


Touro Institute  מכור טרו

*In conjunction with the*



# **Islamic Societies of the Middle East and North Africa: Religion, History, and Culture**



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**Professor Asma Afsaruddin**

Middle East Studies  
Department of Classics  
University of Notre Dame

## Course Description

This new course offers a panoramic survey of the Islamic societies of the Middle East and North Africa from their origins to the present day. It will deal with the history and expansion of Islam, both as a world religion and civilization, from its birth in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century to its subsequent spread to other parts of western Asia and North Africa. Issues of religious practices, political governance and movements, gender, social relations and cultural norms will be explored in relation to a number of Islamic societies in the region. The course foregrounds the complexities and diversity present in a critical geographic area of what we call the Islamic world today.

## About the Professor



**Professor Asma Afsaruddin, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies

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Asma Afsaruddin is associate professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies in the Department of Classics and previously taught at Harvard University. Her fields of specialization are the religious and political thought of Islam, Qur'an and hadith studies, Islamic intellectual history, and gender. Among other publications, she is the author of *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002) and of the forthcoming *The First Muslims: A Short History* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2007), and the editor of *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiation of Female "Public" Space in Islamic/ate Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1999). She has also written over fifty research articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries on various aspects of Islamic thought and has lectured widely in the US, Europe, and the Middle East. Afsaruddin serves on the editorial boards of the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Islamic World* and the *MESA Bulletin* (Cambridge University Press). Among her

current research projects is a book-length manuscript about competing perspectives on and martyrdom in pre-modern and modern Islamic thought. Her research has won funding from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, among others.

## Syllabus

### Course Objectives

To familiarize the student with the cultural, religious, and political landscape of the Islamic societies in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, the course will examine the perception of Islam worldwide. This will include an exploration of how we construct the Middle East and refer to it through a Western prism in literature, historical narratives, etc.

### Required Texts

- 1) Bates, Daniel G. and Amal Rassam, *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*. Oxford, 1998.
- 2) Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York, 1994.
- 3) Afsaruddin, Asma, ed. *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female & Public Space in Islamicate Societies*. Cambridge, Mass., 1999.
- 4) Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun and other Palestinian Stories*. Boulder, Colo., 1999.
- 5) Esposito, John. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. Oxford, 2002.

### Other Readings

A course packet containing several other readings is also required. The bibliographic information for these readings can be found in the 'Readings and Assigned Viewing' subsection of this course.

## Calendar

Session	Topic	Readings
1	Introduction to the Geography and History of the Middle East; the Rise of Islam	Chapter One from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 1-29
2	Islamic Civilizations and Societies	Chapter Two from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 30-57; VIDEO: The Five Pillars
3	The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods I	Begin reading Edward Said's <i>Orientalism</i> ; MOVIE: <i>The Battle of Algiers</i>

4	The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods II	Finish reading <i>Orientalism</i> ; VIDEO: Edward Said on Orientalism
5	Religious and Intellectual Trends and Movements	Chapter Three from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 58-89
6	Diversity of the Middle East: Ethnicity, Communal Identity, and Authority	Chapters Four and Ten from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 90-119; 251-277
7	Kinship, Marriage, and the Family	Chapters Eight and Nine from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 201-249; Intro, pp. 1-28 and "Gender and Sexuality: Belonging to the National Order," in <i>Hermeneutics and Honor</i> , pp. 70-88
8	Villages, Urban Lives, and Change	Chapters Six and Seven from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 143-200; VIDEO: The Islamic City
9	Popular Islam: Folk Practices and Beliefs	Annemarie Schimmel, "Mystical Islam and Sufi Brotherhoods," "Popular Piety and the Veneration of Saints" (from CP)
10	The Palestinian <i>Nakba</i> —Tragedy and Conflict	William Cleveland, "The Palestine Mandate and the Birth of the State of Israel" (from CP); and <i>Men in the Sun</i> (entire novel); MOVIE (optional): <i>The Dupes</i> (adaptation of <i>Men in the Sun</i> )
11	Gendered Identities and Islamic Feminism	Afsaruddin, ed., <i>Hermeneutics and Honor</i> , pp. 29-54; 70-88; 89-116; 159-88
12	The Onslaught of Modernity I: Are Western and Muslim Societies on a Collision Course?	John Trumbour, "The Clash of Civilizations," in Qureshi and Sells, ed., <i>The New Crusades</i> ; Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," ( <a href="#">online</a> ); Mazrui and Mazrui's "Islam and Civilization," in Tehranian and Chapell, ed., <i>Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millenium</i>
13	The Rise of Political Islam and Militancy	Chapter Eleven from <i>Peoples and Cultures</i> , pp. 278-304; and <i>Unholy War</i> (entire book)
14	The Onslaught of Modernity II: The Challenges of Political Authoritarianism, Democracy, and Globalization	Juan Cole, "The Modernity of Theocracy"; and Mehran Kamrava, "The Question of Democracy"; Class lecture by Professor John Voll of Georgetown University, "Modernities, Democracies, and Islam(s)"
15	The Middle East in the Age of Globalization and Cybernetics	Jon Anderson, "Wiring Up: The Internet Difference for Muslim Networks"
16	Finals Week (no new material)	

# Readings and Assigned Viewing

- Anderson, Jon W. "Wiring Up: The Internet Difference for Muslim Networks." In *Muslim Networks: Medium, Method, Metaphor*. Miriam Cooke & Bruce B. Lawrence, eds. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. pp. 252-63.
- Cleveland, William L. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 2004. pp. 222-255. (A supplemental chronology of Palestinian-Israeli relations is included in the "Study Materials" section of this course.)
- Cole, Juan. *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002. pp. 189-211.
- Huntington, Samuel. "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* vol. 72, n.3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49. (In order to obtain subscription access to this article, please visit the [Council on Foreign Relations website](http://www.cfr.org/). - <http://www.cfr.org/> )
- Kamrava, Mehran. *The Modern Middle East: A Political History since the First World War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. pp. 331-358.
- Mazrui, Ali A., and Mazrui, Alamin M. "Islam and Civilization." In *Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millennium*, Majid Tehranian & David W. Chappell, eds. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002. pp. 139-160.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1992. pp. 101-126.
- Trumbour, John. "The Clash of Civilizations: Samuel P. Huntington, Bernard Lewis, and the Remaking of the Post-Cold War World Order." In *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, Emran Qureshi & Michael A. Sells, eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. pp. 88-130.
- [MOVIES AND VIDEOS](#)
  - [Edward Said on Orientalism](#). Dir. and prod. Sut Jhally. Videocassette. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1998.
  - [Islam and Pluralism](#). Epicflow Production of Channel Four. Videocassette. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 1994.
  - [The Battle of Algiers](#). Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, prod. Igor Film. Videocassette. New York: Guidance Associates, 1988.
  - [The Five Pillars of Islam](#). Dir. and prod. Michele Arnaud. Videocassette. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities, 1988.
  - [The Glory and the Power: Fighting back fundamentalisms observed](#). Dir. and prod. Bill Jersey. Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 1992.
  - [The Islamic City](#). Dir. and prod. Michele Arnaud. Videocassette. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities, 1988.
- [Online translation of the Holy Qur'an](http://www.oneummah.net/quran/quran.html) - <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/quran.html>

# Lectures

Week	Topic
1	Introduction to the Geography and History of the Middle East
2	The Rise of Islam and the Life of the Prophet Muhammad
3	Medieval Expansion of Islam
4	The Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods
5	The Shi'i Muslims and their historical development
6	Diversity of the Middle East: Ethnicity, Communal Identity, and Authority
7	Villages, Urban Lives, and Change in Islamic Societies
8	Islamic Mysticism and the Influence of Sufism
9	Revivalism and Reform Movements within Islam

## Lecture 1

### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MIDDLE EAST

#### **THE MIDDLE EAST:**

Geographic and cultural region located in southwestern Asia and northeastern Africa. The geopolitical term “Middle East” was first coined in 1902 by a United States naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan. (Originally referred to the Asian region south of the Black Sea between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and India to the east). The older term for this area was the “Near East” loaded term to the British colonialist rulers. In modern scholarship, and for the purposes of this class, the term “Middle East” refers collectively to the Asian countries of Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait,

Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and the African country of Egypt. The Middle East and North Africa brings in the Muslim countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and the Sudan. An even more broad definition of the term would include Afghanistan and Pakistan since they are adjacent areas, are predominantly Muslim and share many cultural and historical similarities with the rest of the Middle East. Arabs in fact make up the overwhelming majority of the people of the Middle East but we also have non-Arab Iranians, Turks, the Hebraic people or Jews, now associated primarily with Israel, although you continue to have Jewish communities the rest of the Middle East, the Berbers of North Africa, and the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, for example. This is a political map of the region:



The Present Day Middle East and North Africa  
Image courtesy of David Poell

The Middle East is described as the cradle of civilization. Why is this? By 300 BC, as your book (Bates and Rassam) points out [p. 20 ff], 1) we see the division of society into a number of social classes; 2) the development of large, densely populated urban centers, or the rise of cities; 3) and the emergence of centralized political institutions, leading to the formation of the state. We also have evidence of the rise of different kinds of occupations other than the primarily agricultural one, as artisans, merchants, priests, soldiers, and kings. Long-distance trade becomes important.

## **WRITING:**

Phoenicians: a nation of seafarers and traders: developed a phonetic alphabet; previously hieroglyphics (Egypt) and cuneiform (Akkadians and Sumerians)

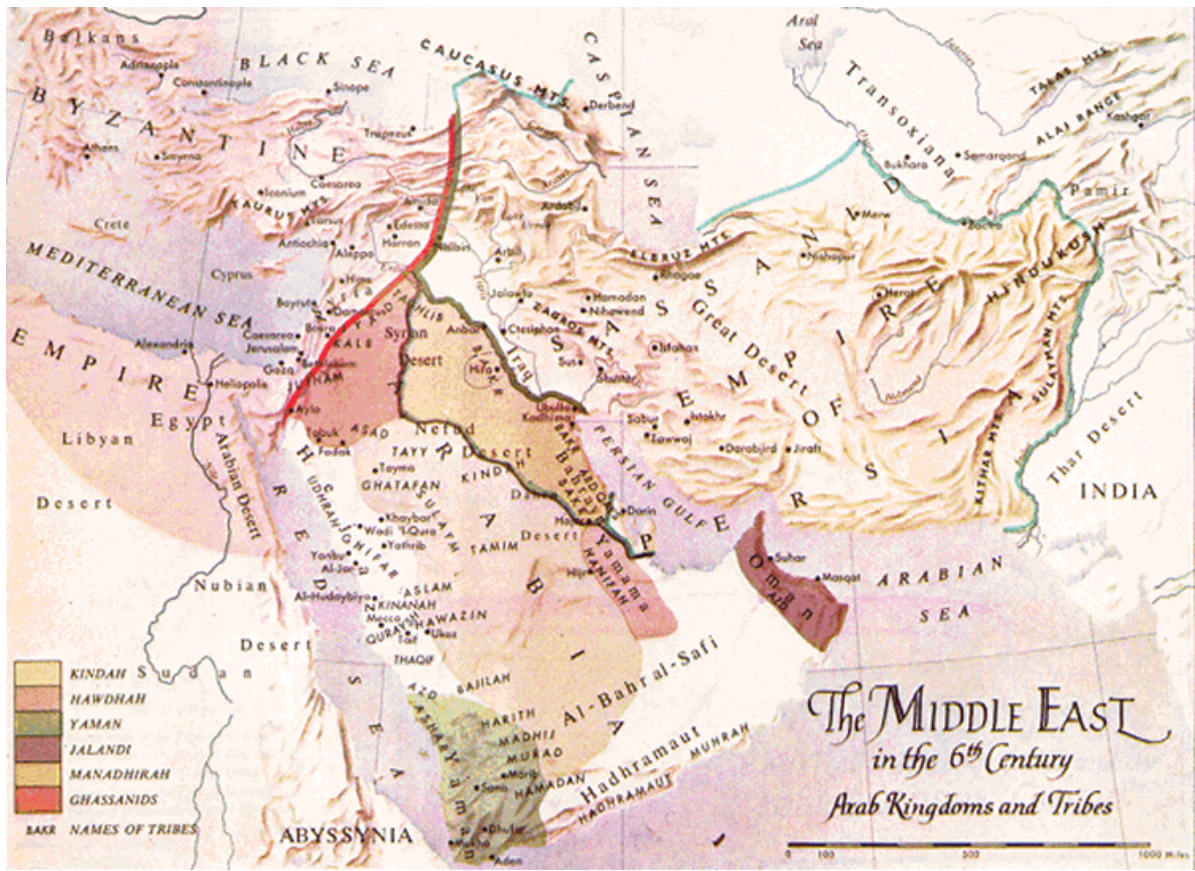
Writing made possible: keeping of written records, the spread of information and therefore education, and progressively led to a more sophisticated civilization.

