath Ibn Qays, the Himyarite chief who failed 'All, the fourth Caliph, at Siffin.

A man of considerable means, al-Kindi could employ some of the ablest men to assist him in his researches and studies.

It ought to be emphasized that the Aristotle whom these savants of the realm of Islam came to know was not the Aristotle of the Hellenic, but of the Hellenistic age, shrouded in the Neo-Platonism of the Syrian Porphyry.

Mu'tazilite writings, so impregnated with Greek thought, led al-Kindi to turn to Aristotle and to philosophy.

He reached the conclusion that philosophy is all-comprehensive, comprising every branch of knowledge, and that religion and philosophy are not competitive.

Religion, the product of prophetic Revelation, is accepted by faith, whereas philosophy is apprehended by reason.

However, certain issues were left unresolved.

One was the question of resurrection.

A Muslim believed that resurrection was of the body, and so did a Christian.

The Neo-Platonist maintained that resurrection was of the soul.

Al-Kindi did not attempt a synthesis.

But he would not agree with Aristotle that matter and time had no beginning.

And he followed the Mu'tazilite line, asserting that certain verses of the Qur'an were allegorical and need not be taken literally.

Al-Kindi's pioneering work made the Islamic civilization conversant with Greek philosophy.

### Ar-Razi

The next outstanding philosopher, ar-Razi, struck another trail, as we have seen, which put him at odds with contemporary <p313> thought.

Because he repudiated the whole concept of prophetic Revelation, he became isolated.

As a scientist and physician his word carried great weight.

As a philosopher he was either denounced or wholly ignored.

### Al Farabi

Abu-Nasr al-Farabi (872-910) was a Turk and a Sufi, attending the court of Sayfi'd-Dawlih 'All Ibn Hamdan, the Shi'ite ruler of Aleppo.

So vast was his learning and so accomplished was he that to him was given the title of Mu'allim-i-Thani (the Second Teacher), the first being Aristotle.

Although it was his commentary which, on Ibn-Sina's own admission, enabled the latter to comprehend the complexities of Aristotle's Metaphysics, al-Farabi devoted the greater part of his philosophical speculation to civics and the art

of government.

He achieved fame with his *Risalah fi Ara Ahli'l-Madinata'l-Fadilah* (A Treatise on the Opinions of the People of the Superior -- or the Virtuous -- City), and *as-Siyasat-al-Madaniyyah* (The Politics of Civilization); the former after the manner of Plato's Republic, and the latter in a similar vein to Aristotle's Politics.

Needless to say that the *Madinata'l-Fadilah* -- the Superior or the Virtuous -- City -- is none other than Utopia.

According to the doctrine of Emanation, Neo-Platonic in origin, the universe is hierarchical.

There is the Supreme Being, All-Perfect, at the very summit.

From Him a lower tier of beings originate or emanate, and they, in turn, give existence to the next grade.

This process is continued until the lowest grade of existence is reached.

Al-Farabi causes his Utopia to be similarly structured.

There is the Head whom none can or will command, and there are those at the very base who command none.

Qualities required of that Head are such as to make of him almost a superman -- in other words the Philosopher-King of whom Henry St.

John, Viscount Bolingbroke, was dreaming in eighteenth-century Britain.

Al-Farabi also envisages a situation in which no single person has all the required qualities, but two or more persons collectively possess them; then there would be a presidium to command the 'Superior City'; and should Hikmat (Wisdom, or Philosophy) be absent from the sum total of those excellences, the Utopia would be deprived of true Headship.

In developing the theme of his Utopia, al-Farabi nowhere and in no way denies the necessity and the validity of prophetic Revelation. <p314> On the contrary he affirms the need for it.

Al-arabi also wrote a commentary on Aristotle's Organon, which Roger Bacon found very useful.

Ibn-Sina

Thus we pass on to the next colossal figure:

Shaykhu'r-Ra'is Abu-'Ali Husayn Ibn 'Abdu'llah Ibn Sina, a Persian, originally a native of Balkh, who was born thirty years after the death of the Turanian al-Farabi.

His father, an official serving the Samanid monarchs, was an Isma'ili, but Isma'ili doctrines did not prove attractive to the son.

We have already noted his precocious genius, his astonishing memory, his

immense erudition and his vast output.

As in the discipline of medicine, so in the field of philosophy Ibn-Sina outshone all.

His philosophic system, neither Aristotelian nor Platonic, neither Stoic nor Neo-Platonic, came to dominate the thought of the East and left visible marks on brilliant intellects in the West, notably the leading scholastics, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

Ibn-Sina could not give full assent to any single one of the Greek schools.

He chose carefully the Greek ideas he would adopt to synthesize with various strands of thought found in the Islamic milieu.

While he agreed with Aristotle that matter was ancient and eternal, he took the concept of emanation from the Neo-Platonists.

He inclined towards the Mu'tazilah, maintained that man is possessed of free will, and rejected the rigidity of predestination.

He also refuted the belief in the resurrection of the body and brought upon himself the wrath of theologians.

Central to his theme was the necessity of the existence of God.

The only essential being was the Being of God, supreme and transcendent.

And from His all-encompassing will and knowledge emanated every other being, whose existence was possible but not essential.

The office of the Prophet-Revelator was also needed to give direction to the affairs of men.

The welfare of the state depended upon it.

The part which the philosopher played was secondary to that of the Prophet.

He, himself, despite the depth of his philosophic insight and the vastness of his knowledge, had, as an administrator and statesman, failed time and again.

His attainments had proved insufficient.

For him there was no Philosopher-King.

The precepts of religion had to be expressed in symbolic terms.

The language of the philosopher was incomprehensible to the majority of men.  
<p315>

It seems an aberration that whereas Ibn-Sina had given his encyclopaedic work on medicine the title of al-Qanun (Canon, or Law)[1] he accorded the title of ash-Shifa' (Cure, or Remedy) to his equally encyclopaedic work on philosophy, which treats of all branches of knowledge, including music.

A recension of the same work, a shorter version, he named an-Najah (Deliverance).

And apart from the aforementioned Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, in another work al-Isharat wa't-Tanbihat (Directions and Warnings) Ibn-Sina turned his attention to mysticism and the inner life -- the life of the spirit.

He traced three stages on the mystic path: first, that of the Zahid (the Ascetic), next that of the 'Abid (the Worshipper), and finally that of the 'Arif (Gnostic).

[1 It is of interest that three centuries prior to the discovery in Europe of the pulmonary circulation of the blood, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn-an-Nafis (d.

1228), the dean of the hospital established in Cairo by the Mamluk ruler, Qalawun, gave a description of that vital bodily process, in his commentary on Ibn-Sina's al-Qanun.]

With Ibn-Sina, philosophical speculation in the East reached its climactic point.

Those who followed him either took from him their guide-lines or adumbrated on the basis of what he had propounded.

Such was the case with Shihabi'd-Din Yahya as-Suhrawardi, known as Shaykha'l-Ishraq.

Suhrawardi was put to death in Aleppo, in 1191, by order of the Ayyubite al-Malik az-Zahir, the son of Salahi'd-Din (Saladin), for alleged pantheistic views.

He developed his Hikimata'l-Ishraq (Philosophy of Illumination) from the statements of Ibn-Sina on Ishraq.

This doctrine of Illumination has its origin in Neo-Platonism.

Ibn-Rushd

In al-Andalus the star of Ibn-Rushd was yet to rise.

Abu'l-Walid Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd (Averroes), a native of Cordova, belonged to a family renowned for its jurists and theologians.

Both his father and grandfather occupied the office of Qadi (Judge).

He studied medicine and jurisprudence; while practising medicine he also served the state in the same manner as his father and grandfather.

As we have seen, it was Ibn-Tufayl who introduced him to the Muwahhid ruler, Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf I.

In 1182 he was given the post of Court physician in succession to Ibn-Tufayl.

The King also appointed him Chief Justice, first of Seville and afterwards of Cordova, and wished him to write a treatise on philosophy.

Royal favours continued in the reign of al-Mansur, the son of Abu-Ya'qub Yusuf.

However, in 1194, at the instigation of the Malikite theologians, who still dominated the scene and whose support the king badly needed, Ibn-Rushd, then

sixty years old, was shorn of office and exiled.

His books were burnt.

Although al-Mansur soon made amends and gave him the office of judge in North Africa, Ibn-Rushd had received a severe blow.

He died at his post within a few years, in the closing weeks of 1198.

At a later date his remains were taken to Cordova.

Ibn-Rushd was the last and possibly the greatest of those giant figures who bestrode the arena of philosophy in the realm of Islam.

He wrote thirty-eight commentaries on philosophy.

Of these only twenty-eight have survived in Arabic.

More exist in Hebrew and Latin translations.

In addition to his scientific works, the most notable of which is al-Kulliyat fi't-Tibb (Generalities of Medicine), he wrote a book to demonstrate that religion and philosophy were not and need not be contradictory and that there is an essential harmony between them; to this he gave the name of Fasl al-Maqal (The Decisive Treatise).

When Ibn-Rushd received his commission from the king, he made a survey of the sources available to him.

Soon realizing that the Aristotle handed down to the scholars of the realm of Islam was not the genuine philosopher of the Hellenic Age, he set about to dispel the obscurities caused by Neo-Platonism.

For the first time Aristotle emerged as he had been, and when the commentaries of Ibn-Rushd were put into Latin the Western world came to know the true Aristotle.

The profound effect of this discovery was reflected in the Thomism of St.

Thomas Aquinas.

Ibn-Rushd like Ibn-Sina maintained that matter was ancient and eternal.

Likewise he rejected belief in corporeal resurrection and predestination.

But unlike Ibn-Sina he could visualize a Philosopher-King in the manner of Plato, and had no use for the theory of Emanation.

He saw creation as a continuous process, never-ending, and the social structure as the creation of the Prophet-Revelator and Legislator.

He, himself, had been successful as a judge and jurist.

Therefore, he could endorse the participation of the philosopher in the work of government.

He could not let al-Ghazali's strictures on philosophers remain unanswered, and

adopting the same word which al-Ghazali had used to criticize the philosophers, he composed his *at-Tahafut-at-Tahafut* (The Inconsistency of the Inconsistency) to examine al-Ghazali's objections point by point and to indicate where the true philosopher stands.

Averroism was at first hailed universally in the West and found its way into the universities.

But then the Church took fright, the cry of heresy went up and, in 1231, Pope Gregory IX condemned it.

However, Averroism had taken root in a Europe just awakening, and could not be dislodged.

The name may have been forgotten with the passage of centuries but the liberalizing influence remained.

### Ibn-Khaldun

It remains now to have a look, no matter how briefly, at the work of another outstanding figure of al-Andalus, before bringing to a close this chapter of glorious achievement in the realm of Islam. 'Abda'r-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was born and bred in Tunisia, but his origins were in al-Andalus, and the culture of al-Andalus was his spiritual home, the source of his inspiration.

Ibn-Khaldun spent many years in the service of various rulers -- in Fas, in Granada, in Cairo -- and thus gained valuable experience of the affairs of men.

He negotiated with the Castilians on behalf of Granada, and he met Tamerlane -- 'the scourge of God' -- on behalf of Egypt.

This mighty conqueror showed him every mark of respect.

Ibn-Khaldun is rightly honoured for his wisdom and insight, judgement and discernment.

He is the first historian ever to look for forces that shape history.

That has brought him renown as the first sociologist.

His history of the Arabs, Persians and Berbers has a very long title in Arabic. [1] The introductory volume, known as the *Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena) has run to three massive volumes in its excellent English translation by Franz Rosenthal. [2] In this Prolegomena Ibn-Khaldun probes diligently into the processes of history, examining with care such factors as climate and geographical position, ethical, moral and spiritual values, and the masterly sweep is truly superb.

Ibn-Khaldun is undoubtedly the greatest of all the historians of the realm of Islam and one of the greatest intellects of all history.

[1 *Kitab al-Ibar Wa Diwan al-Mubtada Wa'l-Khabar fi Ayyam al-'Arab Wa'l-'Ajam and Wa'l-Babar* (Book of Instructive Examples and Register of Subject and Predicate Dealing with the History of the Arabs, Persians and Berbers).]

[2 Published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1958. ] <p318>

## 28 The Crusades

The Saljuqs restored, to a very large extent, the hegemony of the Islamic Empire.

They rescued the Sunni 'Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad from the feeble grasp of the Sh'iah Buwayhids, who like so many similar dynasties had swiftly gone into decline.

And in 1071 Alp-Arslan broke the Byzantines in the battle of Manzikert (Maladhkirt) and Emperor Romanus Diogenes fell into his hands.

Not only were the Byzantine inroads into the realm of Islam halted, but the uplands of Asia Minor were opened to the Saljuqs.

Malik-Shah, the son of Alp-Arslan, had a brilliant reign, but died when only thirty-seven years old, in 1092; and the feuds and jealousies within the circle of his own family, which he, with the wise counsel of Nizamu'l-Mulk, had kept in check, tore the Saljuq Empire asunder.

Nizamu'l-Mulk had already fallen from the high office which he had held with distinction and competence for many years, and had soon after died by the dagger of an Isma'ili, a follower of Hasan-i-Sabbah.[1] His assassination preceded the death of Malik-Shah by a matter of weeks.

[1 Hasan-i-Sabbah died in the year 1124. ]

The territory over which Malik-Shah, the Saljuqid, ruled was extensive and far-flung.

When his army crossed the river Oxus to complete the conquest of Turkistan, the boatmen, who ferried his troops to the other bank of the river, came to him to complain that the vizier had made their dues payable from the revenues of Antioch.

To the Sultan's remonstrances Nizamu'l-Mulk replied that he had done so to register the fact of the vastness of the Empire. 'But this description of his limits,' Gibbon remarks, 'was unjust and parsimonious: beyond the Oxus, he reduced to his obedience the cities of Bochara [Bukhara], Carizme [Kharazm] and Samarcand [Samarqand] and crushed each rebellious slave, or independent savage, who dared to resist.

Malek passed the <p319> Sihon [Sayhun] or Jaxartes, the last boundary of Persian civilization: the lords of Turkestan yielded to his supremacy; his name was inserted on the coins, and in the prayers, of Cashgar,[1] a Tartar Kingdom on the extreme borders of China.

From the Chinese frontier, he stretched his immediate jurisdiction or feudatory sway to the west and south, as far as the mountains of Georgia, the neighbourhood of Constantinople, the holy city of Jerusalem, and the spicy groves of Arabia Felix.[2] Gibbon also relates the story of Malik-Shah's visit to the shrine of Imam Rida, at Tus, on the eve of a battle he had to fight with a rebellious brother. 'As the Sultan rose from the ground,' writes Gibbon, 'he

asked his vizir Nizam, who had knelt beside him, what had been the object of his secret petition: "That your arms may be crowned with victory," was the prudent and most probably the sincere answer of the minister. "For my part," replied the generous Malek, "I implored the Lord of Hosts that he would take from me my life and crown, if my brother be more worthy than myself to reign over the Moslems."<sup>[3]</sup> Such was the measure of the single-mindedness of this devout Turk.

And also, such was the fanatical intensity of the will to power of the descendants of Saljuq, the Turkish seeker after fortune, that with the death of Malik-Shah the immense empire, which he bequeathed to his successors, could not endure the strains to which it was subjected.

What followed is a sad story of fragmentation, of shrinking principalities, of desperate intrigues, of fratricidal struggles within the House of Saljuq, and of the moving in of fresh barbarians from the East.

In the meantime, Crusaders no less uncouth had come from the West: some truly devout, inflamed with the love of Christ, many merciless, possessed by greed.

The fall of Jerusalem to the Franks, on 15 July 1099, changed the face of both the East and the West.

[1 Kashghar, situated in the present-day Chinese province of Sinkiang. ]

[2 Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol.

6, p.

26.]

[3 *ibid.*, pp.

261-2. ]

The Crusaders had come upon Jerusalem on Tuesday, 7 June 1099.

Its ramparts and fortifications disallowed an immediate assault.

Iftikhari'd-Dawlih, the Muslim commander in the Holy City, knew that he could not reasonably expect any rescue operation from the Muslim principalities of the region.

Antioch and <p320> Edessa had been captured by the Crusaders, the first by Bohemond, the Norman lord from Southern Italy, and the second by Baldwin of Boulogne.

The leaders of the Crusaders, Godfrey de Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine,<sup>[1]</sup> Bohemond<sup>[2]</sup> of Taranto, his nephew Tancred,<sup>[3]</sup> Baldwin of Boulogne,<sup>[4]</sup> and Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, were disunited, even warring amongst themselves.

The Byzantine Emperor Alexius distrusted them all, and was trying hard to prevent them from obtaining permanent possession of cities taken back from the Saljuqs in Asia Minor, towns such as Nicaea and Iconium.<sup>[5]</sup> The rulers of Muslim principalities were also at loggerheads, one with the other, and their

ranks had fallen into disarray.

When the Crusaders were preparing to march on Nicaea, the Saljuq, Qilich-Arslan I (reigned 1092- ) went away to fight Amir Ghazi Gumushtigin (reigned 1084-1134), the Danishmindid Prince of Eastern Anatolia.

Another Saljuqid, Tutush, the brother of Malik-Shah, held Aleppo and Damascus, and had grave problems of his own to contend with.

But in the first days of July news reached the Crusaders that Egypt had sent a force to fight them.

Thus time was precious.

[1 Elected ruler of Jerusalem, after its fall, he assumed the title *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*:

The Dedicated Defender of the Holy Sepulchre.

He died on 18 July 1100.]

[2 Prince of Antioch. ]

[3 Prince of Galilee, Regent of Antioch. ]

[4 Count of Edessa, who succeeded Godfrey de Bouillon as King of Jerusalem; he was known as King Baldwin I.]

[5 Qunlyah, the modern Konya. ]

A tight ring was thrown around Jerusalem with siege towers and mangonels, and the night of July 13th to 14th was chosen for a concerted attack to reduce the defences of the Holy City.

The battle that ensued was truly desperate.

The assailants sustained enormous losses, and the defenders, at first, stood their ground well.

Let the able pen of Sir Steven Runciman picture Jerusalem in mid-July 1099:  
' . . .

By the evening of the 14th Raymond's men had succeeded in wheeling their tower over the ditch against the wall.

But the defence was fierce; for it seems that Iftikhar himself commanded in this sector.

Raymond could not establish a foothold on the wall itself.

Next morning Godfrey's tower closed in on the north wall, close to the present Gate of Flowers.

Godfrey and his brother, Eustace of Boulogne, commanded from the upper storey.

About midday they succeeded in making a bridge from the tower to the <p321> top of the wall; and two Flemish knights, Litold and Gilbert of Tournai, led the pick of the Lotharingian army across, followed soon by Godfrey himself.

Once a sector of the wall was captured scaling ladders enabled many more of the assailants to climb into the city.

While Godfrey remained on the wall encouraging the newcomers and sending men to open the Gate of the Column to the main forces of the Crusade, Tancred and his men, who had been close behind the Lorrainers, penetrated deep into the city streets.

The Moslems, seeing their defences broken, fled towards the Haram es-Sherif,[1] the Temple area, where the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of al-Aqsa stood, intending to use the latter as their last fortress.

But they had no time to put it into a state of defence.

As they crowded in and up on the roof, Tancred was upon them.

Hastily they surrendered to him, promising a heavy ransom, and took his banner to display it over the mosque.

He had already desecrated and pillaged the Dome of the Rock.

Meanwhile the inhabitants of the city fled back in confusion towards the southern quarters, where Iftikhar was still holding out against Raymond.

Early in the afternoon he realized that all was lost.

He withdrew into the Tower of David, which he offered to hand over to Raymond with a great sum of treasure in return for his life and the lives of his bodyguard.

Raymond accepted the terms and occupied the Tower.

Iftikhar and his men were safely escorted out of the city and permitted to join the Moslem garrison of Ascalon.

[1 Haram ash-Sharif (The Sacred or Noble Sanctuary). ]

'They were the only Moslems in Jerusalem to save their lives.

The Crusaders, maddened by so great a victory after such suffering, rushed through the streets and into the houses and mosques killing all that they met, men, women and children alike.

All that afternoon and all through the night the massacre continued.

Tancred's banner was no protection to the refugees in the mosque of al-Aqsa.

Early next morning a band of Crusaders forced an entry into the mosque and slew everyone.

When Raymond of Aguilers later that morning went to visit the Temple area he had to pick his way through corpses and blood that reached up to his knees.

'The Jews of Jerusalem fled in a body to their chief synagogue.

But they were held to have aided the Moslems; and no mercy was shown to them.

The building was set on fire and they were all burnt within.

'The massacre at Jerusalem profoundly impressed all the world. <p322> No one can say how many victims it involved; but it emptied Jerusalem of its Moslem and Jewish inhabitants.

Many even of the Christians were horrified by what had been done; and amongst the Moslems, who had been ready hitherto to accept the Franks as another factor in the tangled politics of the time, there was henceforward a clear determination that the Franks must be driven out.

It was this bloodthirsty proof of Christian fanaticism that recreated the fanaticism of Islam.

When, later, wiser Latins in the East sought to find some basis on which Christian and Moslem could work together, the memory of the massacre stood always in their way.[1]

[1 A History of the Crusades, vol.

I, pp.285-7 (Penguin edn.) ]

The Fatimid power was now on the wane.

For another half century the Isma'ili caliphs of Cairo exercised varying degrees of authority, but in the meantime their viziers were becoming stronger and more powerful.

And whilst the Crusaders, in the opening years of the twelfth century, were consolidating their position, conquering more cities in the realm of Islam, Muslim principalities, in their neighbourhood, were unstable, until the Zangids of Mosul appeared on the scene.

Haifa fell to Tancred and Daimbert of Pisa in July 1100.

In the same year Caesarea was conquered. 'Akka (Acre)[1] fell to King Baldwin in 1104 and Beirut in 1110.

Tripoli had gone to the Franks the previous year, after a long siege.

Count Raymond of Saint-Gilles (whom Arabs call Sanjil, also Ibn-Sanjil), one of the most assiduous and most ambitious leaders of the Crusaders, who instituted the siege, did not live to witness the fulfilment of his cherished wish.

Two Saljuq brothers, Ridvan and Duqaq, sons of Tutush, held Aleppo and Damascus, respectively.

They were disunited and their conflicts led to the extinction of Saljuqid power in Syria.

The Saljuqs of Rum (Asia Minor) were contained for the time being, powerless in the face of a resurgent Christendom.

Emperor Alexius I, Comnenus, of Byzantium, was particularly vigilant and concerned, trying to wrest as much as possible, both from the Muslims and from the Crusaders.

In the year 1117, there were two eclipses of the moon: one in June and one in December, and on the sixteenth of December the aurora borealis was seen in Palestine.

It was said that these omens in the skies foreshadowed the deaths of rulers.

True enough, many of them died in the following year, among them:

Pope <p323> Paschal II, of Ravenna (January 21st); King Baldwin I (April 2nd); Sultan Muhammad, the Saljuqid monarch of Iran (April 5th); al-Mustazhir, the 'Abbasid Caliph (August 6th); the Emperor Alexius (August 15th).

The weakened state of the Saljuqs, and the rise of new principalities in places as far apart as Kharazm, Fars, Adharbayjan and Mosul, all under potentates of Turkish origin, provided a new lease of life for the 'Abbasid power in Baghdad, short-lived though it was.

Sultan Sanjar (reigned II 1857), the youngest son of Malik-Shah, revived, for a while, the moribund kingdom of the Saljuqids in Iran; but in the end he met total disaster, by falling into the hands of the barbarous Ghuzz Turkamans, and spent four years in bondage.

On the ruins of the Saljuq domains the Kharazmshahs of Transoxania built another kingdom which comprised a large section of the Iranian plateau, as well as parts of northern India: it flourished until Chingiz and his Mongol hordes swept over it and destroyed

[1 Also St.

Jean d'Acre. ]

In the western stretches of the realm of Islam, the rise of the Zangids posed, for the first time, a serious threat to the Crusaders, who had initially carried all before them. 'Imadi'd-Din Zangi was appointed Governor of Mosul, in the year 1127, by Sultan Mahmud II, the Saljuqid overlord of 'Iraq.

He was also given the office of Atabig, guardian of the sons of the Sultan.

These various Atabigs (or Atabaks) whom the later Saljuq rulers, in pursuit of their own internecine struggles, placed in high positions, eventually made themselves the masters, and carved out principalities from the domains of the Saljuqids.

Such was the case in Mosul, in Fars and in Adharbayjan. 'Imadi'd-Din in Mosul soon became a power to be reckoned with.

He extended the' area under his control, captured Aleppo and waged war against both the Byzantines and the Franks.

In 1144 he took away Edessa (ar-Ruha) from Count Jocelyn II.

The loss of Edessa led to the Second Crusade at the head of which marched Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany.

Damascus was invested but could not be taken by storm, and the Second Crusade petered out. 'Imadi'd-Din Zangi was murdered in 1146 and his enlarged domains were partitioned between his sons.

Sayfi'd-Din Ghazi kept the original principality and Nuri'd-Din Mahmud had the Syrian portion.

Aleppo was his capital.

Nuri'd-Din was a much more competent ruler than his father.

He conquered Damascus, overran the whole <p324> of the Crusaders' principality of Edessa, and even made inroads into their principality of Antioch.

Bohemond III of Antioch fell into his hands, and so did Raymond III of Tripoli.

Raymond remained Nuri'd-Din's prisoner for nine years.

But both these Frankish rulers, being heavily ransomed, were eventually freed.

Nuri'd-Din had in his service a Kurdish warrior named Shirkuh, who, encouraged by his master, turned his attention to Egypt, where the Fatimid Caliphate was in its death throes.

In 1169, Shirkuh, having gained notable victories both on the field of battle and in the field of diplomacy, was appointed vizier to the weak Fatimid Caliph, al-'Adid (reigned 1160-71).

The previous vizier, Shavar, had made an alliance against Shirkuh with King Amalric of Jerusalem, the successor of King Baldwin III (reigned 1131-62).

The Kurdish contestant won, but died the same year.

His nephew, al-Malik an-Nasir[1] Salahi'd-Din (Saladin), son of Ayyub, took his uncle's place.

In less than two years, Saladin brought the Fatimid rule to its end, and restored Egypt to Sunni orthodoxy and allegiance to the 'Abbasids of Baghdad.

Kurds had always been staunch Sunnis, and few amongst them had ever shown any sympathy for the Shi'ite cause.

Thus in 1171 one of the most liberal and enlightened regimes that the realm of Islam had ever known passed into limbo.

[1 This title signifies the monarch who dispenses victory. ]

In 1174 both the redoubtable Nuri'd-Din Mahmud and King Amalric died.

Whereupon Saladin declared Egypt independent of the Zangids and set about to deprive them of Syria.

He needed control over Syria in order to destroy the Crusader's kingdom of Jerusalem, which, next to the total overthrow of the Fatimid heterodoxy, had been his objective.

And so he set about to dispossess Nuri'd-Din's eleven-year-old son, Isma'il, of his patrimony.

Isma'il died in 1181.

During this period of Ayyubid entrenchment in Syria, Turan-Shah, a brother of Saladin, overran Yemen (Yaman) and Saladin's writ was extended to the twin holy cities of Arabia.

Before long his domains became contiguous with the borders of Iran.

However, in the course of the twelfth century, a new force, potent and effective, though operating from a very narrow base, had made its presence thoroughly felt in Syria and its environs.

This force was the outstretched arm of the Isma'ilis of Alamut, who had gained a small, but well-defended <p325> territory in the heart of the mountains of northern Syria.

Muslims and Franks alike had experienced the impact of that force.

Not only had the Fatimid Caliph, al-Amir, died by the dagger of an Isma'ili in 1130; Raymond II of Tripoli had suffered the same fate in 1152.

The life of Nuri'd-Din was attempted once, and that of Saladin twice.

Saladin, therefore, decided to extirpate the heretics with one blow.

Rashidi'd-Din Sinan, who had earned the sobriquet of the 'Old Man of the Mountain' (Shaykh-al-Jabal), found himself, in 1176, besieged at his stronghold of Masyad by Saladin's army.

Sinan had succeeded in throwing off the tutelage of the masters of Alamut and could, on his own choosing, come to terms with Saladin.

He solemnly promised the Ayyubid Sultan not to cross his path again, a promise which he kept; and Saladin raised the siege.

King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, who had succeeded his father at the age of thirteen, was very brave and courageous, but he suffered from leprosy and the ravages of that dreaded disease were increasingly disabling him.

As late as November 1177 he had inflicted a severe defeat on Saladin, in the neighbourhood of Ramlih, which had sent the Ayyubid monarch fleeing into Egypt.

Six years later, Baldwin's condition had sadly deteriorated.

His physical miseries apart, his mother, his sister Sibylla, and Guy of Lusignan, Sibylla's husband (freshly arrived from Europe), made his life even harder to bear.

Disorders encompassed the bedridden king.

Nearly totally blind, hands and feet useless and rotting, in the last years of his life Baldwin was plagued by rank disobedience as well, almost amounting to rebellion.

Guy, whom he had dismissed from his side, sat defiantly at Ascalon.

The King had a treaty with Saladin, a two-year truce, concluded in May 1180.

The treacherous conduct of Reynald of Chatillon, Prince of Antioch and Lord of Oultrejordain (the area beyond the Dead Sea and the river Jordan, with its capital at Karak), led to the breakdown of the truce.

Reynald was a man who had no regard for any pact, treaty, or promise.

He raided whenever and wherever he could, and even entertained plans for assaults on Mecca and Medina.

His acts of blatant piracy in the Red Sea were numerous.

Muslim trading vessels, rich with merchandise, fell to him, and a pilgrim-ship with all its inmates vent down before his onslaught.

Saladin took a solemn oath to slay him with his own hands.

On 11 May 1182, Saladin marched out of Egypt for the last <p326> time.

As a bystander foretold, he would never return to the country which had given him the substance of his power.

Saladin was not yet ready, however, to take the kingdom of Jerusalem by storm.

Christian ranks were disunited, but so were the Muslim ranks, and each side had allies amongst the ranks of their opponents.

