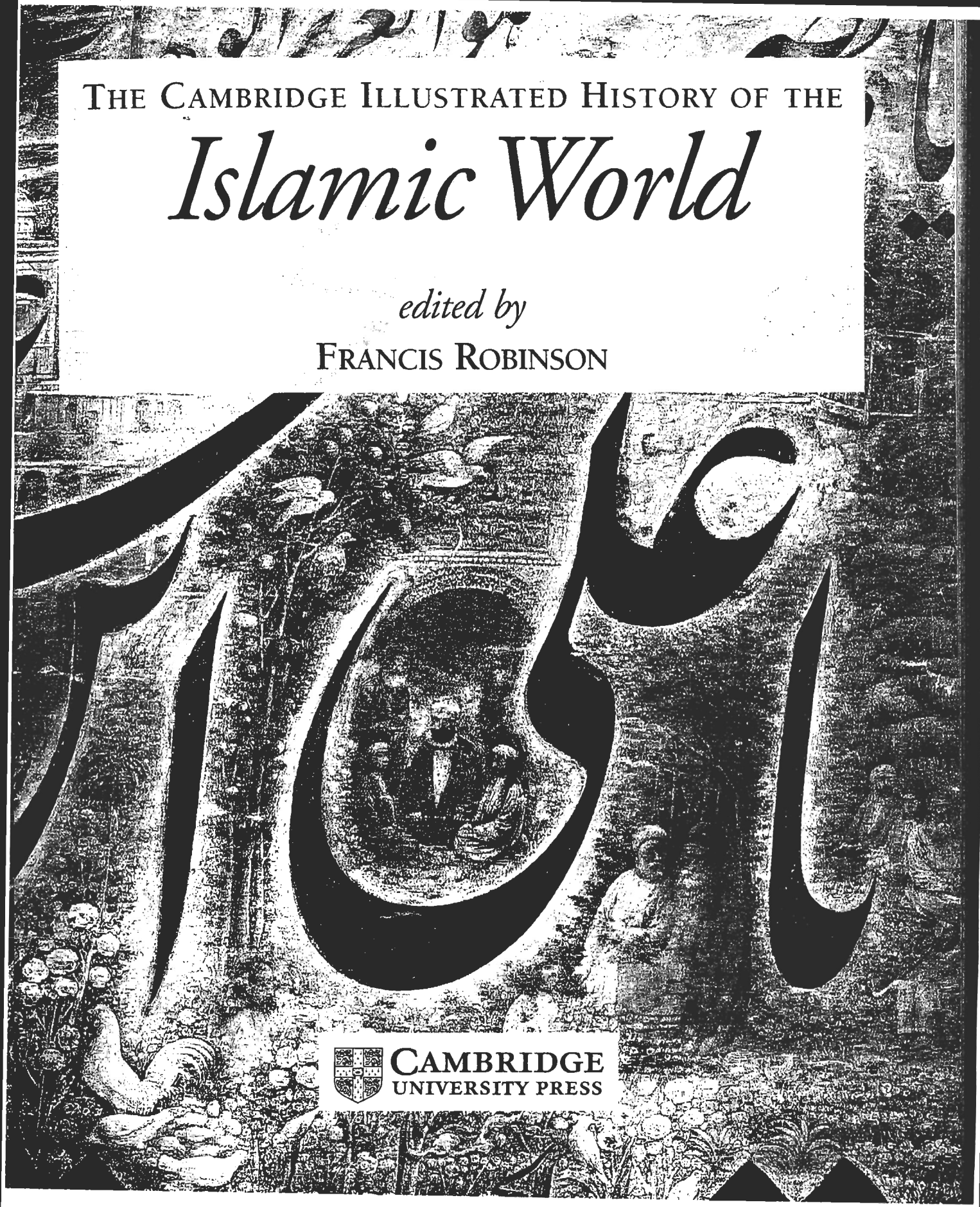

THE CAMBRIDGE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE

Islamic World

edited by

FRANCIS ROBINSON

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DEDICATION

To my Muslim friends

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The *bismallah*, 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful', the invocation with which a pious Muslim would begin any action.

Introduction

Since the seventh century a growing proportion of human beings have been followers of Islam. Over this period the message which Muslims believe God sent to all people through the Prophet Muhammad has both given meaning to Muslim lives and helped to shape the world in which they live. Now, one fifth of the world's people identify themselves as Muslims and their increase is amongst the fastest of humankind. They live in the main in a great swathe of territory stretching from the Atlantic shore of north and west Africa, through west, central, and south Asia to island southeast Asia. Theirs is the dominant culture in over fifty nation states, while they also form significant minority cultures most notably in India but also in western Europe, north America, east Asia, and southern Africa. This is a global presence which cannot be ignored.