## **THE AREA WE ARE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH:**

Today the part of the world that first witnessed the rise of Islam is the area known as Saudi Arabia, containing two of Islam's holiest sites, Mecca and Medina. In earlier periods, known simply as ARABIA or the Arabian Peninsula. We do not know that much about life in the Arabian peninsula before the seventh century when Islam arose there. Much of the literature during this period was oral; there was much poetry and exquisite poetry at that. What we know about the culture and mores of Arabian society from this period is largely gleaned from this oral literature which was written down during the Islamic period. From the viewpoint of Islamic history, we have two very distinct periods: the pre-Islamic and the Islamic periods. In Islamic chronology, there are two main historical periods, the "Jahiliyya" era and the Islamic era. (Please see the meaning of Jahiliyya in the Bates Rassam glossary.)

This map shows the tribal landscape of the Jahili world in the century before the Prophet Muhammad.





Territorial Control of Middle Eastern Territories during the 6th Century  
Image courtesy of Princeton University

The great divide is 622 of the Common Era which is year 1 of the Islamic era. We'll explain the significance of this date later. From the existing literature of the pre-Islamic period, we are able to reconstruct important pieces of information regarding the construction of Jahili Arab society. The basic unit of pre-Islamic Arab society was the tribe. Membership and affiliation with one's natal TRIBE was crucial for individual identity and standing in society. One basically did not exist - as a person or individual - and did not have any social power without reference to one's tribe. Personal names to this day can reflect a person's genealogical descent (nasab). Descent is always patrilineal, that is traced through the father and his male ancestors. The name of a tribe is usually prefaced by the word Banu, meaning sons.

The importance of kinship and tribal affiliation was something the Arabs shared with other Semitic peoples: Thinking of how the [Gospel of Matthew](http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html) - <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html> - begins with the extended GENEALOGY OF JESUS: it refers to Jesus Christ as the son of David the son of Abraham and then through Abraham reaches down to Joseph and to Mary, his wife. THIS REFLECTS A COMMON SEMITIC PREOCCUPATION WITH ONE'S LINES OF KINSHIP; IT IS BOTH A SOURCE OF IDENTITY AND LEGITIMATION OF AUTHORITY AND POWER.

## **WHO ARE THE ARABS, ETHNICALLY AND HISTORICALLY?**

Popularly, Arabs, like other ancient Middle Eastern peoples, are considered to be the descendants of Shem, son of Noah, and therefore considered to be Semites. Like ancient Babylonians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, the Hebrews, and the Aramaeans. Another son of Noah, called Ham, gives his name to a closely related group called the Hamites, among whom are the Ethiopians (called Abyssinians in ancient times), the ancient Egyptians, and the Sabians and Himyarites, in southern Arabia. These terminologies were made popular by European scholars based especially on chapter ten in Genesis from the Old Testament. Where the original home of the Semites was remains a point of debate and discussion for scholars today; some say they come from some part of Asia, i.e. originally from the Arabian Peninsula or from Mesopotamia, some say they crossed into Asia originally from Africa. But in any case, based on linguistic evidence, we know that these various peoples of the Middle East must have originally come from one stock and then settled in various parts of what we call the Middle East, including North Africa, to become distinctive ethnic groups.

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA is divided into North and South; divided by a desolate, desert area called *Rub` al-khali* (the Empty Quarter). This is not only a physical division: the peoples of the North and the South are in fact two peoples with differing languages and characteristics. The people of the North considered themselves to be the descendants of a legendary figure known as Adnan, who in turn was believed to be the descendant of Isma`il, the biblical Ishmael, the son of Abraham. A prominent tribe from among the North Arabians is the Banu Quraysh, the most famous member of which is Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah, the prophet of Islam. The people of the South considered themselves to be the descendants of a man called Yaqtan, who has been popularly identified with Joktan mentioned in the Bible (as the son of Eber) in Genesis.

Until about 600 A.D. (of the common era), it was the southern Arabs who were culturally and materially more advanced than the northern Arabs. Yemen was actually referred to in ancient times as Arabia Felix (happy or prosperous Arabia), the site of an ancient civilization and of fabulous wealth, spices, gold, and precious stones. It is believed that the legendary gold mines of Solomon were located in southern Arabia. However, by the sixth century, the south Arabian kingdom called the Himyarite was overthrown by the Abyssinians (Ethiopians) and by 600 A.D., south Arabic was basically a dead language. The Arabic language of northern Arabia now gained prominence and this is the language we now refer to when we speak of the Arabic language.

## **POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND WORLDVIEW:**

As far as the INDIVIDUAL was concerned, one knew where one belonged; he or she had the right to a place in the tribe; as long as one did not commit a crime or violate its mores or rules and thus become an outlaw, one could count on its help and support.

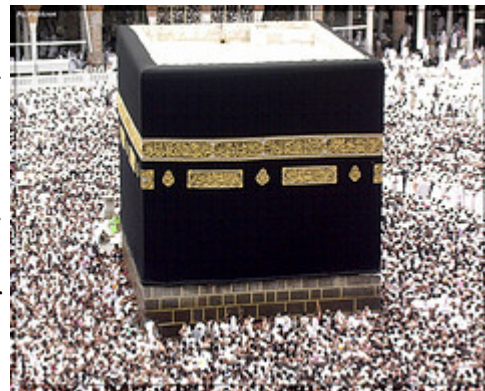
Based on this strong identification with their individual tribe and the larger clan of which the individual tribe was a member, the Arabs evolved an intricate system of kinship and genealogical relationship. On the positive side, this system helped them distinguish between personalities and defined their relationship to one another, to remember

historical events and keep track of participants in them; in short it was their way of recording history.

ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, this intense loyalty to one's tribe and the sense of partisanship that it created often led to tribal feuds. Blood revenge was one frequent reason for outbreaks of hostilities. For every blood-guilt, whatever the motive for its being committed, imposed upon any member of the tribe the duty of avenging it; he was, in turn, the object of an avenger. Thus, wars between whole tribes or individual members were constant, and only willingness to offer and accept a ransom instead of paying with blood prevented them from continuing indefinitely. These wars are the subject of those literary narratives I mentioned before, the Ayyam al-'Arab.

Among the Arabs we find those who lived in settled communities in urban areas as well as the "Bedouins," the nomads who lived in the desert and who traveled throughout it for their livelihood.

The settlements developed from the presence of water in an oasis or grew up around a sanctuary which in turn often owed its existence to the presence of a well, as was the case in Mecca, the most renowned of all. The famous sanctuary in Mecca is the Ka'ba which as Arab and Islamic tradition maintains was built by Abraham and which then consequently became a shrine to the pagan gods of the Meccans. Another important place associated with the environs of Mecca was a marketplace called Ukaz. This was an important center for the cultural and literary activities of the peninsular Arabs of this time. Every year a fair would be held here at which the most renowned poets would gather to compete with one another in the composition of poetry, some of which have come down to us. Other important settled centers were Ta'if, Yathrib which later was renamed Medina, and Khaybar, an important oasis town. The importance of these settlements lay in their role as places for rest and replenishment of food and water for the caravans that passed through them on their way from South Arabia to Egypt and the Fertile Crescent and beyond. North and Central Arabia contributed by way of merchandise to this trade in dates from the oases, riding and pack camels which the Bedouins bred and their wool and skins. Caravans from Yemen and Hadramawt and from faraway India brought back incense or sandalwood and spices.



The Kabba during the Hajj  
Photo courtesy of Turkey Al-Fassam.

## RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES AND IDEAS PREVAILING IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA:

Our sources do not give us copious evidence of the religious practices and emotions of the Jahili Arabs. We know they worshipped a multiplicity of gods much like the ancient Greeks and Romans or other ancient Near Eastern peoples. These deities were housed in the Ka'ba to which they performed pilgrimage. The Ka'ba is the cube-shaped temple in the city of Mecca which tradition affirms was originally built by Abraham and his son, Ishmael, and dedicated to the one God. Under the pre-Islamic Arabs, the Ka'ba was given over to the worship of idols. The pre-Islamic Arabs also subscribed to an animistic or pantheistic religion; that is they regarded the natural phenomena as manifestations of the divine. In the harsh environment of the desert, exposed to hardships of climate and geography, constantly endangered by the hostility of man and nature, the Bedouin must often have felt small and in need of divine assistance. There is evidence from the Quran and other sources which indicate that some of the pre-Islamic Arabs like the Sabeans subscribed to an astral belief; i.e. they worshipped celestial bodies like the sun, the moon, and the stars. The pagan Arabs probably had little or no concept of the after-life or of personal accountability for their deeds; no explicit expression of this belief can be found in our texts.

But this did not mean that the pre-Islamic Arab did not aspire to spiritual and moral ideals. The very important notion of *muruwwa* may be seen to be akin to the Latin notion of *virtus*, from which we get the English word *virtue*. *Muruwwa* is comprised of honor (*sharaf*), hospitality (*karam*), loyalty (*wafa*), help for (*najda*) the weak, particularly widows or women in general, and orphan children. Blood-feuds (*thar*) were conducted in order to avenge loss of either personal or tribal honor. Ideas of chivalrous behavior were part of the inter-tribal moral code. To the domain of chivalry belonged ideas of gallantry to women, holding to pledges, avoidance of treachery in combat and refraining from fighting an unarmed opponent. We find all or some of these themes reflected in the pre-Islamic literature and in the *Ayyam al-`Arab*, the battle-days of Arabs.

We also find glimpses in this literature into the political organization of the tribe. The tribal group of the Bedouin was a closely knit one. Only as a member of the tribe could the Bedouin Arab be assured of protection and help in his feuds and raids for the sake of revenge or booty. Political organization tended to be loose and very flexible, for lack of a better word, the internal organization of the tribe has been described as a democratic one. Leadership rested in the most admired and honored, and often the strongest member of the tribe, the man who could guide because of superior wisdom and insight. At the same time he dispensed advice and charity, speaking with authority for the tribal community. A leader in particular had to have *muruwwa*. This leader, known as the *sayyid* (chieftain, ruler) or *shaykh*, was a *primus inter pares*, first among equals, and not a despotic tyrant. He was primarily a consultant, a chief advisor. This has important implications for the Islamic period as well, for in many ways, the caliph, the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, who was the leader of the entire Muslim community, was conceived along the lines of a tribal *sayyid*. We will discuss this further when we talk about the period of the rightly-guided caliphs.

# Lecture 2

## II. THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET, THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

### Life of the Prophet:

A man called Muhammad b. Abdallah was born around 570 A.D. in a town called Mecca in the Arabian peninsula. At the time of his birth, his father `Abdallah was already deceased; Muhammad's mother Amina brought him up with the help of her extended family. Traditional accounts describe Muhammad as a humble, honest, and upright man in his youth, given to quiet reflection. In recognition of these traits, he is said to have been given the title al-Amin -- which means "the trustworthy one." Sometimes the young Muhammad would retire to a cave in the surrounding mountains of Mecca to meditate on the social and moral ills around him and contemplate ways of counteracting them. Traditional accounts describe a society in decline in this period; there was much tribal warfare which led to many widows and orphans who were often left to fend for themselves. There appears to have been a breakdown in the basic social structure; those who were well off tended to care very little for the poor, the weak, and the disenfranchised; thoughtful people like Muhammad were concerned about their condition and the social neglect from which they suffered.

Muhammad, however, was not a total recluse, he was also a merchant and went on trading trips, for example, to Damascus, Syria. On one of these trips, tradition tells us, he met a Christian monk called Bahira, who foretold that one day he would be chosen by the one God, the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, to be His prophet and to perfect His religion. When Muhammad was about twenty-five, he married a twice-widowed 40 year old woman, called Khadija, on whose behalf he had carried on some business. Due to the new both financial and emotional security in his life, Muhammad could now dedicate his time more fully to reflection and meditation in his cave at Mt. Hira. One day, when he was about forty years old, around 610 of the common era, Muhammad heard a voice address him in his solitary cave:

"Recite, in the name of your Lord who created-  
Created man from a blood-clot  
Recite, for your Lord is bountiful  
Who taught by the Pen  
Taught man what he knew not."

These verses, verses 1-5 from the chapter entitled Chapter of the Pen, is considered to be the first revelation to Muhammad; even though it is the 96th sura. You may wonder why the first revelation is chapter 96 rather than the first chapter of the Qur'an. The Qur'an consists of 14 units or chapters; each chapter in Arabic is called a *sura*. The suras are arranged according to length and not according to chronology that is, according to the

date of revelation, with the longest suras coming at the beginning and progressively getting shorter. The chapter of the Pen, as you can see, is quite short and therefore placed towards the end of the text. In general, the longer suras were revealed during the Prophet's Medinan phase, and the shorter suras during his Meccan phase; that is, before the *hijra* or emigration to Medina in 622 CE. This is an oversimplification because scholars have determined that some of the longer Medinan suras may have Meccan verses inserted in them; we can tell because of the subject matter that they deal with or sometimes on account of the style. But I think for your purposes at this stage, we need not be unduly concerned with the exact dating of the chapters or specific verses. The Qur'anic revelations had begun; they would continue for another roughly twenty-two years until the Prophet's death in 632.