Aleppo was still to be conquered, and King Baldwin could still take the field.

He even attempted the capture of Damascus at the close of the year 1182.

But soon Baldwin could no longer rise from his bed and died in March 1185, no more than twenty-four years old, having named his nephew, a mere child, to succeed him.

Count Raymond of Tripoli, although reluctant at first, had accepted the regency.

However, the eight-year-old Baldwin V died in 'Akka, in August 1186.

Thus the kingdom of Jerusalem came at last to Guy of Lusignan, a foolish, vainglorious man.

During those few years Saladin had consolidated his position considerably in Syria and its neighbourhood.

He had won Aleppo from the Zangid, 'Imadi'd-Din, and overawed other potentates, Muslim and Christian alike.

Both Bohemond III of Antioch and Raymond III of Tripoli reaffirmed the truce with Saladin, and King Guy accepted it.

Once again it was Reynald of Chatillon who broke the truce.

Saladin was now ready to take the kingdom of Jerusalem by storm.

A few miles from Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee lie the heights known as the Horns of Hattin or Hittin.

Miscalculation and a desire to save Tiberias brought King Guy and his army onto those heights.

On 3 July 1187 they bivouacked for the night, unable to go further.

But no water could be found nor was there protection from the intense heat.

Below them Saladin kept watch.

His men had shade, water and comfort, while the Christians were thirsty, weary and exposed.

When Saladin closed in on July 4th few of them escaped.

The King, his princes, barons, knights and troopers were all made captive.

Reynald was amongst them and Saladin, after recounting to Reynald all his misdeeds, with one stroke of his sword decapitated the Lord of Oultrejourdain to fulfill his oath.

King Guy, on the other hand, was treated with respect, for one king does not slay another, Saladin told him.

The next day Tiberias fell, 'Akka opened its gates on July 10th, and Jerusalem capitulated on October 2nd.

Saladin proved most generous at the hour of his supreme victory.

He freed King Guy, the princes, barons and knights (save the <p327> Templars and the Hospitallers[1]), together with thousands of other captives.

The Emperor Isaac Angelus of Byzantium sent a deputation to congratulate Saladin, and to ask that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre be returned to the care and the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Saladin complied with the wish of the Emperor.

Not only did he give Christians their liberties; Jews were encouraged by him to go back to Jerusalem (after the lapse of nearly a century) and settle there.

[1 These were put to the sword at Hittin.

Only the Grand Master of the Temple was spared.]

The news of the loss of Jerusalem jolted Europe to action and the Third Crusade (1189-92) was set afoot.

Warring kings and princes buried their hatchets, for the time being, and marched eastwards.

Frederick Barbarossa of Germany was in the vanguard, but was drowned while crossing a river in Cilicia, when the greater number of his soldiery gave up and retraced their steps to Europe.

Then came Richard Coeur-de-Lion of England and Philip Augustus of France, who were deadly enemies.

Richard scored a great success at the very start, by conquering Cyprus for Christendom before setting foot in the Holy Land.

In the meantime, Saladin had systematically advanced to reduce one Frankish stronghold after another; from Ladhiqiyyah (Laodicea, Latakia) in the north to Safad and Karak in the south, he swept over them all.

By the end of 1189, all that remained to the soldiers of the Cross were (apart

from isolated castles and a few minor towns) Tyre, Tripoli and Antioch.

Had Saladin gone straight from 'Akka to Tyre in 1187, he would have gained that glittering prize as well.

But by the time he reached the walls of Tyre, much had happened.

Conrad of Montferrat had arrived from Europe to take charge of the city's defences.

Saladin caused the old Marquis, his father, to be brought from Damascus and shown to him, threatening his death if Tyre did not surrender.

Conrad's sense of honour and his zeal for the cause proved the stronger: he refused to surrender Tyre.

Saladin's sense of honour prompted him to match Conrad's magnificent stand:

Conrad's aged father was not put to death.

Saladin's second attempt to overcome the resistance in Tyre was disastrous.

He lost ships, and his army, battle-weary and in need of rest and recuperation, had to be disbanded.

The Franks, reinforced with some of the men whom Barbarossa <p328> had led, and strengthened by the arrival of the advance army of Philip Augustus, found a golden opportunity to wrest back 'Akka from Saladin.

King Guy, who had promised on his release to go back to Europe, and never again to fight Saladin, appeared at the head of the investing forces.

He was joined by Richard of England, of whom it has been said: ' . . .

He was a bad son, a bad husband and a bad king, but a gallant and splendid soldier';[1] both chivalrous and romantic, he entertained notions of marriages that would bind his House to the House of Saladin.

He and Saladin exchanged gifts but no meeting ever took place between them.

The siege of 'Akka was long and hard.

The Christians found it impossible to break through its defences, while Saladin was unable to give substantial aid to the besieged Muslims.

The siege lasted from 27 August 1189 to 12 July 1191.

At last the brave defenders of 'Akka had to surrender.

Although gravely shaken, Saladin would not repudiate the pledge given on his behalf by the garrison of 'Akka.

There were further battles and skirmishes along the coast, during which Jaffa was taken and re-taken, but it was obvious that the Third Crusade, having achieved the establishment of yet another Frankish kingdom in the Holy Land (destined to last for a century), was already a spent force.

Fresh quarrels had broken out among its protagonists.

Philip Augustus abandoned his post in the fight for the Cross -- a deed which amounted to high treason in Richard's eyes -- and promising Richard not to encroach on his possessions, went back to France.

Once there he promptly ignored his promise.

[1 Runciman. *ibid.*. vol.

III, p.

75. (Cased edn.) ]

The English king himself had been too long absent from his kingdom and had pressing problems that required his early return.

Still entertaining his romantic notions he knighted a son of al-Malik-al-'Adil, a brother of Saladin.

Then Conrad of Montferrat was assassinated in 'Akka, in all probability on the direct orders of Sinan, the Old Man of the Mountain.

Guy of Lusignan who coveted the kingship of 'Akka was denied it; instead, Henry of Champagne, nephew of both Richard and the King of France, became the ruler of the new kingdom.

Richard made arrangements that Cyprus might go to Guy, the ex-king of Jerusalem, as a consolation prize; Guy was at last out of the Holy Land, and happy.

After protracted negotiations a peace treaty was signed between Richard and Saladin, in September 1192.

Cities on the <p329> coast, from 'Akka to Jaffa, were all that the Third Crusade had gained for the Cross.

Richard sailed away, only to be shipwrecked and to fall captive to Duke Leopold of Austria, who hated him and considered him guilty of the murder of Conrad.

Saladin, who had only a few months to live would not now turn over the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Greek rite.

He himself would decide the apportionment between the Latins, the Greeks and other Christians, and not let any sect assume a dominant position.

After decades of warfare Saladin was greatly wearied, but before going to Damascus which was to be his capital, he journeyed from Jerusalem to Beirut, to reach a settlement with Bohemond.

Then he went to Damascus, and there died on 3 March 1193, at the age of fifty-four.

His mausoleum stands there today, awesome and revered.

Al-Malik an-Nasir Salahi'd-Din was one of the greatest leaders of men in the whole range of the history of mankind.

His nobility of character and his generosity were exemplary. <p330>

29 Islam at Bay

Timujin, the son of a petty Mongol chieftain, was a boy in his early teens when his father died.

For many years he had to fight to secure his patrimony; but he achieved even more, for he united the tribes of Mongolia under his own rule.

In the year 1206, by general acclaim, Timujin took the name and title of Chingiz Khan.[1] Next, he set about extending his empire eastwards, and eventually conquered northern China.[2] By then (1215), he was nearly fifty years of age -- he was born in 1167 -- and had been campaigning since the age of thirteen.

To his west lay the empire of the kings of Kharazm -- the Kharazmshahs.

[1 Variouslly written in English as Jenghiz and Genghiz, it means the Perfect Warrior.]

[2 The Chin Empire.

The Sung Empire of southern China was overrun in 1279, during the reign of the famous Qubilai Qa'an (Kubla Khan).]

At one time in Transoxania, the Qarakhata'i or the Gurkhaniyyih kingdom, together with the smaller principality of the Al-i- Khaqan or the Al-i-Afrasiyab (based on Samarqand) formed buffer states which separated the territory of Chingiz Khan from the domains of the Kharazmshahs.

Their Turkish rulers were renowned for their justice and patronage of learning and poetry, but Sultan 'Alai'd-Din Muhammad, the Kharazmshah, wantonly destroyed them.

Thus his frontiers became contiguous with the frontiers of the Mongols.

Chingiz Khan apprised Sultan 'Alai'd-Din Muhammad of the fact that he had overrun China, and was now a mighty and powerful ruler; but he was weary of warfare and wanted to be at peace with his western neighbour.

He hoped that trade between his people and those of Kharazm would flourish.

Though somewhat riled that Chingiz Khan had addressed him as his son, 'Alai'd-Din Muhammad responded appropriately to this expression of <p331> good will.

However, when four Muslim traders from Mongolia arrived at Utrar, a frontier town, its avaricious governor, coveting their riches, accused them of espionage, threw them into prison, robbed them of their possessions and, to compound his felony, put them to death.

Chingiz was naturally furious, but he kept calm and sent a deputation to the court of the Kharazmshah to obtain redress.

The arrogant Sultan Muhammad responded stupidly and abominably by executing the head of the deputation and sending back the rest to Chingiz Khan with their

beards shaved off.

Chingiz moved quickly to avenge the blood of innocent people and the insult so grotesquely rendered to his own person.

His Mongol hordes descended mercilessly upon the realm of Islam.

The first to taste the wrath of Chingiz was the governor of Utrar, who had murdered harmless merchants for the love of silver and gold.

Molten silver was poured down his throat.

The distinguished Arab historian, Ibn-al-Athir (d.

1234), was a witness to the horrors of the Mongol invasion, but when writing his great history, al-Kamil at-Tawarikh, he could not, at first, bring himself to make any record of it.

'For years,' he wrote, 'I drew back from mentioning this event.

So horrendous did I find it that I could not mention it.

Whenever I took a step forward to deal with it, the sheer horror made me take another step backwards . . .

How I wish that I had never been born, or that prior to the descent of this calamity I had been taken away from this world -- no trace left of me.

Notwithstanding, my friends persuaded me not to leave this episode unrecorded.

I hesitated, but then I saw that no good purpose would be served by omitting it.

Let me say, then, that what is entailed is describing the most dire of all disasters, the most catastrophic of all calamities which befell all men and Muslims in particular.

Should anyone claim that since the day God created man to the present time this world had never witnessed a tragedy of such dimension, he would have spoken the very word of truth.'

Such was the reaction of a level-headed historian to the enormity of the misfortune which overtook the realm of Islam.

Yaqt al-Hamawi (d.

A.D.

1220), the greatest of Muslim geographers, who was of Greek parentage, was engulfed by the onrush of the Mongols and narrowly escaped with his life from the city of Marv.

According to Ibn-al-Athir, 700,000 perished in this <p332> one city, while 'Ata-Malik-i-Juvayni[1] (d.

1283) put the figure at 1,300,000.

Yaqt endured much hardship before he reached the city of Mosul.

There he wrote these lines to the vizier[2] of the ruler of Aleppo:

[1 Author of the Tarikh-i-Jahangusha, translated by John Andrew Boyle under the title of The History of the World-Conqueror. 'Ata-Malik-i-Juvayni was a high official in the service of the descendants of Chingiz Khan.]

[2 Jamali'd-Din 'Ali ash-Shaybani al-Qifti. ]

'Great was the number of its pious men who outshone their peers in their nobility.

Numerous were its jurists whose deeds shielded the integrity of Islam.

Evidence of its science and learning is inscribed on the scroll of time.

The excellence of its authors shed glory on religion and upon the world.

Their works have reached far-away lands.

None was there of sound judgement and sound knowledge who did not but rise like unto the sun from that region of Khurasan.

And none was there, worthy and true, who would not but choose that horizon for the setting of his star, a year to dwell there and be counted amongst its denizens.

Their children were as stalwart men, their youth heroes, their aged the elite of the world.

The proofs of their accomplishments and the evidences of their glory exist for all to see.

Then there is every reason to wonder why the king, who ruled over such cities and towns, turned his back on them and left them to their fate.'

Indeed the behaviour of 'Alai'd-Din Muhammad-i-Kharazm-shah was inexplicable.

He insulted Chingiz Khan in the grossest manner, provoking the Mongol ruler to the white-heat of fury; and then he not only neglected the defence of the region that lay in the path of the Mongol hordes, but ran away -- from town to town, from city to city -- until, abandoned by his officers and officials, he took refuge in a small island in the Caspian Sea, leaving a disrupted empire that had once extended from the Ural Mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Indus to the Euphrates, to his brave, courageous, but ill-starred son, Jalali'd-Din.

Yaqt may have been carried away by his rhetoric, his grief, and the recollection of his own past and privations.

But, in truth, that area of the East which comprised Transoxania, Khurasan and the present day Afghanistan, was a region teeming with populous, prosperous and renowned cities, such as Samarqand, Bukhara, Gurganj, Tus Nishapur, Tirmidh, Marv, Balkh, Bamyan and Hirat.

It was there that modern Persian was formed.

From that <p333> region arose such men as Abu-Muslim, Firdawsi, Abu-'Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Farabi, Khayyam, Ghazali, Faridi'd-Din-i-'Attar and

Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi.

Chingiz destroyed those flourishing cities and, literally, millions lost their lives.

The entire population of Hirat was put to the sword in a massacre which lasted for several days.

The scale of the havoc wrought by the Mongols in the Eastern Marches of the realm of Islam can be measured by the story told of a man who found a hiding-place in a minaret, and, when the invaders left a wrecked City behind them, all he could utter was: 'They came, they killed, they burned, they went'.

Jalali'd-Din, the last of the Kharazm-shahs, had his back to the Indus when Chingiz, at the head of his army, closed upon him.

His mother and his wife, dreading captivity, pleaded to be thrown into the river.

At first Jalali'd-Din flinched from such a dire deed, but consented at the last moment.

And then, riding his third horse (two others had been killed under him), he leapt into the waters of the fast-flowing river from a considerable height, and gained the safety of the other shore.

Chingiz watched this daring feat with amazement and admiration, and stopped his men from pursuing the last of the Kharazmshahs.

But he did not spare the young children of Jalali'd-Din and even an infant was murdered.

In India, Jalali'd-Din had to face the opposition of both the ruler of Sind and Shamsi'd-Din Iltamish of Delhi.

He subdued them, then turning to the Iranian plateau, held off the Mongols for a while, but not before they had flattened Ray and Hamadan.

The ancient city of Ray (Rhages) was dealt such a savage blow that it disappeared for ever from the map.[1] Surprisingly, an 'Abbasid force also stemmed the tide on the borders of 'Iraq Meanwhile, Chingiz himself had returned to Mongolia, where he died in 1227.

His army had already broken the resistance of the Russians, though it had not pressed home its advantage.

The ill-fated Jalali'd-Din's temporary successes brought fresh hordes from Mongolia, who ranged as far as the Caucasus and invaded Georgia.

Jalali'd-Din, fleeing before them, as well as from the Ayyubids, his fellow-Muslims, met his death on a solitary mountain-top, at the hands of a Kurd who nursed a grudge against him.

Apart from the province of Fars, the Iranian plateau passed <p334> firmly under the rule of the heirs of Chingiz Khan.

Although the 'Abbasid preserve of 'Iraq held out for a while longer, Islam was at bay.

[1 In recent years a township, adjacent to Tihran, has been named Shahr-i-Ray.

It is not the ancient city.]

The Franks were also on the move, regaining Jerusalem not as the consequence of a pitched battle, but as the result of the fratricidal contests of the Ayyubids.

Al-Malik al-Kamil Nasiri'd-Din (reigned 1218-38), the ruler of Egypt, ceded to Emperor Frederick II Jerusalem, Bethlehem and a corridor linking them with the sea.

Just at that time (1229), the Hohenstaufen Emperor was excommunicated by Pope Gregory IX, ostensibly because he had not embarked on a crusade at an earlier date.

The Muslims were pained and horrified, the Christians embarrassed and uneasy.

To hand over Jerusalem was rank treachery in the eyes of Muslims, although they had retained full possession of the Haram ash-Sharif.[1] As for the Christians, that an excommunicated Emperor should gain mastery over the Holy City was quite inadmissible, although many of them owed no allegiance to the Pope.

But so confused and contradictory were the affairs and the behaviour of the Muslim Ayyubid and Saljuqid potentates, and the Franks of Outremer and other Christians of the East, that the quiet deal between the Sultan of Egypt and the Hohenstaufen Emperor did not seem entirely out of place.

Before long Al-Malik al-Kamil died, Emperor Frederick was forgiven and restored to favour, and new patterns emerged.

Strange cross-currents, futile alliances and ruinous counter-alliances, battles between Muslim and Muslim, Christian and Christian, proceeded apace until the year 1244, when the Kharazmian army, left leaderless by the cruel death of Sultan Jalali'd-Din, and roaming over the vast stretches of northern 'Iraq and northern Syria, plundering and pillaging as they went, raced towards Damascus.

Finding it hard to reduce, they wheeled to overrun Tiberias and Nablus, and storm Jerusalem, where the Christians received no mercy at their hands.

These soldiers, being desperate, put their loyalty at the disposal of the highest bidder.

When they found al-Malik as-Salih.

Najmi'd-Din (reigned 1240-49), the Ayyubid ruler of Egypt, ungrateful for services they had rendered him and refusing them entry into Egypt, they changed sides in assaults on Damascus, and were overwhelmed in the vicinity of Ba'labakk (Baalbek) by al-Malik as-Salih's army, which had been sent to relieve pressure on the <p335> besieged city.

They deserved a better fate, for they had wrested Jerusalem back from the

Franks, who never again possessed the Holy City.

Instead, they were denied a home and were decimated, and their remnants retreated eastwards to enrol under the banner of the Mongols.

It was a sad end for a group of men once led by the intrepid Jalali'd-Din.

[1 See p.205n. ]

The Mongols had had to call a halt while arrangements regarding the heritage of Chingiz Khan were discussed and settled.

For the succession Chingiz had passed over his eldest son, Juchi,[1] who actually predeceased him, and his second son, Chaghatay,[2] naming his third son, Uktay,[3] to succeed to the overlordship of his empire, which extended from the waters of the Pacific to the headwaters of the Tigris, from the Indian Ocean to the Arctic.

At the Assembly (Quriltay) of the Mongol nobles, held conveniently soon, Uktay offered to step down in favour of his elder brother, but the Quriltay decided that Chingiz Khan's wishes should be honoured.

Brothers of Chingiz, his other sons and the sons of Juchi had all had territories and principalities allotted to them, and they, one and all, pledged obedience to the overlord, who was now hailed as the Qa'an.

Uktay Qa'an proved to be a just and benevolent ruler, who sought to repair the grievous damage which his father had inflicted on a vast area of the globe.

Following his death in 1241, there was an interregnum of five years before his son Guyuk (Guyuk) was elevated to his high office.

Guyuk reigned for only three years and, on his death in 1249, another period of regency intervened before a decision was reached for the overlordship to pass to the line of Tuluy, the fourth son of Chingiz Khan.

Mingu (Mongke) Qa'an, the son of Tuluy, was also a remarkable ruler.

He realized as his grandfather had, when he apportioned various territories to the members of his family, that such a vast empire as that of the Mongols could not be ruled directly from a central point, although there must be a powerful overlord to whom the separate administrations would bear ultimate allegiance.

At the same Assembly which raised him to overlordship, Mingu commissioned his brothers Hulagu (Hulegu) and Qubilay[4] (who eventually succeeded him in 1260) to complete <p336> the conquest of Iran and China and consolidate Mongol power therein.

Hulagu went to Iran and Qubilay to China.

[1 Variants:

Jochi, Tushi, Jujf.]

[2 Variants:

Chaghatai, Jagatai. ]

[3 Variants:

Ogetei, Ogodai, Ogedci, Ogedey. ]

[4 Kubla Khan of Coleridge's famous poem. ]

In Iran the hold of the Mongols had somehow slackened.

Hulagu was particularly instructed to destroy the power of the Isma'ilis[1] and to bring the 'Abbasid caliph in Baghdad to heel.

But on leading a considerable force into Iran, he found conditions considerably altered.

The descendants of Chingiz Khan had become aware and enamoured of the gifts of civilization.

Qaraqurum, in Mongolia, which three or four decades earlier had been an unknown, isolated spot for tribes to congregate, had now become an imperial seat, attracting men of science and learning, poets and artists of many kinds. [1 Isma'ilis had been responsible for the murder of Chaghatay, the second son of Chingiz.]

Hulagu wrote to the rulers of principalities and emirates, such as the Zangids of Fars, who had preserved their independence, that he intended to attack the strongholds of the Isma'ilis, and he asked for their co-operation.

Atabak Abu-Bakr of Fars sent Sa'd, his son and successor, to meet the Mongol Prince, offering him homage and support.

Submission and offers of support came also from Sultan 'Izzi'd-Din and Sultan Rukni'd-Din, the rival Muslim potentates of Anatolia.

Hulagu moved by easy stages.

Before he reached Khurasan, Kit-Buqa, his celebrated Nestorian general, was already in the field.

Gird-Kuh, the famous Isma'ili stronghold in Quhistan (Kuhistan) successfully resisted the assault of the Mongols, but the city of Tun in Khurasan was reduced and its inhabitants slaughtered.

It was now the summer of 1256 and Hulagu had opened negotiations with the Isma'ili 'Grand Master', Rukni'd-Din Khur-Shah.

The Isma'ili leader was expected to deliver himself to the mercy of the Mongols.

In his impregnable castle of Maymun-Diz, Khur-Shah had with him a number of learned men, honoured prisoners who were not Isma'ilis.

The most prominent of them was Khajih Nasiri'd-Din-i-Tusi, a philosopher and scientist, of no mean accomplishment, and of the Ithna-'Ashariyyih (Twelver) affiliation.

These men advised Khur-Shah to send one of his brothers to the encampment of Hulagu, in token of his submission.

Accordingly Shahanshah was sent; Hulagu received him with proper honours, but

was far from satisfied.

His prime purpose was to obtain the dismantling of all the Isma'ili fortifications.

Rukni'd-Din Khur-Shah was <p337> well aware of the might of the Mongols.

He could not possibly meet them in the open, nor could he withstand a long siege.

Yet he much feared that once his castles and battlements had been made inoperative, his future and the future of his people would be at stake.

Nor was he wrong in his assumptions.

So, he began to temporize.

While fervent in expressing his submission to the great overlord in Qaraqurum, he asked for time.

Could he have a year's grace before pulling down the fortifications of Maymun-Diz?

Would Hulagu Khan agree to leave the castles of Alamut and Lanbasar untouched?

Hulagu now demanded that Khur-Shah come before him in person.

Meanwhile, he was relentlessly drawing nearer to Maymun-Diz.

The castle of Shahdiz had to be reduced and Maymun-Diz encircled and attacked before Khur-Shah yielded to the inevitable, and, receiving assurances that he and his family would be safe, abandoned his strongly-fortified castle.

The extinction of Isma'ili power took place in November 1256.

Hulagu kept his promise, because as long as Rukni'd-Din Khur-Shah was his highly honoured and revered prisoner, he could (and did) use him to persuade all the Isma'ili castles to surrender.

Alamut and Lanbasar put up some resistance but were soon overwhelmed. 'Ata-Malik-i-Juvayni managed to save part of the great library and some of the astronomical instruments that were lodged in Alamut.

As soon as the Isma'ili strongholds were overthrown Hulagu allowed Rukni'd-Din Khur-Shah to go to Qaraqurum, but it was a long and futile journey, for the overlord had no use for him.

Somewhere he was put to death, as was every member of his family and every Isma'ili held by the Mongols.

Such was the tragic end of the amazing handiwork of the dedicated and single-minded Hasan-i-Sabbah.

Flushed with victory, Hulagu now turned his attention to the next objective set by his brother: the overthrow of the 'Abbasids.

Even before Lanbasar had fallen Hulagu was moving westwards.

He had as a close personal adviser the same Nasiri'd-Din-i-Tusi whom the Isma'ilis had forcibly detained in order to benefit by his vast store of knowledge.

Nasiri'd-Din, an Ithna-'Ashari (Twelver) Sh'iah, who could have no love either for the Isma'ilis or the Sunni caliph, brushed aside with sound reasoning and faultless logic all the forebodings about attacking Baghdad and dispensing with the 'Abbasid caliphate.

Hulagu had been told that <p338> such action would result in natural and supernatural calamities.

To Hulagu's query Nasiri'd-Din replied simply that nothing would happen except that he, Hulagu, would replace the Caliph as the ruler of Baghdad.

Al-Musta'sim-Bi'llah, the thirty-seventh caliph of the House of 'Abbas, had been elevated to the Caliphate in 1242.

He was weak and vacillating, unlike his great-grandfather, the formidable an-Nasir-li-Dini'llah (1180-1225), who had, in the course of his long tenure of the Caliphate, restored some semblance of authority to the institution which he represented and had added considerably to the material power of his state.

When Hulagu requested support in his campaign against the Isma'ilis, Musta'sim failed to respond, although he should have welcomed the move; and to Hulagu's summons he turned a deaf ear, replying in contemptuous terms.

Hulagu hoped to play the same game with Musta'sim as he had with the last of the Isma'ili rulers: to lure him out of Baghdad.

But Musta'sim seemed unimpressed, and once again counselled Hulagu to go back the way he had come.

Even the news of the fall of Kirmanshah and the massacre of its inhabitants, followed by the descent of the Mongols from the Iranian plateau onto the plains of 'Iraq, did not disconcert the Caliph.

However, when his army was routed and had its back to land which was being inundated by the waters pouring through the dyke destroyed by the Mongols,[1] with Baghdad invested and under attack, Musta'sim found that he had no choice but to negotiate surrender terms.

It is claimed that Musta'sim was beguiled and betrayed by his vizier, Ibn-al-Alqami, who, like Nasiri'd-Din-i-Tusi, was of the Ithna-'Ashari Sh'iah persuasion, and proof is provided by the fact that Hulagu gave him the same office he had held under Musta'sim.

On 10 February 1258, Musta'sim and his three sons walked into the camp of Hulagu, who received them well.

At Hulagu's bidding, the fallen Caliph sent word to the people of Baghdad to give up the struggle and come out of their barricades.

They did so, only to find the Mongols waiting to cut them down.

For seven days, Baghdad, the renowned city of Mansur, of Harun and Ma'mun, was delivered to carnage and looting.

Then Hulagu withdrew from the humbled and ravished Dar-as-Salam (the Abode of Peace) to a village on the road to <p339> Iran.

There Musta'sim was put to death.

The very thought of shedding the blood of the Caliph was horrendous to many in the service of the Il-Khan,[2] although in the past caliphs had been murdered without ado.

In any case, it is doubtful if Hulagu would have had any qualms in that respect.

However, the manner of Musta'sim's death was itself horrific, for, to prevent shedding his blood he was put within the folds of a carpet and rolled and kicked until dead.

No doubt a shudder went through the realm of Islam at the news.

In far-away Shiraz, where Mongols had not yet set foot, the famed poet Sa'di bewailed the fall of the House of 'Abbas.

Heaven has every cause, he said, to rain tears of blood on the earth, and he called out to the Prophet not to delay until the Day of Resurrection, rather to rise up then to witness the calamity that had overtaken the world.

Yet, Atabak Abu-Bakr, the Sulghurid, whose patronage the poet enjoyed and whose court he adorned, had to go posthaste to Maraghih in Adharbayjan,[3] to renew his pledge of submission, offer felicitations and express his delight at the brilliant success of the Mongol arms.

And so did Sultan Rukni'd-Din Qilich-Arslan IV, the Saljuqid ruler of Rum (Anatolia), as well as Badri'd-Din Lu'lu' of Mosul, then in his nineties, who had wrested power from the descendants of 'Imadi'd-Din Zangi in 1222, and had loyally accepted the suzerainty of Hulagu Khan.

Neither Abu-Bakr of Fars or Badri'd-Din of Mosul had long to live; the former died in 1260 and the latter the following year.

Abu-Bakr's son, Sa'd, fell ill, while on his way home from Hulagu's camp, and died twelve days after his father.

Sa'd's son, Muhammad, a minor, fell from a roof and died.

Saljuq-Shah, a nephew of Atabak Abu-Bakr, proved to be a headstrong and incompetent ruler, arousing Hulagu's ire and, as a consequence, losing his throne and his life.

The last of the Sulghurids was a daughter of Sa'd, married to a son of Hulagu.

Thus the last independent principality in Iran passed into the possession of the Mongols.

In Mosul, Salih, the son of Badri'd-Din, also brought upon himself the wrath of Hulagu, and he too lost his life.

Thus the whole of northern 'Iraq was added to the Mongol domains.

[1 The Mongols wrecked the irrigation system of 'Iraq which had remained intact for centuries.]

[2 The title applied to Hulagu and his successors. ]

[3 Hulagu had chosen Maraghih for his capital; there Nasiri'd-Din-i-Tusi built for him an observatory which attained well-deserved fame.]

Although the conquest of Syria was a goal which Hulagu <p340> achieved initially, very soon the whole enterprise turned to failure.

When the Mongols overthrew the 'Abbasids, Ayyubids still ruled in Damascus and Aleppo, but in Egypt the Mamluk Turks had treacherously murdered the Ayyubid Turan-Shah, bringing to an end the reign of the descendants of Saladin.

In September 1259, Hulagu set out from Adharbayjan for the west.

As he and his general moved in the direction of Syria, famous cities such as Diyarbakr, Mayyafariqin, Amid, Edessa, Nasibin and Harran fell to them.

The Kurds were the chief sufferers in this steady advance of the Mongol army until Aleppo was reached.

King Hethoum of Little Armenia (who had gone in person to Qara-qurum to offer homage) and his son-in-law, Bohemond VI of Antioch and Tripoli, joined Hulagu in besieging Aleppo.

The city was taken within six days, followed by six days of rapine and slaughter.