The world's billion Muslims share a past of glorious achievement. For much of the period from the eighth to the eighteenth century the leading civilization on the planet in terms of spread and creativity was that of Islam. It was formed in the seventh century when Arab tribesmen burst out of the Arabian peninsula and conquered the two rival empires to the north, those of Byzantium and Sasanian Iran. Afterwards, a great new cultural and economic nexus developed which was able to draw on the knowledge and the commodities of lands from China and India in the east to Spain and Africa in the west, as well as those of the west Asian lands on which it was based. This new civilization commanded a substantial slice of the globe's area of cities and settled agriculture. In this region there was a shared language of religion and the law. Men could travel and do business within a shared framework of assumptions. In its high cultures they could express themselves in symbols to which all could respond. The first notable centres were found in the Arab worlds of Damascus, Baghdad, and Cordoba from the eighth to the tenth centuries; the second were found in the Turko-Iranian worlds of Istanbul, Isfahan, Bukhara, Samarqand, and Delhi from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. There were great achievements in scholarship and in science, in poetry and in prose, and in the arts of the book, of building, and of spiritual insight, which are precious legacies to all humankind. For about half of what is termed the Christian era Muslims marched at the forefront of human progress.

From the nineteenth century this Islamic world system was overwhelmed by forces from the West, driven by capitalism, powered by industrial revolution, and civilized, after a fashion, by the Enlightenment. The symbolic moment when the leader's standard overtly passed to the West was Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. From this moment western armies and western capital overran the lands of the Muslims. By the 1920s only Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, central Arabia, and the Yemen were free from western control. The caliphate, the symbolic leadership of

A Muslim and a Christian play the ud or lute together, from a thirteenth-century *Book of Chants* in the Escorial Monastery of Madrid. Medieval Europe was deeply influenced by Arab-Islamic culture, transmitted particularly through Spain. In music some of the many works in Arabic on musical theory were translated into Latin and Hebrew, but the main influence came from the actual arts of singing and playing spread by minstrels. Amongst the living traditions thus influenced is that of the Morris or 'Moorish' dancers of England. Recent investigations in musical history have found pervasive Arab influences over the development of flamenco music, affecting everything from the style of performance to the rhythm and scales of the songs themselves.

the Muslim community which reached back to the Prophet, had been abolished. For a moment it had been feared that the holy places of Islam, Mecca and Medina, would fall into infidel hands. Muslims, who for centuries had walked hand in hand with power, had good reason to feel that history had deserted them.

The twentieth century has witnessed, from the emergence of modern Turkey in the early 1920s to that of the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, a steady decolonization of the Muslim world. But for many this has seemed a pyrrhic victory. More often than not they have found western rule replaced by that of Muslims with western values, while western capital and western culture has come to be even more corrosive of their customs and their standards than before. This challenge has elicited from Muslims throughout the world an assertion of an Islamic, and for some a totalitarian Islamic, future for their people. Such views have not been shared by all Muslims but have come to be shared by enough to represent a significant threat to the secular leaders of their societies, and on occasion, as in the revolution in Iran, to drive their upholders to power. These Muslims, who are popularly known as 'fundamentalist' in the West but are more appropriately known as 'Islamists', are seen to challenge some of the most cherished principles of the contemporary West, whether it be the position of women,

human rights, or the role of revealed religion in modern life. Such is the fervour of the challenge and such is the violence with which some Islamists are prepared to press it forward, that there has been talk in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union of the red menace being replaced by a green one.

History can offer few answers to present problems, but it can place them in perspective and enrich understanding. Islamic history demands attention because of the numbers of humankind who claim that past for their own, because of the achievement of that past in the saga of human history, and because of the challenge which the inheritors of that past place before the present.