At first Muhammad preached quietly, mostly among family members. The first person to accept Islam, as is universally recognized, was Khadija, the Prophet's wife. After Khadija, close companions of the Prophet like `Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, Abu Bakr, Umar, `Uthman, Zayd b. Haritha, the Prophet's freed bondsman, and close members of his family, like his daughters, accepted Islam.

Then he received a divine injunction, roughly around 613, commanding him to start preaching publicly. A list of these early conversions, after Muhammad started to preach publicly, have been preserved for us containing about fifty names. It is interesting to look at the kind of people who were first drawn to Islam. Firstly, there were a number of young men from the most influential families of the most influential clans. Secondly, there were men from other families and clans, still mostly young, and from weaker clans and families. The majority of these converts were under thirty when they became Muslims. Thirdly, there were a number of men who were outside the "clan system" (see Bates/Rassam for an explanation of the clan system). Some of these converts were non-Arabs, of Byzantine, Persian, or Abyssinian origin. The most famous examples of these various ethnic groups were Salman al-Farisi, and as his last name suggests, he was Persian; Suhayb, who was Byzantine, and Bilal, the famous *muezzin* of Islam, from Abyssinia/Ethiopia. In addition to these outsiders, the non-Arabs, there were also a number of Arabs from outside Mecca attached to clans as "clients" or confederates as they were called; in Arabic *mawali*.

As Islam began to increase in numbers, the powerful tribe of Quraysh, to which Muhammad himself belonged, began to grow alarmed at the prospect of losing their enormous power in Mecca at this time. If you remember, I had mentioned earlier, that the members of the Quraysh tribe, which included close relatives of the Prophet, had control over the Ka`ba with its religious and cultic significance, and also wielded enormous economic and political power. The Quraysh therefore began to persecute some of the converts, particularly those who were from poorer and weaker clans. The Qur'an mentions by name one of Muhammad's uncles Abu Lahab and his wife (Chapter 91), who used to persecute the Prophet. Things became very grave, when Muhammad gave some of his followers permission to emigrate to Abyssinia (today known as Ethiopia), whose ruler was Christian and, therefore, would be expected to sympathize with



Muslims, who recognized Jesus as a prophet sent by God, rather than with the polytheist Meccans.

**In 615 CE**, the Quraysh instituted an economic boycott against the Banu Hashim, the clan of Muhammad, refusing to trade or have any social dealings with them. The boycott, however, was unsuccessful and unpopular even among those Meccans who had not accepted Islam, especially since many of them were related to the Banu Hashim. But even after the lifting of the boycott, it was clear that the growing community of Muslims could not co-exist with the hostile Meccans; the situation in fact was growing desperate for the Prophet and his band of followers in Mecca. In 620, a glimmer of hope dawned for the Muslims; during the annual pilgrimage season in the summer, Muhammad came into contact with six men from the neighboring city of Yathrib. These men expressed an interest in Islam and invited the Prophet, along with his followers, to settle in their midst. Now, I am of necessity skipping over a lot of details here and just giving you the bare bones of this history. There were actually lengthy negotiations between the Prophet and the Medinans, but finally, two years later, in the year 622, the Prophet received a divine commandment to emigrate to Yathrib, which, upon his arrival, was renamed *Madinat al-nabi*, Medina for short. This emigration, called *hijra*, in Arabic marks the beginning of a brand new epoch in history, the Islamic era, denoted by A.H.

**622 A.D. = 1. A.H.** An event of momentous importance in Islamic chronology; as I mentioned in our first class, this date marks the divide between the *Jahiliyya* (the Age of Ignorance) and the Islamic era.

The Medinans proved to be far more receptive to Islam than the Meccans, and the Prophet set about building a specifically Muslim community, in Arabic, *umma*, here. He drew up a charter for this community which is referred to in English as the [Constitution of Medina](http://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/con_medina.htm) - [http://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/con\\_medina.htm](http://www.constitution.org/cons/medina/con_medina.htm), which laid the groundwork for social and ethical relationships among the Muslims in Medina. The rights of minorities were also protected; Medina had a sizeable Jewish population; the Prophet of Islam promised to protect the rights of the Jews to live according to their laws, in return for their cooperation and alliance against the Meccans.

**One very important system of forging fraternal bonds** between Meccan and Medinan Muslims was instituted by Muhammad at this point. He paired a Medinan Helper (sing. *Nasir*, pl. *Ansar*) with a Meccan emigrant (*muhajir*) and established brotherly ties between them, underscoring the new fraternal spirit based on religious allegiance rather than allegiance to the tribe.

The Meccans continued to be hostile to the new religion in their midst; three major battles were consequently fought between the Muslims and pagan Meccans. They are the **Battles of Badr (624), Uhud (626), and Khandaq (628)**. In the first battle, of Badr, a small band of Muslims won a spectacular victory over the larger Meccan army; the Muslims, understandably, took this to be a sign of divine favor, which greatly helped the cause of the Muslim community. The Meccans swore revenge; in the Battle of Uhud two years later, the Muslims, because of disunity in their ranks, suffered initial

reverses/setbacks and then routed the enemy but with great loss of lives. The final great battle, the Battle of Khandaq (in English, Battle of the Trench) or the Siege of Medina, as it also has been called, was a massive Meccan military build-up against the Muslims in Medina, with the Meccans laying siege to the city. In response to the threat, the Muslims dug a trench around Medina and the Meccans could not cross it. Eventually, the Meccans retreated and the Muslims won a decisive military victory.

**After this defeat**, the Meccans signed a peace agreement with the Muslims in 628 called the Treaty of Hudaibiyya. The terms of this treaty called for the abandonment of hostilities for ten years on both sides. The treaty was broken in 629 when two tribes, one an ally of the Meccans and the other an ally of the Muslims, got involved in a dispute, at which point the tribe allied with the Meccans attacked the other tribe in a secret ambush. The tribe allied with the Muslims appealed to Muhammad for help; the Prophet gathered together an army of about 10,000 men and camped outside Mecca. The Meccans were too demoralized to fight; instead, a leading member of Muhammad's own clan, the Banu Hashim, (Abu Sufyan) sued for peace and agreed to surrender Mecca to Muhammad. Muhammad in return promised a general pardon for all those inside Mecca who did not offer resistance to the Muslims. On ca. January 11th, 630, the Prophet entered Mecca in peace and triumph; very little resistance offered by the residents of Mecca who wished to take advantage of the amnesty offered by Muhammad. The Ka`ba and private houses were cleansed of idols; the leading men and women of the powerful Meccan clans now publicly accepted Islam. The Islamic age had fully/truly begun.

**About a billion of today's inhabitants of the world are Muslim; there are about 6 million Muslims in the United States today.**

### **HOW MUSLIMS VIEW THE PROPHET:**

1) Qur'anic view, view in the sira: A messenger of God, Rasul Allah, whose primary function was to convey the divine message contained in the Qur'an to humankind. From the Islamic point of view, there were four messengers of God, Moses with the Torah, David with the Psalms (*zabur*), Jesus with the gospel (*Injil*), and Muhammad with the Qur'an. The Qur'an makes no distinction between them in terms of moral excellence; they were equally pious men, chosen above all men by God to deliver his message to humankind.

2) No imputation of divinity; insistence on his mortality and on his humanness in the Qur'an: Lack of attribution of miracles, although in later generations, pious Muslims would come to attribute to him certain miraculous deeds, as we see in the biography of Muhammad compiled by Martin Lings. In general, Muhammad's deliverance of the divine message in the form of the Qur'an is considered to be his true and great miracle. Here is a man, according to Muslim tradition, who was illiterate, who became the bearer of the divine message composed in incomparable and exquisite Arabic; this could be nothing short of a miracle. This is something we will talk about further when we discuss the Qur'an.



# Lecture 3

## III. MEDIEVAL PERIOD OF EXPANSION

### The Era of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs: 632-661

- 1) Abu Bakr: 632-634
- 2) 'Umar ibn al-Khattab: 634-644
- 3) 'Uthman ibn 'Affan: 644-656
- 4) 'Ali ibn Abi Talib: 656-661

### THE BIRTH OF THE SHI'A:

When the Prophet Muhammad died and Abu Bakr was chosen as caliph, not everyone supported his candidacy for the caliphate. Contrary to the opinion of those who are called Sunni Muslims (who believed that Abu Bakr was the most qualified successor to Muhammad) the sect of Muslims now known as Shi'a believed that Muhammad had already ordained his relative 'Ali as his successor. The name Shi'a is a shortened form of Shi'at Ali, which means "followers of 'Ali."

### Important achievements during this period:

- 1) 'Umar's contributions to interpretation of the religious law: Shari'a
- 2) Collection of the Qur'an during 'Uthman's time
- 3) Civil war during 'Ali's period; murdered in 661
- 4) Mu'awiya of the Umayyad clan and also a rival of 'Ali comes to power.

The Umayyads get their name from a clan of the Quraysh tribe known as the *Banu Umayya*. After the murder of 'Ali at Karbala in 661 of the common era, Mu'awiya, who had been the governor of Syria, assumed the office of the caliph. The large majority of the people eventually and grudgingly came to recognize his rule; the Shi'a (and the Kharijites) continued to oppose the Umayyads. The Umayyads established the capital of their dynasty, as might be expected, in Damascus, the most important city in Syria, where Mu'awiya, before his assumption of the caliphate, had served as the governor.

### EXPANSION OF BORDERS:

Most of the Umayyads get a bad rap in Islamic history for being too worldly and having reverted to the tribal ways of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Valued kinship more than piety; discriminated against non-Arab Muslims; even favoring Arab non-Muslims over non-Arab Muslims. The Umayyads, however, are given their due for being excellent administrators. In their governing practices, they adopted some of the practices of the earlier Byzantine and



Persian empires. A prominent name from among the Umayyads is 'Abd al-Malik (685-705), who was also responsible for the erection of important architectural monuments, the most famous of which is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, which is the third holiest sanctuary in Islam. It was built roughly around 691 CE. The territorial expansion of the domain of Islam also continued under the Umayyads. By the mid-eighth century (Hisham's time, between 724-43), the Islamic empire extended from the shores of the Atlantic and the Pyrenees in Western Europe to the Indus River and the borders of China in the East.

## The Dome of the Rock

All of North Africa west of Egypt had fallen to the Muslims and in 710, Muslim troops passed across the straits of Gibraltar into Spain. Muslims also advanced beyond the Caucasus into the area we now call Central Asia and reach the Anatolian frontiers. An Arab governor made his way into Sind, planting Islam for the first time on Indian soil. So by 732 CE, it has been noted that a hundred years after the death of the Prophet, his followers were the masters of an empire greater than that of the Roman Empire in its heyday. This map traces the expansion of Islamic territories during the first century of the faith.



### The Early Expansion of Muslim-Controlled Territories

Image courtesy of the [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#) of the University of Texas-Austin

### THE RISE OF THE ABBASIDS:

By the middle of the eighth century [after Hisham (724-43)], the situation under the Umayyad dynasty steadily deteriorated. Opposition to the Umayyads from various quarters slowly began to mount. By the time of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan II (744-50), it was practically all over for them. The descendants of al-Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, took advantage of this wide-spread popular discontent, and began to agitate for the downfall of the Umayyads. Three groups of people became the fervent supporters of the Abbasid revolution.

These groups were:

1) The Alids or the Shi'a, who had never forgiven the Umayyads, especially for the tragedy at Karbala, joined forces with them.

2) There was another very important group of people who threw in their lot with the Abbasid campaign, the "*mawali*," the large number of non-Arabs who had converted to Islam by this time. The *mawali* felt they were discriminated against by the Umayyads. There was a large measure of truth in this; in many ways the Umayyad period represented a reaction against the rule of the four rightly-guided caliphs and their socially egalitarian policies. Under Islamic principles, there was to be no distinction between an Arab and a non-Arab Muslim or any distinction on the basis of ethnic or socio-economic considerations. Under the Umayyads, however, the Arabs were clearly in a privileged position. The ruling elite tended to be composed of members of the prominent Arab tribes; the old Jahili values of placing pride in one's lineage and tribal affiliation (*hasab* and *nasab*) made something of a comeback among the Umayyads. Among the *mawali*, the Persian Muslims were the most dissatisfied; part of the reason for this was their consciousness that they represented a higher and more ancient culture, a fact acknowledged by the Arabs themselves.

A large number of the disgruntled *mawali* therefore joined the Alid-Abbasid coalition.

3) Then, finally there were in general pious Muslims who saw the Umayyads as at best lukewarm Muslims or at worst as godless tyrants who had seized power illegally and who ruled for the sake of worldly power and glory. The medieval historians tend to describe their rule as *mulk*, an Arabic word meaning "kingship," a word that is never used in relation to the four rightly-guided caliphs.