The Armenian king himself set fire to Aleppo's main mosque.

Al-Malik an-NaSir Salahi'd-Din Yusuf escaped towards Egypt, but he was captured by the Mongols and Damascus surrendered without a battle.

Carrying their advance as far as Gaza, the Mongols were poised to invade Egypt when news reached Hulagu that Uktay Qa'an was dead.

He decided to return immediately to Iran.

Before turning back, Hulagu sent an envoy to Sayfi'd-Din Qutuz, the Mamluk ruler of Egypt, calling upon him to submit to Mongol suzerainty.

Qutuz had murdered Aybak, the first of the Mamluks, and seized the throne.

Now, he put Hulagu's envoy to death.

Whereas the Franks of Antioch and the Armenians had rallied to Hulagu and may even have encouraged him to invade Syria and restore Jerusalem to the Christians, the Franks of 'Akka and other cities of the coast let the Mamluk army pass by without hindrance and provided it with victuals.

They were Latins and the Mongol commander, the renowned Kit-Buqa, was a Nestorian.[1] Furthermore, they knew of the arrogance and brutality of the

Mongols and preferred Muslims to them.

They were yet to learn of the brutality of the Mamluks.

[1 Both the mother of Hulagu and the step-mother of Abaqa, Hulagu's son and successor, were ardent Nestorians.]

On 3 September 1260, the Mongol army was destroyed at 'Ayn Jalut (the Pools of Goliath) near Nazareth.

The brave Nestorian fought to the last, but was captured and beheaded.

Rukni'd-Din Baybars, the victorious Mamluk general, now killed Qutuz, his own monarch, took his place and cleared Syria of the Mongols. <p341>

Hulagu's return to Iran looks to have been pointless.

If he had hoped to gain the overlordship, his brother Qubilay had already secured that position and exercised it, having conquered the whole of southern China, no longer from Qaraqurum but from Khan-Baligh -- the City of the Khans (Peking).

The great distance between his capital and western Asia contributed to the loosening of control over the descendants of Hulagu in Iran, who became independent and were known as the hl-Khans.

Moreover, while the Mongols in western Asia embraced Islam, the Mongols in China and Mongolia itself became Buddhists.

The descendants of 'Kubla Khan' in China ruled there until 1368 as the Yuan dynasty, Chinese for all intents and purposes.

The Ming dynasty replaced them.

At Tabriz, Hulagu heard of the disaster that had overtaken his army at 'Ayn Jalut.

He had just given the governorship of Damascus to the Ayyubid al-Malik an-Nasir, who had shown himself happy and contented to serve under the Mongols.

Incensed and suspecting treachery, Hulagu sent a small force in pursuit of the Ayyubid, now on his way to Syria.

Al-Malik an-Nasir and all his followers were killed.

The only survivor of that party was the astronomer, Muhiyyi'd-Din al-Maghribi, who was spared because his science and accomplishment were highly valued.

Hulagu made a second attempt to conquer Syria; that too ended in failure.

The Mongols drove as far as Hims, but Hulagu was not with his army which suffered a decisive defeat, on December 10th, at the hands of the Mamluks.

Thus the Mongols remained barred from Syria and their westward expansion into Islamic lands was definitely checked.

The Franks, who had previously displayed benevolence towards the Mamluks, soon began to reel under the hammer blows of Rukni'd-Din Baybars and longed for

relief from any quarter.

Hulagu, however, had a more urgent problem on his hands than making a third attempt to invade Syria.

He was threatened in the north, from the Caucasus, by the Golden Horde, whom the Muslim historians call Qipchaq.[1] Their ruler, Berke, was a cousin of Hulagu, a descendant of the eldest son of Chingiz Khan.

Berke had become a Muslim, and it is claimed that Hulagu's attack on Baghdad and the death of Musta'sim aroused his hostility.

On the other hand, there is also the fact that princes of the House of Jochi had been put to death in <p342> Iran.

Whatever the reasons for this fratricidal struggle, Berke posed a serious menace.

At first Hulagu achieved victory over the Golden Horde, but an army under the command of his son, Abaqa, sent to pursue the enemy, was routed by Berke himself, and Abaqa just managed to escape with his life.

Sad and disheartened, Hulagu turned back to Tabriz.

He died in February 1265, on the shores of Lake Urumiyyih (now Rida'iyyih), not yet fifty years of age.

The war with the Golden Horde continued into the reign of Abaqa, who had also to meet invasion on his north-eastern frontier by the descendants of Chaghatay, the second son of Chingiz Khan.

[1 Eastern Mongols, from the valley of the Volga.]

Abaqa's reign (1265-82) was thus interspersed with warfare.

Berke's death, not long after the death of Hulagu, brought the war with the Golden Horde to a close.

The aggression from Transoxania was also eventually contained, but not before Bukhara had been overrun and destroyed, a tragic fate for a renowned city which had suffered grievously, half a century before, at the hands of the great-grandfather of these contestants.

Baraq of the House of Chaghatay had inflicted a similar punishment on the city of Nishapur, in Khurasan, which had also been totally devastated, decades before, by the armies of Chingiz.

The famous castle of Gird-Kuh opened its gates, in 1271, after a siege which had lasted eighteen years.

This victory of Mongol arms was a minor affair, but it did mark the final liquidation of all Isma'ilf power in Iran.

The Saljuqs of Rum had accepted (as we have already seen) the Mongol suzerainty, and preserved their independence, although there was a Mongol garrison stationed in Anatolia.

Internal disturbances forced Kay-Kawus II, one of the two rival Saljuq sultans, into exile.

The other, Qilich-Arslan IV was sent to his death by the vizier, Mu'inid-Din-i-Parvanih.

In collusion with the usurper, Baybars invaded Anatolia in 1277, massacred the Mongols and swiftly returned to Egypt.

Incensed by the perfidy of the people of Rum, Abaqa marched into Anatolia, put many to the sword, ordered the execution of Mu'inid-Din-i-Parvanih (who was tried and found guilty), and would have entered Syria from the north but for the onset of winter.

Abaqa's wish was to obtain support from the Franks and the Christian rulers of Europe to fight the Mamluks, just as the Christians had hoped for Mongol support against these Muslims.

His preparations for an attack on Syria were badly impeded by yet another <p343> excursion into his territories, on the part of his Chaghatay cousins, this time from the south-east, in the region of Fars and Kirman.

Having dealt with the marauders and despairing of any aid from the potentates of Europe, he committed a force of forty thousand men to the invasion of Syria, under the command of his young brother, Mangu-Timur, who had hardly any experience of generalship.

Georgians and Armenians added their support.

But, once again, the attempt to penetrate into Syria and to hold it failed.

In October 1281, in the vicinity of Hims, the Mongol army suffered a crushing defeat.

The days of Outremer were numbered.

We have now to go back with the years to obtain a picture of the affairs of Outremer, the attitudes and the mentality of the Mongol conquerors, the tide of fortunes involved in abortive Crusades, the entanglements and divisions of Christian Europe, and to note how these factors contributed to the increase and consolidation of Mamluk power, the enfeeblement of Christian endeavour, the failure to cement a working alliance between the Mongols and the Christians of the West, and finally to the liquidation of Outremer at the close of the thirteenth century. <p344>

Islam Ascendant

PROFESSOR PHILIP HITTI writes:

'Hard pressed between the mounted archers of the wild Mongols in the east and the mailed knights of the Crusaders on the west, Islam in the early part of the thirteenth century seemed for ever lost.

How different was the situation in the last part of the same century I The last Crusader had by that time been driven into the sea.

The seventh of the Il-Khans,[1] many of whom had been flirting with Christianity, had finally recognized Islam as the state religion -- a dazzling victory for the faith of Muhammad.

Just as in the case of the Saljuqs, the religion of the Moslems had conquered where their arms had failed.

Less than half a century after Hulagu's merciless attempt at the destruction of Islamic culture, his great-grandson Ghazan, as a devout Moslem, was consecrating much time and energy to the revivification of that same culture'[2]

[1 Ghazan (1295-1304) embraced Islam and took the name Mahmud.

His career is dealt with in the next chapter.]

[2 History of the Arabs, p.

488. ]

When Saladin died in 1193 at the early age of fifty-four, the unity which he had forged betwixt the Muslims in western Asia and Egypt was shattered.

He had too many scheming and foolish sons, who plotted and counter-plotted and, unlike their father who never broke his word, made promises and alliances, only to break them at a suitable moment.

As Sir Steven Runciman remarks: '. . . the tragedy of medieval Islam was its lack of permanent institutions, to carry on authority after a leader's death.

The Caliphate was the only institution to have an existence transcending that of its holders; and the Caliph was now politically impotent.

Nor was Saladin Caliph.

He was a Kurd of no great family who commanded the obedience of the Moslem world <p345> only by the force of his personality.'[1] And now it was the personality of Saladin's brother, al-Malik al-'Adil Sayfi'd-Din (1200-18),[2] who held his heritage together.

If the Ayyubids had their squabbles, so did the Saljuqids of Rum, the Franks of Outremer, and the Armenians of Cilicia.

Matters were no better in Byzantium, where Emperor Isaac Angelus was deposed, blinded and thrown into prison, together with his son, young Alexius.

A brother of Isaac, also named Alexius, took his place as Emperor Alexius III.

In 1201, the deposed emperor's son escaped from prison and made his way to Europe, to the court of his brother-in-law, Duke Philip of Swabia.

[1 Runciman, A History of the Crusades, vol.

III, pp.

78-9. (Cased edn.) ]

[2 He was called Safadin (Saphadin) by Europeans. ]

In Europe, Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) was preaching yet another Crusade.

As long as Henry VI, the Hohenstaufen emperor, son of Barbarossa, lived, Celestine III, Innocent's predecessor was chary of promoting a fourth Crusade, because he rightly feared that Henry would dominate it.

Henry was on the way to becoming the most powerful potentate in Christendom, and that was not to the liking of Rome.

He had already dispatched German troops to the Holy Land, whose presence added to the bewildering confusion of Outremer and its kaleidoscopic relations with the Ayyubids and Saljuqids.

The fact is that the Franks in the East were happy as they were, and did not welcome the arrival of large bands of knights and warriors from Europe.

Henry died in September 1197 at the age of thirty-two.

On hearing of the Emperor's death the German Crusaders went home.

They had, however, wrested Beirut from the control of a Muslim who was universally detested, and left behind a legacy: the institution of Teutonic Knights.

This made a situation already complicated by the presence of Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers even more complex and unpredictable.

One constant factor was the mutual antipathy of these two orders.

Although they remained loyal to the Latin Church, their alliances and partisanships were ever-changing.

The Hospitallers were even in league with the Isma'ilis of the Old Man of the Mountain.

The Teutonic Knights, on the other hand, could always be counted upon to follow the lead of the Hohenstaufens, even if in opposition to Rome.

With the opening of the new century, the Pope's efforts at mounting a Crusade were beginning to bring results.

At first the leading figure of the Fourth Crusade was Tibald of Champagne, but he died in March 1201, and the leadership fell to a man whom the Pope did not trust, Boniface of Montferrat, a grandee from northern Italy who was a friend and supporter of the Hohenstaufens.

Young Alexius made a successful attempt to enlist the sympathies of Boniface, through Duke Philip, his sister's husband, brother of Emperor Henry VI.

Pope Celestine's negotiations with Byzantium had not led to reunion.

Now Alexius promised that should the Crusaders help him to oust his uncle, he would end the schism, bring the Greek Church into communion with Rome, and replenish the coffers of the Crusaders.

Richard Coeur-de-Lion, who was killed in 1199, had maintained that the Crusaders should first invade Egypt, in order to open a way to success in the

Holy Land.

It was decided to follow his advice.

The Crusaders had no means of maritime transport other than that obtainable from the seafarers of Italy.

Venice would provide them with the ships they required but, having close and very profitable trading relations with Egypt, was by no means prepared to lend assistance to an invasion of this realm of the Ayyubids.

The Crusaders assembled at Venice to set out for Egypt, but they did not have the money their leaders had agreed to pay the ship-owners of Venice.

Enforced idleness, their mounting debts, and the continual Venetian demands became very irksome and began to tax the patience of the Crusaders.

Boniface and the Doge of Venice provided a way out.

Boniface had spent the previous winter at the court of Duke Philip, where the young Alexius was angling for help.

The Hohenstaufens hated Byzantium, chiefly because they could not bear to have rivals; it was a hatred which Enrico Dandolo, the aged Doge of Venice, shared.

He and Boniface made secret arrangements and concealed them from others.

The Crusaders were given ships, but instead of sailing for Egypt they were taken across the Adriatic to Zara on the Dalmatian coast.

Although the town belonged to the Roman Catholic King of Hungary, Zara was taken and sacked, thus confirming the worst fears of Innocent III.

He was powerless, however, to divert the course which the Fourth Crusade was taking.

He excommunicated them all, but relented later when he realized that the Venetians had duped them.

Only Venice was left under interdiction.

The wily Doge <p347> cared not at all, since a force intended to capture Jerusalem for the glory of the Cross had secured for him a firm foothold on the other side of the Adriatic; he had every reason to be content.

Even better prospects were now in view: a march on Byzantium.

Young Alexius had joined the Crusaders, and in July 1203, Constantinople was attacked and captured.

Alexius III fled to Thrace.

Blind Isaac was brought out of prison and made co-ruler with his son, who took the title of Emperor Alexius IV.

But it soon became apparent that the young Alexius could not keep his promises, while the Venetians were making exorbitant demands.

At last the people of Constantinople rose in revolt.

Alexius IV was strangled, his father died a few days after him, and Alexius Murzuphlus, a son-in-law of Alexius III, was hailed Emperor Alexius V.

A sad and curious casualty was the statue of Athena, a work by Phidias.

It was smashed because some of the outraged citizens of Constantinople thought that it seemed to be inviting the Franks to come into the imperial city.

Alexius V was competent and would have governed well, but the Crusaders (and the Venetians in particular) were determined to destroy the Greek character of the Empire, and to replace it with a Latin regime.

Who was to be the fortunate Latin emperor?

Philip of Swabia was half a continent away, and in any case he had other ambitions and problems of his own.

Boniface of Montferrat, who had made a mockery of the Crusade, was not the Venetians' choice, although the Doge was willing to support his candidature, because Boniface had friendly relations with the Genoese.

The intense rivalry between the Italian city-states -- Venice, Genoa and Pisa -- was a baneful influence which dogged the fortunes of the Franks of Outremer and led to bitter hostilities and much bloodshed.

Six Venetians and six of the Crusaders were given the task of choosing a Latin emperor.

Byzantium was divided between this Latin emperor, the Venetians and the knights of the Crusade -- the major portion being allotted to the conquerors.

Appalled by their misfortunes the Byzantines made a last desperate effort to retrieve the situation, but it failed.

Their soldiery had lost heart.

Alexius V fled to Thrace, to join his father-in-law.

Another son-in-law of Alexius III, Theodore Lascaris, escaped with the Patriarch, other prelates and members of the nobility to the mainland of Asia, where he established an empire based on Nicaea, which was truly Byzantine.

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What happened in Constantinople, in the wake of the occupation of the city, was barbaric, shameful and criminal in the highest degree.

For almost a thousand years, this proud city of Constantine the Great had harboured and preserved priceless gems of art and the finest products of culture and learning.

Now that the Franks had triumphed Constantinople was delivered to unbridled rapine and total anarchy.

Nothing and no one was spared.

All things, sacred and profane, were desecrated.

Nuns were raped, churches were looted, drunken orgies were staged in the basilica of St.

Sophia, libraries were ransacked, houses were wrecked.

The civilized Venetians knew the value of the precious objects they plundered and took them with care to their city, where one finds them today.

Others, uncouth and ignorant, just trampled on icons and images, pictures and manuscripts.

Then Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders Hainault, was made Emperor of the Latin Romania.

But his reign was short-lived.

The following year, in the battle of Adrianople, he was defeated by the Bulgars and the Greeks, who carried him into captivity.

His brother, Henry, took his place.

This emasculated kingdom had a shadowy existence till 1261.

Then the Nicaean Emperor overthrew it.

In the north of Anatolia, on the shores of the Black Sea, another Greek empire based on Trebizond arose, which endured for two hundred and fifty years; it was established by Alexius Comnenus, another prince of Byzantium.

In the Balkans, another scion of the Byzantine emperors raised himself to power in Epirus and destroyed the kingdom of Thessalonica, which Boniface of Montferrat had salvaged for himself and his heirs.

Venetians took the islands of Crete and Corfu and a port or two in Greece.

The Greek Church was not reunited with Rome.

The Papal legate absolved the Crusaders from the pursuit of their original objective.

No help reached Outremer, apart from a few insignificant contingents that had refused to embark on the Byzantine adventure.

Pope Innocent III was mortified, for he had indeed raised a monster to torment other Christians.

Yet, before long, the Pope was endeavouring to promote a fifth Crusade.

Meanwhile, there had been the tragic episode of the Children's Crusade.

Thousands of children from France and Germany headed for seaports to take ship to the Holy Land.

Very few ever returned home and hundreds died as they trudged along the roads that led <p349> to the coast.

Those who reached Marseilles were given ships, but the ship-masters took them to Egypt and sold them.

Al-Malik al-Kamil, it is reputed, bought a number of them to have as teachers of languages, interpreters and secretaries.

He did not force them to become Muslims.

In Germany, bereaved and infuriated parents hanged the father of Nicolas, the boy who had led their children away.

In Europe the star of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen was rising.

Innocent III died in 1216.

His successor, Honorius III, had feelings of affection for Frederick because the Emperor had once been his pupil.

Where Innocent was stern Honorius was forbearing.

While energetically pursuing the work of the late Pope to set the Fifth Crusade in motion, Honorius gave Frederick every latitude.

Affairs of both camps, Christian and Muslim, were highly convoluted.

Their twists are well illustrated by incidents which centred round the principality of Antioch.

In 1206, King Leo of Little Armenia raided the territory which Bohemond IV of Antioch claimed as his own.

At the same time the Ayyubids of Egypt attacked Tripoli, a riposte against hostile acts committed by the Knights of the Hospital.

Bohemond asked the Saljuqs of Rum to help him punish the Armenians.

Pope Innocent turned to the Ayyubids of Aleppo to save Antioch from the depredations of Greeks.

Seven years later, Raymond, the eighteen-year-old son of Bohemond IV, was murdered by the Isma'ilis of Syria, who were in league with the Hospitallers.

The Patriarch, Albert of Jerusalem, had also fallen foul of the Hospital, and Isma'ilis eliminated him as well.

Bohemond, supported by the Knights of the Temple, besieged a castle of the Isma'ilis.

Sworn enemies of the Sunni Ayyubids, the Isma'ilis besought the help of the Ayyubid al-Malik az-Zahir of Aleppo, who appealed in turn to his uncle, al-'Adil of Egypt.

Al-Malik al-'Adil Sayfi'd-Din was now old and tired.

He had no desire for confrontation with any opponent, Christian or Muslim.

He had long been at peace with the Kingdom of Acre<sup>[1]</sup> and had amicable

relations with the European seafarers, particularly with the Venetians.

Large numbers of Italians lived and traded in Egypt, where al-'Adil had been a tolerant and enlightened ruler.

The Franks of Outremer also did not favour the prospect of future <p350> conflicts under the banner of the Cross.

However, Innocent III had raised the call for a fresh Crusade, and now Pope Honorius was in full cry, despite the tergiversations of his former pupil, who wanted to make his own power-base strong and secure before embarking on adventures overseas.

[1 Akka was known in the West by this name. ]

King Andrew of Hungary and Duke Leopold VI of Austria had both taken the Cross but, having arrived with their armies at Spalato in Dalmatia during the summer of 1217, found themselves faced with the same problem which had daunted and tried the patience of earlier Crusaders: a shortage of shipping.

With the bulk of troops left behind in Spalato, Andrew and Leopold arrived at Acre in the autumn, and King Hugh of Cyprus joined them there.

They had no overall command.

King John of Acre (John of Brienne) was keen on dislodging al-'Adil's garrison from their fort on Mount Tabor.

These Muslim warriors were too close for comfort.

Others had no interest in the mountain which, it was claimed, was the scene of the Transfiguration.

Troops from Acre, even aided by the Templars, could not capture the fort, but shortly afterwards al-'Adil, himself, ordered his men away.

A fort on Mount Tabor was really of no use to him.

King Andrew, having obtained some holy relics, including the head of St.

Stephen, and having lost some of his men in a blizzard on the heights of Lebanon, felt that it was time to return home, which he did.

He marched away to Cilicia and reached Constantinople under the protection of the Saljuqs of Rum.

Duke Leopold was in dire financial straits and stayed behind.

He and King John of Acre, together with the Grand Masters of the Temple, the Hospital and the Teutons, sailed in Frisian ships to Egypt, in May 1218, at the head of their combined forces.

Richard Coeur-de-Lion's advice had not gone unheeded.

Initially, they were successful and captured the fort of Damietta (Dimyat.).

Al-Malik al-'Adil was in Damascus when he heard of the loss his army had sustained in Egypt.

His younger son had wrested Caesarea from the Franks, but that did not compensate for the reverse in Egypt.

At the end of August the saddened al-'Adil died in Damascus, as had his brother, the great Salahi'd-Din (Saladin).

Al-Malik al-Kamil Nasiri'd-Din, his eldest son, took over Egypt, and the younger son, al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Sharafi'd-Din, took over Syria.

The Frisian ships had returned home, but others brought fresh contingents from Europe, which included French <p351> counts, bishops, and English lords -- the Earls of Chester, Arundel, Derby and Winchester.

But the personage of highest rank amongst the new arrivals, the Spanish Cardinal Pelagius, the Papal legate, soon proved that his presence there was not at all a blessing.

King John, now that Andrew of Hungary had left and Hugh of Cyprus had died, claimed the right to supreme command, but the Cardinal would not have it; as representative of Honorius he believed he should lead.

Fortunately for the Crusaders, al-Kamil had serious problems and disloyalties to contend with.

He retreated and al-'Adiliyyah fell to the Crusaders.

Although his brother, al-Mu'azzam, had been tardy to come up with help, he arrived at last to strengthen the Muslim position.

Although Crusaders occupied the fort, the town of Damietta was still held by the Muslims, but daily their position was becoming less and less tenable.

Finding themselves bogged down, the Crusaders began to lose heart.

The Grand Master of the Temple was killed.

Duke Leopold had had enough and returned home, as did many others.

King John and Cardinal Pelagius continued to dispute.

There was still no sign of the Emperor Frederick.

It was now the year 1219.

St.

Francis of Assisi arrived to watch the fighting and was allowed by the Cardinal to visit the ruler of Egypt.

Al-Kamil treated St.

Francis with the esteem due to a holy man and he was escorted back with respect to the Christian camp.

Then a short truce intervened, but not before the Crusaders' army had been nearly destroyed.

Al-Kamil and his brother were both aware of the weakness of their own position and offered peace terms.

They were willing to cede Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth to the Christians, should the Crusaders withdraw from Egypt.

King John proposed acceptance and the nobility of Outremer, France, Germany and England supported him.

But Cardinal Pelagius refused to treat with infidels, and the Knights of the Temple, the Hospital and the Teutonic order also opposed the conclusion of a peace treaty.

Their objection, however, was not theological but practical.

In their view Jerusalem could not be defended without the castles of Oultrejourdain.

Thus the stalemate continued into yet another winter of misery.

Damietta, now peopled by a few thousand starvelings who were helplessly awaiting death, was at last taken by the Crusaders.

But bitter quarrels arose over the division of the plentiful spoils.

The Italians revolted and had to be put down by the Templars. <p352> The legend of Prester John, the zealous and brave Christian warrior-king, who stood poised in Central Asia to come to the aid of the Crusaders, was at this time much cherished, but it was Chingiz Khan that Central Asia produced, not Prester John.

King John went back to Acre, but returned in a sullen mood in July 1221.

In the meantime the Emperor Frederick had made a move.

He sent Duke Louis of Bavaria with a sizeable force.

The Cardinal, hearing the good news of the Emperor Frederick's impending departure from Europe, rejected once again al-Kamil's peace offer, and ignoring King John's sound advice, moved his forces far inland, at a time when the Nile was rising.

The rest of the story is soon told.

Frederick did not come.

Floods completed the debacle of the Crusaders' army.

In September 1221 Pelagius was forced to capitulate.

Both he and King John surrendered as hostages.

John went back to Acre, but Pelagius did not return to Europe, going instead to Antioch and Little Armenia, where he failed to resolve the conflicts of the Christians and excommunicated Bohemond IV.

The repercussions of the Fifth Crusade were disastrous for the Christians of

Egypt; even al-Kamil's generosity could not save them from the anger of the Muslims.

And when it came to handing over the true Cross to the Papal legate no one knew where it was.

Honorius III died in 1227 and was succeeded as Pope by Gregory IX, a stern disciplinarian.

He had no particular affection for the Emperor Frederick and would stand no nonsense.

He ex-communicated the Emperor at a time when Frederick really intended to honour his vows, and excommunicated him a second time for going to the Holy Land while still under an interdict.

It was a deliciously farcical situation, and although (as we saw in the previous chapter) Frederick did get Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the Christians, he managed to stir up enough trouble in Cyprus and Outremer to shake these Frankish outposts in western Asia to their foundations.

King John of Acre held his position and his title by virtue of having married in 1210 Queen Maria, the ruler of the kingdom of Acre.

Maria died after giving birth to a daughter, named Isabella, but known as Yolanda.

Although keeping the title of king, John was, in fact, the regent for her daughter.

Yolanda, at the end of the Fifth Crusade, was nearing the age when she would rule in person, and it was urgent to find her a suitable husband.

John of Brienne, <p353> an obscure Frenchman, had found himself a spouse in Queen Maria by the good offices of King Philip Augustus.

Now he went to Europe, in the company of Cardinal Pelagius, in search of a husband for his daughter.

The Pope expressed his warm approval of marriage between the Emperor Frederick and Yolanda.

The King of France was not at all pleased with the prospect, but died before the marriage took place in 1225.

As soon as Yolanda was married the Emperor made it plain to his father-in-law that there was no longer a place for 'King John' in Outremer.

Despite John's appeal, Honorius could do no more for the ex-king than offer him a post in Tuscany.

Soon after, a much more attractive and dignified position became available to John of Brienne.

The child-Emperor of Romania, Baldwin II, needed a regent, and John was chosen.

He was then almost eighty.

His four-year-old daughter, Maria, (by his Armenian wife[1]), was married to the child-Emperor.

John made certain that no matter what happened in future, he would keep the title of 'Emperor' till his death.

He lived on until 1237.

[1 She too was dead by 1225.

It was rumoured that she had tried to poison Yolanda, and John, discovering it, gave her a severe beating which led to her death.]

In April 1228, Yolanda gave birth to a son and died within a week, not yet seventeen years of age.

The infant, Conrad, was now the rightful ruler of Acre, and the Emperor, his father, held exactly the same position as had John of Brienne during Yolanda's minority.

Frederick was now going to the Holy Land, in earnest.

It was lucky for him that the news of the Queen's death had not reached Outremer.

Otherwise the notables of Acre might have chosen another regent.

The bickerings, the bitter conflicts, the battles of Christians and Muslims in western Asia and Egypt provided the right background for the functioning of the Emperor's dark genius.

Frederick was indeed brilliant, he spoke several languages fluently, one of which was Arabic, but he was cold and calculating, cruel and treacherous.

The Saljuqids and the Ayyubids were, as usual, at each other's throat.

Christians sought help from one or the other in their own quarrels.

In 1226, Bohemond IV of Antioch asked the Saljuqid Sultan Kayqubad to aid him against the Armenians, by invading Cilicia.

The Ayyubids were, once again, showing signs of a serious split in their ranks.

Al-Malik al-Mu'azzam had aided his brother to defeat the Crusaders, but once the <p354> danger had passed, relations between him and al-Kamil became strained.

Therefore al-Kamil entered into secret negotiations with Frederick before the Emperor sailed for the East.

Frederick was non-committal.

And al-Mu'azzam refused to fall in with the suggestion of ceding Jerusalem to the Christians, a course of action which he had twice proposed during the Fifth Crusade.

But al-Mu'azzam died in 1227 and his brothers, al-Kamil and al-Ashraf, combined after some wrangling to deprive their nephew, al-Malik an-Nasir Salahi'd-Din Dawud, of his patrimony.

Al-Malik al-Kamil was at last in a position to hand Jerusalem to the Emperor Frederick.

A peace treaty was signed which (as we have seen) pleased nobody except its authors.

Frederick entered Jerusalem on 17 March 1229.

The Muslims, in deference to him, had decided that mu'adhhdhins should not raise the call to prayer while he was in the city.

Frederick said that he had come to hear the adhan.

When he entered the Haram ash-Sharif he saw that a Christian monk was following him.

He chased out the poor monk, and then declared that any Christian, who entered the holy places of Islam without obtaining permission from the Muslims, should be put to death.

For all his achievements Frederick had set many a hornet's nest buzzing, and apart from the Teutonic Knights, he found little support in Outremer.

Knights of the Temple were particularly offensive.

The Emperor thought that he would punish them by capturing Athlit, their stronghold by the sea, round the spur of Mount Carmel.

But it was too heavily fortified and well defended.

Frederick's partiality towards the Pisans had angered the Venetians and the Genoese.

His conduct towards the Family of Ibelin whose head, John the Lord of Beirut, was one of the most powerful and highly respected magnates of Outremer, amounted to frenzied persecution.

When he left Acre to embark for Cyprus, crowds turned out to hurl abuse and offal at him as he walked down the Street of Butchers to the harbour.

He had hardly reached Europe, in the late spring of 1229, when Cyprus erupted into civil war as a direct result of his policies.

The mainland was also affected, especially after the arrival, in 1231, of Marshal Filangieri with the title of Imperial Legate and a powerful force.

Meanwhile, in 1230, Frederick had come to terms with the Pope.

Peace with Gregory IX added considerably to his stature in Outremer.

The Templars and the Hospitallers could no longer <p355> oppose him.

But the struggles with the Ibelins and others dragged on, to weaken the

position of the Christians.