WESTERN ATTITUDES TO ISLAM

Anyone setting out to explore Islamic history should first arm themselves with some knowledge of the hostility towards Islam which has infused western culture over many centuries. Some Christians have felt bound to oppose a faith which denied the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which denied Christ's crucifixion, and which raised the authority of its Quran over that of the Bible. Some Christian rulers, equally, have felt bound to oppose the armies of a faith which for nearly one thousand years from the Arab thrust to Poitiers in 732 to the Ottoman advance on Vienna in 1683 has threatened to penetrate to the heart of Christendom. Indeed, the Crusades from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, when Christian rulers took the fight against Islam into the eastern Mediterranean lands, were one of the great forces of European history.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that from the early Middle Ages to the Enlightenment European attitudes to Islam were instinct with hostility. Early European attitudes, which out of ignorance were fashioned from hearsay and fantasy, dismissed Islam as a Christian heresy and its Prophet as a sorcerer, whose success owed much to the divine imprimatur he gave to sexual licence. With the Crusades there came the first translations of the Quran into Latin and a more knowledgeable approach. This was accompanied by a redoubled attack on the status of Muhammad as a prophet and assaults directed at those aspects of his message which seemed to condone the use of violence, to endorse sexual freedom in this world, and to promise sexual ecstasy in the next. These basic lines of attack were continued through the Renaissance and Reformation so that on the eve of the Enlightenment the widely accepted picture of Muhammad was of an impostor who had founded a heresy and given it the name of religion.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a continuation of the old attacks against Islam. They were carried by missionaries who, taking advantage of the growing European ascendancy, now fanned out across Muslim lands; much of the medieval polemic, for instance, was repeated in a *Life of Muhammad* published in 1851 by the Bombay Tract and Book Society. But their message was broadcast, too, by westerners with purely secular concerns. Such was the impact of the writers Flaubert and de Nerval, or the painters Ingres and Gérôme, who associated sex,

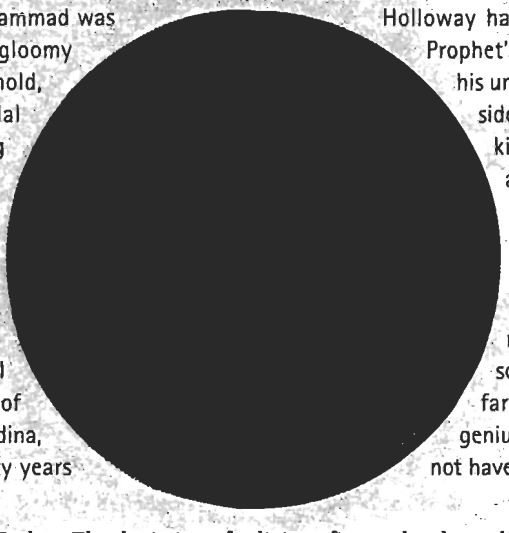
sensuality, and the Muslim world. Colonial administrators, their minds exercised by the tendency of Muslims to wage holy wars against their presence, found the term 'fanatic' the natural adjective for them.

Mercifully, however, the range of western attitudes to Islam was beginning to broaden. Enlightenment scholars seeking a critique of Christianity found rational qualities in Islam. It was seen, moreover, as a civilizing force which had transmitted ancient learning to the West, while its Prophet came to be viewed as a profound thinker and the founder of rational religion. This new spirit was well represented by Napoleon who, whatever his political motives, had no difficulty on landing in Egypt in declaring: 'I respect God, his Prophet, and the Quran.' For many in Europe, however, Islam was more than just a weapon in the war against Christianity, it was also an exotic playground full of novel possibilities. A good number of these were supplied by Galland's translation of the *Arabian Nights* in 1704 with its rich store of caliphs, genies, and fabulous happenings. Creative minds roamed excitedly through this new world -Montesquieu in *Persian Letters*, Mozart in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, and Goethe in *West-Easterly Diwan*. Others preferred to travel and discover for themselves how Muslim societies might expand the potential of their lives. Not the least amongst these were women, Mary Wortley Montagu, Hester Stanhope, and a host of others, who found that Muslim women's lives were in many ways preferable to the circumscribed lives of women in the West.

Modern scholarship represents a further broadening of the range of attitudes. Arguably the modern study of Islam reaches back to the foundation of the first chairs of Arabic at the Collège de France in 1539, at the university of Leiden in 1613 and at the university of Cambridge in 1634. Later came more accurate translations of the Quran such as that of Sale into English in 1734 and the writing of the Muslim past such as Simon Ockley's *History of the Saracens* (1708–18) not as polemic but as history. Towards the end of the eighteenth century large numbers of texts, both literary and religious, began to be translated into European languages, and in the nineteenth century the range of study widened as scholars of religion, biblical criticism, and comparative philology brought Islam and the languages of the Islamic world within their purview. At the beginning of the twentieth century there emerged the Islamic specialist, like the Hungarian Ignaz Goldziher, the Dutch scholar-administrator Snouck Hurgronje, the British-American D. B. MacDonald, and the Russian V. V. Barthold, who were concerned to expose their subject to the highest standards of scholarship and interpretation. This tradition has reached its highest peaks so far in the achievement of three men – the Frenchman Louis Massignon, who greatly enlarged understandings of the spiritual dimensions of Islam, the Englishman Hamilton Gibb, who strove to provide a framework in which the historical development of Islam could be understood, and the American Marshall Hodgson, who aimed to place Islamic history in the broader context of world history. All three, too, were believers, Massignon a