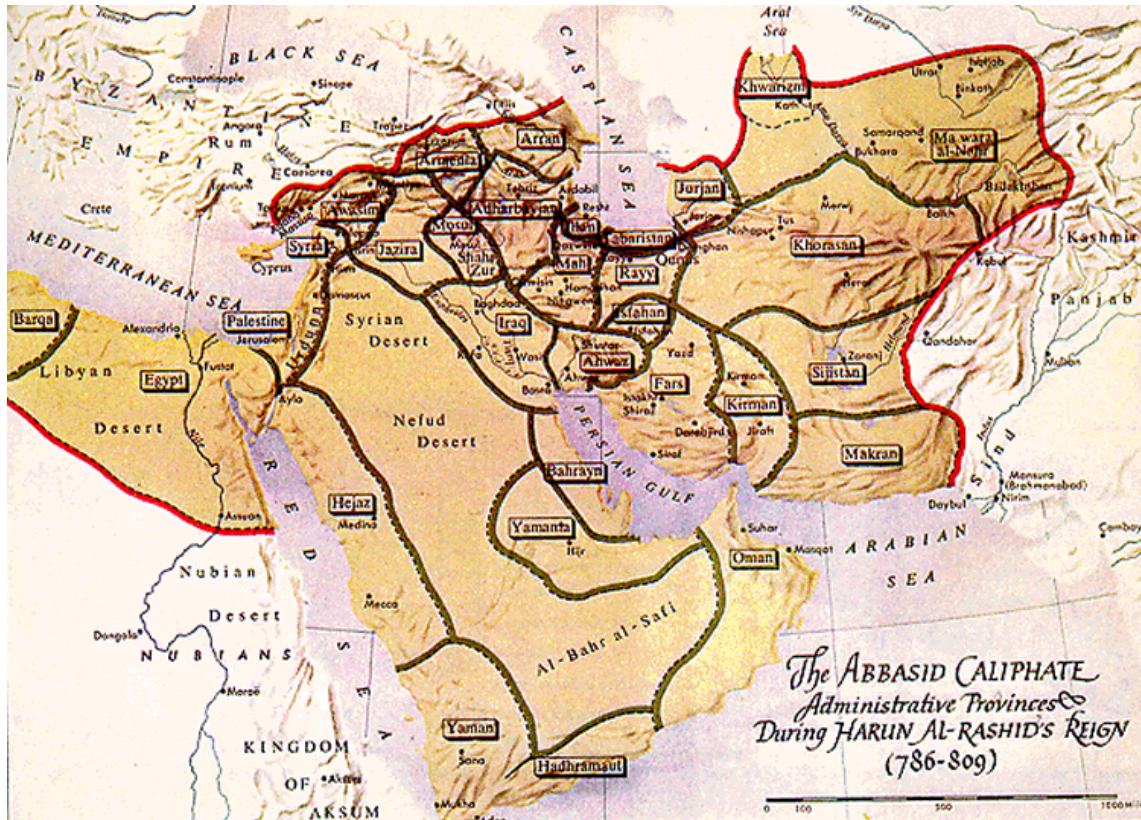
**By 738/39, the Abbasid revolution began to spread from Iraq into Persia.** The Abbasid forces were headed by Abu al-Abbas, a (great-great-great grandson), a descendant of al-'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet.

The Abbasids ushered in a new dynasty to replace the Umayyads. With the fall of the Umayyads the glory of Syria passed away; the center of gravity in Islam had left their land and shifted eastward to Iraq. The truly Arab period in the history of Islam had now passed. The Abbasid government called itself *dawlah*, meaning a new era, and a new era it was. Muslims in general felt that a more righteous reign had begun; the Shi'a considered themselves avenged; and the *mawali* felt liberated. Kufa, on the border of Persia, was at first made the new capital. The capital was then moved to Baghdad which became the enduring capital of the Abbasids. Many Persians now began to occupy the chief posts in the government. The original Arab aristocracy under the Umayyads was replaced by a hierarchy of officials drawn from various ethnic groups under the Abbasids. The old Arab Muslims and the new foreign converts were beginning to merge together into one community. It is possible to say that Arab nationalism fell with the defeat of the Umayyads but Islam continued, especially Islam in a new international or cosmopolitan guise.

Persian influence became quite evident during the Abbasid period, especially in court etiquette and in literary and cultural tastes. The Abbasids were enthusiastic patrons of the arts and sciences and avid supporters of learning in general. In philosophy and the sciences, the influence of the ancient Greeks became noticeable. Names that may already



be known to you, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), are from the Abbasid period whose writings and thought influenced medieval intellectual life, both in the Muslim heartlands and in medieval Christian Europe. There was in fact a spectacular flowering of culture and knowledge under the Abbasids; a period that has been described as the golden age of Islamic civilization. The map below shows the expanding territory of the Muslim world gained during the Abbasid reign.



The Expanding Abbasid Empire  
Image courtesy of Princeton University

One of the most important achievements of the caliph al-Ma'mun's rule, if not the most important achievement, was the establishment of the famous Bayt al-Hikma (the House of Wisdom) in 830. This House of Wisdom was a combination library, an academy, and a translation bureau, if you like. One historian has described the Bayt al-Hikma as the most important educational institution since the foundation of the Alexandrian Museum in the first half of the third century B.C. Under al-Ma'mun, the Bayt al-Hikma became the center of translation activity. This era of translation would last through the early tenth century.

Among the ancient material translated were most of the works of Galen and Hippocrates (fl. ca. 436 B.C.). He is also said to have translated the *Elements* of Euclid and the *Almagest*, the great astronomical work of Ptolemy, as well as the works of Aristotle and Plotinus.

## **TO SUM UP THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GREAT ERA OF TRANSLATION:**

Before the age of translation was brought to an end, practically all the works of Aristotle that had survived to that day, had been translated into Arabic. Two Muslim chroniclers tell us that no less than a hundred works of Aristotle, called by them the “Philosopher of the Greeks,” had been translated.

## **THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MAMLUK DYNASTY:**

The Mamluks were a Turkic group from various parts of Central Asia, who were primarily slaves to begin with, as the word “mamluk” means. Many became powerful in the army and free and some even became rulers.

Since the Mamluks were from such humble backgrounds, they had a problem with establishing themselves as legitimate rulers. Somehow they had to appear as having the right to rule over their subjects. Their chance came in 1258 when the Mongols sacked Baghdad. When the Abbasid caliph, al-Musta‘sim was killed along with his family, they installed his uncle, called al-Mustansir, who had survived as the caliph in Cairo in 1261. The Abbasid caliphs were now thus mere figureheads, rulers in name only, with no real power. But protecting the caliphate in this manner gave the Mamluks the much needed legitimacy that they needed and craved; they continued to rule in the caliph's name, but in reality, they were the ones who possessed real political power.

The Mamluks were famed for their military prowess. In 1260, they won a decisive victory over the Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut in Palestine. Ayn Jalut means Goliath's spring in Arabic. It should be noted that the Mongols became Muslims themselves in the course of time. The Mamluks went on to seize Ayyubid territories in Syria, and by 1293, they had completely driven out the Crusaders. They continued to rule until 1516 when Egypt and Syria were taken over by the Ottomans. After 1516, the Mamluks then continued to rule in Egypt on behalf of the Ottomans.

## **WHO ARE THE OTTOMANS?**

The Ottomans were Turkish tribesmen who began to migrate to Anatolia in the thirteenth century. They derive their name from their ancestor, whose name is pronounced in the Turkish way as Osman. Osman is the same name as Uthman (Turks and Persians pronounce the “th” as “s”). In 1453, the Ottomans entered the world stage by defeating the Byzantines and capturing the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. They renamed this city as Istanbul under which name it is known today. The capture and fall of Constantinople confirmed the status of the Ottomans as an imperial power who continued to exercise considerable world influence for the next almost 500 years. The Ottomans were on the whole great administrators and patrons of learning. They were also known for their tolerance towards religious and ethnic minorities within their empire.

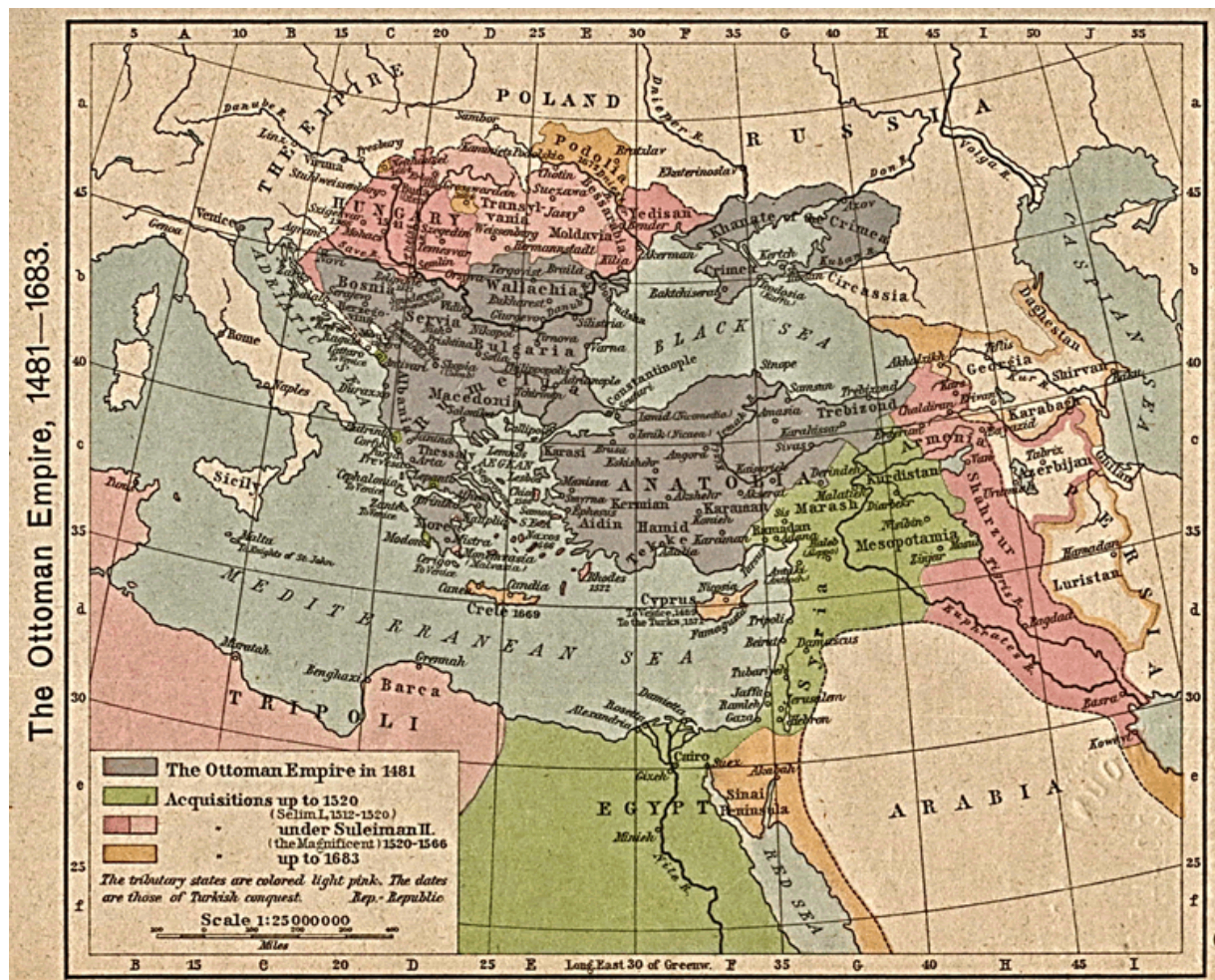
## **WHAT ELSE HAPPENED DURING 1453?**

When Muslim Spain fell to European Christians, both the remaining Muslims and Jews



were persecuted and many expelled. Many of the Jews fleeing European persecution settled in Ottoman lands.

**In the 16th century**, the Ottomans entered their golden age. In 1517, the Ottoman sultan Selim, known as Selim the Grim, conquered Egypt and Syria from the Mamluks and brought the last Abbasid caliph from Cairo to Istanbul. From this time on, the Ottomans began to consider themselves the rightful caliphs of the Muslim world. Probably the greatest Ottoman ruler was Suleyman the Magnificent, who ruled between 1520-1566. Suleyman earned the title the Magnificent because of the wonderful flourishing of the arts, architecture, learning and culture in general under his rule. He was also a wise and benevolent ruler. In Turkish, he is known as Suleyman al-Kanuni, Suleyman the Lawgiver, because of his interest in the religious law and its effective application. During his long reign, the Ottomans gained control of most of Hungary. He also brought Iraq and most of North Africa under Ottoman control. In 1571, The Ottoman fleet was defeated in the eastern Mediterranean by a European coalition at the Battle of Lepanto; this marked a turning point in Ottoman fortunes as far as Europe was concerned. However, Ottoman influence continued in Eastern Europe, and as late as 1683, they almost succeeded in taking Vienna. This map traces the evolution of the Ottoman Empire's controlled territories during their golden age.