If Christians were enormously harming themselves, so were the Muslims.

Jalali'd-Din, the last of the Kharazmshahs, went down to defeat before the Ayyubite al-Malik al-Ashraf.

The Ayyubites, after the death of al-Kamil in 1238, resumed their quarrels; and as they fought amongst themselves, al-Kamil's treaty with Frederick expired.

Pope Gregory, following in the footsteps of his predecessors, now began to preach another Crusade.

Frederick had no intention of going yet again to the Holy Land.

Nor did the Kings of France and England wish to be involved.

It fell to Tibald, King of Navarre, to assume command.

Many noblemen took the Cross at the same time.

This Crusade, too, was not devoid of grotesque episodes.

Frederick would have nothing to do with it.

Being the regent for his son, Conrad, and concerned with the affairs of Outremer, he considered such interference highly impertinent.

In Acre Tibald found divided counsel.

Finally it was decided to attack Egypt.

Jealousies and futile rivalries led, in the vicinity of Gaza, to foolhardy action.

The Christian army was so badly mauled that retreat to Acre became inevitable.

Now, the Ayyubid an-Nasir of Karak took action against Jerusalem, in reprisal for the assault by the Count of Brittany, who had waylaid a caravan belonging to the Muslims and seized a very large herd of cattle and sheep.

An-Nasir demolished whatever fortifications Jerusalem had, and went back to Karak.

Next, the Ayyubid Amir of Hama sought the help of the Crusaders to thwart his kinsmen of Aleppo and Hims.

Then, the Ayyubid Prince of Damascus, fearing the designs of his relatives in Egypt and Karak, agreed to hand over to the Christians the castles of Safad and Beaufort, in return for their protection.

Muslims who held Beaufort refused to cede it and al-Malik as-Salih 'Imadi'd-Din had to come from Damascus to eject them.

Knights of the Temple came into possession of Safad.

This was too much for the Knights of the Hospital.

So they made common cause with al-Malik as-Salih.

Najmi'd-Din Ayyub of Egypt and obtained Ascalon as their prize.

Tibald approved of this alignment, which scandalized the noblemen of the kingdom of Acre.

Tibald could stand it no more and sailed away.

The next Crusade was led by a saint:

Louis IX of France, whom the Church of Rome has canonized.

King Louis reached Egypt in <p356> 1249.

During the decade which separated Tibald's Crusade from King Louis's, the Franks of Outremer and the Ayyubids of Egypt and Syria had persisted with their ruinous dog-fights, and Jerusalem had been retaken by the Kharazmian army.

In all those years Conrad, the rightful ruler of the kingdom of Acre, never visited Outremer.

Conrad was also the heir of the Emperor Frederick and his patrimony in Europe was by far the more attractive.

Frederick's disgust with the Franks of the East apart, he had need of his son in Europe, to whom he had already given the rulership of Germany.

King Louis had indeed a saintly character, but he had two hot-headed and impetuous brothers, Robert of Artois and Charles, who did irreparable damage to the fortunes of Louis as a soldier of the Cross.

News of the eruption of the Mongols into the realm of Islam had been received with glee in Europe.

But there came a time when Europe felt apprehensive.

In 1240, Mongols invaded Ukraine and captured Kiev, slaying its inhabitants and destroying its heritage of art.

As they penetrated into Poland, Hungary and Silesia and reached the Adriatic, Pope Gregory appealed to the Emperor Frederick and to the Kings of France and England to join forces and halt the Mongols.

However, the death of Uktay Qa'an intervened and the Mongol armies retired from Europe.

After the death of Gregory IX in 1241, his successor, Innocent IV, had high hopes of enlisting Mongol support against the followers of Muhammad.

The legend of Prester John was, once again, current and fervently believed.

Pope Innocent sent envoys, in 1245, to the Great Khan.

They acquitted themselves well of the duties of their mission, and Guyuk, who had just been raised to the overlordship of the Mongols, treated them amiably.

Nestorianism dominated Christian belief in Central Asia and the Great Khan was served by a substantial number of Nestorian officials and counsellors.

Guyuk wrote to the Pope that he and all the princes of Europe should come to his capital, to acknowledge him as their suzerain and the Ruler of the World.

Now, when King Louis reached Cyprus in 1248, two Nestorians arrived at Nicosia, on behalf of a Mongol general.

Louis immediately responded.

A Dominican mission set out with gifts to try and forge an alliance against the Muslims of Egypt and Syria.

They were under the illusion that the overlord of the Mongols was ready to embrace the Christian Faith, and so they included in the gifts they carried a portable chapel with all its appurtenances.

By the time they reached Qaraqurum, Guyuk had died and his widow was regent.

She accepted King Louis's gifts as offerings of a vassal.

The affairs of the Mongol Empire, however, would not allow at that moment the dispatch of an effective force to aid the vassal, who was told to keep sending gifts every year.

In Cyprus, King Louis came up against the intractable problem of shipping.

As in the past, Venetians were unwilling to provide ships for the invasion of Egypt.

Louis expected the Genoese to supply the ships he required.

But just then the Genoese and the Pisans went to war, up and down the Syrian coast, and the Genoese fared badly.

Louis's problems were multifarious.

Suitors came from the mainland asking for his help.

Maria of Brienne, now the empress of Romania, was one of them.

She wanted protection because of the threatening attitude of the emperor of Nicaea.

King Louis had come to fight the infidels, not to aid one Christian monarch against another.

Al-Malik as-Salih.

Najmi'd-Din Ayyub was a dying man.

He hurried to Egypt from Syria.

King Louis had little difficulty in capturing Damietta.

When the waters of the Nile subsided he moved on towards Cairo.

Najmi'd-Din Ayyub was in Mansurah -- the Victorious -- the city built by al-Kamil to mark his victory and the failure of the Fifth Crusade. (He had been carried there in a litter and had died there.) Grave dangers were in the offing because the Sultan's heir, al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Turan-Shah, was far away in the Jazirah.

Shajarat-ad-Durr, the widow of Najmi'd-Din Ayyub, succeeded in concealing the news of her husband's death, and held the country together until Turan-Shah reached Egypt in February 1250.

In the meantime, King Louis had crossed the canal that separated his army from the Egyptian camp at Mansurah; but the rashness of Robert of Artois in a premature bid to capture Mansurah (which cost him his own life) had greatly weakened Louis's position.[1] He was bogged down before Mansurah, his food ships were intercepted, and shortage of food, the unhealthy climate and raging disease were taking heavy toll of his army.

Louis realized that there was no hope of further advance and all that could now be achieved was to contrive, in <p358> some way, an orderly retreat to Damietta.

Unfortunately, the King fell ill, his retreating army was continuously harassed, treachery raised its hideous head, and the entire army capitulated on false orders.

As a result, Louis himself fell into the hands of the enemy and was carried to Mansurah where he was put in chains.

The disaster for the Christians was complete and unmitigated, but now the prestige of Frederick brought the defeated Crusaders some measure of relief.

The ruler of Egypt was demanding the cession of all the territories held by the Franks in Syria, to which King Louis replied that he could not give away what was not his, for those lands belonged to Conrad, the son of the Emperor Frederick.

The demand was never again made.

[1 Robert had disregarded his brother's strict orders and impetuously brushed aside sound advice given him by the Templars and the English.]

Negotiations for the restoration of Damietta and the ransom to be paid were almost completed when nemesis overtook the vain-glorious Turan-Shah, virtually the last of the Ayyubids of Egypt.

Made arrogant by unexpected victory, he insulted his stepmother who had saved the throne for him, and used abusive language to the Mamluks, his elite and loyal corps of Turkish and Circassian slaves.

On 2 May 1250, he was murdered by Rukni'd-Din Baybars, who was destined to play a central role in the affairs of Islam in future years.

Turan-Shah had ruled for only a few months.

Had he been more moderate his reign might have been truly remarkable.

As it was, it spelled the end for the House of the great Salahi'd-Din.

By the common consent of the Mamluks, one of them, 'Izzi'd-Din Aybak, assumed the regency and married Shajarat-ad-Durr.

An infant named Musa, cousin to Turan-Shah was proclaimed co-ruler, but no one knows what happened to him.

Amidst these convulsions King Louis suffered horribly.

When freed he refused to return to France.

Let anyone go who wished, but he would remain in Outremer, for his presence was needed to help put its affairs in order.

His own force had been destroyed, but even more serious was the fact that Outremer's military resources had been exhausted.

Whereas Frederick had been brusque and unyielding, Louis was tactful and forbearing.

His brothers and the nobility of France left him, which in all probability aided his endeavours at conciliation.

He restored a large measure of peace and tranquillity to the Frankish outposts in the East, although soon after his return to France, fighting broke out between the Italian seafarers.

Both the Mamluk 'Izzi'd-Din Aybak of Egypt and the Ayyubid <p359> al-Malik an-NaSir II Salahi'd-Din Yusuf of Damascus had become very much aware of the menace posed by the Mongols.

They concluded pacts with King Louis, as did the Isma'ilis of Syria.

Moreover, although deadly enemies, the Mamluks and the Ayyubids gave ear to the plea of the 'Abbasid Caliph and resolved to live in peace.

In Europe, the Emperor Frederick had again succeeded in putting himself under papal interdict.

His attacks on the papal states in Italy had forced Innocent IV to excommunicate him and also to abandon Rome.

Frederick's stormy career ended in December 1250.

Conrad, who succeeded him, died in May 1254 after a brief reign, when his son, Conradin, was an infant.

At last, conditions in France left King Louis no choice but to go home.

That was in April 1254.

In 1256 open war broke out in Acre between the Genoese and the Venetians over the possession of the monastery of St.

Sabas.

Pisans supported the Genoese, while in Tyre Philip of Montfort took action against the Venetians.

The Teutonic Knights and Knights of the Temple sided with the Venetians, but the Hospitallers stood with the Genoese.

The whole of Outremer was dragged into the bitter strife of the Italians, which assumed much wider proportions, by involving the rights of Queen Plaisance of Cyprus as regent for Conradin.

Plaisance's own son, King Hugh, was only five years old and Conradin was about the same age.

The Queen was sister to Bohemond VI of Antioch and Tripoli, who tried to keep aloof, although his sympathy was for the Venetians.

He accompanied his sister to Acre and was inevitably drawn into the foray.

Finally an appeal was made to Pope Alexander IV, who had succeeded Innocent IV on the latter's death in 1254.

Summoning representatives of the Italian city-states to attend and hear his verdict, Alexander demanded an immediate armistice, and an elaborate peace plan was drawn up.

Before it could be put into effect, the Genoese were decisively defeated in a fierce sea battle off Acre and had to pull out.

In 1259 the Pope dispatched a legate to Outremer to seek a solution to the conflict which had undone all the good work of King Louis.

It was agreed that the Genoese should have their colony and establishments in Tyre and keep away from Acre.

The Pisans and Venetians would establish themselves in Acre.

Smarting under defeat, the Genoese took their vengeance by putting their fleet and services at the disposal of Michael Palaeologus, the emperor of Nicaea.

With their aid Constantinople was captured in 1261 and Romania ceased to be.

Over the years, King Louis had watched from afar the sad deterioration in the condition of Outremer; and he had never put away the thought of making yet another effort to recover Jerusalem.

By 1270 his preparations for yet another Crusade were complete.

Whether he would have succeeded, had he avoided past errors, is a matter of conjecture.

The fact is that he unwisely allowed himself to be seriously misled by his brother, Charles of Anjou, and was landed in yet another disaster.

Charles was the very antithesis of King Louis.

His rise to power had its origins in the traditional hostility betwixt the Papacy and the House of Hohenstaufen.

Four years after the death of Conrad, Sicily, which was an appanage of the Papal States, was taken over by his half-brother, Manfred.

Pope Urban IV, who succeeded Alexander IV in 1261, began to look round to choose a prince who would wrest Sicily from Manfred.

King Louis had come to believe that a Hohenstaufen on the throne of Sicily would impede his Crusade, on which he had set his heart.

Urban's choice fell on Charles of Anjou.

King Louis endorsed the choice and provided financial aid.

Manfred was defeated and killed.

Now Charles of Anjou showed his true colours.

His ambition knew no bounds, so much so that Clement IV, who had succeeded Urban in 1265, took fright.

Poor Conradin, dispossessed in his early childhood, tried to win back the Italian territories which his grandfather had conquered.

He failed, fell into the hands of Charles of Anjou and was beheaded.

He was only sixteen, and with his death the House of Hohenstaufen became extinct.

Charles was now dreaming of dominance over Europe.

He detested the Byzantines and in his estimation the recapture of Constantinople had much greater priority than the recapture of Jerusalem.

The force which his brother had raised, Charles reckoned, could well serve his own ends.

He presented his brother with the tale that the Amir (Emir) of Tunis was on the point of declaring for Christ.

A call there, on the way to the Holy Land, would clinch matters.

The ruler of Tunis, however, had no desire to change his religion, and the French army, soon ravaged by disease, could not fight.

Louis himself died in Tunisia on 25 August 1270 and was buried by the ruins of Carthage. <p361>

We have seen that King Louis had hopes of an alliance with the Mongols against the Muslims.

But the hauteur of the Mongols made impossible such alliances with European monarchs.

Even the Pope, as we have seen, was summoned to Mongolia to render homage to the Great Khan.

But it was different with such Christian rulers as Hethoum of Little Armenia.

For them, recognizing Mongol suzerainty did not mean a lowering of status, and Mongol protection would give them the kind of security they needed.

Thus, Hethoum made his way to Qaraqurum, but the Franks, while witnessing with alarm the displays of strength and ruthlessness by Baybars of Egypt, remained sceptical of putting their trust in the Mongols.

Baybars was ranging now over Syria.

In 1263 he overran Nazareth and demolished the Church of the Virgin.

In 1265 he captured and destroyed Caesarea and Haifa, with their citadels.

Those of the inhabitants of Haifa unable to make good their escape were put to the sword.

In 1266 it was the turn of Safad and Toron.

Despite the promise of safe conduct the Templars of Safad were all put to death.

Next, Baybars murdered every Christian he could find, right up to the gates of Acre.

In the same year another Mamluk force erupted into Cilicia and almost destroyed the Armenian kingdom.

And so it went on, with another show of force outside Acre in 1267.

Beaufort and Antioch fell the following year.

Antioch, the oldest of the principalities established by the Crusaders, had been governed by Christians for more than a century and a half.

Its loss was a tremendous blow to the Franks of Outremer.

The behaviour of the victors in Antioch was appalling and boded ill for the future.

It is true to say that massacre and destruction reduced a fine, flourishing city to total obscurity and insignificance, from which Antioch has never recovered.

The death of King Louis dimmed the hopes of Outremer Charles of Anjou had his eyes on other goals and maintained good relations with Rukni'd-Din Baybars.

The Venetians as well as the Genoese were also on excellent terms with the Mamluks, a fact which astounded Edward, the son and heir of King Henry III of England, when he reached the Holy Land in May 1271.

Edward had set out from England to join King Louis; although the latter's death and the consequent abandonment of the Crusade by the French army were

dispiriting, he decided to go on to the Holy Land.

With the small force at Edward's command and Outremer's <p362> paucity of resources, Baybars felt in no way threatened.

Only a short time before Edward's arrival at Acre, Egyptians had, at long last, captured the fortress of Karak, which had successfully defied onslaughts in the past.

Edward needed massive aid, either from Europe or from the Mongols.

He sent three English emissaries to Abaqa -- Reginald Russell, Godfrey Welles and John Parker -- and the Il-Khan promised his support.

But occupied as he was with repelling the attacks of his own kinsmen, all Abaqa could do was to send some ten thousand men from Anatolia to harass the Mamluks in northern Syria.

Baybars was in Damascus with a considerable force, and the small Mongol detachment was no match for him.

In addition to his military gifts, Baybars was also a proficient and very successful diplomat.

He not only established friendly relations with Charles of Anjou, but also negotiated treaties with James of Aragon and Alfonso of Seville, and in Asia won the Golden Horde and the newly-restored Byzantium to his side.

In Constantinople Michael Palaeologus rebuilt a mosque which the Franks had destroyed.

Moreover, the Italian seafarers were conducting a profitable trade with Egypt.

Prince Edward soon reached the conclusion that his sojourn in Outremer was useless.

A peace treaty with Baybars was signed at Caesarea, in May 1272, which guaranteed Outremer another ten years and ten months of existence.

When on the point of leaving for England, Edward was stabbed with a poisoned dagger at the instigation of Baybars, although the Mamluk monarch dissociated himself from the act which was attributed to the Assassins.

By the time Edward reached home, Henry III had died.

Charles of Anjou was now a very powerful potentate in Europe; for four years his intrigues blocked the election of a successor to Pope Clement IV.

When, in 1272, Gregory X ascended the throne of St.

Peter, he at once began to review the possibilities of organizing another Crusade.

Despite Europe's lack of enthusiasm for a holy war, and the discouraging reports he was receiving from well-informed sources, Gregory convened in Lyons, in 1274, a council to consider the situation and map out a policy.

Charles of Anjou would have no part of it.

The Byzantine Emperor sent representatives because he greatly feared Charles's designs.

Neither King Philip III of France, who had nearly died in Tunisia, nor King Edward I, so recently returned from Outremer, attended <p363> the council.

Gregory X died two years later and the deliberations of his council proved abortive.

Now it was Abaqa's turn to ask, but in vain, for assistance from the monarchs of Europe.

He sent emissaries to the Council of Lyons, wrote to Edward of England and Philip of France, but received no firm response.

Charles of Anjou was hostile towards the Mongols because they were on friendly terms with the Byzantines.

Able to put pressure on the Curia, he blocked all manner of aid to Abaqa.

The Il-Khan, as we have seen, then attempted the conquest of Syria unaided and failed; he died shortly after in 1282.

Meanwhile, Rukni'd-Din Baybars, the scourge of Outremer, had died in July 1277.

His son was a weakling; not until three years later, when Sayfi'd-Din Qala'un came from Syria and took over the government, did the Mamluks march again.

In Iran Abaqa was succeeded by his brother, Takudar, who, on becoming a Christian, had taken Nicholas as his name.

After his accession he was converted to Islam and assumed the name Ahmad.

The Mongols, however, were not yet ready to countenance a Muslim as their ruler; so within two years, Arghun, the son of Abaqa, revolted and deposed his uncle, putting him to death.

Takudar had been trying to establish amicable relations with the Mamluks, but, with Arghun on the throne, old enmities were revived.

Arghun sought unsuccessfully, time and again, to obtain aid and support from the Pope and monarchs of Europe.

The very year of Abaqa's death witnessed an event of prime importance in the Mediterranean, known in history as the Sicilian Vespers.

The people of Sicily, unbearably angered and humiliated by the haughtiness and insolence of their French masters, burst into revolt and killed them mercilessly.

Peter of Aragon, whose wife, Constance, was the daughter of Manfred of Hohenstaufen, was offered the kingdom of Sicily.

Thus Charles of Anjou lost his power-base and his efforts to retrieve his

fortune were fruitless.

Byzantium (which had incited the rebellion) felt immensely relieved of the anxieties which had weighed heavily on it since its rebirth, while the Mamluks, although in friendly relationship with King Charles, were not unhappy to see some curtailment of this imperious man's unbounded ambition.

The disappearance of a powerful Christian kingdom to the north of them could have been, also, a source of satisfaction.

The loss of Sicily to the Aragonese incensed Pope Martin IV <p364> (1281-85), a Frenchman who was intensely proud of his native land and its royal dynasty, and was the patron and champion of Charles of Anjou.

He excommunicated the King of Aragon, the Emperor of Constantinople (who, in any case, no longer felt obliged to be deferential towards the Pope), the Sicilians, the anti-Angevin Italians, and called for a Crusade against the Aragonese.

King Philip of France, attached to his uncle as he was, set about preparing to invade Aragon, although he had hardly shown any zeal for a Crusade to rescue the Holy Land.

It ought to be noted that Pope Martin owed his position to the manoeuvrings of Charles of Anjou.

Repeated efforts to reverse the state of affairs in Sicily were not successful, but the Papacy remained strongly committed to the Angevin cause.

King Charles was now in poor and declining health; his son and heir, Charles of Salerno, had been captured; and the movement to force Aragon into submission was slow, although King Philip had massed a considerable force.

Then death intervened to remove the chief protagonists from the scene.

Charles of Anjou died in January 1285, Pope Martin IV (who had so ardently promoted the Angevin cause and had damaged the prestige of his supreme office) died in March, Philip of France in October, and Peter of Aragon in November.

But Sicily would not know peace for decades.

Sayfi'd-Din Qala'un of Egypt did not live to see the total extinction of Outremer, although he hastened it and was about to deal the final blow when he died in 1290.

The monarch who wished to save Outremer, and even restore Jerusalem to the Christians, was Arghun, the Il-Khan of Iran.

But he knew that he could not accomplish his purpose without aid from Europe.

While jealousies and rivalries racked Outremer, and the Angevin cause continued to cast its baleful spell over the Pope and the Curia, Arghun was sending a stream of letters, missions and envoys to Europe, to plead for help against the Mamluks.

But if Edward of England had ever truly intended to go back to the Holy Land, the conquest of Wales and Scotland had now become his objective to the exclusion of all else.

Kings of France, Philip III (Phillipe le Hardi) and his son, Philip IV (Phillipe le Bel, d.

1314), were wholly occupied with other pursuits.

And the Popes, Honorius IV (1285-87) and Nicholas IV (1288-92) were involved in the failed projects of their predecessors.

Shamsi'd-Din-i-Juvayni, the Sahib-Divan (brother of the <p365> historian, 'Ata-Malik-i-Juvayni), who, in the service of the Mongols, has been compared with Nizamu'l-Mulk in the service of the Saljuqs, had been put to death in the third month of Arghun's reign.

Shamsi'd-Din had indeed served Hulagu and Abaqa with great distinction and unquestionable fidelity.

Arghun had as his vizier a noted Jewish physician, Sa'di'd-Dawlih of Abhar.

And a man very close to the Il-Khan, a loyal counsellor, was the Nestorian Catholicus,[1] Mar Yahbhalla, who hailed from the Chinese Turkistan.

This Turkish Catholicus was urging Arghun to deliver Jerusalem from the oppression of the Turkish Mamluks.

Arghun wrote to Pope Honorius, who left his letter unanswered.

Two years later, in 1287, Rabban Sauma, a Chinese Nestorian priest, was sent to the courts of Europe.

The Byzantine Emperor, Andronicus, although giving him a splendid welcome, had little to offer. -In Rome, Honorius was dead and the next Pope had not been elected.

Cardinals engaged the Nestorian prelate in theological disputations which taxed his patience.

In France, the youthful Philip IV accorded him a regal welcome, and appointed Gobert d'Helleville to accompany him back to Iran.

Edward of England also received him with great warmth in Bordeaux.

When he returned to Rome, Nicholas IV had been raised to the Papal throne.

Rabban Sauma had the honour of celebrating Mass in the presence of the College of Cardinals and receiving Communion from the person of the Pope.

Nicholas declared the Nestorian Catholicus to be the Patriarch of the East, and sent him highly-valued gifts which included holy relics.

But, despite the honours showered upon him, the Chinese prelate returned with a heavy heart to the court of the Il-Khan.

There was no definite promise of material aid that he could convey to Arghun.

Nevertheless, the Il-Khan did not give up the attempt to persuade Christian monarchs to fight for the Cross.

Buscarel of Gisolf, a Genoese, long resident in Mongol domains, was sent to the courts of Europe in 1289.

A year later, the same man was dispatched in the company of two Christian Mongols.

It was all of no avail.

No aid came from Europe.

Arghun died in 1291, and in the same year Outremer perished.

[1 In Arabic Jathliq.]

The rulership of the Kingdom of Acre had passed to the strikingly handsome kings of Cyprus.

But they were terribly handicapped in that they could not reside permanently in Acre, since Cyprus was their base.

Nor would their nobility stay long in Outremer.

Furthermore, partisans of King Charles were numerous in Acre and the Orders of Chivalry were vacillating.

King Hugh came in 1283 to claim the crown of Acre.

Mishaps plagued him, his nobles returned to Cyprus and he died in Tyre in March 1284.

His heir, John, was an ailing seventeen-year-old youth, who had only one more year to live.

After him the next son of King Hugh came to the throne -- Henry, only fourteen years old, the last Christian ruler of Acre.

In the meantime Qala'un had wrested the stronghold of Marqab from the Hospitallers; he had already extended the truce with Acre for another ten years.

In 1286, King Henry, now fifteen, arrived at Acre amidst jubilation but also some opposition.

His sojourn in Outremer was short.

Following his return to Cyprus war broke out between the seafarers of Pisa and Genoa, and immense damage was done to the waning fortunes of Outremer.

A natural catastrophe in 1287 further ruined Outremer's chance of survival.

An earthquake struck Lattakieh (Ladhiqiyyah).

Its fortifications suffered considerably, and Qala'un captured the port with little difficulty.

Next, Tripoli fell to him in 1289, in the following circumstances.

He had been invited by some of the Venetians to take action there against the Genoese, but at the last minute the Venetians as well as the Genoese sailed away.

So did Amalric, brother of King Henry, and the Countess Lucia, sister of Bohemond VII of Antioch.

It was Lucia's arrangements with the Genoese which had infuriated the Venetians.

So Tripoli was totally destroyed and its inhabitants massacred.

Another Tripoli would arise in future years, but diminished and insignificant, as in the case of Antioch.

For ten years Qala'un had honoured his truce with King Henry and Acre was flourishing and enjoying a period of calm.

Muslim merchants and farmers thronged its market.

Then came a band of Italians as Crusaders.

They were riotous and unruly, and one day in a drunken brawl they set upon the Muslim visitors and murdered them all, taking anyone bearded for a Muslim.

Thus many Christians were slain as well.

The commune of Acre was aghast and Qala'un was livid with rage.

He might have been pacified, had the government of Acre been wise enough to hand over to him those of the culprits whom it had caught and imprisoned.

Instead, Qala'un left Cairo in November 1290, to extirpate the <p367> Franks of Outremer.

Within a few days he was dead, but before dying he laid a mandate on Khalil, his son, to complete his purpose.

Before setting out from Cairo, in March 1291, al-Malik al-Ashraf Salahi'd-Din Khalil declined to parley with the envoys from Acre, and cast them into prison where they died.

On April 5th, he encamped in front of Acre.

King Henry first dispatched his brother, Amalric, and then arrived himself from Cyprus with a pitifully small force -- all that he could commandeer.

In response to urgent appeals some men had come from Europe, but far too few; Edward I had sent only a tiny contingent of English.

On the other hand, the army of al-Malik al-Ashraf was truly formidable.

With the odds obviously much against them, the warriors of Acre nevertheless fought bravely.

Henry and Amalric stayed to the very end, having sent the women, children and the old to Cyprus.

Yet Henry was, in the first instance, King of Cyprus.

Regretfully, this young and courageous monarch, no more than twenty years old, took ship with Amalric.

By May 18th, Acre was in the hands of the Mamluks, and the slaughter of the population went on apace.

No one knows how many were killed, how many of the young were taken into slavery.

The castle of the Templars which was built into the sea, on the south-west promontory of Acre, held out for another ten days.

Its surrender would have been peacefully carried out but for the fact that the Mamluk soldiery ran amuck and tried to seize the women and the youths; whereupon the Templars turned and murdered them.

The last scene of that gruesome and bloody finale was the beheading of Peter of Sevrey, the Marshal of the Temple, and a few others who had gone under safe conduct to the tent of al-Malik al-Ashraf.

Two thousand assailing Mamluks, together with the defenders of the castle, were entombed under the debris of its massive walls which crashed in the thick of fighting.

Al-Malik al-Ashraf had achieved his father's mandate with a vengeance.

Next to fall was Haifa, occupied on July 30th.

Monasteries on Mount Carmel were set on fire and their monks were put to the sword.

Tyre and Sidon and Beirut were easily overrun.

Their warriors sailed away to Tortosa or to Cyprus.

Their inhabitants, as many as could, took to the mountains, to live in destitution amongst the native Christians, for whom also the conquerors had no pity.

The tolerance of the Fatimids and the Ayyubids <p368> became memories of the past.

Ravaged and mined towns and devastated countryside, along the Syrian coast, bore witness for a long time to the ferocity and ruthlessness of the victorious Mamluks, standing sentinel over the wreck of an experiment, which though nobly conceived, and spanning two hundred years, began and ended with incredible cruelty.

It had evoked great piety and unrelieved infamy, great devotion and sordid greed.

It had drawn within its orbit peoples of infinite diversity, who should have been reconciled by common aims and purposes, by shared sufferings, but who drew apart in bitterness.

Thus fare the projects of the mighty, when touched by perversity and sullied by self-seeking.

At the time al-Malik al-Ashraf was moving out of Cairo to destroy Outremer, the monarch who would have saved it was on his death-bed.

Arghun died on 10 March 1291, in his early thirties, and was succeeded by his brother, Gaykhatu.

There was a brief clash between the armies of the two brothers, on the banks of the Euphrates, but neither side ventured to expand the area of hostilities.

Gaykhatu might have had a longer and a peaceful reign, had it not been for his extravagances, his lavish way of living and his curt behaviour towards his cousin, Baydu.

Sa'di'd-Dawlih, the wise and moderate vizier of Arghun, had met the same fate as Shamsi'd-Din-i-Juvayni, and had been executed by a group of conspirators.

The young Il-Khan was beset by the machinations of a number of disloyal and rebellious Amirs, whom he had treated with remarkable clemency.

These very men declared for Baydu.

They captured Gaykhatu in March 1295 and strangled him, when he was only twenty-four years old.

Baydu, who was not involved in the intrigues leading to his cousin's death, had ruled only a few months, when Ghazan, the son of Arghun, challenged him for the throne and won.

Before gaining it, prompted by Amir Nawruz, a powerful Mongol nobleman, Ghazan declared himself a Muslim.

That event, a prominent landmark in the history of Islam, took place on 19 June 1295, in the beautiful Lar valley in the heart of the Elburz range.