Western attitudes to Muhammad

The changing image of the Prophet Muhammad is a touchstone of changing western attitudes to Islam. For a thousand years he was the false prophet, the impostor. Hence the terrible fate which Dante contrived for him in the *Inferno*. Although some Muslims, the doctors and philosophers Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, and the hero of medieval chivalry, Saladin, were numbered amongst the virtuous heathen and let off with slight punishment, Muhammad was consigned to the ninth of the ten gloomy ditches surrounding Satan's stronghold, where, branded a spreader of scandal and discord, he was doomed to being split in twain continuously. From the eighteenth century a more complex picture began to emerge. The historian Edward Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was able to admire the original genius of the Muhammad of Mecca, the moral leader, while questioning the purity of the motives of the Muhammad of Medina, the calculating politician. Some fifty years later, the historian Thomas Carlyle was able to make Muhammad his prophetic hero in his lectures *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. 'He is by no means the truest of the Prophets', Carlyle declared, 'but I do esteem him a true one...a great soul: one of those who cannot but be in earnest.' At a less elevated but nevertheless telling level half a century later, the Victorian entrepreneur Thomas Holloway had little difficulty in having the Prophet's image affixed to the Chapel of his university college for women alongside other great teachers of humankind: In the twentieth century attitudes range from the secular that would dismiss Muhammad along with Jesus as the misguided catalyst of religious enthusiasm through to some recent Christian Roman Catholic scholars of Islam who have gone so far as to regard him as a religious genius and have wondered if he might not have been a true prophet.



Muhammad in calligraphy from Turkey. The depiction of religious figures has been discouraged in Muslim culture.

Roman Catholic, Gibb an Anglican Protestant, and Hodgson a Quaker, who brought the insights of their personal commitment to their studies.

Those involved in this tradition of scholarship considered themselves committed to the objective study of the Islamic world. In recent years, however, and in particular since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, these scholars have been accused of distorting truth, that is, of practising 'orientalism'. The charges are that they have explained Islam in terms of some unchanging essence rather than subject to processes of differentiation and change similar to those undergone by the West, that they have created a body of received truths about Islam which have authority in western academic life but little relation to Muslim realities, that they have in fact created a structure of knowledge to explain superiority of the West over the Islamic world and to justify its continuing domination. There is a grain of truth in these charges, and more than a grain when we come to the popular discourse of politicians and the press. But these charges are less fairly applied to the twentieth-century masters of Islamic studies. And they are less fairly applied to most practitioners of the subject in recent decades, who bring the

Opposite From the eighteenth century the Muslim world has been a particular arena in which westerners, in large part men, have played out their sexual fantasies. Here artists found rich inspiration. Striking was the orientalist school of painters for whom the harem, the odalisque, or the women's bathhouse were frequent subjects. Such paintings often convey a mood of sensuality, indeed sexual promise, as is the case with 'The Almeh', an Arab woman painted by the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904).

insights of all disciplines from anthropology to psychology to their research, who more often than not work side by side with Muslims in their studies, and who reveal the many different ways there have been and are of being Muslim.

Contemporary attitudes to Islam contain much of the old Christian polemic in modern form, which despite the efforts of modern scholars of the Muslim world, is firmly underpinned by the continuing vigour of the old 'orientalist' understandings in popular discourse. Thus, the old objection to Islam which focused on sex and sensuality has become a new objection to the position of women. The worry about violence has become a disapproval of the approach to human rights in Muslim states. The fear of Muslim power has emerged again as the rise of the Islamists has led to talk of a green menace. Islamists, indeed, in their desire to subordinate all of human life to their understanding of revelation, provoke the strongest responses from the secular West. They commit a form of heresy in western eyes by wishing to deny the achievements of the Enlightenment and on occasion, as in the case of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, by trying to impose their standards on the West. Ironically, Rushdie's unflattering picture of the Prophet, which has its antecedents in the Christian polemic of the Middle Ages, is one which most contemporary Christian clergy would deplore. In a secular and materialistic world, the Church, particularly the Roman Catholic branch, finds it has more in common with those who believe than with those who do not. 'Upon the Muslims too', declared the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, 'the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, maker of heaven and earth and Speaker to men.' Since this Council the Vatican has found increasing reason to make common cause with forces in the Muslim world.