The Ottoman Empire (1481-1683)  
Image courtesy of the [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#) of the University of Texas-Austin

## Lecture 4

### IV. MODERN PERIOD: THE RISE OF COLONIAL INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

As we head into the modern period, it is useful to divide this juncture of time into 4 main periods:

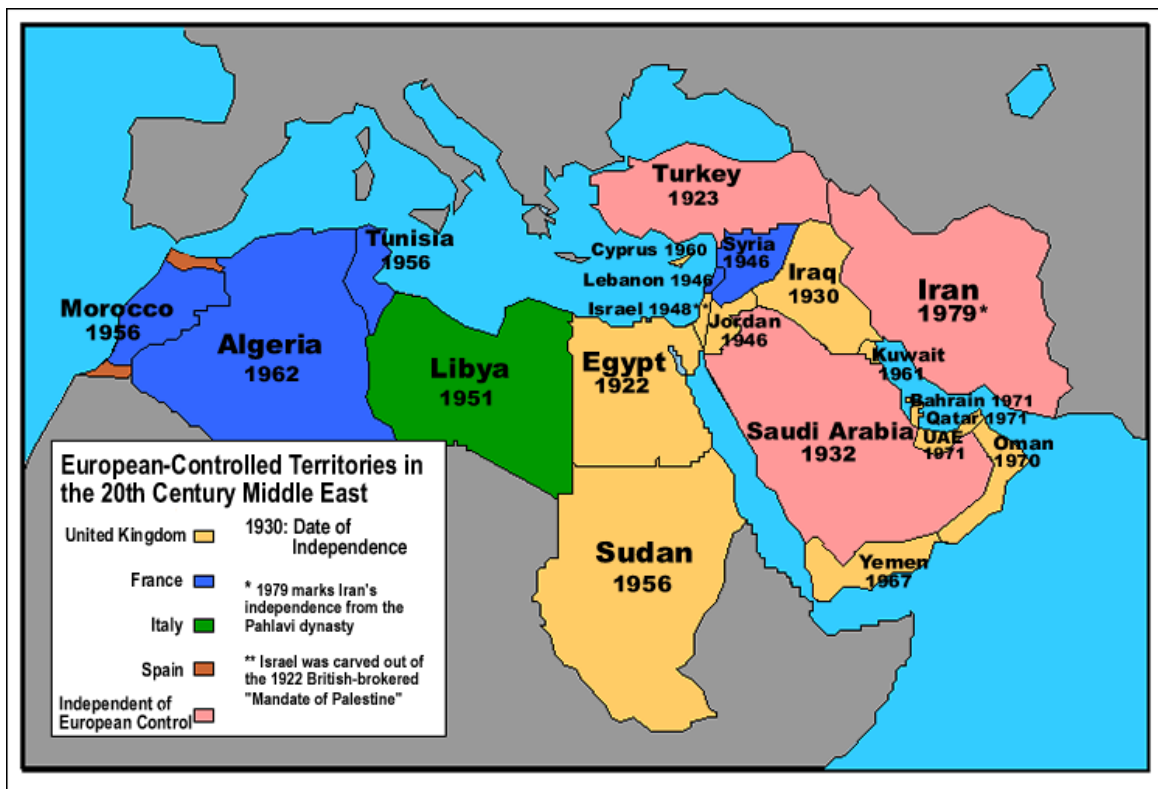
1) **The first period, 1699-1798**, was both a century of decline and of reform. The three great Muslim empires in this period, the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mughal, began to suffer economic and political setbacks. In 1699 (because of the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz), the Ottoman empire lost extensive territories for the first time: they had to surrender Hungary and Transylvania to Austria, and the Ukraine to Poland. The map below shows the gradual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire that occurred over the course of the next few centuries.



The Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire (1683-1924)  
Image courtesy of the [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#) of the University of Texas-Austin



2) **The second period, 1798-1922**, was characterized by European domination which began with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, followed shortly thereafter by British occupation of Egypt after the French were driven out. The French, however, would go on to occupy most of North Africa and Syria. The notorious [Sykes-Picot Treaty](#) which was concluded between Britain and France in 1916 gave France control of, or in the terminology of the day, designated France the protector of Arab Syria and Kurdish Mosul province, while Britain was designated the protector of Baghdad and Basra provinces. Up to the time of signing this treaty, the European powers, particularly the British, had been promising the Arabs that they would be allowed to form independent nations in return for helping the British to oust the Ottoman Turks, and as a consequence defeat Germany and her allies during the First World War. This treachery on the part of the British and the French was not easily forgotten or forgiven, as one might expect. In 1920, the League of Nations (the forerunner of the United Nations) gave its seal of approval to the terms of this treaty and awarded France and Britain mandates to rule the newly-created Arab states in 1920. This map displays the various European spheres of influence in the Middle East and North Africa following World War I:



European-Controlled Territories in the 20th Century Middle East  
Image courtesy of David Poell

Before the period of colonialism, there was no concept of a territorial state in the Muslim world. Muslims were conscious of ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences among themselves, but they saw themselves as politically united first under the caliphate and then the later empires and sultanates. The nation-state, and thus nationalism, arose in the

Muslim world only as a consequence of colonialism. In a number of cases, some of these nation-states were created in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner to serve the interests of the colonizers: For example, British interests in Persian Gulf oil led to the creation of Kuwait; France carved Lebanon out of Syria to create a friendly Arab Christian state; and Britain created Jordan to reward King Abdullah, who had fought with the British during World War I. In many cases, this gratuitous recarving of territory aggravated already existing ethnic, linguistic, and religious tensions as in the case of Lebanon, Pakistan, Palestine, and Malaysia, for example. In some cases, secular nationalism focused on territorial boundaries arose as a consequence of the creation of nation-states, it always remained in competition with a broader religious identity, grounded in Islamic culture.

**Specific actions that the colonial powers took against religious institutions** had disastrous consequences afterwards and helped create an Islamic backlash. For example, SHARI'A COURTS WERE ABOLISHED in many countries by the European colonizers. This in fact planted the seeds for future fundamentalist reaction against governments in a number of Islamic countries which, due to the abolition of the Shari'a courts and the adoption of European legal codes, were now no longer seen as following and implementing Islamic law. The system of charitable endowments (*waqf*) which financially supported the *madrasas* and had allowed the *madrasas* and their professors to maintain independence from the various ruling authorities was dismantled by the British, for example, in Egypt. As a result, al-Azhar became a governmental institution. These policies were continued by the post-colonial governments which came to power after the departure of the British, which wanted to restrict the freedom of the ulama and the intelligentsia in general. The rector (our university president) of al-Azhar is now on the government payroll and widely regarded as a spokesperson for the government.

**3) The third period, 1922-1962**, was one of decolonization and the origins of nationalism and of political Islam. In 1922, Egypt gained limited independence from the British. In 1923, The Republic of Turkey was formed when the Ottoman sultan was sent into exile and the empire dismembered. In 1924, the caliphate based in Istanbul was abolished by the newly formed secular Republic of Turkey under Kemal Ataturk which ended the Ottoman Empire. Kemal Ataturk was a zealous secularist and he took a number of drastic steps to initiate modernization of the country, which he equated with adoption of Western ideas and customs and the abandonment of traditional Islamic practices and habits. Thus, he switched from the use of the Arabic script to write Turkish to Latin. He banned traditional Islamic forms of clothing, such as the Fez for men and the veil for women, and secularized the school system. Kemalism, as this deliberate adoption of secularism was called, is still the reigning ideology in Turkey today.

Most Muslim countries under European colonialism gained their independence between 1945-1960. Another crucial event that occurred in this period was the creation of the Jewish state of Israel on Palestinian soil in 1948 by the League of Nations, which led to the homelessness of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. This was an event that further embittered the attitudes of Arabs and Muslims toward the West.

**4) And finally the fourth period, 1962 to the present:** Nasser's revolution. This is a period of continuing nationalism and the consolidation of political Islamic movements. The secular nationalists believed in pan-Arabism; that is the overall unity of the Arab world despite their separation into independent nation-states. However, nationalism began to give way to religiously resurgent movements. The most dramatic of these revolutions was that of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran in 1978-79.

These cataclysmic events fostered the rise of political Islam in this period, the early 20th century. Some have referred to these highly politicized religious groups as neo-revivalists; the more usual term today is Islamist.

#### **JUST A FEW COMMENTS ON TERMINOLOGY:**

Scholars in the field refer to Islamic revivalism, Islamic resurgence, political Islam, and Islamism. Another term that is used is Islamic fundamentalism. We must remember that fundamentalism was a term coined in the 19th century to refer to particularly Protestant Christian movements which insisted on the acceptance of the Bible as the literal word of God. In Islam, scriptural inerrancy is simply not an issue. A Muslim by definition is someone who accepts the Qur'an as the literal word of God; whether one is a conservative or liberal Muslim, there is a consensus on this issue; one cannot be a believing Muslim without accepting that the Qur'an is a divine, revealed text. From this point of view, it doesn't make sense to talk of Muslim fundamentalists as a separate group within Islam. With this caveat, this warning, in mind, it is better to speak of Islamic revivalist or resurgent movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and, particularly in the 20th century, to talk about political Islam or Islamism.

Political Islam can have many faces; some Islamists take the more militant and radical route, and these are the ones who regularly get into the media today. The earliest such groups are the Muslim brotherhood, established by Hasan al-Banna (1906-49) in Egypt and the Jamaat-i Islami ("the Islamic society") established by Mawlana Abul 'Ala Mawdudi (1903-79) of India. Both men were personally pious, highly educated men both in the traditional Islamic sciences and in Western learning. Both came to react strongly against British imperialism, under whose shadow they lived a part of their lives.

Also importantly, they were reacting against a local elite that under European colonial influence had become Westernized to the extent that members of this elite spoke the language of the colonizers, imitated their dress and customs, and considered themselves secular. Thus they were fighting the influence of both external and internal forces. Islamists are both religious and social activists; both al-Banna and Mawdudi were very effective at organizing supporters at the grass-roots level. They set up health clinics and social welfare projects that helped in gaining the loyalty of a cross-section of the middle and working class people. The activities of these Islamists may be described as being part of a religious, socio-political protest movement that was committed to fighting political corruption and religious laxity, through violence if necessary.

After the departure of the foreign colonial rulers, they continued their opposition to the local governments that were set up, often by the departing colonizers; these local ruling

elites were thus perceived as representing Western interests at the expense of national interests. If you have studied anything about modern Middle Eastern politics and history, you will know that Arab governments that have ruled after the Second World War have off and on been primarily monarchies and military regimes. As far as the Islamists were concerned, these governments, often corrupt and despotic, had no legitimacy and therefore they had a sacred mission to set up a just and righteous government that would govern according to Islamic principles. If they had to resort to violence and lay down their lives for it; they were quite prepared to do so. For them, jihad primarily came to mean the equivalent of just war or holy war to fight those whom they regarded as compromising Islamic principles. Many Islamists believe in what Mawdudi called theo-democracy; in other words, a democracy that called for power-sharing through consultation, according to the Qur'anic concept of shura. They also believed in elections, because the Islamic principle of bay'a which is a pledge an individual gives to his or her ruler, gives the right to the people to express their approval or disapproval of the government. But it would have to be an Islamic democracy, subject to the tenets of the religious law, the Shari'a, which, as interpreted by them, was practically an unchanging body of law which mandated a specific form of government. This government, as Mawdudi pronounced, was founded on the notion of God's sovereignty, in Arabic *al-hakimiyyah*.

## Lecture 5

### V. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SHI'A ON ISLAM

So far we have been talking about mainstream Islam, the Islam of the majority of Muslim populations, that is Sunni Islam. The word sunni is short-hand for the Arabic phrase, ahl al-sunna, people of the sunna, that is, people who follow the way of the Prophet. About 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni; the remaining 10% are Shi'a. As we mentioned before, the word Shi'a is a shortened form of shi'at 'Ali, which means the supporters of 'Ali.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHI'A:

As you know by now, the Shi'a came into being when they insisted after the death of Muhammad that Ali should have been the first leader of the Muslim community. This was so because the Shi'a recognize blood-kinship with the Prophet as the most important criterion for picking a successor to Muhammad. Ali as we know was the cousin of the Prophet and was also married to his daughter, Fatima. After Ali's death, the Shi'a believed that certain of his and Fatima's descendants should have been recognized as the rightful leaders of the umma. They prefer to use the term Imam for this religious leader. The Sunnis in contrast use the term khalifa for their leader, which literally means "successor;" an imam in the Sunni sense refers usually to a prayer leader.

The differences between the Sunnis and the Shi'a, at the very beginning was therefore a political dispute, a dispute over political succession to the Prophet Muhammad. The

dispute at this time had no religious overtones. Rather, the dispute was framed in terms of what constituted legitimate leadership. The majority of the Muslims were of the belief that the Prophet did not name any of his Companions as his successor. The majority of the Muslims thus came to view the office of the caliph as an elective office; that is that the caliph would be chosen or selected from a pool of candidates on the basis of outstanding virtue and moral excellence in general by the larger community of Muslims. Pious Muslims can point to specific verses in the Qur'an which counsel the faithful to settle their affairs through consultation with one another through the process known as *shura*, (3:153-59; 42:36-38). The Shi'a would maintain, however, that rather it was blood-kinship with the Prophet that determined a person's eligibility for leadership of the Muslim community. The Shi'a would also come to maintain that Muhammad had actually named 'Ali as his successor before he died. To this end, they mention a famous hadith of the Prophet. This hadith is known as the "Ghadir Khumm tradition - <http://www.amaana.org/ismaili3.html#Hazrat%20Ali> . This is a tradition that the Prophet is said to have uttered at a place called Ghadir Khumm on his return from the last pilgrimage to Mecca. This tradition is believed by the Shi'a to endorse 'Ali as the Prophet's successor after his death. The hadith states, "Of whomever I am the *mawla*, 'Ali is his *mawla* too."