In October, Ghazan reached Tabriz, the capital of his forefathers.

He mounted the throne with clean hands, for Baydu, by his orders, had not been executed.

The new master of Iran took a new name, Mahmud, to indicate his conversion to the Faith of the Arabian Prophet. <p369>

31 The Changing Face of Islamic Society

Outremer was dead and five centuries were to pass before the people of Europe would become, once again, involved in the affairs of the realm of Islam.

But it certainly must not be assumed that traffic between Europe and the Islamic world came to a halt with the death of Outremer.

During those very years of bitter clash between Christendom and Islam, scholars such as Gerard of Cremona (1114-87) were quietly transmitting the learning of the Islamic world to the Christendom of the West, through their copious translations of outstanding works which the civilization of Islam had produced.

This process went on into the fourteenth century, unaffected by the dislocations and upheavals of war.

It is interesting to note that while Muslim Spain, the principal channel of cultural intercourse, was being fragmented and then diminished under Christian pressure, the transmission to the West of Islamic learning gathered speed.

Abaqa's descent on Anatolia in 1277 extinguished the rule of the Saljuqs of Rum, although nominally, until 1307, there were Saljuqids on the throne, whose names were struck on coins.

At the end of the thirteenth century, a Turkish chieftain, 'Uthman, the son of Irtughril, rose to eminence in Anatolia.

Not much is known of the origins of this remarkable warrior, who, before long, found for himself a seat of power.

We find his successor, Urkhan (reigned 1324-60) well established, with his capital at Brusa (Bursa). 'Uthman and Urkhan fought many battles with the Byzantines to consolidate and expand their domain.

Such were the beginnings of the great Ottoman Empire of future years.

In 1357 Urkhan ventured to cross the Dardanelles at Gallipoli, and under Murad I (reigned 1360-89) Adrianople, on the European mainland, became the capital of the Ottoman kingdom.

This was no mean achievement. <p370>

The conversion of Ghazan to Islam did not remove the causes of hostility between the Mamluks and the Mongols and that hostility continued as long as the Il-Khans had the power and the substance to sustain it.

Ghazan was by nature a tolerant man.

He soon put an end to excesses committed by fanatics, who had issued a decree ordering the demolition of the Buddhist, the Jewish and the Christian places of worship.

This bore heavily on the Buddhists in particular, because they had only recently come to settle on alien soil.

Buddhism had, for long, totally disappeared from the Iranian plateau, until the Mongols brought a variety of it with them.

It disappeared again as soon as the Mongol nobility, en masse, embraced Islam.

Jews and Christians suffered for the time being, but their Faiths were indigenous and survived.

Eventually, Ghazan went to the length of punishing those responsible for

attacks on Christian churches in Tabriz.

Possibly, one reason for Ghazan's eager reversal to his natural tolerance towards Faiths other than his own was the disgrace and fall from power of the Amir Nawruz, which led to his execution.

Nawruz had greatly helped Ghazan to obtain the throne, but his arrogance and the discovery of his treasonable correspondence with the Mamluks, in the days of Baydu, destroyed him and his family.

Although it was true that he had appealed to the Mamluks to come and overthrow the hl-Khan, a good deal of the evidence brought against him consisted of forgeries.

Ghazan had a far from peaceful reign.

He had to contend with rebellions often engineered by members of his own family, with acts of disloyalty and misdemeanour in the high offices of state, which he dealt with brutally at times, and with his own ill-health, for though young he was a sick man.

And the seething hostility between himself and the Mamluks erupted into inconclusive war and invasion.

Also, he intervened forcefully in the Saljuq principality of Rum, by dismissing one puppet ruler and putting another in his place, who had soon to give way to the previous one.

That Ghazan's conversion to Islam did not incline him to make common cause with other Muslim potentates against Christendom is further attested by his letter to the Pope and by the favourable reception which he gave to the envoy of the Byzantine Emperor.

In April 1302 Ghazan wrote to Boniface VIII (1294-) to the effect that he was preparing for the 'great work'[1] <p371> which was to be his 'sole aim', and that the Pope and the Christian rulers of Europe should do the same and 'not fail to keep the rendezvous'.[2] Towards the end of the same year, an embassy came to him from the Emperor Andronicus II (1282-1328) to solicit his aid against the Ottomans.

But Ghazan was a devout Muslim.

In the course of his campaigns and his wanderings around his Empire, he visited the shrine of Husayn, the third Imam, at Karbila, and the graves of the supporters of 'Ali, the first Imam and the fourth Caliph, who fell at Siffin.

He and his nobles gave up their Mongolian hats which were brimmed, hindering the performance of the daily prayers, and acquired turbans instead.

[1 Fighting the Mamluks.]

[2 Cited in the Cambridge History of Iran, vol.

V, p.391.]

Under Ghazan, Mongols invaded Syria three times.

He was marshalling his forces for a fourth attempt when death overtook him in 1304.

During his first incursion, his army cleared Syria of the Mamluks (or so it was said); on the last day of the year 1299, in the meadows of Marj Rahit, the Damascenes came to greet him.

There, more than six hundred years before, the Umayyad Marwan I had met and put to flight the partisans of 'Abdu'llah Ibn az-Zubayr.

But as soon as Ghazan had completed his first conquest of Syria, he went back to 'Iraq, and his general, Qutlugh-Shah, retreated in his wake.

During the second attempt in 1300, floods immobilized both armies.

Then Ghazan called on the Mamluk monarch, al-Malik an-Nasir Nasiri'd-Din, to recognize him as his overlord; naturally, the Mamluk refused.

Ghazan did not take part in the third invasion, which was led by Qutlugh-Shah.

This general, who stood high in the esteem of Ghazan and had served him with distinction, suffered a decisive defeat and fled in haste.

This precipitate flight so angered the Il-Khan that he dismissed that seasoned campaigner from his presence.

Ghazan died in the vicinity of Qazvin, at the age of thirty-three.

He was a learned man himself and encouraged others in the pursuit of learning.

It is said that he was conversant with many languages, including a language of Europe, possibly Latin.

At the bidding of this monarch, the celebrated vizier, Khajih Rashidi'd-Din Fadlu'llah, a Jewish convert to Islam, began to compose in Persian his great encyclopaedic history, the Jami'u't-Tawarikh.

Ghazan's reign inaugurated a cultural revival, at first imperceptible, which, in its plenitude, produced magnificent works of painting and architecture.  
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Ghazan's successor was his brother, Uljaytu, named Nicholas when he embraced Christianity, and further renamed Muhammad when he embraced Islam.

He is known in the annals of Iran as Sultan Muhammad-i-Khuda-Bandih[1] (or Khar-Bandih).[2] It is related that he was hesitant in choosing between the two Sunni schools of Hanafi and Shafi'i.

He therefore summoned an eminent representative of each to argue the case, that he might be better informed.

Their disputation became so rancorous and abusive that the Il-Khan was disgusted, and so were the members of his retinue, who urged him to abandon Islam and revert to the religion of his forefathers.

Apparently those new converts were still wavering, but not so Uljaytu.

He finally chose to be a Sh'iah -- the first Sh'iah ruler in Iran and 'Iraq since the days of the Buwayhids.

[1 Servant of God.]

[2 Ass-herd.]

Firm as Uljaytu remained in allegiance to his Faith, no less firm was he in his stand to continue the contest with the Mamluks.

He went on corresponding with Christian potentates, as his brother and his father had done before him, to obtain their support.

He wrote a long letter to Philip IV (Phillipe le Bel) of France, but there is no evidence to show whether the French king ever received or answered it.

Uljaytu's letter to Edward I of England was answered by Edward II, his son.

The English king expressed his joy that the Il-Khan was determined to destroy 'the abominable sect of Mahomet',<sup>[1]</sup> but for Edward it was a long way to the Holy Land and he faced other exigencies. (The Scots were still unruly and he had yet to fight the battle of Bannockburn.) Pope Clement IV (1305-14) was more responsive.

He wrote to the Il-Khan that when the time was opportune he and other potentates would send an army and inform him of the fact.

But, of course, that information never came.

Again, single-handed, the Mongols tried to dislodge the Mamluks from Syria.

Taking heart from the reports of some discontented Amirs, the Mongol army crossed the Euphrates and laid siege to Rahbat ash-Sham.

It was winter-time, victuals were hard to come by and the loss in manpower was great.

Nothing could be done but to retire.

Thus in January 1313, the very last attempt of the Mongols to beat the Mamluks was foiled.

[1 *ibid.*, p.402.] <p373>

The Caspian province of Gilan had always defied the Mongols.

Uljaytu decided to force the Gilakis into submission.

There were initial successes, but in the end thick forests and bogs proved to be the undoing of the Mongol army, and Qutlugh-Shah, who had been restored to favour, lost his life.

His death brought the Amir Chuban (Chupan) to the fore.

He was destined to play a decisive part in the affairs of the Il-Khans.

Control from his distant Peking over the Empire of Chingiz Khan had long ceased to exist.

As we have seen, the descendants of Chingiz had been fighting amongst

themselves.

During the reign of Uljaytu, prompted by the Emperor in China, a pact was made for the purpose of harnessing them in unity, which was short-lived.

Internal developments in these kingdoms, ruled by the members of the House of Chingiz, had taken divergent courses, and as far as the hl-Khans were concerned the sun was almost setting on their fortunes.

The memorial of Uljaytu is his massive mausoleum, which, in its ruined state, inspires awe and admiration.

In the lush meadows on the plains, in the north-west corner of 'Iraq-i-'Ajam, near the city of Zanzan, Arghun had begun the construction of a city which Uljaytu, his son, completed, made his capital and named Sultaniyyih.

That city is no more, but the majestic mausoleum remains, in solitary splendour, dominating the landscape.

Uljaytu, like his brother, died young.

When the end came, in December 1316, he was thirty-six years old.

His son and heir-apparent, Abu-Sa'id, was a boy of twelve, far away from the capital at the time of Uljaytu's death.

Two Amirs contended for his guardianship.

However, it was to the Amir Chuban's care that his father had left him.

Gradually, this Amir became the most powerful man in the realm, until Abu-Sa'id resolved to be rid of him.

The learned and accomplished Rashidi'd-Din Fadlu'llah had voluntarily retired from the service of the State.

Chuban sought him out and urged him to take up his office once again.

The enemies of that eminent man now conspired to min him.

It was rumoured that Uljaytu had been poisoned, and Rashidi'd-Din was accused of having encompassed it.

Chuban, who had brought him from retirement, did not lift a finger to protect him.

Rashidi'd-Din and his sixteen-year-old son, 'Izzi'd-Din, who had been page to Uljaytu, were executed on flimsy charges.

His head was carried round the streets of Tabriz and he was reviled as a Jew.

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As Abu-Sa'id grew up he became acutely aware that all power was in the hands of Chuban, and he naturally resented it.

But there were rebellions to be put down and an invasion by the Golden Horde to repel, which the Amir managed most effectively.

The young monarch displayed great bravery in combat, for which he gained the title of Bahadur (Valiant).

Taymur-Tash, a son of Chuban, was Viceroy of Rum.

He too rebelled and claimed that he was the promised Mahdi.

Chuban himself undertook the punitive expedition against him, whereupon Taymur-Tash offered his submission and was pardoned.

He was very successful in containing the Byzantines and the Ottomans.

Later, when his father fell from power, Taymur-Tash fled to Egypt.

Al-Malik an-Nasir Nasiri'd-Din received him most amiably, but, in the end, put him to death, in order to keep friendly relations with the Il-Khan.

Times had indeed changed.

The first member of Chuban's family to meet the wrath of the Il-Khan was another son, Dimashq Khajih, governor of Adharbayjan, who had been acting as the chief minister.

It was alleged that Dimashq Khajih was involved in a plot with a wife of Uljaytu.

His murder caused his father to rebel, who, in turn, was destroyed.

This happened in 1327.

Eight years later, while on his way to throw back another invasion by the Golden Horde, the thirty-year-old Il-Khan died, in all probability by poison.

Abu-Sa'id Bahadur was both talented and courageous, but domination by the Amir Chuban and the Amir's relations had an adverse effect on him.

It is worth recording that after the elimination of Dimashq Khajih, Abu-Sa'id made Ghiyathi'd-Din, a son of Rashidi'd-Din, his vizier; that high-minded and generous man did not take any action against those responsible for his father's execution.

On the contrary, he overwhelmed them with his favour.

Abu-Sa'id, like his predecessors, was very tolerant where other people's faith was concerned.

He would not allow Armenians to be molested.

In the second year of Abu-Sa'id's reign, Pope John XXII (1316-34) established the Archbishopric of Sultaniyyih and gave it into the charge of Franco de Perouse.

He also appointed six suffragans.

This new Archdiocese had for its domain the whole of the Iranian plateau.

It speaks well for the tolerance shown to the Christians that, at the same

time, bishops sent by Rome took up their posts in Izmir and Sivas.

William (Guillaume) <p375> Adam, the Bishop of Izmir, became the second Archbishop of Sultaniyyih.

These arrangements from Rome were not to last.

Turbulent times lay ahead.

Within a year of the death of Abu-Sa'id, who had no heir-apparent, the kingdom of the Il-Khans broke up.

Two protagonists, who contested for power in the Il-Khanid realm, were Shaykh Hasan-i-Kuchik (the Lesser), son of Taymur-Tash, and Shaykh Hasan-i-Buzurg (the Greater).

The latter had been disgraced in the reign of Abu-Sa'id, but, restored to favour when his innocence was proved, he was sent to be Viceroy of Rum.

A series of puppets, descendants of Chingiz, were put up by Hasan-i-Kuchik and Hasan-i-Buzurg, and discarded at will.

By the middle of the fourteenth century, the lands stretching from the confines of Hindu-Kush to the frontiers of Syria had been parcelled out between the Kurt Maliks of Hirat, the Sarbadaran of Khurasan, the Muzaffarids of Shiraz, Isfahan and Kirman (descendants of Mubarizi'd-Din Muhammad), the Chupanids of Adharbayjan (descendants of Shaykh Hasan-i-Kuchik) and the Jalayirids of 'Iraq (descendants of Shaykh Hasan-i-Buzurg).

Now for the first time in that vast realm of Islam no kingdom or emirate could be considered all-powerful.

Apart from the Banu'l-Ahmar or the Nasrids of Granada, who were tributaries to the kingdom of Castile, there were no Arab dynasties anywhere in control of a substantial part of the Islamic realm.

With the growing power of the Ottomans and the still dominant position of the Mamluks, Turks seemed destined to wield supreme authority over Islamic lands.

Then arose a man whom Christopher Marlowe has well described as 'the Scourge of God'.

He too was a Turk, a Tartar.

Amir Timur-i-Gurkan, known generally in the West as Tamerlane, came from Transoxania.

Kish or Shahr-i-Sabz (the Verdant City) was his native town.

Wounded during one of his battles by an arrow, he was permanently lamed, and was known subsequently as Timur-i-Lang (Lame), which became, in due course, Tamerlane (or Tamburlaine) in English.

He was born in the year of Abu-Sa'id Bahadur's death, the last of the effective Il-Khans.

Timur's early years resemble those of Chingiz Khan.

His father died when he was young and Transoxania was as turbulent as Mongolia had been.

The Chaghatayid kingdom was in dissolution and when Tughluq-Timur came from Jatah to annex <p376> Transoxania, its leading men joined forces to resist him.

At the last minute Haji Barlas, Timur's uncle, felt that he was not equal to the task and sought refuge in Khurasan.

Young Timur, far from attempting to fight the invader, went to him and offered his submission, for which he was rewarded with the governorship of Transoxania.

However, the situation was basically unstable, and there were many who craved for power.

Timur's fortunes ebbed and flowed for several years; at one time he was a wanderer in the desert, looking for friends and allies.

Time and again supposed friends turned against him.

Even his uncle returned from Khurasan to stand in his way.

His brother-in-law, Amir Husayn, who was once a fellow wanderer with him, in the wastes of Transoxania, tried to snatch away the prize.

Just as Chingiz had overcome all odds, so did Timur, and by the year 1369 he was master of the whole of Transoxania.

Then he set out to reduce the neighbouring territories of Jatah to the east, Kharazm to the west and Badakhshan to the south.

In 1381, he captured the fair city of Hirat.

The Memoirs (Malfuzat) and the Institutes (Tazuk) ascribed to his own pen are now rejected by scholars as forgeries.

Yet they have a ring of authenticity and, even if written by someone else, they show Timur's valour, perseverance, total disregard of danger and superb generalship.

Timur was possessed of those virtues, but he was also cruel, bloodthirsty and vindictive.

This is what Professor Arnold Toynbee has written of him:

'Thus, besides forfeiting a Promised Land, Timur undid his own work of liberating his native country;<sup>[1]</sup> but the greatest of all his acts of destruction was committed against himself.

He has succeeded in making his name immortal at the price of erasing from the minds of Posterity all memory of the deeds for which he might have been remembered for good.

To how many people in either Christendom or Dar-al-Islam<sup>[2]</sup> to-day does Timur's name call up the image of a champion of Civilization against Barbarism, who led

the clergy and people of his country to a hard-won victory at the end of a nineteen-years-long struggle for independence?

To the vast majority of those to whom the name of Timur Lenk [Lang] or Tamerlane means anything at all, it commemorates a militarist who perpetrated as many horrors in the span of twenty-four <p377> four years as had been perpetrated in a century by a succession of Assyrian kings from Tiglath-Pileser III to Assurbanipal inclusive.

We think of the monster who razed Isfara'in to the ground in 1381; built two thousand prisoners into a living mound, and then bricked them over, at Sabzawar in 1383; piled 5,000 human heads into minarets at Zirih in the same year; cast his Luri prisoners alive over precipices in 1386; massacred 70,000 people, and piled the heads of the slain into minarets, at Isfahan in 1387; massacred the garrison of Takrit, and piled their heads into minarets, in 1393; massacred 100,000 prisoners at Delhi in 1398; buried alive the 4,000 Christian soldiers of the garrison of Sivas after their capitulation in 1400; built twenty towers of skulls in Syria in 1400 and 1401;[3] and dealt with Baghdad in 1401 as he had dealt fourteen years earlier with Isfahan.

In minds which know him only through such deeds, Timur has caused himself to be confounded with the ogres of the Steppe -- a Chingiz and an Attila and the like -- against whom he had spent the better half of his life in waging a Holy War.

The crack-brained megalomania of the homicidal madman whose one idea is to impress the imagination of Mankind with a sense of his military power by a hideous abuse of it is brilliantly conveyed in the hyperboles which the English poet Marlowe has placed in the mouth of his Tamburlaine:

[1 This refers to events of future decades. (H.M.B.)]

[2 The realm of Islam. (H.M.B.)]

[3 Timur conquered Damascus in that year. (H.M.B.)]

I hold the Fates bound fast in yron chaines,  
And with my hand turne Fortune's wheel about,  
And sooner shall the Sun fall from his Spheare,  
Than Tamburlaine be slaine or overcome....

The God of war resignes his rounge to me,  
Meaning to make me Generall of the world;  
Jove, viewing me in armes, looks pale and wan,  
Fearing my power should pull him from his throne...."[1]

[1 A Study of History, vol.

IV, pp.500-1.]

Toynbee so deservedly and mercilessly castigates Timur, because in his view Timur became a victim of militarism and turned upon the realm of Islam, inflicting horrors of mass destruction upon it, instead of going beyond the area of Qipchaq to conquer and control the whole of the Eurasian Steppe and establish a 'Pan-Eurasian Islamic Empire'.

Here we are not concerned <p378> with what might have been, nor, particularly,

with Professor Toynbee's views.

The above quotation has been cited at length because it presents a forceful picture of the enormities committed by Tamerlane.

Nevertheless it is salutary to ponder over the miseries which his bloody assaults brought on his fellow Muslims.

And the nomads of the Eurasian Steppe, not very long after the death of the great conqueror, swept down over Kharazm and then Transoxania, dispossessing his heirs of their heritage.

Professor Toynbee even suggests that had Timur gone on to push his frontiers inexorably northwards, there would be today an empire based on Samarqand controlling Moscow rather than the reverse.

While Timur was battling in the eastern limits of the realm of Islam, the Ottomans were advancing steadily at the expense of the Christians.

Sofia was captured by them in 1382 and the whole of Bulgaria in 1393.

By 1390 they had driven the Byzantines entirely out of Asia Minor.

Murad I had been murdered, in 1389, to be succeeded by Bayazid I, the Bajazet of Christopher Marlowe and other Western writers.

The same year the Serbians received a heavy defeat at the hands of the Ottomans.

In 1396, Bayazid overwhelmed a Christian army at Nicopolis.

The Emperor Manuel travelled to France and England, in the year 1400, to ask for help against Bayazid.

The Mamluks had also been active.

They overran the kingdom of Little Armenia (Cilicia) in 1375.

Up to 1382, the Mamluk rulers were Turks, originating mainly from Qipchaq, and are known as Bahris (Marines), because under the Ayyubids, their quarters were on an island in the rule.

The next line of the Mamluks, all Circassian (with two exceptions), are known as Burjis (Men of the Tower), because their barracks were originally in the citadel.

Timur sent envoys to al-Malik az-Zahir Sayfi'd-Din Barquq, whom the Burji ruler wantonly put to death although their mission was innocent enough; and in the words of Professor Hitti:

'Like a cyclone Timur swept over northern Syria in 1400.

For three days Aleppo was given over to plunder.

The heads of over twenty thousand of its Moslem inhabitants were built into mounds ten cubits high by twenty in circumference, with all the faces on the outside.

The city's priceless schools and mosques of the Nurid and Ayyubid ages were destroyed, never to be rebuilt.

Hamah, Hims and Ba'labakk fell in turn.

The advance forces of <p379> the Egyptian army under Sultan Faraj were routed and Damascus captured (February, 1401).

While the city was sacked the fire broke out . . .

Of the Umayyad Mosque nothing was left but the walls.

Of the Damascene scholars, skilled labourers and artisans the ablest were carried away by Timur to his capital, Samarqand, there to implant Islamic sciences and to introduce certain industrial arts which have since been lost to the Syrian capital . . .

Ibn Khaldun[1] accompanied Faraj from Cairo and headed the Damascene mission which negotiated peace with Timur.'[2]

[1 The great scholar and historian. (H.M.B.)]

[2 History of the Arabs, p.

701.]

Flushed with triumph in Syria, Timur made another assault on Baghdad to redress a wrong with vengeance, and then set out to challenge the Ottomans.

At the battle of Anqurah (modern Ankara), in 1402, he crushed them and made a prisoner of Bayazid, who died the following year in captivity.

Sulayman I succeeded him.

Timur himself died in Utrar in 1405.

His tomb in Samarqand, Gur-Amir, a magnificent structure, stands in good repair.

At his death, his vast empire, larger than Chingiz Khan's, began to crumble.

The fratricidal strifes of his progeny made it impossible for that empire to endure, quite apart from the fact that Timur had been almost continuously engaged in piling conquest upon conquest and had not consolidated his gains, although there were powerful men lurking about to seize the territories which he had made his own.

Timur's progeny (with one exception) were not very successful as rulers, but their petulance and self-destructive, senseless quarrels were overwhelmingly compensated by their brilliant talents.

Their patronage of art and learning combined with their own achievements made those few decades a glorious period of renaissance.

The most effective and successful of Timur's descendants (barring the Mughul Emperors of India, whose age is different, as is their story) was Shahrukh, the conqueror's fourth son.

Timur had named Pir-Muhammad, the son of Jahangir, his eldest son, to succeed him, but he never came to the throne.

Miranshah, another son of Timur, controlled a substantial part of the Iranian plateau; Khalil-Sultan, the son of Miranshah, held Transoxania, and Shahrukh was well established in Khurasan.

Throughout Adharbayjan and Iraq and into Anatolia, two Turkman (Turkmen) factions subdued by Timur -- the Aq-Quyunlu (White Sheep) and the Qara-Quyunlu (Black Sheep) -- were struggling for mastery.

However, within four years of the conqueror's death, Shahrukh was the acknowledged head of the House of Timur and obeyed as such (although insubordination was not lacking).

He defeated Qara-Yusuf of the Qara-Quyunlu and held him at bay, later forcing Iskandar and Jahanshah, sons of Qara-Yusuf into submission.

Shahrukh was the husband of Gawhar-Shad, whose name is immortalized by her resplendent mosque at Mashhad, of which the Shrine of the eighth Imam forms an integral part, and by the Theological College and mausoleum at Hirat, which even in their ruined condition are truly dazzling.

In these buildings Islamic architecture and faience reached great heights.

Baysunqur and Ulugh Beg were sons of Shahrukh and Gawhar-Shad.

The former lived in Hirat and the latter was given the viceroyalty of Transoxania by his father.

Ulugh Beg was a learned astronomer.

He had an observatory built in Samarqand, and gathered round him astronomers no less talented than himself.

The set of Astronomical Tables which Ulugh Beg produced is described as 'the most accurate and complete which have been bequeathed by the East to the West'. [1] John Greaves, Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, published Ulugh Beg's Tables, in Latin, in 1665.

The West was profoundly impressed.

Baysunqur excelled in arts, calligraphy being his forte.

His work is imprinted on the faience of his mother's mosque in Mashhad.

An Englishman, who in disguise found his way into the court of the Mosque of Gawhar-Shad, has written:

[1 Sykes, A History of Persia, vol.

11, p.

138.]

'I hastened down the dark bazaar, found the dome where I turned to the left, and was greeted, on coming out into the court, by such a fanfare of colour and

light that I stopped a moment, half blinded.

It was as if someone had switched on another sun.

'The whole quadrangle was a garden of turquoise, pink, dark red, and dark blue, with touches of purple, green, and yellow, planted among paths of plain buff brick.

Huge white arabesques whirled above the ivan[1] arches.

The ivans themselves hid other gardens, shadier, fritillary-coloured.

The great minarets beside the sanctuary, rising from bases encircled with Kufic the size of <p381> a boy, were bedizened with a network of jewelled lozenges.

The swollen sea-green dome adorned with yellow tendrils appeared between them.

At the opposite end glinted the top of a gold minaret.

But in all this variety, the principle of union, the life-spark of the whole blazing apparition, was kindled by two great texts: the one, a frieze of white suls[2] writing powdered over a held of gentian blue along the skyline of the entire quadrangle; the other, a border of the same alphabet in daisy white and yellow on a sapphire field, interlaced with turquoise Kufic along its inner edge, and enclosing, in the form of a three-sided oblong, the arch of the main ivan between the minarets.

The latter was actually designed, it says, by "Baisanghor, son of Shah Rukh, son of Timur Gurkani (Tamerlane), with hope in God, in the year 821 (A.D. 1418)."

Baisanghor was a famous calligrapher; and being the son of Gohar Shad also, he celebrated his mother's munificence with an inscription whose glory explains for ever the joy felt by Islam in writing on the face of architecture.[3]

[1 Ayvan: portico, open gallery. (H.M.B.)]

[2 Thulth. (H.M.B.)]

[3 Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, pp.

243-4 (Cape Paperback edn.)]

Baysunqur brought together brilliant calligraphers and miniaturists in Hirat and personally directed and instructed them to make books and bindings, to paint and write and create works of unsurpassed beauty.

Poets and musicians, too, found an honoured place in the court of Baysunqur.

He died in the lifetime of his father, as a result of his intemperate drinking bouts.

Ulugh Beg succeeded his father in 1447, but his reign was short-lived, for his wretched son, 'Abdu'l-Latif, had him put to death.

Six months later, 'Abdu'l-Latif received his deserts, when he was assassinated.

Thereafter the fortunes of the House of Timur rapidly declined, except for the long reign from 1470 to 1506 of Sultan Husayn Mirza Bayqara in Khurasan.

Once again, Hiraṭ became the cynosure of poets such as Jami, the last great classical poet of Persia and an eminent exponent of Sufiism; miniaturists such as the incomparable Bihzad; writers such as Mir-Khund, the industrious historian and author of the *Rawdatu's-Safa*,<sup>[1]</sup> and Mulla Husayn-i-Va'iz-i-Kashifi, author of the *Anvar-i-Suhayli* <p382> (*Lights of Canopus*), a recension of the *Kalilah-wa-Dimnah* (*The Fables of Bidpay*).

Sultan Husayn's minister, Amir 'Ali-Shir-i-Nava'i, was also a remarkable man, giving his patronage to all who deserved it, and is particularly renowned as a talented writer in Turki and the promoter of that language.

[1 This work, which is in seven volumes, has been denigrated, but the view of Professor Arberry that it 'exercised a wholly baneful influence' (in *Classical Persian Literature*, Allen & Unwin, 1958, p.390) is not justified.

In the nineteenth century, Rida-Quli Khan-i-Hidayat wrote a Supplement to it, in three volumes, which is known as *Rawdatu's-Safay-i-Nasiri*.]

It is sad to relate that because of the internecine struggles amongst the Timurids, Gawhar-Shad was put to death, when she was over eighty, by Abu-Sa'id, a great-grandson of Timur.

Abu-Sa'id was the grandfather of Babur, the founder of the Mughul Empire in India.

He ruled over Transoxania and Khurasan until 1469, when he was defeated by Hasan Beg (Uzun Hasan) of the Aq-Quyunlu and was handed over to Mirza Yadgar Muhammad, a grandson of Baysunqur, who had no hesitation in ordering his execution.

Hasan Beg, whose seat was at Diyarbakr in Anatolia, also defeated Jahanshah and extinguished the power of the Qara-Quyunlu.

Jahanshah had, for a while, extended his rule to the southern regions of Persia; but now the star of the Aq-Quyunlu was in the ascendant.

For nearly fifty years they held in their possession almost the whole of Iran (Khurasan excepted) and 'Iraq, as well as a part of eastern Anatolia.

The Ottomans had, in the meantime, recovered their territories, and at long last they achieved that victory which had eluded the Muslims for eight hundred years.

In 1453 Sultan Muhammad (Mehmet) II Fatih (the Conqueror) captured Constantinople and a dream came true.

Byzantium fell, never to rise again.

The Basilica of St.

Sophia became the Mosque of Aya Sufiya.