MUSLIM ATTITUDES TO THE WEST

Those setting out to explore Islamic history should also benefit from knowledge of the range of Muslim attitudes to the West, and how they have changed through time. In many ways they represent the reverse of the coin of western attitudes. In particular, moreover, in the passing on of received 'truths' without reference to reality, they contain elements of a Muslim 'occidentalism' to match western orientalism.

For a thousand years the Muslims were little interested in Europe. They neither wished to learn its languages nor to travel its lands. They had only the haziest idea of its geography and its peoples. They were sure that Europe contained a lesser civilization that had nothing to offer them. As far as Muslims noticed Europeans at all their attitudes contained the following strands: the Europeans, as Christians, were people of the book (*ahl-i kitab*), people to whom God had revealed knowledge, but also people who had misunderstood his message; they were *kafirs*, from the Arabic meaning to disbelieve or deny, therefore infidels, and they would be referred to as such both in speech and in official documents, often accompanied

by a curse; they were dirty: 'they do not cleanse or bathe themselves more than twice a year, and then in cold water', commented one Muslim of the medieval Franks, 'and then they do not wash their garments from the time they put them on until they fall to pieces'; and they permitted their women amazing liberties: 'the women do not cover themselves decently', declared the companion of the Ottoman prince Jem on his visit to Nice in 1482, 'but on the contrary they are proud to kiss and embrace. If they grow tired of their games and need to rest, they sit on the knees of strange men.' From the sixteenth century some interest in the West developed, especially at the level of, say, the Ottoman, Safawid, or Mughal courts. The technology of warfare was of particular interest but so too were European arts, architecture, and even religion. This said, at the level of mosque and bazar, Muslims remained indifferent.

From the nineteenth century Muslims were increasingly forced to take notice of the West. Some of the old attitudes continued and were joined by new ones. The presence of Christian missionaries who were supported by European power in Muslim lands meant that it was no longer enough to dismiss Christians as infidels; in northern India Muslims went on the attack debating their faith with missionaries and developing the modern Muslim critique of Christianity based on the implausibility of the doctrine of the Trinity and the corruption of the scriptures. At the same time, ruling elites found themselves forced to admire the military strength and material achievements of the West. 'So it went on until all had passed', declared the secretary to the Moroccan envoy to France in 1846 after watching a review of French troops, 'leaving our hearts consumed with fire for what we had seen of their overwhelming power and mastery ... In comparison with the weakness of Islam ... how confident they are, how impressive their state of readiness, how competent they are in matters of state, how firm their laws, how capable in war.' It was but a short move from admiration to resentment at the bullying way in which this strength was used. Each advance of western power into the Islamic world from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 to the Allied occupation of Istanbul after the First World War etched bitterness yet more deeply into Muslim psyches.

In the twentieth century the complexity of attitudes increased. Christianity moved to being more an ally than a threat; the infidel is less the Christian than those who do not believe at all. Inter-faith discussion is now common, and it is possible, for instance, for Christian and Iranian Shia theologians to come together, as they did in Birmingham (England) in 1992, and to discover substantial common ground. Admiration of the West has become large-scale; secular Muslim leaders have copied its ways in order to make state and society strong enough to stand on their own feet. At its extreme this could mean a forced adoption of western ways. Thus Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, told his National Assembly in 1927:

Muslim images of western women

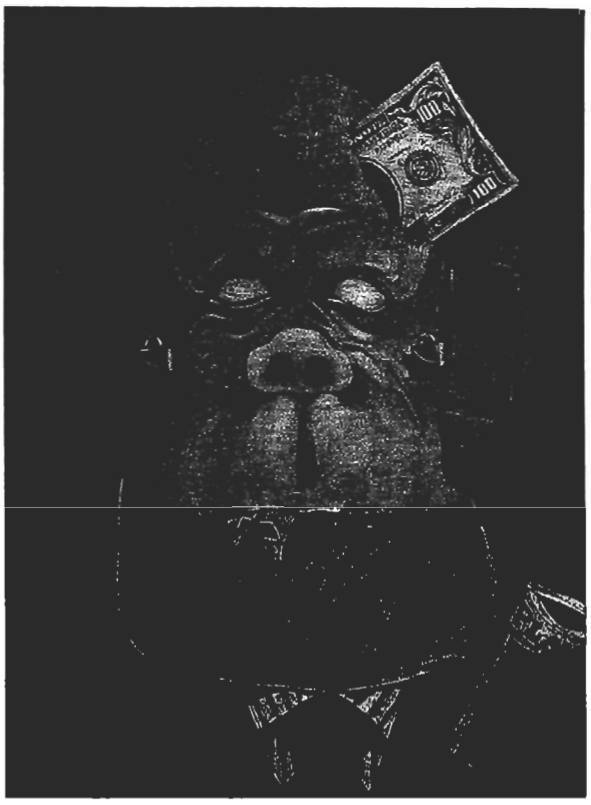
Nothing about the West has struck Muslims more forcibly than the greater liberties of all kinds which women enjoyed. Their comments reveal how differently their own societies were usually ordered and also, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, their concern for their own future development. The Crusades in the eastern Mediterranean offered opportunities for detached observation. Usamah, a Syrian, was astonished by the licentious freedom of the Frankish women. Their men, moreover, were 'void of all zeal and jealousy' in relation to their women. Evliya Chelebi, the seventeenth-century Turkish traveller, was amazed at the public deference shown to women. He tells how even the Habsburg emperor would make way for a member of the opposite sex. 'This is the most extraordinary spectacle. In this country, and elsewhere in the lands of the infidels, women have the chief say.' Nowhere, by common consensus, were women so dominant as in France. 'Men among them are the slaves of women', declared Shaykh Rifaa al-Tahtawi, an Egyptian who stayed in Paris from 1826 to 1831, 'and subject to their commands whether they be beautiful or not'. The Indian educational reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan had another point to make – the high levels of education amongst European women. In Paris in 1869 he noted how a shop assistant talked four languages. In London he was amazed to discover that his landlady's sister was keen to read books of religious polemic and was able to discuss them with excellent sense. He was even more astonished to discover the female servants of the house reading newspapers and journals. The dominant response, however, at least amongst Muslim men, has always been one of shock at the freedom enjoyed by European women. If this was a source of pleasurable surprise for early commentators, it came to be a matter of deep concern as in the twentieth century European values began to make serious inroads into Muslim societies. Such freedoms led to moral degeneration. 'To develop a magnetic attraction for a man has become a mania with the women there', declared the Indian Islamist Mawdudi, who was concerned that strict rules of modesty should be enforced: 'men, on the other hand, are growing more and more voracious in their sexual appetite ... This disease is eating fast into the very vitals of the western nations. No nation in the past has survived it. It destroys all the mental and physical capabilities of man that God has endowed him with for his well-being and prosperity.'

The freedom of western women shocks and threatens but is also a subject of prurient interest for Muslims. Over the past two centuries in the West the increasing presence of women outside the home, the display of the feminine form, often scantily clad, in public, and the many opportunities openly enjoyed by women have more and more defined the difference between western and Muslim civilizations. For many Muslims, in particular Islamists, as western values have invaded public space, the seclusion of women has become the focal point of identity of an Islamically ordered society. This cartoon is from *L'Oud* ('The Lute', 1983), a strip by Farid Boudjellah for his compatriots, the Beurs, or second-generation north Africans living in France. It depicts Kader, an immigrant labourer from Algeria. The centrality of women to the differences between the two cultures to which he belongs is clear.

> Gentlemen, it was necessary to abolish the fez, which sat on the heads of our nation as an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress and civilization, to accept in its place the hat, the headgear used by the whole civilized world, and in this way to demonstrate that the Turkish nation, in its mentality, as in other respects, in no way diverges from civilized social life.

As might be expected, some Muslims have doubted whether western forms of progress were appropriate for Muslims. 'The westerners', declared the Indian poet Iqbal, who was a direct contemporary of Ataturk, 'have lost the vision of heaven, they go hunting for the pure spirit in the belly.' Both communist and capitalist roads were false ones: 'The soul of both is impatient and intolerant, both of them know not God, and deceive mankind. One lives by production, the other by taxation and man is a glass caught between these two stones.'