The word *mawla* can have several meanings. It can mean master or patron, friend, and a client. This word is related to the word *mawali* we learnt before, which referred to the non-Arab clients of Arab tribes. The Shi'a understand the Arabic word *mawla* to mean master in this context. This designation by the Prophet of Ali as his successor came to be seen by the Shi'a as divine appointment of the Imam; in other words, the Imam was actually appointed by God through the mediation of the Prophet.

**A very important consequence** of this belief is that the Sunnis believe that the caliphate is primarily a political office while the Shi'a hold that it is both a religious and political office. The main task of the Sunni caliph was to see that the Shari'a, the religious law, was applied in the community, that the borders of Islam were secure, and in general to provide for the well-being of his citizens. In contrast, the Shi'a would come to emphasize that the imam was also responsible for interpreting the law in addition to upholding it and providing for the welfare of his citizens.

**As time went on**, there came to be several factions within Shi'ism which you do not have to be concerned about in great detail. Among the three most important groups within Shi'ism you need to know about are the **Twelvers**, or the Imamiyya, largely concentrated in Iran, and to a lesser extent in Iraq, and in other parts of the Middle East and South Asia where they live as minority communities. They are called Twelvers because they believe in twelve divinely appointed religious leaders, all descendants of Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband 'Ali. The Twelvers believe that their last Imam, the 12th, disappeared as a child, and will return at the end of time. He is known as the Mahdi, the guide; in the meantime, the Mahdi remains in occultation, which means he is alive but hidden from us. The Twelver Shi'a do not accept the first three rightly guided caliphs as legitimate caliphs; 'Ali according to them was the first legitimate caliph.

Another major Shi'a group is the **Zaydis**, or the Fivers. As you may guess from their name, they believe in only five Imams as opposed to the Twelvers who believe in 12. Their first four Imams are the same as the Twelvers. Disagreement arose among the early Shi'a over which son of the 4th Imam should become the leader; the Zaydis chose Zayd b. 'Ali as the 5th Imam, from whom they get their name. The majority of the Shi'a picked another son (Muhammad al-Baqir) and separated from the Zaydia. The Zaydis are considered to be more moderate and closer to the Sunnis since they do recognize the first three caliphs as valid leaders of the Muslim community. The Zaydis established a state in Yemen in 893 and ruled there until 1963.

The other major faction within Shi'ism is the **Isma'ilis**, also known as the Seveners. They are so-called because they accept the first 7 Imams from among the twelve. After the 6th Imam (Ja'far al-Sadiq d. 765) common to the Twelvers and the Seveners, the Isma'ilis chose his elder son, Isma'il as the 7th Imam. The rest of the Shi'a followed a younger son (Musa al-Kazim) and continued until the disappearance of their twelfth Imam. The Isma'ilis are notable for coming to power in 969 in Egypt, establishing the new capital called Cairo which was the seat of the dynasty they founded called the Fatimids. They also established the famous al-Azhar university in Cairo which exists to this day and which is therefore the oldest university in the world. The Fatimids were defeated however by the celebrated Salah al-Din (Saladin in Western literature) in 1171, known for his heroism against the Crusaders.



Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt  
Photo courtesy of Azeem Azhar.

Your textbook also mentions a sect called the **Druzes**; they are an offshoot of the Isma'ilis, and rose during the Fatimid period. They are today minority communities in the Levant, Syria and Lebanon in particular. They are a highly secretive community with special rituals, the details of which are known only to them. They avoid intermarriage or mixing in general with other Muslims.

### **MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SUNNIS AND THE SHI'AS:**

It is useful to compare Shi'ism to Catholic Christianity. As Shi'ism came to develop by the ninth century, its leader, the Imam, like the Catholic Pope, came to be regarded as infallible charged with interpreting the religious law. The Imam, like the Pope, is primarily a religious, charismatic leader who rules by God's decree and who once installed in office cannot be deposed by man. He is named by his predecessor as the succeeding Imam, and since the Imam is divinely inspired, amounts to a divine appointment.

By contrast, the Sunni caliph governs or at least is supposed to govern by the people's consent, he is not considered infallible in his decisions, and is considered a temporal leader, that is primarily a political, not a religious, leader whose primary duty is to maintain law and order and uphold but not necessarily interpret the religious law. He can also, at least theoretically, be removed from office for wrongdoing.

In Islam, as you probably know by now, there is no clergy, no ordained priestly class to carry out special religious rites and functions. This is certainly true for Sunni Islam. However, in Shi'a Islam there came to be a distinctive class of theologians who were charged with the interpretation of the religious law and whose decisions were binding on the Shi'a faithful. Popularly, theologians from the lower ranks are called mullahs, a term that you have probably heard of in relation to Iran. There is a definite hierarchy of theologians; the highest rank to which only the most learned theologians may aspire to is Ayatollah. Of course I assume everyone has heard of Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran; it is a term of great religious honor and respect for such an individual and implies years of learning and service as a theologian. So again, like Catholicism, there is a definite hierarchy of religious officials and the overall religious structure is more authoritarian and centralized.

Another feature that Shi'a Islam shares with Catholicism is the belief that pious, holy people after their death can intercede for the living. Therefore, visitation of the graves and shrines of holy figures, especially of members of the Prophet's family, is a frequent feature of worship among the Shi'a just as Catholics are prone to visit the shrines of saints, to ask for special favors, for example, to request the healing of certain illnesses etc. By the way, the Sufis are also inclined to this kind of religious activity.

The Twelver Shi'ites I mentioned before do not have an Imam right now; they believe that sometime in the 9th century (874), their last Imam, the twelfth, disappeared under mysterious circumstances and will reappear at the end of time as a messianic figure. In fact, messianism is a very important part of Shi'ism as it is of Christianity. Minority, persecuted religions often develop a strong messianic orientation and this is as true for Shi'ism as it had been true for early Christianity. According to the Shi'a, the twelfth Imam will come out of hiding at the appropriate time, defeat his enemies and inaugurate an era of peace and prosperity. Millenarian vision, according to the textbook.

# Lecture 6

## VI. CHAPTERS 4 & 10: ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

**ETHNICITY:** Refers to a social or group identity based on socially perceived differences in origin, language, and/or religion. For example, within Turkey, Kurds are perceived as a different ethnic group. In Iran, Azeri Turks (compare the Copts in Egypt - not a different ethnic group). People, especially from minority groups, may hold more than one identity: Azeri Turks may adopt Persian upper class mannerisms and speech, and identify primarily as Persian, but with their own ethnic group, will maintain their Azeri identity. As the editors of our book point out, ethnic identity need not depend on a territorial component: Kurds all over the map: Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.

**NATIONALITY:** In the modern world, nationality often trumps ethnic identity. People can manipulate ethnic identity as a personal strategy: to get ahead in life and in society. Traditionally, certain ethnic groups were identified with certain professional occupations; for example, as the book points out, Nubians from the Sudan were often employed as chefs/professional cooks in Egypt; Kurds often served as porters in the bazaars; etc. In the modern period, however with mass education, mobility, and with the growth of new occupations and professions, many of these ethnic distinctions are slowly being erased.

**RACE:** Not a meaningful category in the Middle East and North Africa; most of the people in this area are labeled as Mediterranean. In the West, we tend to group people racially on the basis of the color of their skin. Although a light skin in the Middle East is considered an element of physical attractiveness, particularly in women, it does not get associated with racial superiority. Slavery existed in Arab societies in the pre-modern period, but it did not have racial overtones. You had slaves both from Africa and Central Europe, for example. And slavery was not the same institution as it was in the West. Slaves and descendants of slaves could rise to very high positions in administration and government. If slaves became Muslim, they were automatically free. Slaves at the royal court were actually more servants of the sultan. Remember, we talked about the MAMLUKS (1250-1517).

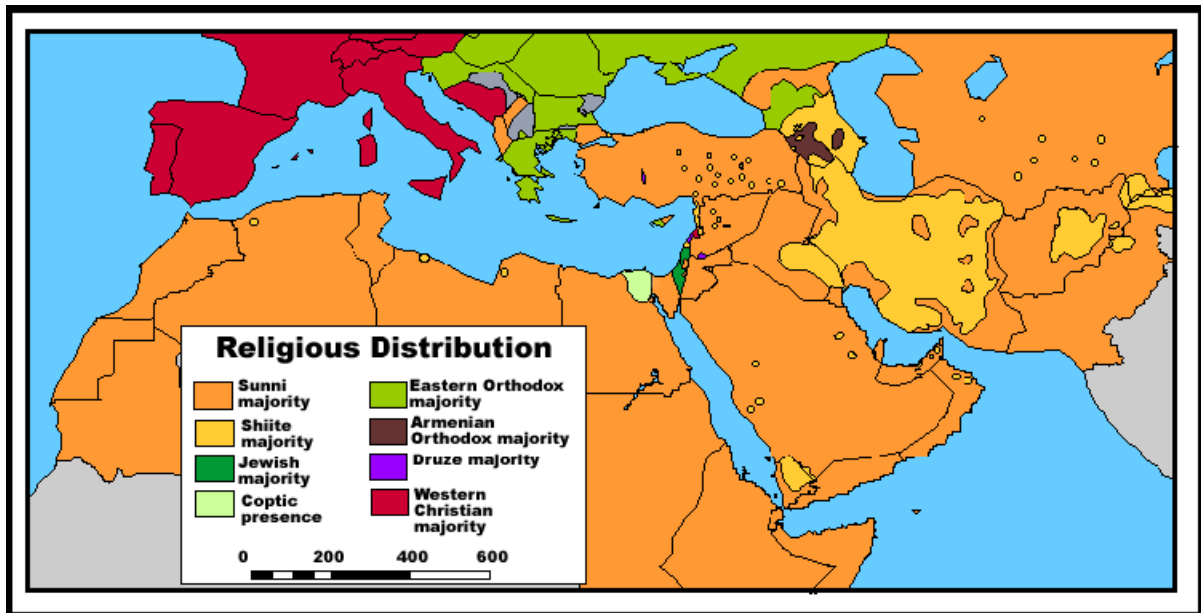
**LANGUAGE:** A more realistic demarcator of identity is language: who is an Arab? Consists of Copts, indigenous Africans, Bedouin Arabs, Mediterranean peoples, different religious groups: Christians and Jews.

**Arabic:** Semitic; **Persian and Kurdish:** Indo-Eur; **Berber:** Afro-Asiatic; **Turkish:** Altaic or Uralic languages; **Persian:** written in Arabic characters

**RELIGION:** Still remains the most important single source of personal and group identity. Muslims are the large majority of the population of the Middle East and North Africa but there are also substantial Christian populations in some countries, although the Jewish population has dwindled considerably after the creation of Israel in 1948. The relationship of Religion to other components of a person's identity, such as ethnicity and



nationality, is rather complex. As our book points out, Sunni Arabs in Iraq have been fighting Sunni Kurds over possession of land and other assets such as oil. So there is no guarantee that sharing the same religion will automatically create solidarity. The map below displays the general demography of the religious landscape in the region with which we are concerned.



Religious Distribution  
Image courtesy of David Poell

### **Jews and Christians: People of the Book; Abrahamic Faiths**

Traditionally, allowed to practice their religion, in payment of a poll-tax, *jizya*. Jews and Christians usually formed autonomous communities; headed by their own religious leaders, and in matters of family and personal law, could follow their own religious rulings. They were known as "ahl al-dhimma": protected people. True, they were not full citizens as Muslims were but they were usually left unmolested. And individual Jews and Christians often rose to very high posts in ruling circles. The famous Jewish philosopher, Maimonides (1135-d.1204), was a physician to Saladin. Some of the Abbasid caliphs had Christian physicians who had a lot of influence in the court. Now, the book misstates something: NOT allowed to serve in the army; in return for the *jizya*, they did not have to serve in the military. They had the option of not paying the *jizya* and serving in the army. Also, women, poor people, monks and other religious leaders did not have to pay it.

St. Catherine's Fourth, while visiting the St. Catherine's Monastery at Mt. Sinai in 1979, I was shown a personal letter said to be signed by the Prophet Muhammad himself, guaranteeing the freedom of the monks and their monastery and dated 632. The document was issued because the monks

honored Islam by building a small mosque within their walled fortress. ‘Umar in Jerusalem refused to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre because he was afraid that later Muslims would wrongfully claim it as a mosque. This anecdote illustrates a due concern for the rights of the “People of the Book,” particularly in the early period. The Arab Muslim armies were usually welcomed in the early period by the Egyptian Copts and the Syrian Christians. Copts and some of the Syrian Christians, the Assyrians, the Nestorians, for example, were Monophysite Christians. The Byzantines who ruled were Diophysites - that is, they believe in the two distinct natures of Christ. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE which opted for the diophysite doctrine, the Byzantine rulers persecuted the Monophysites as heretics and taxed them heavily.