Today it is a museum.

Within half a century of being humbled, humiliated and nearly obliterated by Timur, the Ottomans had regained all they had lost in Europe and Asia, had won

the defiant City of Constantine, and had begun their meteoric rise to imperial power.

By the opening years of the sixteenth century a series of events was to occur which would cause the fulcrum of civilization and the balance of world polity to move steadily westwards, away from the Mediterranean Basin -- for two millenniums the main centre of world events; which would bring down a shutter on Central Asia, plunging it into an impenetrable darkness reminiscent of barbaric times, cutting off this vast area of the world from the significant currents of civilized life; and which would create <p383> a deep rift in the realm of Islam, such as it had not experienced before.

In January 1492, the last vestige of Islamic presence in Spain, once so dramatically and beneficently dominant, was removed by the action of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile and Aragon.

Abu-'Abdu'llah (Boabdil of Western chroniclers and writers), the weak, scheming ruler of the Banu'l-Ahmar, lost his tenuous grip on Granada.

In October of the same year, Christopher Columbus, financed and equipped by the same Spanish monarchs, reached an island in the Antilles which he named San Salvador and which he thought was India.

Europeans stood at the portals to a New World.

By 1488, Bartholomew Diaz had rounded the Cape of Good Hope.

In 1498, Vasco da Gama brought his ships into harbour at Calicut in India, John Cabot discovered Labrador and Columbus discovered South America.

In 1499, a boy of thirteen named Isma'il, descended from Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din, a revered Sufi murshid (guide), set out to carve a kingdom for himself in Adharbayjan.

And in 1505, Uzbaks became the masters of Transoxania.

We shall examine these events in the next chapter, as they touched upon the fortunes of the realm of Islam. <p384>

### 32 Final Divisions

The rapid growth of Ottoman power produced, not unreasonably, alarm and consternation in the West.

As already mentioned, the Byzantine Emperor travelled to France and England in search of help.

The West, alerted to a potential danger, looked to the East to find a possible ally against the Ottomans.

The pattern was almost the same as in the days of the Crusaders, when descendants of Chingiz Khan were courted and fervent hopes expressed that Prester John would issue from the confines of Central Asia.

Now there was Timur, and his remarkable story had reached the ears of the potentates of Europe.

Henry III of Castile, son-in-law of John of Gaunt, sent an embassy, and two of Henry's envoys witnessed the defeat and capture of Bayazid.

Timur himself had written to Henry IV of England, brother-in-law of the enterprising King of Castile, with the purpose of fostering trade.

The English King congratulated him on his victory over the Ottomans.

But despite his friendship with the West, Timur expelled the Knights of St. John from Smyrna.

Timur, however, died shortly after his triumph in Asia Minor, and the Ottomans were soon back and menacing Europe.

Venice, particularly, felt threatened.

In the past she had been able to come to terms with the rulers of Egypt, be they Ayyubids or Mamluks.

But making deals with the Ottomans -- ever advancing, ever expanding their dominions -- was not easy.

In the latter part of the fifteenth century, Venice had become the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean; she had humbled Genoa and had a near monopoly of trade with Beirut and Alexandria.

Her consuls were stationed in Damascus, Aleppo, Tripoli and Beirut.

Wares and merchandise from the East came to Damascus, to be sent to the port of Beirut -- spices, precious stones, Persian gums, silk goods, all highly valued in the West.

Alexandria equalled Beirut <p385> as an important depot, particularly for spices and pepper which Europe badly needed to preserve its meat.

To safeguard her interests, Venice was desperately trying to rally Western powers to form a common front against the Ottomans, but the response was hardly encouraging.

So when Hasan Beg of the White Sheep made an approach to Venice, the Doge and his council were delighted.

The tall (Uzun) Hasan had backed the Prince of Karamania (Cilicia), only to be defeated by the Ottomans.

Realizing that he needed naval help he turned to Venice.

The Venetian leaders decided to reciprocate by sending an envoy to Diyarbakr.

Hasan Beg was married to Theodora, daughter of an emperor of Trebizond.

A sister of Theodora was married to the Duke of Archipelago.

Caterino Zeno, a wealthy merchant of Venice, whose wife was a daughter of the Duke, was chosen to go to attend Hasan Beg and persuade him to mount an attack on Sultan Muhammad the Conqueror.

The Ottomans had extirpated the empire of Trebizond in 1461, and had wrested Negroponte from the Venetians in 1470.

Hasan Beg readily agreed to attack the Ottomans from the rear while the Venetian naval forces operated off the coast of Cilicia.

However, attacks and counter-attacks by the White Sheep and the Ottomans proved equally futile; the war between Venice and the Ottomans, begun in 1463, dragged on until 1479, ending in the cession to the Ottomans of Lemnos and the Venetian holdings in Albania.

In 1473, during a brief struggle between the forces of Muhammad the Conqueror and Hasan Beg, the Venetians became masters of Cyprus.

Now Caterino Zeno, representing Hasan Beg, visited European potentates to obtain their support against the Ottomans, but Zeno's mission failed, and the White Sheep ruler wisely decided not to embroil himself further.

Nevertheless, in future decades both East and West continued to seek allies from each other's regions.

The net gain of these contacts was the settlement of a number of Persian metal-workers in Venice.

Their craftsmanship and patterns profoundly affected this branch of art in Europe, reaching England from Germany.

The designs and the finished products of goldsmiths of the reign of Queen Elizabeth reflect the influence of those Persians who went to live in Venice.

In the end it was not the dominance of the Ottomans which mined Venetian trade, but Columbus's desire to reach India and <p386> Vasco da Gama's successful journey to Calicut.

Within a few years Venetian ships could not find enough pepper and spices in the depots of Beirut and Alexandria to take to Europe.

Whereas in 1498 there was such an abundance of pepper in Alexandria that the Venetians had not sufficient cash to buy it all, four years later they had to search for the merchandise they required, while in Beirut they found no more than four bales of pepper.

Portuguese merchants were now buying these goods at source and bringing them to Europe without payment of imposts en route or any other hindrance.

It was a long journey by land from the source to ports on the Mediterranean and the dues extracted mounted up, particularly as the Ottomans within two decades swept over Syria and Egypt.

The discovery of sea routes to the south, the east and the west created new maritime powers: the Spanish, Dutch and English.

#### THE RISE OF THE SAFAVIDS

And now we must turn to the amazing story of a boy of thirteen, who wrought

unbelievable changes which diverted the course of history; who succeeded where both his father and grandfather not only had failed, but had lost their lives as well.

This boy was the future renowned Shah Isma'il-i-Safavi.

He had many faults, but right through the course of his career his courage and single-mindedness shone dazzlingly.

His achievements, in a lifetime of no more than thirty-six years, testify to what one man can do, with firm resolve, to alter the affairs of mankind in directions not warranted or even demanded by the sociological and economic climate of his day -- factors to which many historians, particularly those tied to notions of economic determinism, usually give priority.

It has been said that Shah Isma'il represented the resurgence of the national spirit of Iran.

This is manifestly untrue.

Isma'il himself was Turkish-speaking and wrote habitually in Turkish, whereas his inveterate opponent, Salim (Selim), the Ottoman ruler, wrote in Persian and composed Persian poems.

Isma'il's main support rested on the seven great Turkish tribes of Afshar, Qajar, Takallu, Rumlu, Shamlu, Ustajlu and Dhu'l-Qadar.

Collectively they bore a Turkish name:

Qizil-Bash (Red-Capped), by which for a long period the Safavid power was known.

A contemporary chronicler, bitterly hostile to Shah Isma'il and his <p387> policy, speaks bitterly of 'the Qizil-Bash Turkmans'.

For centuries, Iran had had a succession of rulers: the Ghaznavids, the Saljuqs, the Kharazmshahis, the Atabaks of Fars and Adharbayjan, the Il-Khans, the Timurids (Gurkanis), the Black Sheep and the White Sheep -- alien conquerors all -- who had been so thoroughly and completely assimilated that no one could think of them except in terms of the natives of the land.

Even the Turkman White Sheep (Aq-Qyunlu), whom Shah Isma'il supplanted, were more thoroughly Persian than he.

Another theory which considers Shi'ism (so punctiliously and fanatically promulgated by Shah Isma'il and imposed on a population averse to it) as the natural embodiment of the aspirations of the Iranians, is a theory not sustained by facts.

The days when the call in the name of the House of the Prophet aroused the people of Iran were long since forgotten.

In those times the racial preferences of the detested Umayyads weighed heavily on the Persians, and Abu-Muslim had raised his black standard in Khurasan to

challenge their power.

But in the fifteenth century of the Christian Era, Khurasan was Sunni to the core.

The Timurid Sultan Husayn Bayqara, despite his Sh'iah tendencies, had been dissuaded by his vizier, Amir 'All-Shir-i-Nava'i, from making a public profession.

Uljaytu had found Sh'iah beliefs more acceptable because the argumentations of Sunni theologians had disgusted him, nearly leading him to abandon Islam altogether; yet he had not attempted to make others fall in line with him.

At Tabriz, which Shah Isma'il made his capital, even the Sh'iah divines of the city begged him, on the eve of his coronation, not to imperil his position by forcing the people to conform to Sh'iah beliefs, since two-thirds of the inhabitants of Tabriz were Sunni.

Shah Isma'il brushed aside their plea.

It is certainly true that the people of the Caspian provinces beyond the Elburz range, and particularly the Daylam, because of their opposition to the caliphs, first of Damascus and then of Baghdad, had always had Sh'iah proclivities.

But when Shah Isma'il appeared on the scene, the principal centres of Shi'ism were in Hillah in 'Iraq, Jabal 'Amil in Syria, Bahrayn and al-Hasa.

So short was Iran of Sh'iah divines that Shah Isma'il had to bring a large number of them from Syria, at the same time putting to death prominent Sunni doctors of law who were Persian.

No less a person than Sayfi'd-Din Ahmad-i-Taftazani, the Shaykhu'l-Islam of Hirat -- great- <p388> grandson of the celebrated jurist and author Sa'di'd-Din-i-Taftazani -- suffered in this manner; and at Kazirun, in the province of Fars, a number of Sunni clerics were made to pay the supreme penalty.

Only in Kashan and Qum did the young Isma'il have an enthusiastic welcome, since their populations were overwhelmingly Sh'iah.

Shah Isma'il, by the exercise of his iron will, completely changed the religious environment of Persia.

Professor Arnold Toynbee argues that the schismatic effect of Shah Isma'il's policy on the nascent 'Iranic Society' (born after the demise of the 'Abbasid Caliphate) was such that the other powerful half which remained Sunni, represented by the Ottomans, recoiled upon its sister Islamic society, which Toynbee names the nascent 'Arabic Society', and absorbed it.

Thus the 'Iranic Society' fell asunder and the 'Arabic Society' was destroyed.

In Toynbee's view, until Shah Isma'il appeared in the role of a militant divider, the Ottomans had no thought of expanding their domains southward or eastward; their sole objective was to regain territories they had lost as a

result of defeat at the hands of Timur, and then to strike ever deeper westward into Christian lands.

Toynbee's verdict is that Shah Isma'il's bellicosity and aggressiveness triggered off the same fierce qualities in Sultan Salim.

So, let us start at the beginning and see who were Shah Isma'il's forbears, and what happened to set a thirteen-year-old boy on his fate-laden and stormy career.

We have to begin with the renowned Shaykh Saffyyi'd-Din, who lived in the days when Outremer still existed, and pagan or Buddhist hl-Khans reigned over Iran.

He died in 1334, at the age of eighty-five -- one year before the death of Abu-Sa'id Bahadur Khan, the last of the great hl-Khans, and one year before the birth of Timur.

We cannot go further back than Shaykh Saffyyi'd-Din Ishaq, because those who are named as his ancestors have left no mark at all on history, and also because we know now that the genealogy of Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din is fabricated.

Shah Isma'il claimed descent from Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam of the Twelvers, which reinforced his position as the defender and the promoter of the rights of the House of the Prophet.

Modern research has shown, beyond any doubt, that despite the assertion of the author[1] Of the Silsilatu'n-Nasab-i-Safaviyyih (The Genealogy of the Safavids) and other contemporary chroniclers of the <p389> Safavid period, Shah Isma'il was not a descendant of the Prophet, and that Shaykh Saffyyi'd-Din was a Kurd, a Sunni and the head of a fraternity of Sufis.

That Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din was a man of high eminence is particularly evidenced by a letter from the great minister of Ghazan and Uljaytu, Rashidi'd-Din Fadlu'llah, to his son, the governor of Ardabil, enjoining him to act in such a way as to earn the good-pleasure and the gratitude of the illustrious Shaykh. [1 Shaykh Hasan Ibn-i-Shaykh Abdal-i-Zahidi.]

Safiyyi'd-Din's successor, Sadri'd-Din Muhammad, did nothing remarkable to recommend him to attention, but the latter's son, Khajih 'Ali, a contemporary of Timur, is particularly worthy of note, because he was decidedly the first of his line to change his allegiance from Sunni doctrines to the Sh'iah.

And he was a man of sufficient stature to intercede with Timur for prisoners brought from Anatolia.

These men and their descendants became ardently attached to the House of Shaykh Saffyyi'd-Din.

Khajih 'Ali died in Syria and was succeeded by his son, Shaykh Ibrahim, better known as Shaykh Shah, who did nothing out of the ordinary and, in turn, passed his mantle of authority to his youngest, Shaykh Junayd.

By this time, the following of the Safavids had greatly increased and they had assumed a military character.

The famous Hasan Beg (Uzun Hasan) of the White Sheep married his sister, Khadijah, to Junayd, a union which enhanced enormously the prestige of the Safavid Superior.

Amir Jahanshah of the Black Sheep, who ruled over Adharbayjan and 'Iraq, although growing apprehensive of the power wielded by Shaykh Junayd, turned his attention to Shirvan in the Caucasus and died in the ensuing battle.

Shaykh Haydar, the son of Junayd, enjoyed the protection of his uncle, the White Sheep ruler; Hasan Beg gave his daughter in marriage to him.

This lady, whose mother, Despina Khatun, was the daughter of Kalo Ioannes, the last Greek Emperor of Trebizond, has been variously named as Marta, Halimah, Baki-Agha and 'Alam-Shah Bagum (Begum).

Isma'il was the second son of this auspicious marriage.

Contemporary Europeans have described him as being very handsome, fair of complexion with red hair.

Shaykh Haydar was even more warlike than his father, a quality which Isma'il and his elder brother, Sultan-'Ali, inherited in full measure.

It was Shaykh Haydar who devised for his devout followers the headgear which made them feared and famous -- a <p390> scarlet twelve-gored hat.

When Isma'il was a year old, Haydar too lost his life, fighting Shirvan Shah (the ruler of Shirvan).

As his grandfather, Hasan Beg, was dead, his uncle, Sultan Ya'qub, sent him and his brothers to Fars, in the care of its governor.

The White Sheep ruler was now much alarmed, as the last Amir of the Black Sheep had been, by the growing strength of the Qizil-Bash, and he arranged to have his nephews, the three sons of Shaykh Haydar, kept in a fortress in Fars.

After him, the family squabbles of the White Sheep led to the death of Sultan-'Ali on the battlefield and the flight of Isma'il and his younger brother to the Caspian province of Gilan, where Kar-Kiya Mirza 'Ali, the governor of Lahijan, was friendly and afforded them refuge.

It was in this province that Shaykh Safiyyi'd-Din had found his murshid in the person of Taji'd-Din Ahmad, a Kurd known as Shaykh Zahid-i-Gilani, had married Shaykh Zahid's daughter, and had inherited from him the headship of that Sufi order which he directed.

In those days, the direction of the Shaykhs had been entirely spiritual, but, after three successive heads of the order had gone down fighting, to avenge their blood became a burning desire, and the martial spirit imparted to the Red-Caps transformed the erstwhile Sufi fraternity into a considerable force of seasoned warriors who were biding their time.

When Isma'il came out of the safety of Lahijan, at the age of thirteen, he was accompanied by only seven men, but by the time he reached Ardabil, the home of

his forefathers and their burial place, his entourage had greatly increased.

However, he was not yet in a position to give battle, and when he was told to leave Ardabil, he discreetly withdrew to the shores of the Caspian.

Next year (A.D.

1500) he was back with an army and prepared to fight.

His first act was to invade Shirvan, to avenge the death of his father and grandfather.

Farmkh-Yasar, the King of Shirvan, was slain, and the extirpation of this long-reigning dynasty of Shirvan-Shahs, who claimed to be descendants of the Sasanian Chosroes I, was accompanied by repellent horrors.

Next, Shah Isma'il defeated Alvand Mirza of the White Sheep and captured Tabriz, where he was crowned.

Sultan Murad, son of Sultan Ya'qub, who was Isma'il's cousin, held the central areas of Iran, but he too went down to defeat.

The Ottoman ruler, Bayazid II, son of the conqueror of Constantinople, was peace-loving; he did not wish to make <p391> Shah Isma'il's fierce assault on the Sunnis a casus belli.

In his attempts at conciliation he even sent an embassy, laden with presents, to congratulate Shah Isma'il on his victories.

Shah Isma'il made suitable gestures in return, then went on to conquer 'Iraq and Akhlat and Diyarbakr, to the very limits of the Ottoman domains.

His pride was great when he gained possession of Karbila, Najaf and other holy cities and sites held in reverence, particularly by the Sh'iahs.

By now the Ottoman army had had enough of the docile, pacific Bayazid.

He was swept off his throne and his son, Salim, replaced him.

At last, Shah Isma'il was to meet his match.

The incident which sparked off the clash between the Ottomans and the Safavids was the rebellion in 1514 of the Sh'iahs of Anatolia, led by a certain Shah-Quli (Techelles of Christopher Marlowe), which may or may not have been inspired and engineered by Shah Isma'il.

At first the rebels gained some ground, but their failure was inevitable without active help from the Safavid monarch, which was not forthcoming.

Salim put down the rebellion with ferocity and massacred the Sh'iahs.

They were Turks, not Persians, and probably as many as forty thousand perished.

The figure of sixty thousand has also been mentioned.

No one knows for certain, as the majority of chroniclers and historians, both Sunni and Sh'iah, for purposes of their own, failed to register the fact of

this rebellion or massacre.

Salim, having got rid of troublesome elements in Anatolia and having consolidated his position, now turned his full attention to Isma'il.

A letter written in April 1514, grossly abusive and imperious in tone, demanded repentance and recantation from the Safavid; otherwise punitive action would be taken against him.

Not content with that insulting missive, Salim wrote a second letter, even more abusive than the first, demanding the cession to him of the Safavid domains.

In the meantime Shah Isma'il had established a secret accord with al-Malik al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghawri (1501-17), the Mamluk monarch.

Qansuh was as much a stalwart Sunni as Salim, but he was alarmed by the latter's militancy.

Isma'il, for his part, had no illusions that he could persuade Qansuh to become a Sh'iah, but it was politic to ally himself with the Mamluk.

As we shall see, Isma'il had already ruined the chances of the Timurid prince, Zahiri'd-Din Babur, in Transoxania, by making him declare allegiance to Sh'iah doctrines <p392> as a condition of military support.

Qansuh had the foresight to realize that unless Salim was checked and the Portuguese were driven out of the Indian Ocean, Egypt stood in dire peril.

So he prepared for innovations.

Throughout the previous centuries, Egypt and Persia had been always in opposite camps.

Now they were to be reconciled.

The Venetian fleet had served Egypt well in the past, but now Egypt's transit trade had vanished and Venice was helpless.

Qansuh was the protector of Mecca and Medina; he cast his eyes on the shores of Arabia to establish naval outposts to prevent Portugal from depriving Egypt of her lucrative transit trade.

Salim, as good as his word, invaded Persia.

The Ottoman and the Safavid armies met at Chaldiran, some sixty miles from Tabriz, on 22 August 1514.

Isma'il's valour was exemplary but although Salim lost more men than Isma'il, his artillery prevailed.

A dejected Isma'il (who, it is said, never regained his *joie de vivre*) had to withdraw and let his capital fall to the detested enemy.

Salim lost no time in broadcasting far and wide the news of his victory, but he could not retain his gains.

His Janissaries,[1] the backbone of his army, were not used to the conditions of northwestern Iran and pined for south-eastern Europe.

So Sultan Salim had to retreat, taking with him Prince Badi'u'z-Zaman Mirza, son of Sultan Husayn-i-Bayqara, the last Timurid ruler of Hirat, who had taken refuge with the Safavid king.

Within weeks a crestfallen Shah Isma'il was back in Tabriz.

The Mamluk Qansuh was next on the move.

He came out of Egypt accompanied by jurists and by al-Mutawakkil, the 'Abbasid nonentity, ostensibly to mediate between Salim and Isma'il; in fact, to bring aid to Isma'il against Salim.

But the Ottoman ruler was aware of the intentions of the Mamluk monarch, for his spies had done their work well.

The Ottoman and the Mamluk armies clashed at Marj Dabiq, north of Aleppo, on 24 August 1516.

Qansuh, betrayed by Kha'ir Bey, the governor of Aleppo, was slain and Salim won the day.

The battle of Marj Dabiq sealed the fate of the Mamluks and also of the sham Caliphate.

Salim entered Cairo in January 1517.

His victory over the Mamluks also meant gaining possession <p393> of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which raised him to high eminence in the realm of Islam.

The wretched al-Mutawakkil was carried off to Constantinople, accused of peculation.

[1 These were European Christians, forcibly converted to Islam at an early age, and drafted into an elite military corps.

With the passage of years their morale deteriorated and they became unruly -- a menace to the stability of the Empire.

Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39) found that he had no alternative but to destroy them.]

When Hulagu exterminated the Caliphate at Baghdad, Rukni'd-Din Baybars installed an 'Abbasid in Cairo with the title of al-Mustansir, but gave his puppet Caliph scant support in the latter's foolish attempt to recover Baghdad.

Al-Mustansir was killed and Baybars put another 'Abbasid in his place.

Over the years the position of these 'Abbasids in Cairo bore no relation to fact.

They were obscure if decorative figureheads in the Sunni kingdom, without power or authority.

It has been claimed that Salim forced al-Mutawakkil to transfer the Caliphate to him.

No document exists which would give credence to this claim.

In any case, Sultan Salim did not need a legal document from one who had no power to exercise or give.

Salim had achieved all that he desired; he had become master of Syria, Egypt, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula but, above all, of the holy cities of Arabia -- the cradle of Islam.

He died in 1520, having reigned for less than nine years.

In that short space of time he had wiped out Shi'ism in his domains and inflicted a resounding defeat on Shah Isma'il -- 'that vile, impure, sinful, slanderous, reprehensible and bloodthirsty Sufi-cub' (Salim's words)[1] -- which shattered the confidence of the Safavid, but proved a hollow victory for the Ottomans, as it thoroughly destroyed what Arnold Toynbee terms the 'Arabic Society'.

[1 Quoted by Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol.

IV, pp.

73-4.]

#### THE EASTERN MARCHES

Now we should turn to the story of Transoxania and to events in the Eastern Marches of the realm of Islam.

The fate of Transoxania is deplored by Professor Toynbee, who holds Timur responsible for it.

What eventually befell that area of the realm of Islam was indeed tragic; but could Timur have foreseen and forestalled the happenings of nearly a century after his death?

Shiban was a grandson of Chingiz Khan.

This youngest son of Juji (Jochi) became the progenitor of the people whom we know as Uzbaks (Ozbegs).

The Giray Khans of Crimea, who ruled there until 1783, were also descendants of Juji.

However, the people of Shiban, who eventually became known as Shaybani, kept to western Siberia and were relatively isolated.

These <p394> Shaybanis finally dispossessed the Timurids in Transoxania.

Timur fought Tuqtamish, who had united the White Horde and the Golden Horde, all descendants of Chingiz Khan; and to punish him for his broken word and his rank treachery, forced him out of his capital on the river Volga, driving him to seek refuge in Lithuania.

Timur went so far north in search of Tuqtamish that, according to Sharafi'd-Din

'Ali Yazdi, in his Zafar-Namih (The Book of Victory), he came upon an area where sunset merged into sunrise.

Timur scoured the vast expanse of Qipchaq; what more could he do?

Professor Toynbee believes he should have tamed completely the nomads of the Eurasian Steppe.

He did cow them into submission; but perhaps he should have been content to rule over the steppes instead of going west to conquer Shiraz and Baghdad, Damascus and Ankara.

Be that as it may, the fact is that Timur's death signalled the break-up of his Empire.

The in-fighting of his dynasty accelerated the process of dissolution, while nomads of the steppes descended upon his beloved Transoxania, until all that was left of his heritage was Khurasan and a part only of Transoxania.

Abu'l-Khayr the Shaybanid captured Kharazm in 1447, and at the turn of the century his grandson, Muhammad Khan, also known as Shaybak Khan, drove the Timurids completely out of Transoxania.

Toynbee writes: 'This fresh invasion of the Islamic World by a Eurasian Nomad horde within less than a century after the death of Timur Lenk[1] was a signal proof that Timur's life-work was utterly undone.'[2]

[1 Timur-i-Lang. (H.M.B.)]

[2 Toynbee, A Study of History, vol.

I, p.372.]

Shaybak Khan next invaded Khurasan in the year 1506 and Badi'u'z-Zaman Mirza, the son of the renowned Sultan Husayn-i-Bayqara, fled to the court of Shah Isma'il The Shaybanid conqueror was arrogant and overbearing, as witnessed by his letter to the Safavid monarch.

And he was a staunch Sunni.

A clash between these two had to come sooner or later.

When Shaybak Khan made a foray into the province of Kirman, Shah Isma'il moved against him.

The engagement took place at Tahir-Abad, near the city of Marv, in December 1510.

The Uzbaks were overwhelmed and Shaybak Khan lost his life on the battlefield.

Isma'il had a drinking-goblet made of Shaybak's skull, set in gold, and sent the head stuffed with straw as a present to <p395> Bayazid II.

A devotee took one of Shaybak's hands to Mazindaran, and found an opportunity to throw it onto the lap of Aqa Rustam-i-Ruz-Afzun, the ruler of that principality.

It was a challenging and a symbolic act, for on one occasion the Mazindarani

chieftain, refusing to submit to Shah Isma'il, had exclaimed: 'my hand on the skirt of Shaybak Khan', and now the severed hand of the Shaybanid had come to rest on his own skirt.

It is said that Aqa Rustam-i-Ruz-Afzun did not survive the shock of this encounter.

Incidentally, the downfall of this principality brought to a close the long line of independent and semi-independent rulers and chieftains, based on the shores of the Caspian Sea, who had ruled since the early days of Islam when, well protected behind the fastness of the Elburz range, men of Daylam and Mazindaran and Tabaristan had defied the Arab conquerors and maintained the ways of their forefathers.

On the death of Shaybak Khan, Zahiri'd-Din Babur, the only remaining Timurid prince with a sizeable enough force to fight the Uzbaks, took the field to retrieve his fortunes, particularly his native city of Farghanah, to which he was greatly attached.

But the Uzbaks were still too formidable and Babur had to turn to Shah Isma'il.

The Safavid made the supplying of aid conditional upon his public profession of the tenets of Sh'iah doctrine.

Babur readily acceded to Isma'il's demand.

It brought him the support he needed but lost him the sympathy of the people of Transoxania who, though preferring the Timurids to the Shaybanids, had yet greater regard for their own strong Sunni convictions.

Babur entered Samarqand, in October 1511, to occupy the throne of Timur, and the Uzbaks were cleared out of Transoxania.

However, Babur's triumph was short-lived, for the Uzbaks swiftly returned, and Babur, defeated, had to abandon Samarqand after a reign of only eight months.

Once again he appealed to Shah Isma'il.

This time the celebrated Amir-i-Kabir Najm II was ordered to his aid with a large army.

They stormed the town of Qarshi and put multitudes to death, amongst them Banna'i, a well-known poet.

But at Gujduvan, the Qizil-Bash army was overpowered, Najm was slain, and Babur had to beat a second hasty retreat to Afghanistan.

Faced with threats from Sultan Salim of the Ottomans, Shah Isma'il dared not risk another incursion into Transoxania.

Instead, he made peace with 'Ubaydu'llah Khan, the Shaybanid, in 1513 and Babur, giving up all hope of ever returning to his native land, turned eastwards to India in search of a kingdom.

Although the struggle between the Persians and the Uzbaks was not at an end, as

Professor Toynbee has pointed out: '. . . on this frontier, social conditions eventually relapsed so far towards barbarism that the opposing forces on either side of the barrier became incapable of waging formal wars like those which were fought periodically between the Safawis and the "Osmanlis"[1].[2]

[1 The Ottomans. (H.M.B.)]

[2 *ibid.*, p.

390.]

A final comment by Professor Toynbee on the transformation effected by the rise of the Safavi power ought to be quoted in full:

'The most conspicuous tangible effect, which was not only immediate but was also enduring, was the abrupt and violent break-up of the former Iranic World into three separate fractions: one consisting of Transoxania and the Iranic "colonial" domain in India, the second consisting of Iran proper, and the third consisting of the other Iranic "colonial" domain which had been created by the Turkish conquests in Orthodox Christendom.

These three fractions of the former Iranic World were prised asunder and held apart by two new frontiers: a new frontier between Iran and Transoxania which ran from the north-western face of the Hindu Kush northwards to the Qara Qum Desert or alternatively to the south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea; and a new frontier between Iran and the Ottoman domain which ran from the southern face of the Caucasus southwards to the Syrian Desert or alternatively to the head of the Persian Gulf.

'Strictly, these two new frontiers were not fresh cuts but ancient wounds which had broken open and begun to bleed again along the lines of the old scars, under the stress of a tremendous social shock.

The frontier which now divided the Safawi Empire from the Uzbek Empire had once divided the Seleucid and Arsacid and Sasanian and Umayyad Empires in Iran from a series of Hellenic and barbarian principalities in the Oxus-Jaxartes Basin over a span of about a thousand years extending from the third century B.C. into the eighth century of the Christian Era.