In the hands of the Islamist movement of the second half of the twentieth century this attitude has become an aggressive rejection of western models of progress. 'Come, friends,' exhorted Ali Shariati, ideologue of the Iranian revolution, 'let us abandon Europe; let us cease this nauseating, apish imitation of Europe. Let us leave behind this Europe that always speaks of humanity, but destroys human beings wherever it finds them.' Side by side with this rejection, there has been continuing anguish at what is seen to be western bullying of Muslim peoples. Ayatollah Khomeini's howl of rage, when in 1964 the Iranian parliament granted US citizens extra-territorial rights in exchange for a $200 million loan, spoke for all Muslims who had felt powerless in the face of a bullying West from the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 to the Gulf War in 1991: 'they have reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog'.



Two strands in Muslim responses to the West have been rejection of western materialism and of western attitudes to women. This repulsive image by Hussein Khosrojerdi, born in 1957 and a graduate of the College of Fine Arts, Teheran University, is infused with the spirit of rejection which animated the Iranian revolution. The westerner is portrayed as blind and deaf to the world and motivated by money and by sex. The painting is entitled 'Corruptor of the Earth'. Ironically, it was western thought that influenced groups involved in bringing about the revolution as well as those who consolidated it.

INTERACTION AND INTERDEPENDENCE

One of the misfortunes of the long history of stereotyping and conflict between Islam and the West is that it has fostered ignorance. Muslims and westerners know too little of how much they have in common and how much they owe to each other.

There are shared religious roots. Muslims, like Jews and Christians, believe in one God, in prophecy, and revelation. Twenty-one of the twenty-eight prophets mentioned in the Quran appear in the Christian Bible. Muslims are as familiar with the stories of Jacob, Joseph, and Job as any Christian. The Quran specifically recognizes the scriptures of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David,

This painting from a dispersed manuscript made for the Mughal emperor Akbar underlines the point about prophets shared by Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The Persian couplet above the tent declares: 'With the compassion of Jacob, and the countenance of Joseph, with the piety of John [the Baptist], and the sovereignty of Solomon'. Under the tent Solomon (Sulayman) sits enthroned and listening to the hoopoe at his left hand, who is telling him of the imminent arrival of the Queen of Sheba. For Muslims, Solomon was the model of the perfect king, with authority over humans and animals, and natural and supernatural forces.

and the Gospel of Jesus as books revealed by God. The same angel, Gabriel, who came to Mary to announce her mission came to Muhammad to tell him to recite the Quran. Muslims, Christians, and Jews all look back to Abraham as the first prophet to receive revelation. Muslims trace their lineage back to him, through Ishmael the child of his servant wife Hagar, while Christians and Jews do so through the son of his legal wife Sarah. Muslims revere Jesus as a Prophet and they honour Mary as his virgin mother; they accept moral responsibility for their actions and anticipate a day of judgment with its attendant outcomes of heaven and hell. Major differences are that Muslims do not accept the divinity of Jesus and regard the Quran as perfecting a tradition of prophecy which Jews and Christians had allowed to become distorted through human intervention.

There are also shared intellectual roots. It is too little known that the great heritage of Hellenistic learning has been as much cherished in the Islamic world as in the West. The works of Aristotle, Plato, and their subsequent elaborators – Stoics, Pythagoreans, Neo-Platonists – were eagerly devoured by Muslims and had a major impact on theological, mystical, and political thought. The influence of Plato is evident in Islamic political thought down to the twentieth century, while to this very day Aristotle is referred to in some traditional Muslim schools as the 'first teacher'. The Greek achievement in mathematics, astronomy, and optics was greatly extended by Muslims; the names Euclid, Archimedes, or Ptolemy speak as resonantly to them of scientific achievement as they do for any westerner. In the

same way Muslims developed the medical system of Galen which is practised even now in South Asia and referred to as 'Unani Tibb' or Greek Medicine.

Because the Muslims absorbed and cherished this great heritage from classical civilization, they were able to transmit its benefits along with much that they themselves had created to the West. Indeed, medieval Europe was profoundly influenced by the Arab-Islamic world, although to precisely what extent is a matter of debate. The channels of influence were in small part the Byzantine empire, in greater part Islamic Sicily, and in large part Islamic Spain. The trade networks of the Mediterranean and the international connections that developed out of Europe's crusading enterprise also played a role. The major period of influence was from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. This was the time when notable centres for the translation of Arabic texts were set up in Sicily, Barcelona, Toledo, and Seville. By this means the Hellenistic achievement and its various Muslim elaborations in mathematics, astronomy, optics, astrology, alchemy, natural history, geography, medicine, philosophy, theology, and mysticism entered the western world. Two Muslim names stand before all others for their influence on medieval Christian thought: Avicenna (Ibn Sina), whose Neo-Platonism was devoured by Christian mystics, while technical equipment was borrowed by scholars ranging from Aquinas to Duns Scotus; and Averroes (Ibn Rushd), whose commentary on Aristotle was a source of controversy and scholarship down to the end of the sixteenth century.