St. Catherine's Monastery. Photo Courtesy of Carolyn Scotchmer.

At a popular level, Jews, Christians, and Muslims often worshipped at the same shrines; for example, at the tomb of Rachel in Jerusalem, Jewish and Muslim women. At Ephesus in Turkey to this day, there is a small church associated with the Virgin Mary where she stopped with the Christ child. I just visited it recently, and there were both Christians and Muslims praying fervently inside the shrine.

### **Ottoman Times:**

**MILLET:** referring to autonomous minority religious communities

Jewish millet ruled by the haham basi, the chief rabbi grew due to Jews fleeing from the Spanish Inquisition. Before the 1940's, there were substantial Jewish populations in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

**Christian millets:** Armenian, Catholic, Orthodox, Assyrian Christians. During the colonial period, the Christian communities were sometimes mobilized by European colonizers against the Muslim rulers. One striking example is Lebanon. The Maronite Christians (followers of St. John Maroun, d. 410) belong to a Uniate church: they have their own patriarchs and retain internal autonomy but recognize the Roman Catholic Pope as the leader of their church and have adopted the Latin rites. With the full support of the French, the Lebanese Maronites broke away from Syria and Lebanon became an independent country in 1946. Lebanon is a real ethnic and religious mosaic. The Maronites held onto political control until the seventies when Palestinians arrived. In 1975 (until 1988, Ta'if agreement), a strike by Shi'i fishermen working for Maronite boat

owners; joined by Palestinians. Not strictly a Christian-Muslim conflict: Syrian Muslim forces intervened on the side of the Christian Maronites. In 1988, Maronite President but stripped of much of his executive powers, Sunni prime minister; Shi'i speaker of parliament.

**Armenians:** significant Christian minority primarily in Turkey and Lebanon. Most belong to the Armenian Orthodox church, which has its own patriarch. Under the Ottomans, they formed a separate millet as did other religious minority groups. Most Armenians lived in rural Anatolia. After World War I and during the breakup of the Ottoman empire, there was much insurgency in the Armenian community against the government. Armenians attempted to set up an independent republic in southeastern Turkey, leading to massacres and the forced deportation of Armenians from Anatolia. Most Armenians left for Lebanon and Syria and Soviet Armenia.

**Bahais:** The Bahai movement originated in Shiraz, Iran in 1844 when a man called Mirza Ali Muhammad declared himself to be the “gateway [Bab] to heaven,” originally called Babism. When the Bab was executed in 1850 for his “heresy,” his half-brother called Baha’ullah began to preach a somewhat revised version of the faith, emphasizing universalist aspects that combined the best of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Bahais emphasize social ethics above religious dogma, have no priesthood, and stress the oneness of humanity and religious belief. The writings and spoken words of the Bab, Baha’ Ullah, and 'Abd ol-Baha form the sacred literature of the Baha’i faith. Bahai services may also consist of recitation of the scriptures of all religions. The Baha’i faith underwent a rapid expansion beginning in the 1960s, and by the late 20th century had more than 150 national spiritual assemblies (national governing bodies) and about 20,000 local spiritual assemblies. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, about 300,000 Baha’is there are often persecuted by the government. Baha’i houses of worship exist in the United States, Europe, Africa, Australia and even in Panama City, Panama.

## Lecture 7

### VII. CHAPTERS 6 & 7: VILLAGE LIFE AND URBAN LIFE

As your book points out, the Middle East is where agriculture developed, about 10,000 years ago. Until fairly recently, the Middle East was largely agricultural and people resided primarily in rural communities. The textbook mentions that in the early 1940’s, an estimated 75 percent of Egyptians were engaged in farming in rural areas. By the mid-1980’s, only about 35 percent of Egypt’s labor force were farmers. By 2000, that percentage dropped even more as more and more people have migrated from rural areas to large cities looking for steady employment and better educational opportunities.

Having said that, we should keep in mind that agriculture remains a very important part of the economy, as it does in this country, because of its overall necessity to the economy and also because there has been to some degree reverse migration back to the countryside as people look for less expensive property in rural areas at least as part-time dwellings. With modern technology and means of communication, rural life has changed quite a bit in the Middle East as it has everywhere else in the world; so you do not necessarily see or feel a sharp distinction between rural and urban parts. Satellite television is almost everywhere as is the internet and cellular phones. For self-employed or independently wealthy people, the rural-urban divide is not very meaningful.

Certain class and social status distinctions remain, however, between the more rural parts of a country and the urban. Difference between Saidi and Cairenes: speech, sophistication, etc. Villages in various parts of the Middle East can be tribe-based or not. Some of the villages in Anatolia, in Turkey, are characterized by homogeneous ethnic groups, such as Kurdish, as in Eastern Turkey, or tribal communities, such as the Chebayish in southern Iraq. Smaller villages tend to have a headman called a *mukhtar* in Arab countries and Turkey, *'umda* in Egypt, and *kathoda* in Iran. Usually elected by various households or appointed by the government. In tribal communities, usually the sheikh of the tribe is the village chieftain. Now the book goes into a lot of detail about land use and land tenure arrangements which are not of great concern to us. Except for one, the *waqf* system, which I will come back to in the urban context.

The largest cities in the Middle East and North Africa: Istanbul, Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut, for example, can be quite densely populated, as are particularly Cairo and Istanbul. Cairo: 1998 census: 16 million; Istanbul: 2000, over 9 million (9,413,000 to be exact). The most spectacular urban growth has taken place in the Persian Gulf region, with the revenues from oil production pouring in starting in the 1970's. But most of these oil-rich countries are sparsely populated and have heavy expatriate populations of other Arabs, South Asians, and Southeast Asians, such as Filipinos, who do a lot of the actual administrative and menial work.

The question may be raised justifiably: can we talk about "the Islamic City" and what would we mean by it? There is one very important concept and facet of Islamic societies that puts a distinctive stamp on the architecture in particular within such societies: the importance of the family and the household and the desire for privacy. Because of the fact that space tends to be segregated by gender, private residences are often (I should say used to be often) built facing inward, facing away from the street, so that the most private family quarters are in the innermost part of the house. Oftentimes, these houses would open out into an inner courtyard that would be the common or shared space for the various members of the household.

Another very important institutional feature of most Middle Eastern and North African cities is the *waqf* system. *Waqf* refers to a charitable endowment, a charitable foundation. Any public building or institution can be declared to be a charitable foundation, in which case the building or institution is declared to be a public property, meant to be of benefit to the public. Once a wealthy individual or family declared his, her, or their property to

be *waqf*, the government could no longer get hold of it. It was a charitable foundation in perpetuity. This allowed for a system of education institutions, hospitals, libraries, mosques, markets, hostels, public baths, inns, and agricultural lands to be set up for the benefit of the public, which were usually free since they were self-generating in income from the original endowment. Both wealthy men and women were public benefactors of this type, which testifies to the civic-mindedness of the elite in various cities.

### **SOME KEY TERMS:**

**Mehallet:** neighborhoods often divided according to professional occupations, ethnicity, kinship, and tribal or village origins. Also religious brotherhoods: *tariqas*.

Other defining features of the Islamic city, broadly speaking, are a central mosque (brings people together for congregational prayers; you can hear the daily *azan* five times a day which confers a certain rhythm upon an Islamic city).

**Suq (public bazaar or market):** also a central gather place and place of commercial activity

**Public square (midan):** where public preachers and storytellers gather

**Gardens:** reminiscent of the serenity of Paradise

## **Lecture 8**

### **VIII. ISLAMIC MYSTICISM AND THE INFLUENCE OF SUFISM**

**Mysticism** is called *tasawwuf* - and a practitioner Sufi (Lings; also suggests *safi*= pure)

Sufism is the name given to Islamic mysticism, a word based on the Arabic word *Suf*, meaning undyed wool, because these mystics were accustomed to wearing rough woolen clothes as a mark of their piety and unworldliness. We could regard the woolen garment of the Sufi as a badge or uniform used as a sign of protest against the immense luxury and wealth that the upper classes came to possess as a result of the dramatic conquests in the Near East and Persia. We could consider the wearing of coarse wool also as a mark of their protest against what the Sufis felt to be the political and moral deterioration of the Islamic *umma*. You will often find Sufis being referred to in Western literature as ascetics, which is fine, as long as you realize that we are not talking about monks and monasticism. As one scholar has described it, "If one were to seek a parallel with Christian movements, one might say that, on the whole, the Sufis were more like friars than monks." That is to say their vision of God compelled them in the direction of public preaching and sermonizing rather than of monastic seclusion. Their experience of God was, for them, something to be shared with the rest of their community, even though they realized that not everyone could follow them along the Sufi path. It was therefore more

of an activist involvement with society, rather than a withdrawal from it; even though private reflection and contemplation was a big part of their activities.

As regards the Sufi movement itself, one might fruitfully compare certain aspects of the mood of the movement with the Romantic mood of early 19th-century Europe. Sufism, like Romanticism, represented a revolt against the formalism and intellectual dogmatism that seemed to them to dominate the lives of fellow religionists. Ritualism and reason were no longer adequate as expressions of the totality of religious experience. Most Sufis would claim that they have transcended intellectual knowledge itself (*'ilm*) and to have attained a very special type of knowledge which they call gnosis (*ma'rifa*), or spiritual and even experiential knowledge. What is the site, the locus, the place of this special, immediate, and experiential knowledge? (Lings - p. 48/132 - "the heart is the synonym of the intellect." What is the term that distinguishes "heart-knowledge from mind-knowledge?" Dhawq p. 52/134- Lings) When we read the excerpt from al-Ghazali's autobiography, we sense this rejection on his part of the intellectual and academic dogmatism current in his day.

One early and very famous example of a Sufi mystic is Rabi'a al-Adawiya, from the 2nd/8th century, a contemporary of Hasan al-Basri, another important mystical and scholarly figure. An excerpt from a biography of hers is included in your readings.

**At first, as you might imagine**, the orthodox religious scholars tended to look rather suspiciously upon Sufism. If you have taken the core course in the humanities, you've also heard of another early Sufi, al-Hallaj, who was put to death in 309/922 for uttering the famous or infamous statement, "I am the Truth." In Arabic this utterance is "*Ana al-Haqq*" which his enemies understood to mean literally that he was claiming to be God. A main part of Sufi thought emphasizes the mystic closeness between the Sufi and His Creator, so much so that the Sufi can claim to have extinguished his human self (*fana'*) in the Divine Being. This is of course, not to be taken literally; what it implies is that a Sufi becomes so immersed in the remembrance of God that he or she tends to forget the divide between this world and the next. In Arabic, this remembrance of God is called *dhikr*.

**DHIKR** as a Sufi technical term refers also to the frequent mention and chanting of God's names; sometimes to deliberately induce trances. We will be watching a video which will have clippings from a Sufi dhikr session and you can watch some of these activities. Quite frequently, there will also be music accompanying the chanting of the Sufis; sometimes these mystics would dance to the music while enthralled in trances. So you can see why the more conventional religious scholars were actually quite horrified by what went on at these mystical gatherings.

**The other name** you must remember for all time is al-Rumi, full name Jalal al-Din al-Rumi who died in Konya, Turkey, in 1273. Al-Rumi is particularly celebrated for his exquisite poetry, most of which was written in Persian. His works have been translated into many different languages of the world, and I remember reading somewhere that Rumi is one of the best-selling poets in English today. Rumi was also the founder of a Sufi order known as the Mevlana order; in English they are called the Whirling

Dervishes; dervish is a Persian word meaning a mystic. They are called the Whirling Dervishes because in their dhikr sessions, dressed in their somber white clothes, they often twirl around while chanting pious phrases. [Included here - http://www.videosofturkey.com/video\\_details.asp?id=103](http://www.videosofturkey.com/video_details.asp?id=103) is footage of a dervish ritual called Sema, which was inspired in part by al-Rumi. Anyone ever seen a performance?

## Lecture 9

### IX. REVIVALISM AND REFORM

The period I am going to focus on now is the period of revivalism and reform that began in the period of Western colonization and continues into our own time.

Islam possesses a strong tradition of revival and reform. The concepts of *Tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform) are fundamental concepts within Islam, based on the Qur'an and sunna of the Prophet. The preaching of Islam itself is presented in the Qur'an as, first of all, the revival of the true religion of God and reform of corrupt practices that had crept into the practices of religion by earlier communities. As we've discussed before, Islam regards itself as both the corroboration and the purification of the original Abrahamic faith, not a new religion but a reaffirmation of the ancient Abrahamic tradition and its renewal. *Islah* (reform) itself is a Qur'anic term (occurring in chapters 7:170; 11:117, 28:19) and refers to the reformist activities of all the prophets throughout time, who were sent by God to warn their communities of their sinful ways, and calling on them to return to God's path.