Similarly, the frontier which now divided the Safawi Empire from the Ottoman Empire had once divided the Arsacid and Sasanian Empires from the Roman Empire over a span of about seven hundred years extending from the last century B.C. into the seventh century of the Christian Era.[1]

[1 *ibid.*, pp.

388-9.] <p397>

SULAYMAN THE MAGNIFICENT AND TAHMASB I

Salim and Isma'il both died young:

Selim I Yavuz, 'the Grim', in 1520 and Isma'il in 1524.

Both their successors had long reigns:

Sulayman II Qanuni (the Law-Giver) -- called in Europe 'the Magnificent' -- till 1566, Tahmasb I, the Safavid, till 1576.

Their armies clashed and the Ottomans wrested 'Iraq from the Safavids.

In Europe, the pattern of past centuries recurred, with the Habsburg Emperor and Francis I of France at each other's throat, straining every nerve for supremacy; at the battle of Pavia in 1525 Charles scored a signal victory and captured Francis.

The Ottomans hammered at the gates of Vienna, the French desired alliance with the Ottomans, and the Persians wanted help from the Habsburgs.

Sulayman, soon after the accession of Tahmasb, wrote him a letter which was far from conciliatory.

Shah Tahmasb did not reply but sought the help of the Emperor Charles V, applying also to the King of Hungary.

Sulayman's armies were pressing hard upon the Emperor's domains.

In 1529, Vienna was besieged by the Turks.

Foiled in his attempt to capture Vienna and having made peace with Ferdinand of Bohemia, Sulayman brought the full strength of his martial power to bear on the hapless Tahmasb, who had inherited his father's bigotry, but sadly lacked many of his better qualities.

Tabriz was occupied in 1534, after which Sulayman wheeled round to complete his conquest of 'Iraq.

Everywhere the Qizil-Bash army seemed helpless.

Even the depredations of the Uzbaks in Khurasan, throughout the long reign of Tahmasb, could be countered only feebly.

The loss of the holy cities of 'Iraq must have been very galling to Shah Tahmasb and his subjects, now imbued with Sh'iah zeal.

In 1538, Sulayman once again invaded Persia and once more occupied Tabriz.

Nine years later, Ilqas Mirza, a brother of Tahmasb, rebelled and fled to obtain the protection and aid of Sulayman the Magnificent.

This time the Ottoman army advanced so deep into the heart of Iran as to capture Isfahan.

Worst time and again, Tahmasb sued for peace in 1554.

The Ottoman Emperor, checked in Europe by Charles V who had pushed the Turkish army back along the line of the Danube, granted Tahmasb's request and peace was concluded a year later.

Charles V had won against odds.

France remained hostile despite Francis's humble <p398> and abject submission, which opened up Italy to the Austrians who held power there for three centuries.

The Papacy was unfriendly, and Henry VIII and Edward VI of England were cool and obstructive.

Yet Charles succeeded in warding off the danger posed by the conjoining of Sulayman's fleet with the ships of the Muslim corsairs of North Africa; he occupied Tunis, and but for circumstances beyond his control would have gained Algeria as well.

Nevertheless Hungary became an appanage of Turkey in 1541 and remained so until 1688.

Sulayman was perhaps the greatest of all the Ottoman rulers, his father, Salim, and Muhammad the Conqueror included.

He too, like the last Mamluk ruler, had seen the danger of Portuguese supremacy in the Indian Ocean, and his ships, operating from Arabian bases, tried to put an end to the activities of the Portuguese.

By contrast with Sultan Sulayman, the Safavid Shah Tahmasb cut a very poor figure.

Just as Ilqas, Tahmasb's brother, had sought refuge in the court of the Ottoman ruler, so Bayazid, a son of Sulayman, sought asylum in Qazvin, to which city Tahmasb had moved his capital.

Tahmasb betrayed him unashamedly.

Bayazid and his four sons were handed over to Turkish envoys, for 400,000 pieces of gold; they were all put to death.

On the other hand, Tahmasb gave an amiable reception to the Mughul (or Mongol, a misnomer) ruler, Humayun, who had to flee for his life when rebels unseated him in 1540.

He had succeeded his father, Zahir'd-Din Babur -- founder of a new Timurid Empire in India -- when his father died in 1530.

Although much has been written to extol the generous treatment and aid he is said to have received from Shah Tahmasb to regain his throne, in point of fact the Safavid monarch was incapable of great effort.

It took Humayun nearly fifteen years to establish himself again in Delhi.

The episode of the visit to Qazvin in 1561 of the Englishman, Anthony Jenkinson, throws a lurid light on the bigotry and the shallowness of Shah Tahmasb (written as Shaw Thomas by Jenkinson).

Jenkinson was the representative of the Muscovy Company, which was seeking more opportunities for trade.

Ivan the Terrible found his accomplishments so engaging that he sent him on a mission to the Uzbaks of Bukhara.

Although fanatical Sunnis, they gave Jenkinson every consideration. 'Abdu'llah Khan, the Amir of Shirvan, likewise held Jenkinson in high regard.

But all that Shah Tahmasb had to tell Jenkinson was that Iran had no need or place for infidels such as he.

Jenkinson wrote, quoting Tahmasb: 'O thou unbeleeuer, we have no neede to have friendship with the unbeleeuers, and so willed me to depart.

I being glad thereof did reuerence and went my way, accompanied by many of his gentlemen and others, and after me followed a man with a Basanet of sand, sifting all the way that I had gone within the sayd pallace, even from the sayd Sophies sight unto the court gate." [1] Jenkinson's life was saved by the intervention of the Amir of Shirvan; else he too might have been sold to the envoys of the Ottoman Emperor.

[1 From Richard Hakluyt's *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation.*]

Threatened by the Turks and fearing the imminent loss of Cyprus, the Venetians sent an ambassador, Vincentio A. d'Allesandri, to Shah Tahmasb to invoke his aid.

But Tahmasb had been beaten enough by the Ottomans and would not commit himself to any action.

Thus ended his far from glorious reign.

The description left by the same d'Allesandri shows how negligent Tahmasb had been of his duties towards his subjects, how derelict his country had become, and how impoverished were his people.

The next two monarchs, Isma'il II and Muhammad, sons of Tahmasb, were both unfit to rule.

The first was dissolute and highly eccentric, bent on destroying all the male members of his family in revenge for twenty-five years of incarceration in the lifetime of his father.

He was found dying, in a drunken torpor, in the house of a boon companion.

It must be said to his credit that he banned public reviling of 'A'ishah and the first three of the 'rightly-guided Caliphs'.

Muhammad, the next monarch, who had escaped the holocaust, was almost blind, and had a weak mind as well as a weak will.

But the star of the Safavids shone brightly again with the accession, in 1588, of Muhammad's son, 'Abbas I, justly known as 'Abbas the Great.

We shall presently deal with the story of his reign.

In the Ottoman Empire, after Sulayman the Magnificent, the character and the personality of the occupants of the throne steadily declined, and we have to look far ahead to the nineteenth century to find another ruler of noteworthy calibre, Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39), who tried to drag his Empire into the new <p400> age. [1] Salim II, who succeeded Sulayman the Magnificent, was a drunkard like Isma'il II of Iran.

Ahmad I (1603-17) was completely dominated by the women of the seraglio.

Mustafa I, Ahmad's successor, was insane, and 'Uthman II (1618-22) was killed by the Janissaries, because he intended and tried to have a hand in the governance of his Empire.

Murad IV (1623-40) was the last Ottoman ruler to take the field.

His intemperate habits led to his early death.

On his death-bed he ordered the execution of his brother Ibrahim, so that the dynasty of 'Uthman would have no one left as heir to the throne, and a Pasha, his favourite, could occupy with ease the seat of Sulayman the Magnificent.

His order was not carried out, but Murad was told that his brother was dead.

Though almost in the throes of death he wished to rise from his couch to see the corpse, and had to be held down until he died.

When members of the royal household went to hail Ibrahim as the new Sultan (1640-48) he was too terrified to open the door of his chamber.

Ibrahim's excesses and extravagances were so great that even his mother, who wielded much power as Sultan Validih (the Mother of the Sovereign), consented to his deposition.

He was eventually murdered.

Ibrahim's son Muhammad, still a child, whom he had tried to kill, was then proclaimed Sultan.

Soon a plot was hatched to put Sulayman, another son of Ibrahim, on the throne.

The exposure of this plot led to the murder of Ibrahim's aged mother.

And so it went on.

[1 Salim III was the first to initiate reforms.]

The momentum of Ottoman power was maintained not by the Sultans, but by a number of able and dedicated men who wielded power in their name.

Princes of the blood grew up in the isolation of the seraglio, kept away from the outside world and its multifarious affairs, and when they emerged to mount the throne they stepped into an alien world.

Salim III (1789-1807) was the first Sultan to escape that dreadful fate.

He became acquainted with French culture, fell in love with it, and tried to set his countrymen on the path to reform.

The early Ottoman rulers, up to the time of Sulayman the Magnificent, were rovers and virile warriors, freely moving from place to place and ever on the alert; but as the seraglio was established and its ramifications multiplied, the future rulers of Turkey were entrapped.

The remarkable family of Kuprili (or Kuprulu) gave the Empire five capable grand viziers, the first of whom, Kuprili <p401> Muhammad, took up the

direction of affairs in the early part of the reign of Muhammad IV (1648-87).

Turkey had failed to take full advantage of the disunities of European powers in the course of the Thirty Years War.

However, in 1683 Qara Mustafa, the grand vizier, renewed the effort to capture Vienna.

Although the Habsburg Emperor fled, John III Sobieski of Poland took the Turkish army from the rear and caused it to retreat.

This brilliant success brought about an alliance against the Ottomans, composed of Russia, Poland, Austria, the Papacy and Malta.

The great retreat of the Turks from the heart of Europe had begun, and Hungary and Transylvania were lost in quick succession.

The Ottomans solicited the help of France but le Roi Soleil<sup>[1]</sup> was elsewhere engaged.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the fortunes of the Ottomans in south-eastern Europe fluctuated greatly.

As late as 1739, Turkey defeated both Russia and Austria; Belgrade was reclaimed, and Russia had to pledge herself not to maintain a navy in the Sea of Azov or in the Black Sea.

During the War of the Austrian Succession it was the turn of Turkey not to heed the pleas of France.

But in 1768 Catherine the Second's demands on Poland brought Turkey into war with Russia, which proved disastrous for the Ottomans.

The Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji of 1774, which humbled Turkey, signalled the end of an era.

[1 Louis XIV.]

#### 'Abbas THE GREAT AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Now we should turn back to the reign of 'Abbas the Great.

The realm, of which 'Abbas found himself the ruler in 1587, was in a sorry state.

His elder brother, Hamzih Mirza, had been assassinated at the age of eighteen; his father, Muhammad, had been dethroned; his Qizil-Bash chiefs were at odds; famine and plague had swept over the land; Uzbaks continued to raid Khurasan; and Ottoman troops were in Tabriz and in occupation of Luristan and Khuzistan.

It seemed that the whole structure of Safavid power was disintegrating.

The young monarch began by ridding himself of overbearing chieftains.

Next, he made peace with the Ottomans in 1590.

As he was in a weak position, he had to let the Turks remain in possession of Tabriz, Shirvan, Georgia and Luristan. 'Abbas considered it more urgent first

to eliminate the Uzbek menace.

Indeed, the Shaybanids had made considerable gains in all directions: they had occupied Kashghar to the east, <p402> Badakhshan and Balkh and Hirat in the south.

The Qizil-Bash, who had served Shah Isma'il well, had, within a few decades, become uncontrollable and turbulent.

Shah 'Abbas had to build up a new fighting force before he could restore the balance on either of his frontiers.

To this end he raised a force composed of converted Georgians and Armenians.

This new army resembled the Janissaries of Turkey, but only in the manner of recruitment.

Secondly, Shah 'Abbas called for loyal men from each of the seven Turkish tribes of the Qizil-Bash to enlist under his banner.

Thus a composite tribe came into existence: the Shah-Savan -- Friends of the Shah -- which has preserved its entity.

As luck would have it, the famous Sherley brothers, Sir Robert and Sir Anthony, with a retinue of twenty-six, arrived at Qazvin in 1598.

One of the men accompanying the Sherleys was a cannon-founder.

Full use was made of his skill and services.

It should be remembered that the Turks excelled with their artillery.

The depredations of the Uzbaks reached a climax with the capture of the holy city of Mashhad and the massacre of its people.

The Shrine of the eighth Imam was looted, and priceless treasures, offerings of the devout over the years, were lost.

Then came a day when Shah 'Abbas was ready to strike.

In the year 1597, in the vicinity of Hirat, he inflicted a crushing defeat on the raiders.

The Uzbaks were pushed back into Transoxania, and thereafter, for many years, Khurasan enjoyed peace and security.

To set up a powerful barrier against the Uzbaks, Shah 'Abbas settled a large number of Kurds in the northern regions of Khurasan, where their descendants live to this day.

Shah 'Abbas was anxious to gain the support of the monarchs of Europe, before countering the aggression of the Ottomans.

For that purpose he sent Sir Anthony Sherley as his envoy to the courts of Europe.

The mission was not successful and Sir Anthony did not return to Iran.

But Sir Robert stayed with the Safavid monarch, and was greatly trusted.

He held a high rank in the Shah's army and took part in his campaigns against the Ottomans.

These campaigns began in 1602 and continued for nearly a quarter of a century, in the course of which Shah 'Abbas regained all the territories which the Turks had won, returning his frontiers to their positions in the days of Salim I and Isma'il I.

Shah 'Abbas was particularly gratified to have ended Ottoman domination over 'Iraq and Adharbayjan, and to have retaken the holy cities and <p403> Tabriz.

However, 'Iraq was not to remain for long in the possession of the Persians.

Shah 'Abbas, like his equally renowned contemporary, the Emperor Akbar of Mughul India, and totally unlike his grandfather Tahmasb, was free of religious prejudice except where it was directed, for reasons of state, against the Sunnis.

He was also severe with other sects within Islam, considered to be heretical, such as the Nuqtavis and the Hurufis.

While Carmelites were not only tolerated but welcomed, as long as they did not try to convert the Shah, Sufis were beginning to feel the cold wind of disapproval.

And this was truly strange because Shaykh Saffyyi'd-Din and his descendants attained prominence as heads of a Sufi order.

Included in the mission that accompanied Sir Anthony Sherley were some Persians who became Christians and remained in Europe.

One of these was Ulugh Beg, who made a name for himself as Don Juan of Persia.

In the book he wrote about his native land he imparted to zealous Christians the false notion that Shah 'Abbas, too, would embrace Christianity.

The Carmelites arrived at Isfahan, the new capital of the Shah, in 1607.

Not long after, Father Paul Simon wrote to Pope Paul V (1605-21): 'All I can inform your Holiness is that the King of Persia is very powerful and no longer has need of Christian princes to help him.' Father John Thaddeus wrote later: 'As to the character of the King, at heart he is a Muslim and all he has done in the past is feigned.'<sup>[1]</sup> Nevertheless, he agreed to act as the envoy of Shah 'Abbas to the Czar, the Pope and the King of Poland.

At Astrakhan, thinking he was a spy, Russians imprisoned Father John and might have put him to death, were it not for the Shah's strenuous efforts to obtain his release.

[<sup>1</sup> Waterfield, *Christians in Persia*, p.65 for both quotations.]

The glories of the capital which 'Abbas the Great created in Isfahan still stand, despite the deep wounds inflicted by ungenerous hands, to evoke wonder, awe and admiration.

Shah 'Abbas's vast building projects were not confined to the magnificent mosques and pavilions which he raised in Isfahan.

He provided the country with a large number of beautiful and solidly built caravanserais, particularly on the roads leading to the holy city of Mashhad, and many of these have escaped destruction.

In his time faience reached its perfection in Iran, as did calligraphy and the work of the miniaturist; and yet Persia became a cultural <p404> desert in the Safavid era.

Prose composition reached its nadir, original thought was banished, and poets such as 'Urfi of Shiraz and Sa'ib of Isfahan and Talib-i-Amuli took the road to more appreciative courts in India.

It was the theologian who dominated the scene and the power of the divines increased immensely.

The Majlisis, father and son -- Mulla Muhammad-Taqi and Mulla Muhammad-Baqir -- wrote extensively and overburdened Sh'iah doctrine and practice with dangerous fictions and trivialities.

And the divines led the way to the downfall of the Safavids, while Shah 'Abbas himself contributed, in no small measure, to the eventual break-up of his Empire by introducing the same system which had bedevilled the princes of the blood in Turkey.

His experiences of childhood and early youth were so bitter and he had suffered so much at the hands of unruly chieftains that he made it a pillar of his policy to keep men of power and influence at loggerheads, one against the other.

Although his first efforts at establishing connections with European powers had not been successful, Shah 'Abbas still desired to have some relationship, particularly in the field of commerce.

To that end he sent Sir Robert Sherley twice to Europe, in 1609 and 1623.

The result was not very encouraging.

One ought, however, to take into consideration the condition and the affairs of Europe in the opening decades of the seventeenth century.

The bitter feuds and struggles of the Thirty Years War were ravaging Central Europe.

Britain was ruled capriciously and indecisively by James I.

France had a young and inexperienced king in Louis XIII, a sagacious administrator in the person of Richelieu, who was hated by powerful men, and was suffering a series of civil wars.

Philip III of Spain and Portugal was greatly concerned with the Netherlands.

And Shah 'Abbas wanted to oust the Portuguese from the Island of Hurmuz at the

entrance to the Persian Gulf.

He succeeded in this in 1621, with the aid of the East India Company, which was only too glad to lend a hand.

This company was created by Royal Charter, soon after the defeat of the Great Armada.

The Portuguese, beaten and driven out of Hurmuz, took a fresh position at Masqat (Muscat).

But the Imam of 'Umman (Oman) wrested Masqat from them in 1650.

Attempts to recapture Hurmuz were unsuccessful and Portuguese ascendancy in the Indian Ocean was at an end.

The participation of the English in the conquest of Hurmuz added greatly to the stature <p405> of the East India Company.

The Dutch who had come to replace the Portuguese did not last long in those waters, although according to Chardin they still had the bulk of Persian trade in 1666.

Their possessions, however, fell to the British.

The gathering British strength in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea was a prelude to far-reaching successes in the eighteenth century, which led, although unplanned, to the establishment of an empire in India.

Incidentally, by the time the last Mughul Emperor, Bahadur Shah, who was no more than a titular figure, was removed from the scene by the British after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the descendants of Zahir'i'd-Din Babur had long lost all power and were tributaries to the Mahrattas.

Sir Dodmore Cotton, the first British envoy to Iran, was appointed by King Charles I to accompany Sir Robert Sherley.

They reached Persia early in 1628.

Both Sir Dodmore and Sir Robert died in Qazvin in the same year, and Shah 'Abbas followed them to the grave soon after -- a brilliantly successful monarch, whose last years were embittered and saddled with appalling personal tragedies engendered by his own dark suspicions.

The Safavid power was now in decline; apart from the reign of 'Abbas II (1642-66), the great-grandson of 'Abbas the Great, who attempted to stop the rot, the story is of a long procession of disasters.

Murad IV, the Ottoman ruler, took the field in person, seized Baghdad and occupied Tabriz.

Hamadan also fell to the Turks.

The damage done to those two Persian cities was enormous; nothing was spared, not even the trees.

The famous Blue Mosque of Tabriz was rescued just in time by the intervention of the Mufti, who pointed out that the magnificent edifice had been raised by a Sunni.

Such was the harvest of the aberrant policies of Shah Isma'il.

After the death of 'Abbas II at the age of thirty-five, the Safavids slid swiftly toward doom and extinction.

Men of competence were swept aside, the morale of the army sank, eunuchs of the Royal household became arbiters of government policies and appointments, the number of self-styled, ignorant clerics, wielding greater and greater power, increased alarmingly.

Shah Sultan Husayn (1694-1722), a replica of Henry VI of England, fell a victim to his own piety and finally lost all will to govern.

An ill-equipped army of Afghans, under Mahmud, a Ghilza'i chieftain, besieged Isfahan and forced Shah Sultan <p406> Husayn to abdicate.

That was virtually the end of the Safavid rule.

Russia and Turkey made a pact to share out parts of the Safavid Empire.

The situation was saved by the meteoric rise of Nadir Shah (1736-47) of the tribe of Afshar.

He ousted the Afghans and subdued them in their own land.

The Russians withdrew discreetly, but the Ottomans fought for the mastery of the territories they had occupied.

Nadir defeated them and went on to lay siege to Baghdad and Mosul.

Nadir had served at first under Tahmasb II, the son of Shah Sultan Husayn, whom the Afghans had put to death before evacuating Isfahan.

Then at an opportune moment, in 1732, he deposed Tahmasb and made himself regent for 'Abbas III, his son.

Finally, on 'Abbas's death in 1736, he assumed the kingship and tried to throw out the rigid Shi'ism of Shah Isma'il, proposing that Iran should have instead a discipline to be named Ja'fari, after the sixth Imam, which would rank with the four Sunni schools.

But by then the handiwork of Shah Isma'il had become firmly entrenched and was immovable, while the Ottomans refused to recognize the validity of a fifth discipline.

Nadir Shah's crowning achievement was his victory over Muhammad Shah, the Mughul Emperor of India, and his occupation of Delhi.

Realizing that he could not administer the Mughul Empire, he let Muhammad Shah keep his throne, but took away from him all the territory on the right bank of the river Indus; he returned home with spoils estimated to have been worth more

than eighty-seven million pounds, including the Peacock Throne and two diamonds of world renown: the Kuh-i-Nur (Koh-i-Noor)[1] and the Daryay-i-Nur.[2] The Mughul Empire was already tottering and Nadir Shah dealt it a fatal blow.

Although Nadir declared that anyone who dared to contend with Muhammad Shah (1719-48) would have to reckon with him, the protection thus afforded was of little value, since Nadir's own over-stretched empire began to disintegrate on the very day of his assassination.

However, he scored one more remarkable achievement before his suspicions and resentments led to his murder: a victory over the Uzbaks which made him the master of Transoxania.

This feat put him in line with the mighty conquerors of the past.

But here too, by his own lights, he was generous with <p407> the conquered and returned Bukhara to Abu'l-Fayd Khan, the Uzbek, and restored the border to the ancient frontier line of the river Oxus.

On the other hand, with the Uzbek ruler of Khivih he was stern and unrelenting, because Ilbars Khan was guilty of putting Nadir's envoys to death.

Now he and twenty of his chief men were executed.

At this point in his career (1742) Nadir's character sadly deteriorated.

Reverses in the upper reaches of the Caucasus, an attempt on his life in the forests of Mazindaran, the possession of the riches brought from India, and repeated rebellions within Iran, all combined to make of him an avaricious, distrustful and suspicious tyrant.

He had the eyes of his own son, Rida-Quli Mirza, put out, and plotted the deaths of his Persian officers, relying more and more on the Afghans and the Uzbaks in his service.

One night in 1747, in Khurasan, a number of officers who included members of his own tribe ventured into his tent and murdered him.

As the news spread his army disintegrated.

Ahmad Khan-i-Durrani, commander of Nadir's Afghan and Uzbek troops, gathered his men together, seized booty brought by Nadir from India including the Kuh-i-Nur, and marched away to Afghanistan, where he set up an independent kingdom based on Qandihar.

Persia descended immediately into chaos.

[1 The Mountain of Light.]

[2 The Sea of Light.]

Amongst the contenders for power, it was Karim Khan of the non-Turkish tribe of Zand who rose to eminence.

Karim Khan had been a simple soldier in the army of Nadir Shah.

By the year 1750, he had overcome all the other chieftains and ruled over Iran,

with the exception of Khurasan, for twenty-nine years.

Having served under Nadir, this magnanimous man would not invade Khurasan because it was in the possession of Shah-Rukh, the grandson of Nadir Shah, a monarch whose 'bread he had eaten'.

Nor would he assume the title of King, instead calling himself Vakilur-Ru'aya -- Deputy of the People.

He chose Shiraz for his capital and set about doing for it what 'Abbas the Great had done for Isfahan.

His only foreign adventure consisted of an attack on Basrah, which his brother succeeded in taking from the Ottomans.

The benevolent reign of this great man, who not only spared the lives of his opponents, but invited them into his court as advisers, brought Iran a peace it had not known for decades.

Unhappily, his successors fell out among themselves and once again Persia became a centre of contention and anarchy.

Lutf-'Ali Khan, his valiant great-nephew, might have restored the <p408> fortunes of the Zands, but being young and inexperienced he was overcome by the brutal eunuch, Aqa Muhammad Khan, the head of a clan of the Qajar tribe.

The father of Aqa Muhammad Khan had met his death by treachery, while engaged in trying his strength against the founder of the Zand dynasty.

Karim Khan had treated his offspring with great generosity.

But the eunuch king treated the last of the Zands abominably, and had him blinded and then put to death.

Aqa Muhammad Khan (1779-97) salvaged Iran from chaos and confusion and held the Russians at bay in the Caucasus.

During the reign of his nephew, Fath-'Ali Shah (1797-1834) -- the highly uxorious monarch who was courted by Napoleon Bonaparte as well as the British -- the Persians suffered a series of reverses at the hands of the Russians, which lost them the whole of the Caucasus.

The Treaty of Turkumanchay (1828) brought those wars to an end, imposed capitulations on Iran, fixed the river Araxes as the frontier, and also brought an era to an end.

It will be recalled that the Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji (1774) dealt a similar blow to the Ottomans.

## THE MUGHULS OF INDIA

In the course of the eighteenth century, Great Britain and France went to war time and again.

These strifes and contentions centred around the ambitions of Louis XIV, in the early part of the century.

Then, during the Wars of the Austrian Succession (1744-8), there were clashes in India between the British and the French which, though indecisive and of no great consequence, were highly symptomatic. After the elimination of the Portuguese and the Dutch as leading commercial figures, the position of the British East India Company was commensurately strengthened.

But the French were also in the field.

In order to survive, both British and French required friends and allies amongst the potentates of India, much in the same way as, in the New World, they sought the aid of Red Indian tribes.

India had never been one united realm; ethnic, linguistic, racial and religious differences precluded that.

But from time to time a measure of order was imposed over the greater part of the subcontinent by one or other powerful entity.

The Mughul Emperors achieved this, at least in the northern part of India.

But the Mughul Empire, although it endured for more than two centuries, <p409> was basically unstable.

After the struggles of Zahir-i-Din Babur to found this empire, his son, Humayun, as we have seen, had to flee for his life to Tahmasb in Persia, returning to Delhi only after fifteen years.

And his son, Akbar, had also to fight for his throne.

Jalali-i-Din Akbar (1556-1605) is one of the most remarkable monarchs of all time, who almost united under his rule, by conquest, most of the subcontinent.

But in the words of Laurence Binyon: 'His greater achievement as a ruler was to weld this collection of different states, different races, different religions, into a whole.

It was accomplished by elaborate organisation -- Akbar had an extraordinary genius for detail -- still more by the settled policy which persuaded his subjects of the justice of their ruler.

Akbar's conceptions were something new in the history of Asiatic conquerors.

Though a foreigner, he identified himself with the India he had conquered.

And much of his system was to be permanent.

The principles and practice worked out by Akbar and his ministers were largely adopted into the English system of government.'<sup>[1]</sup>

[1 Akbar, pp.8-9.]

Akbar loathed intolerance and longed for the day when Hindu and Muslim would join in one fraternity.

He even wished for more -- a universal Faith to which all religions would adhere.

To that end he instituted a debating-house to which Zoroastrian, Jain, Hindu, Christian and Muslim (Sh'iah, Sunni and Shi'ih) came to present their views.

Akbar would sit for hours listening to their controversies, and sometimes himself participated in their discussions.

Ridolfo Aquaviva, a Neapolitan, and Antonio Monseratte, a Spaniard, both learned Jesuits, had been sent from Goa at Akbar's invitation.

They came not just to enlighten the Emperor; their true intent was to convert him.

Akbar treated them as personal friends and lodged them in his palace.

The orthodox were shocked, even scandalized, and from one end of the Empire to the other a plot was set afoot to rid the realm of this renegade monarch.

The Jesuits, too, showed an intolerance which was anathema to Akbar, by denouncing the English as vile heretics when a letter reached him from Queen Elizabeth.

Akbar assured them that he revered Christ and hoped that Christians would come and live in his domains.

He would permit them to build their churches just as he had permitted the Hindus to build their temples.

But the Jesuits were offended to be put on a par <p410> with idolaters.

It seems that the Faith of the Parsis had a particular fascination for Akbar.

He sent for a learned Dastur,[1] whom he had met in Gujrat, to come and instruct him.

Thereafter, Akbar kept a fire alight in his palace which was never to be extinguished, rendering solemn respect to the sun as a daily ritual.

[1 A Parsi priest.]

The outraged Muslim plotters invited Muhammad Hakim, Akbar's brother, who had his seat in Kabul, to rise for the vindication of their Faith.

Even Shah Mansur, a man whom Akbar had elevated from low rank to become the administrator of his finances, was in league with them.

The correspondence which he carried on with Akbar's brother fell into the hands of the Emperor.

Twice pardoned and reinstated, Shah Mansur persisted in corresponding treasonably with Muhammad Hakim, until Akbar had no alternative but to have him hanged, thereby losing for the Mughul Empire a very able administrator.

The fact that many important offices of state were held by Hindus also riled the orthodox.

Akbar's three great friends and boon companions were Abu'l-Fadl and Faydi, sons of Shaykh Mubarak -- a liberal-minded theologian from whom Akbar had received

advice and instruction -- and Birbal, a Hindu.

Abu'l-Fadl was a scholar who became Akbar's minister and chronicler.[1] Faydi was a talented poet and became the Emperor's laureate.

Birbal was an accomplished musician whose company delighted the Emperor.

But Shaykh Mubarak and his sons were considered heretics by the orthodox.

Such was the hatred felt for the liberal views of Faydi that a man named Fasih gave this line as the chronogram of the year of his death: 'When infidel Faydi died, Fasih said at the date of his death, "A dog departed from the world in a foul fashion"'.[2]

[1 He wrote Akbar-Namih (The Book of Akbar) in Persian.]