The material culture of the Islamic world was also influential. The impact of Muslim achievements in textiles, carpets, metalwork, glass-making, miniature painting, and bookbinding can be seen across the medieval and early modern European world. Silk and paper came to the West by Muslim hands. So, too, did the cultivation of sugar, cotton, and citrus fruit. Moreover, a host of Arabic words associated with trade have entered European languages, from magazine or the French *magazin* (Arabic *makhazin*, a storehouse) to traffic (Arabic *tafriq*, distribution).

Amongst the greatest areas of influence is Spain whose development in everything from place names to Catholic mysticism was shaped by 700 years of Muslim presence. But it should also be noted that recent scholarship has come to find the roots of medieval scholasticism and the development of universities in Muslim influence. It has even gone so far as to find the origins of Renaissance humanism in that of classical Islam. 'I have read, reverend fathers,' Pico della Mirandola begins his oration *The Dignity of Man* in the late fifteenth century, 'that when Abdala the Saracen was asked what he regarded as most to be wondered at on the world stage ... he answered that there was nothing to be seen more wonderful than man.'

Over the past two centuries, on the other hand, the Islamic world has come to be penetrated and shaped by the West, and much more so than ever the West was affected by influences from its neighbour. Western power has, more often than

not, dictated the boundaries of Muslim countries and fashioned the modern states under which their people live. Western power, too, has integrated Muslim economies into the new western-dominated world economy. In the process it has created whole new worlds of production and exchange which totally overshadow those of handicraft production, the bazar, the communal solidarities they have bred, and the Islamic institutions which have rested upon them for more than a millennium. Muslims have come to exist in new urban landscapes fashioned after those of the West with broad streets, glass-fronted shops, the roar of motor transport and a suburban hinterland of flats, villas, and slums. Their lives have come to be furnished by a material culture taken from the West – biros and bicycles, tables and chairs, while for men the western uniform of shirt and trousers has been widely adopted. Their minds and understandings have come to be filled with knowledge derived from the West. The new school systems of the modern nation states were concerned to transmit knowledge which it was hoped carried with it the secrets of western strength. At elite levels Muslims often came to be educated not in their own languages but in English, French, or Russian. Many, and not just at the level of the elite, came to be divorced from their heritage of learning and to seek to understand it primarily through western sources. Even those who have led cultural resistance to the West have drawn on its wisdom to make their case.

Muslims in the West: allotment-holders show off the fruits of their labours in Sheffield, Great Britain. In the 1950s and 1960s large numbers of Muslims migrated to Britain where they are now an established presence, contributing to many aspects of British life. Similar developments have taken place in France, Germany, the USA and, other western societies, where Muslims now number over 20 million.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of US forces in the Gulf, review ground troops from sixteen countries before the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991. The invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990, and the threat this presented both to western oil supplies and Gulf regimes, dramatically underlined the interdependence of the West and this part of the Muslim world.

Muhammad Iqbal's thought owed much to that of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Renan, that of Ali Shariati to Sartre, Fanon, and Massignon. One of the reasons why the Iranian theologians who went to Birmingham in 1992 found substantial common ground with their Christian collocutors was that they were steeped in western intellectual traditions. Not only did they know the classical Hellenic philosophers but also the work of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger as well as that of Christian theologians such as Barth, Tillich, and Bultmann.

The Islamic and the western worlds are not only profoundly interrelated but also increasingly interdependent. More than twenty million Muslims live in the West and are not unnaturally concerned that their societies should respect their culture and values. On the other hand the West has substantial economic and strategic interests in the Islamic world, as demonstrated by its warlike response to Saddam Husayn's invasion of Kuwait. Nor should this interdependence be restricted to the West. China has a Muslim community as populous as that in the West and no less keen for its views to be respected. Japan by the early 1990s had come to regard the Middle East as important enough to have about 100 trained Arabists in its foreign service. In this increasingly interdependent world, moreover, the rapid globalization of the media and communications is forging yet further connections. We can all, as never before, peer into each other's worlds. Such a capacity makes it crucial that we have the understanding to see through the veils of prejudice and cultural difference to grasp the common thread of humanity we all share.