[2 Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol.

IV, p.

243.]

The Jesuits realized at last that Akbar would not declare himself a Christian, while Akbar, despairing of the contentions assailing his ears (although he still liked to listen to arguments and counterarguments), decided to devise a syncretic system of belief which could appeal to Hindu and Muslim alike.

He called it Din-i-Ilahi -- the Divine Faith -- and presented it to his people, but it failed to win favour.

Rajah Birbal, his close friend, accepted it, but soon he and Faydi were killed in action, and Abu'l-Fadl was ambushed <p411> and murdered, at the instigation of Salim, the Emperor's eldest son.

Akbar, laden with sorrows, suddenly abandoned his magnificent new city, Fatehpur-Sikri.

It still stands, unoccupied, in all its forgotten splendour.

When Akbar himself was on his death-bed, entirely oblivious to the world and those around him, his lips were faintly uttering the name of God.

Salim had a Rajput mother, and Akbar had hoped that in his own person he would bring Hindu and Muslim together.

But it was not to be; Salim rebelled against his father, the worst blow being his treachery in contriving the death of his father's trusted friend and counsellor.

Nevertheless, on succeeding his father as the Emperor Jahangir (1605-27), he followed the same liberal policies and managed to hold his Empire together His son, Shahjahan (1628-58), who is immortalized by the world-famous Taj Mahal, endeavoured to unite India and Transoxania and to create a vast Sunni Empire; it was a forlorn hope and a vain enterprise.

His life ended in deep tragedy, when he was dethroned and imprisoned by Awrangzib, his rebellious youngest son, who then, by various ruses, brought

about the death of his three elder brothers and his nephews, and ascended the throne.

Fratricide was no novelty in the Family of Timur.

The Safavids and the Ottomans were both afflicted by it.

Murad III (1574-95) murdered his five younger brothers, while Muhammad III (1591-1603) has an even more terrible record of murdering, at the start of his reign, nineteen of his brothers.

Awrangzib had a long and eventful reign.

Although he departed from the liberalism of his predecessors, he could not dispense with the services of Hindus, nor could all his exertions halt the rising power of the Marathas, in the person of their brilliant protagonist, Shivaji.

Awrangzib died in the year 1707, and although Shivaji was dead, too, the Maratha Confederacy grew in strength and the Mughul Empire went into rapid decline.

Both Hindu and Muslim principalities sprang up, in some cases making themselves totally independent of the Mughul Empire, in others acknowledging a merely formal and titular overlordship.

Nadir Shah's invasion was before long followed by repeated incursions on the part of Ahmad Shah-i-Durrani, who had founded a vigorous Afghan Kingdom.

These invasions from the north further ruined the chances of the survival of the Mughul Empire. <p412>

#### THE RENEWAL OF EAST -- WEST CONTACTS

The British East India Company, which began life as a chartered trading concern, was disposing of land and naval forces, unencumbered by the power of the State.

The bitter conflicts of Britain and France led it step by step to supremacy in India.

Finally, in June 1757, when the Seven Years War was raging in Europe, Robert Clive's dazzling victory over Suraju'd-Dawlih,[1] the Navvab (Nawab) of Bengal, at the battle of Plassey, ensured that the British, not the French, would found another Empire in India.

Under Clive's direction, Major Coote chased the French as far as Benares.

The Mughul Emperor, Shah 'Alam II, who formally transferred Bengal, Behar and Orissa to the British in 1765, became eventually a pensioner of the East India Company.

These widespread gains and successes of the East India Company induced William Pitt to bring it, in 1784, under the control of the Privy Council.

[1 He was notorious for his cruelties and excesses.]

Again it was the British and the French, in the fresh context of the Revolution

and the meteoric rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, who involved Europe more and more in the affairs of the various branches of the realm of Islam.

In order to bring Britain to her knees, Napoleon planned an overland attack on India.

He invaded Egypt in 1798, and in July of that year, at the battle of the Pyramids, destroyed the power of Murad Bey, the Circassian Mamluk who held Egypt under the authority of the Sultan of Turkey.

On July 25th, he triumphantly entered Cairo.

Through out the Crusades no Christian potentate had succeeded in breaching Cairo -- the Victorious -- and forcing it to submit to him.

Next, Napoleon instituted a Council of State composed of Arab notabilities, and met them wearing turban and Egyptian dress.

They heard from him what was almost a sermon on the ideals of the French Revolution.

Bonaparte is reported to have said that he would be a Christian in France, a Muslim in the East.

He had come not only with an army but with a host of brilliant scientists and savants: engineers to dig the Suez Canal, geologists, astronomers, mathematicians, mineralogists, chemists, physicists, zoologists, archaeologists, poets, painters, philologists and historians.

Amongst them were the Comte Claude-Louis Berthollet, discoverer of the properties of chlorine and the inventor of the method of using carbon to filter water; Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon, the renowned archaeologist; and Gaspard Monge, Comte de Peluse, one of the world's greatest mathematicians.

Napoleon himself took on the vice-presidency of the Institut d'Egypte, under Gaspard Monge.

After an abeyance of more than four hundred years, renewal of cultural contact between the East and the West, on the scale envisaged by Napoleon, was to have far-reaching results.

But whereas in the past it was exclusively a case of transmittal and conveyance from the civilization of Islam to the West, now it was to be chiefly a transfer of the benefits of Western civilization to the realm of Islam.

In India (Napoleon's target), a beginning had also been made with cultural contacts and pursuits that were to widen greatly in scope in future years.

Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of British India (1773-85), was an accomplished Persian scholar.

He founded, at his own expense, the famous Madrasa (Madrisah) or College in Calcutta for Islamic education, and planned an Indian Institute for London.

Sir William Jones (1746-94), rightly hailed as the 'Founder' of modern

orientalism, then judge of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Calcutta, established in 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal, with the active help of the Governor-General.

Indeed, the employees of the East India Company were encouraged to gain deeper insight into the culture of the people around them.

The Hon.

Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859), who went to India in the service of the Company at the age of sixteen, could in his early twenties read with profit and understanding the poems of such giants of Persian literature as Rumi, Sa'di and Hafiz.

Napoleon's Egyptian adventure was not going smoothly.

Nelson annihilated his fleet at Abuqir (Aboukir), on August 1st.[1] The following year (1799) he invaded Syria, but the Turkish garrison in 'Akka (Acre), directed by Sir Sidney Smith, one of Nelson's commanders, successfully resisted his attempts to storm the town.

After a siege lasting two months, Napoleon gave up on May 20th, hurriedly left Syria, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Turkish land forces at Abuqir on July 25th.

Mustafa Pasha, the Turkish commander, was captured and his casualties were enormous.

But on August 22nd, Napoleon had to sail for France because the situation there had become threatening.

Kleber <p414> remained in Egypt, much against his will, for he did not relish the prospect of being marooned.

Yet, in March 1800, he defeated an army of Turks and Mamluks at Heliopolis.

Previously he had entered into negotiations with the Turks and Sir Sidney Smith, who were at al-'Arish.

They had come to a reasonable solution whereby the French would evacuate Egypt honourably.

The British Government, however, refused to abide by this agreement and required the French to lay down their arms, which naturally Kleber rejected.

In June 1800, Kleber was assassinated in Cairo and the command devolved on Beillard.

In the meantime a British force sent from India landed in Egypt.

By then Murad Bey had thrown in his lot with the French and was hurrying to Beillard's assistance, when plague struck him down.

Negotiations were resumed with the British, who offered to provide transport for evacuation.

By October 18th, the French troops were on their way to France, and the British force, which had arrived from India, also embarked for Europe.

Suddenly there was a vacuum in Egypt.

It gave Muhammad-'Ali (later Pasha), an Albanian serving with the Turkish army which Napoleon routed at Abuqir, the chance to establish himself in Egypt, destroy the Mamluks for good, and make himself virtually independent of Turkey.

His career (1805-48) and his ambitions would provide in future years a fruitful source of friction between Great Britain and France.

[1 This engagement has been misnamed 'the Battle of the Nile'.]

Bonaparte, having overthrown the Directoire in France, assumed powers as the First Consul, detached Russia from the Second Coalition, inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Austrians at Marengo, shattered the Second Coalition, and then cast once again a longing glance on India.

It was for Persia or Afghanistan (or both) to provide the corridor for the march of the French army to the desired land.

The possibility of a combined Franco- Russian assault on India also loomed on the horizon.

The Government of India was thoroughly alarmed and the Governor-General, the Marquis of Wellesley (1760-1842),[1] decided on immediate and energetic measures to put up an effective barrier against the French.

It is said that Robert Clive secured India, Warren Hastings consolidated the British power, but it was Wellesley who turned the British supremacy into an Empire.

Wellesley had no patience with the tiresome 'tradesmen in Leadenhall Street' who were his superiors, and he had young and able men under him to accomplish his purpose: men such as Captain (later Colonel Sir John) Malcolm (1769-1833), the Hon.

Mountstuart Elphinstone, Charles Theophilus (later Baron) Metcalfe (1785-1846), and Colonel (later General Sir) David Ochterlony (1758-1815).

Malcolm, whose *History of Persia* remained a standard book on the subject for decades,[2] was dispatched to Tihiran in 1800, where he successfully concluded a treaty with Haji Ibrahim Khan, the I'timadu'd-Dawlih, the minister of Fath-'Ali Shah.

As a reciprocal gesture, a Persian envoy, Haji Khalil Khan, was sent to Bombay.[3] Malcolm's mission provided all that was desired, but Haji Ibrahim Khan, the minister who dealt with him, was disgraced and fell from power.

When Persia lost Georgia to Russia, no help was forthcoming from London; but war broke out afresh between Russia and France, causing Napoleon's overtures to Fath-'Ali Shah to become more assiduous.

In 1807, the Treaty of Finkenstein was signed between France and Persia, and

General Gardanne, with seventy French officers, arrived at Tihran to train the Persian army.

Then, in the same year, Bonaparte met Alexander I at Tilsit and forgot his promises to Persia, although he still meant to confront the British in India and had it in mind to send his brother, Lucien, as his envoy to Persia.

Fath-'Ali Shah was angered by the Treaty of Tilsit and became once again attentive to the British, who were apprehensive of the accord between Bonaparte and the Tsar.

Wellesley had gone from India, but he had already done enough, with or against the Indian potentates, to ensure the rule of the British.

His successor, Baron (later, first Earl of) Minto (1751-1814), was instructed to counter any possible move on the part of the French.

Malcolm was again sent to Persia, in 1808, but did not proceed beyond Bushihr because he was told by the Persian authorities to negotiate with Husayn-'Ali Mirza, the Farman-Farma, a son of Fath-'Ali Shah and the Governor-General of Fars.

Malcolm felt insulted and promptly returned to India, proposing the immediate occupation of the island of Kharg in the Persian Gulf, close to the Persian coast.

Although his proposal was accepted better counsels prevailed, and Malcolm set out on his third mission to Persia in 1810.

The Government in London thought, at the same time, that they <p416> too should try their hand at the diplomatic game, and Sir Harford Jones reached Tihran in due course.

It both surprised and amused the Persians to find two British envoys, obviously at loggerheads with each other, soliciting their favours.

Napoleon had by then become sufficiently discredited for General Gardanne to be sent home.

A treaty was initialled with Great Britain, and an envoy was sent from Persia to London in the person of Mirza Abu'l-Hasan Khan, whom James Morier has portrayed as Mirza Firouz.[4] But this treaty did not save Persia from defeat at the hands of the Russians.

[1 He was the brother of the Duke of Wellington.]

[2 It was published in two volumes, in 1815.]

[3 He was accidentally shot and killed, during a brawl between his servants and the Indian guard.]

[4 Morier's classic book, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, had a sequel with a similar title.]

Afghanistan, to which Mountstuart Elphinstone was sent in October 1808, was in a state of chaos.

The members of the dynasty of Ahmad Shah-i-Durrani had fallen out amongst

themselves.

Elphinstone at no time went as far as Kabul, but met Shah Shuja' in Pishawar (Peshawar).

A treaty, which proved to be worthless, was concluded with the Afghan king.

Shah Shuja' was a fugitive from Kabul.

However, as far as the French menace was concerned, it was obvious by the end of the first decade of the century that it was no more.

Malcolm wrote a worthy book on the History of Persia; and Elphinstone wrote an excellent work, also in two volumes, entitled An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul [Kabul].

Napoleon fell from power and was gone, but his legacy remained. <p417>  
Epilogue

Napoleon's heritage was multifarious, and the impact of his initiative in the cultural field was indeed considerable and should by no means be overlooked.

For the purposes of this epilogue, however, we are more concerned with the effect on the realm of Islam of the clashes of interest and the rivalries of European Powers.

The Treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji of 1774 had sown the seeds of what came to be known as the Eastern Question -- a bone of contention amongst the Great Powers and a cause of despair.

Forced to give Russia the right, however flimsy and tenuous, to protect the Greek Orthodox subjects of the Sultan, Turkey lost the freedom to be the sole arbiter within her own boundaries.

The Treaty of Turkumanchay of 1828 not only put an end to Persia's hopes in an area that had been an integral part of the realm of Islam for well over a thousand years, but it imposed capitulations[1] which severely restricted her jurisdiction in her own domain, eventually giving every Christian Power the right of intervention in judicial affairs and criminal cases -- a right which could be and often was frequently abused.

[1 A system of extraterritorial rights.]

Anglo-French conflicts led to British dominance in India and to the establishment of a new Empire in the subcontinent, with the inevitable consequence of the detachment of large territories from the realm of Islam.

Fears for India, engendered by Napoleon's dreams and designs, did not die with Napoleon's empire, but found fresh life and menace in the real and imaginary schemes of Russia, which mesmerized successive governments in Britain.

Nor did the tug-of-war in Egypt, between Britain and France, cease with the demise of Napoleon's empire, but went on to become more and more pronounced with the march of the nineteenth <p418> century.

The area of rivalry amongst the old Powers and the new rising Powers in Europe

eventually stretched right across the whole of North Africa.

The Caliphate, once a binding force in the realm of Islam even when divided into three ('Abbasid, Fatimid, Umayyad), now rested with the Ottomans.

But their title to it was extremely dubious, and the attachment of the generality of Muslims to a Turkish Caliphate could not be taken for granted.

Indeed, when put to the test it wilted.

Strangely, it was the humiliating treaty of Kuchuk Kaynarji which, for the first time in the domain of diplomacy, gave explicit recognition to the Turkish Caliphate.

A significant movement in the Sunni fold, which deliberately ignored the Caliphate of the Ottomans and seemed even directed against it, was the Wahhabi uprising.

This occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century, within the Arabian peninsula which was divided into several principalities.

Muhammad Ibn 'Abd-i'l-Wahhab (1703-93), a native of Najd, having studied for long years in Basrah and Damascus, and having seen at close quarters the practices of his fellow Muslims, concluded that Islam needed to be cleansed of accretions.

He returned to Najd, in middle life, and preached a strict puritanism that recalled the austerities and the overtones of Kharijite beliefs.

The veneration and worship of holy places and relics and of holy men he regarded as idolatry.

While favouring the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, he rejected as spurious a large body of traditions.

Of all the rulers of the disparate principalities of Arabia, it was Amir Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, based on Dar'iyah, who responded to the call of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd-i'l Wahhab.

Muhammad of Dar'iyah died in 1765.

By then he had established the authority of his House over the central and eastern areas of the peninsula. 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, his son, extended that power well beyond the confines of Najd and began to raid the caravans of pilgrims to Mecca.

The Ottomans tried ineffectively to stop him.

Amir 'Abdu'l-'Aziz simply widened the sphere of his operations.

He sacked Karbila in 1801 and a year later occupied Mecca.

Mausoleums and tombs, the objects of veneration in both places, were demolished.

Sa'ud, the son and successor of 'Abdu'l-'Aziz, added Medina to the Wahhabi

conquests in 1804.

The Ottoman Government was now thoroughly roused and ordered Muhammad-'Ali Pasha, whom it had named Viceroy of Egypt, to stem <p419> the tide of Wahhabi expansion.

In 1811, Amir Sa'ud was on his way to attack Baghdad when news reached him that Tusun, the sixteen-year-old son of the Albanian potentate, had reached the coast of Hijaz with a sizeable force.

He immediately returned to meet the Egyptians and defeated the young Tusun, but both Mecca and Medina were lost to him.

Next, Muhammad-'Ali Pasha took the field in person, but he was no match for Sa'ud.

In 1814, Tusun once again commanded the army and was once again soundly beaten.

It was the last of Sa'ud's victories; he died the same year.

Now the redoubtable Ibrahim Pasha, another son of Muhammad-'Ali Pasha, took over command of the Egyptian army.

By means of bribes, he won to his side a number of tribes, and in a series of campaigns overran Najd, besieged Dar'iyah, forced it to capitulate in September 1818, and destroyed it completely.

Amir 'Abdu'llah, the son of Sa'ud, was sent a prisoner to Constantinople, where he was beheaded.

For the time being the Wahhabi movement had been crushed, but not for long.

Turki, the son of 'Abdu'llah, rose in 1824 to challenge the Egyptians and successfully recreated the Wahhabi State with his capital at Riyadh.

Ibrahim Pasha, at grips with Turkey for the mastery of Syria, had to withdraw the bulk of his troops from Najd, and the continuation of the new state was assured.

The four Sunni schools -- Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali -- have no clerical order.

The muftis and faqihs and qadis are men well-versed in the law and have the same status as judges in secular courts.

But it is otherwise in the Sh'iah fold.

The Sh'iah (Twelver) divine speaks and delivers judgements in the name of the absent Imam -- the Qa'im expected to come forth from his major occultation in the fulness of time.

Therefore the power of the Sh'iah divine has been immense. and this power particularly accrued to him with the advent of the Safavids in Iran.

None of the four 'Gates' to the twelfth Imam, who were believed to be

intermediaries between him and his people during his minor occultation, instituted a Clerical order to perform a special function after them.

Necessity led to the emergence of such an order, but how it happened and when exactly, in point of time, these divines began to make ex cathedra pronouncements cannot be ascertained. <p420>

Theoretically any Sh'iah of the Twelver persuasion is either a mujtahid, or a muqallid.

The mujtahid, which literally means 'the person who strives', is the man whose attainments are such as to entitle him to be an authoritative divine.

The way to become a mujtahid is to obtain a permit from a divine who already has that status.

Of course there have been clerics, and many of them, who have not had the right of ijtiḥad (making ex cathedra pronouncements), but still have had functions to perform, such as leading the congregational prayer in the mosque and performing marriage and burial ceremonies.

Serious differences of opinion between mujtahids, even some of the most prominent divines, have not been unknown.

As to the muqallid, which literally means the 'imitator', not every Sh'iah of the Twelver persuasion has had to choose or has chosen a divine as guide and exemplar.

Theory and practice have not generally coincided.

Furthermore, the whole basis of ijtiḥad has not gone unchallenged.

Mulla Muhammad-Amir of Astarabad, who died during the reign of Shah 'Abbas the Great, witnessing the growing power of the divines and disliking it, spoke out in protest and founded what came to be known as the Akhbari school, in opposition to the mujtahids or the Usulis.

Akhbar means 'traditions' and usul means 'principles'.

The Akhbaris rest their case solely on the authority of traditions ascribed to the Prophet and the Imams and accepted by all, whereas the Usulis, who constitute the vast majority of the Twelvers, maintain that the mujtahid has the right, as the deputy of the Hidden Imam, to deduce principles from the Qur'an as well as the traditions, and to use qiyas or 'analogy' to make an authoritative statement.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Akhbari school did attain some prominence, but at the beginning of the reign of the Qajars in Iran, a concerted effort was made by the mujtahids in general, and two divines in particular, Shaykh Ja'fari-Najafi and Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Bihbahani,[1] to undermine the Akhbari school.

They were only too successful.

Kirman, where the Akhbaris had a stronghold, eventually yielded to the

Shaykhis, whom we shall now consider as the next potent contenders with the Usulis, though not altogether for the same <p421> reasons as the Akhbaris.

Gradually, in the course of the nineteenth century, the Akhbari school faded into insignificance, although not into total extinction.

But before we turn to the Shaykhi school, the oft-told story of Mirza Muhammad-i-Nishapuri is worth repeating.

[1 The son of Aqa Muhammad-Baqir, named Aqa Muhammad-'Ali and known as Kirmanshahi, because he lived in that town, attained fame or notoriety, depending on how one views his actions, as the persecutor of the Sufis.

Nur-'Ali Shah, a well-known Sufi murshid, was killed by his prescription.]  
Mirza Muhammad was an Akhbari divine residing in 'Iraq.

He was driven out by Shaykh Ja'far-i-Najafi.

In Iran, he caught the ear of Fath-'Ali Shah, at a time when the Qajar monarch was reeling under a series of defeats at the hands of the Russians.

The actions of General Tsitsianoff, a Georgian inspector in the Russian forces, were bitterly resented in Iran.

Mirza Muhammad told Fath-'Ali Shah that should he, the Akhbari divine, bring about the destruction of this detested general, whom Persians knew as Ishpukhtur (Inspector), the Shah should, in return, suppress the mujtahids and put Akhbaris in their place.

Apparently Fath-'Ali Shah agreed to this proposal and Mirza Muhammad retired to the precincts of the shrine of Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim (in the vicinity of the capital), engaged in an occult rite which ended with the decapitation of a wax image of 'Ishpukhtur', and then announced that the Georgian's head would be laid before the Shah within forty days.

It happened as Mirza Muhammad had promised.

But the ministers of Fath-'Ali Shah dissuaded him from keeping his side of the bargain.

The Akhbari divine was told that it was not safe for him to remain in Iran, whereupon he returned to 'Iraq, foretelling his own death.

At Kazimayn, a mob, egged on by the mujtahids, broke into Mirza Muhammad's house and killed him, while he was reading from the Qur'an.

The founder of the Shaykhi school was Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i (1743-1826), a native of Bahrayn.

He is known as al-Ahsa'i, because his family, members of the ancient tribe of Banu-Sakhr, came from al-Ahsa on the Arabian mainland.

Shaykh Ah. mad was approaching middle age when he left his island home for the holy cities of 'Iraq, to disseminate amongst a larger circle of people certain views which he had come to hold.

Established at Karbila, he drew to himself a group of disciples, whose numbers gradually increased.

The mujtahids of 'Iraq, with no voice of dissent, admitted him into their own ranks.

His fame spread to Iran and Fath-'Ali Shah invited him to .Tihran.

Shaykh Ahmad chose, however, to take a southerly route, to visit Shiraz and Yazd and go on pilgrimage to the holy city of Mashhad.

He <p422> resided in Yazd for several years.

Although at no time did he identify himself with the Akhbari school, attacks were mounted against him by the Usulis.

Later, he was specifically described and denounced as an Akhbari, although his firmly-held opinions inclined him to neither side.

Haji Mulla Muhammad-Taqi, a prominent divine of Qazvin,[1] refused to sit down to a meal with him, calling him an infidel.

But Shaykh Ahmad was held in high esteem by Fath-'Ali Shah, whose invitations became so insistent that the Shaykh finally yielded and journeyed to Tihran, where he was shown every mark of respect.

Then, in the company of Haji Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti (1793-1843), who succeeded him after his death, he went on to Kirmanshah.

Rukni'd-Dawlih, a son of Fath-'Ali Shah, was the governor of that city and had begged his father to let Shaykh Ahmad be his guest; his premature death intervened and caused Shaykh Ah. mad's return to 'Iraq, after an absence of many years.

Later, well advanced in years, he set out on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, where he died.

In particular, Shaykh Ahmad clashed with the Usuli divines over two fundamental points of belief.

He totally denied the possibility of corporeal resurrection, and he maintained that the mi'raj, the Prophet's night journey to Heaven, was not a physical but a spiritual experience.

Refutation of these two components of accepted doctrine, apart from anything else, was sufficient to damn him in the eyes of the orthodox.

Despite his admirers in high places and a growing body of powerful support in the ranks of his compatriots, Shaykh Ahmad was bitterly assailed by the Usuli divines, and the clamour against his school increased in the days of his successor.

[1 He is known as Shahid-i-Thalith -- the Third Martyr.]

If sheer necessity caused the Sh'iah Twelvers to provide themselves with a clerical order to guide and protect them, the same process can be discerned in

the evolution of ecclesiasticism in the Christian Faith.

But before we examine this theme it should be stated that the nature of *ijtihad* within the Sh'iah fold has made for flexibility and catholicism, in contrast to the rigidities and extreme orthodoxies of such Sunni schools as the Maliki and the Hanbali.

In the secular field a parallel can be found in the two systems of Equity and Common and Statutory Law.

It should also be noted that *ijama'* (consensus), repudiated by the Sh'iah jurists, has been responsible for the acceptance, by the entire realm of Islam, of that version of the Qur'an which the third Caliph promulgated.

No sect or division within Islam has ever taken the contrary view,[1] although it is known that other versions existed which 'Uthman suppressed.

By the same token and process a vast corpus of traditions has found universal recognition.

[1 It is true that some Sh'iah apologists claim the deletion of specific verses referring to 'Ali, but there is no evidence to show that 'Ali himself or any other of the Imams ever made or supported such a claim.]

When Jesus was crucified, there were Christians nowhere but in Jerusalem.

Peter was the chief of the Apostles.

He was thus appointed by Jesus:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jo-na: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

(Matt.

16:13-19.)

The Apostles elected Matthias to fill the place of the fallen Judas.

But it was not Peter who became the head of the community of the Nazarenes (or Nazoreans) in Jerusalem.

That honour went to James, the brother of Jesus, who was put to death by the orders of Ananas, the High Priest, in the year 62.

Simeon, the son of Mary Cleophas, succeeded James.

Simeon was a cousin of Jesus and was in turn crucified, during the reign of Trajan, in the year 104 or 105.

Between the date of his martyrdom and the year <p424> 133, there were thirteen others who are named as the bishops of Jerusalem.

Jews made a final effort under Bar-Kochba, in that year 133, to oust the Romans and gain their freedom, but Hadrian crushed them.

Jerusalem was then totally destroyed and the Nazarene community ceased to exist.[1]

[1 During the first rising of the Jews, which ended with the triumph of Titus, in the year 67, this Christian community of Jerusalem had moved to Pella in Decapolis.]

The Nazarenes were still anchored in their Jewish faith, adhering firmly to Jewish law.

When Saul of Tarsus, with his burning faith in Christ, appeared on the scene, and wished to make it easier for the Gentiles to accept the Saviour, he came up against the relentless opposition of the Nazarenes.

For James and Simeon and possibly some of their successors, the term 'bishop' (from Gr. episkopos), now applied to them in a specific sense, had no meaning, unless it might have had the connotation of 'overseer'.

Naturally, when the gates were flung open by St.

Paul and Gentiles poured in, the Jewishness of the Nazarenes was submerged and Apostolic churches were founded in major cities such as Rome and Alexandria.

Although St.

Peter is acknowledged as the first Bishop of Rome, the hand which raised and reared that Church was the hand of Paul, not of Peter.

And the Church of Rome amongst the other Apostolic Churches came to have the position of primus inter pares.

It was the rise of Islam and the victory of Arab arms, which wrested cities such as Antioch and Alexandria from Byzantium, that gave primacy to Rome.

By then the organs of the church (ecclesia)[1] were well developed.

There had been several oecumenical councils, beginning with the Council of

Nicaea[2] in 325 which formulated the creed, proclaiming the doctrine of Trinity (first enunciated by Tertullian, who later, in 220, turned his back on the Church and joined the Montanists), and condemning the views of Bishop Arius.

The Council of Nicaea, from which also emerged the form and contents of the New Testament, was followed, in 381, by the Council of Constantinople, convened by the Spanish Emperor, Theodosius the Great.

It set the final seal on the creed, after years of struggle with Constantius, the son of Constantine the Great, who favoured Arianism and who had sent such men as Athanasius of Alexandria, Hosius of Cordova, Hilary of Poitiers and Liberius of Rome into exile.

Next, in 431, the Council of Ephesus condemned the Nestorians; the Council of Chalcedon, twenty years later, condemned both the Nestorians and the Monophysites or Jacobites; and the second Council of Constantinople, in 553, condemned the Monothelites.

Others were yet to come to Condemn the Iconoclasts and heresies similar to theirs.

[1 Originally, 'ecclesia' was the general assembly of Athenian citizens.]

[2 Earlier, in 314, a Council had been convened at Arles by Constantine to consider the activities of the Donatists.]

The Nazarenes of Jerusalem, the Corinthians, the Colossians, the Ephesians, the Philippians and other Christian communities to whom Paul wrote his epistles were groupings of the faithful, for whom 'bishops' and 'deacons' were just 'overseers', 'supervisors' and 'administrators'.

They had their 'presbyters' (elders), prophets' (people who prophesied what was to come and were eventually suppressed because of their frenzied extremism) and preachers.

Every grouping of people, anywhere in the world, at any time, needs elders and supervisors.

But it is a far cry from these to possessing authoritative prelates and decision-making councils.

These came into being from sheer necessity, to act as shields against dissent and disorder, and hostile forces without and within.

Can it not be truly said that the great living religions of mankind, by the dictate of necessity, came to fashion and develop, as a bulwark, systems and institutions which neither the Founders nor the early converts had envisaged?

We have surveyed the story of the Faith of Muhammad, the 'Arabian Prophet', up to the period of time when the Christian West had begun to hack at the realm of Islam, mulcting it of large sections to bring under its own domination; while the same onslaught was making the destinies of those parts of that realm which kept their sovereignty more and more dependent on the whims, the conflicts, the rivalries and the fears of the Powers of Europe.

From the far stretches of the Pacific to the eastern edge of the Atlantic, the realm of Islam was under attack and was fast losing its independence of action.

But here we must halt because the examination of the next turbulent chapter, leading eventually to the reversal of that process in recent decades, is a vast study which must also entail a close scrutiny of two World Wars which devastated Europe.

Of course, Europe still exists, but the 'mighty Continent' which once dominated the world is no more.

(nbm)

— Muhammad and the Course of Islam