**The notion of tajdid** (renewal) is based on a prophetic hadith in which Muhammad states, "God will send to the umma [the Muslim community] at the beginning of each century those who will renew its faith for it." We know, for example, 'Umar the second and al-Ghazali was declared to be the renewer of Islam for the 12th century. The question remains, what are the main components of the term renewal or tajdid? The two major components or aspects of the process of renewal are the following: 1) the process of renewal advocates, calls for, a return to the basic moral and religious principles contained in the Qur'an and sunna and secondly, 2) the right to practice *ijtihad*; that is to use independent reasoning in interpreting and re-interpreting the sources of Islam. This two-pronged process of renewal therefore is based on the assumption firstly that the righteous community established and led by the Prophet Muhammad at Medina should be imitated by later Muslims, secondly, the additions and innovations (*bid'a*) that have crept in over the centuries, have to be removed, and thirdly, one must examine critically the interpretation of the medieval commentators and scholars of Islam. Therefore, those who are regarded as renewers of the faith, like our old friend al-Ghazali, claimed the right to exercise *ijtihad* to reinterpret Islam in order to purify and revitalize their societies. As someone who exercised his right to reinterpret Islam and having the credentials of a well-known scholar and theologian, he was able to make Sufism a part of mainstream Islam and infuse new life into Islamic thought. Another famous renewer whose name you should remember is Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who interestingly, as part of his campaign to reform Islam, spoke out against some Sufi practices, such as visiting the shrines of

famous mystics, the (blind) following of Sufi leaders, which he regarded as dangerous innovations within Islam and compromising its basic principles.

**Before we go on to talk about specific revivalist movements**, I want to emphasize that there are many faces and voices within these movements. There is no single paradigm or pattern for them. I also want to discuss the terms that are used in the literature today to describe these movements, both pre-modern and modern. Scholars in the field refer to Islamic revivalism, Islamic resurgence, political Islam, and Islamism. Another term that is used is Islamic fundamentalism. We must remember that fundamentalism was a term coined in the 19th century to refer to particularly Protestant Christian movements which insisted on the acceptance of the Bible as the literal word of God. In Islam, this is simply not an issue. A Muslim by definition is someone who accepts the Qur'an as the literal word of God. whether one is a conservative or liberal Muslim, there is a consensus on this issue; one cannot be a Muslim without accepting that the Qur'an is a divine, revealed text. From this point of view, it doesn't make sense to talk of Muslim fundamentalists as a separate group within Islam. With this caveat, this warning in mind, it is better to speak of Islamic revivalist or reform movements, and particularly in the 20th century, to talk about modernist Islam and political Islam.

**I am now going to discuss a few of these revivalist movements**, starting in the eighteenth century. The first movement of significance in the 18th century was founded by a man called Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), from what is known as Saudi Arabia now, and after whose name this movement is called Wahhabism. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was by training a jurist or a lawyer and a theologian who had also studied Sufism in the two principal cities of Mecca and Medina. He was greatly influenced by the writings of the 13th century reformer Ibn Taymiyya, and who like Ibn Taymiyya condemned popular Sufi practices such as the visitation of tombs, and veneration of Sufi mystics, which to them smacked dangerously of idolatry and superstition. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, like other revivalists, therefore, maintained, that the moral decline of the Muslim community was due to deviation from the original practices of the umma. For the community to regain its vitality and moral vigor, these practices had to be uprooted and replaced with a society that resembled the early Muslim community set up by Muhammad.

**The reformist movement of Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab** acquired a political dimension when he joined forces with a local tribal chief, by the name of Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765). Religious revivalism was now combined with military power to create a religio-political movement that was highly successful in achieving political power in what became renamed as Saudi Arabia. Esposito has described the Wahhabis as similar to the Kharijites of the first century of Islam, and I think this comparison is quite appropriate. Like the Kharijiyya, the Wahhabis subscribed to a rigid, puritanical view of Islam and considered themselves to be the correct and literal interpreters of Islamic principles. Their understanding of ijtihad was not that ijtihad should lead to a reinterpretation of Islam but rather a return to the exact state of affairs during the time of the Prophet and his four caliphs. No deviation was to be tolerated, and Esposito describes to us how they denounced what appeared to them as saint worship, which led them to destroy even the



tombs of Muhammad and his Companions, and the tomb of Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, at Karbala. You can imagine why the Shi'a have a particularly dim view of the Wahhabis. Wahhabism as a majoritarian school of thought that, however, remains restricted to Saudi Arabia; no other Muslim country has adopted on a large scale their point of view, although you find pockets of people who consider themselves Wahhabis in certain countries.

In recent times, 'Abd al-Wahhab has been compared to Martin Luther who ushered in the period of Reformation. This comparison is actually quite apt; like Luther, 'Abd al-Wahhab was a puritan and a literal scripturalist. Both had contempt for scholarly learning and wished to rid their religions of the elaborate theological and intellectual interpretations that had grown up over the years. *Sola scriptura*: back to the scripture only! And just as Luther's Reformation led to some of the bloodiest and most savage religious wars in Europe, the legacy of Wahhabism, as reflected in the ideology of the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Qa'eda, has been barbaric violence.

**Now because of time constraints** I am of necessity skipping over other reformist movements and simply picking out the ones that have had the most impact. **MOVING ONTO THE NEXT CENTURY**, the 19th, we encounter two famous names that are now forever associated with Islamic reform and modernism. These two names are Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), who was a disciple of al-Afghani. Both men stressed the importance of *ijtihad* as their main tool of effecting reform, and they advocated using *ijtihad* to arrive at new interpretations of Islam, rather than slavishly following the interpretation of the medieval scholars.

**The political and historical situation** of the period is important to keep in mind in understanding why reformist and modernist movements began to gain ground at this time. The nineteenth century represented the height of European colonialism in the Middle East and other areas of the Islamic world. This was a humiliating situation for Muslims everywhere; whereas until recent times, the Islamic civilization had been the dominant one and Muslims had been the masters of their destiny, now they were reduced to subjects of alien, hostile powers who regarded their way of life with contempt. This was therefore a period of great soul-searching and self-examination. Muslim thinkers reflected on their fate; what had led to the decline and stagnation of their societies? What factors had contributed to their downfall? Both al-Afghani and later Abduh would emphasize that Muslims had lost their way because they had succumbed to blind imitation of their forefathers and they had ceased tapping into the dynamic, progressive spirit of Islam that had made it a world civilization in an earlier period. Abduh in particular stressed that religion was completely compatible with reason, and that reason, employed through the tool of *ijtihad*, should lead to sweeping social and legal reforms. Although Western political domination should be resisted and Muslim countries liberated from colonialism, Western civilization in itself was not to be regarded as a threat to Islam. And that modern science and technology in so far as they improved the quality of life and led to social advancement, should be embraced just as Muslims had once embraced the learning of the ancient Greeks, Persians, Indians, and so forth.

**Abduh made a very important distinction** between two spheres of activity of Islam, one of which was badly in need of reform. The first sphere of activity was worship as embodied in the five pillars; this formed the core of Islam and is unchangeable. What remains is then a vast body of social relations and matters: commercial transactions, legal relations, public and family law that are subject to reform. Abduh argued that the elaborate legal system that had grown up concerning these matters were conditioned by historical circumstances; as historical circumstances changed, the old legal rulings should be subjected to reinterpretation to reflect the new social realities. As part of his agenda of social reform, he focused on women's rights and the issues of veiling and polygamy. He was critical of both practices, arguing that the changed social situation demanded that these practices be curbed.

Muhammad Abduh's thought has been enormously influential among reform-minded Muslims. He was a highly-regarded scholar and theologian and became the rector (president) of al-Azhar university, the Muslim world's most prestigious religious university. Abduh, however, was in many ways ahead of his time, and during his lifetime had his share of critics. After his death though and until the present time, he has remained easily one of the most widely-respected and widely read author on the topic of renewal and reform.

### **SUBSCRIBERS TO POLITICAL ISLAM/ISLAMISTS:**

Political Islam as a modern phenomenon arises in the early part of the 20th century. Esposito refers to these groups as neo-revivalists, which is also an apt description of them. Like the early revivalists, these neo-revivalists also believed that contemporary Muslim society should be reformed from within by modeling themselves closely on the early Muslim community at Medina. Only by regenerating itself can it successfully establish a righteous government that would rule its subjects wisely and justly while successfully resisting Western imperialism. In many ways, emphasis on a highly politicized Islam is a defining characteristic of these neo-revivalists, who are more frequently referred to as Islamists. Islamists derive a broad political ideology from Islamic principles; it is due to their emphasis on political Islam that we are setting them apart from the other two groups.

Political Islam can have many faces; some Islamists take the more militant and radical route, and these are the ones who regularly get into the media today. The earliest such groups are the Muslim brotherhood, established by Hasan al-Banna (1906-49) in Egypt and the Jamaat-i Islami ("the Islamic society") established by Mawlana Abul 'Ala Mawdudi (1903-79) of India. As Esposito points out, both men were personally pious, highly educated men both in the traditional Islamic sciences and in Western learning. Both came to react strongly against British imperialism, under whose shadow they lived a part of their lives.

Also importantly, they were reacting against a local elite that under European colonial influence had become Westernized to the extent that members of this elite spoke the language of the colonizers, imitated their dress and customs, and considered themselves secular. Thus they were fighting the influence of both external and internal forces.

Islamists are both religious and social activists; both al-Banna and Mawdudi were very effective at organizing supporters at the grass-roots level. They set up health clinics and social welfare projects that helped in gaining the loyalty of a cross-section of the middle and working class people. The activities of these Islamists may be described as being part of a religious, socio-political protest movement that was committed to fighting political corruption and religious laxity, through violence if necessary.

After the departure of the foreign colonial rulers, they continued their opposition to the local governments that were set up, often by the departing colonizers; these local ruling elites were thus perceived as representing Western interests at the expense of national interests. If you have studied anything about modern Middle Eastern politics and history, you will know that Arab governments that have ruled after the Second World War have off and on been primarily monarchies and military regimes. As far as the Islamists were concerned, these governments, often corrupt and despotic, had no legitimacy and therefore they had a sacred mission to set up a just and righteous government that would govern according to Islamic principles. If they have to resort to violence and lay down their lives for it; they were quite prepared to do so. For them, jihad primarily came to mean the equivalent of just war or holy war to fight those whom they regarded as compromising Islamic principles. Many Islamists, but not all, believe in what Mawdudi called theo-democracy; in other words, a democracy that called for power-sharing through consultation, according to the Qur'anic concept of shura. They also believed in elections, because the Islamic principle of bay'a, which is a pledge an individual gives to his or her ruler, gives the right to the people to express their approval or disapproval of the government. But it would have to be an Islamic democracy, subject to the tenets of the religious law, the Shari'a, as interpreted by them.

**Members of the Muslim Brotherhood** may embrace a variety of opinions. Many of the current members in Egypt are moderates who seek to create an Islamic state by democratic means today. In the earlier period, they did engage in violent and largely unsuccessful actions against the government. The movement's leading thinker during the period of Jamal Abdul Nasser was Sayyid Qutb who was accused of attempting to assassinate Nasser. Qutb was tortured and hanged in 1966. Nasser banned the Muslim brotherhood (between 1954 and 1975). His successor, Anwar al-Sadat lifted the ban on them; in 1976, 15 members of the Muslim Brotherhood were elected to Parliament. However, a militant splinter group, the Jihad Organization (Munazzamat al-Jihad), assassinated Sadat in 1982 after his trip to Israel to sign a peace treaty with Menachem Begin, a trip that was regarded as a highly treacherous act. Other militant groups who resort to violence to achieve their goals are for example, Hamas in the Palestinian Occupied territories and Hizbullah in Lebanon.

**And, finally, we should refer to modernist Muslims**, who believe that the Qur'an and the Sunna can be reinterpreted so as to make their injunctions compatible with the modern world and that real change can come about only through long-lasting changes in the legal and educational systems; not merely through political changes, certainly not simply by overthrowing corrupt governments. Modernists are, therefore, reformers. Fazlur Rahman, whose works we have read a little bit of, was certainly one of these

modernists, who emphasized that by correctly interpreting the Qur'an in particular, and not simply by accepting the views of the medieval commentators, modern Muslims could derive an authentically Islamic response to modern life. Muhammad Arkoun, who is still alive and teaches at the University of Sorbonne in Paris, is also a liberal, modernist Islamic thinker who advocates wholesale rethinking and reinterpretation of much of the traditional religious thought and structure. There are many more such names, Hasan Hanafi in Egypt and Azizah al-Hibri, a Lebanese-American. Tariq Ramadan is also influential among such thinkers.

**ABOVE ALL**, we must keep in mind that terms like Islamists, revivalists, modernists, mean a lot of different things and covers a whole range of responses to the modern world in particular. There is no single, pat definition of any one of them.

## Study Materials

**NOTE: The handouts included in this section are designed to be used as supplemental references for various lectures and readings included in the course.**

- [Names and Terms from Lecture 1](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 2](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 3](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 4](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 5](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 6](#)
- [Supplemental Handout for The Islamic City \(Video\)](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 8](#)
- [Names and Terms from Lecture 9](#)
- [Discussion Questions for Esposito's Unholy War](#)
- [Supplemental Handout for William Cleveland readings: A History of Palestinian-Israeli Relations](#)

## Lecture 1 Handout

**Names and Terms to remember from the previous class:**

Adnan

Banu Quraysh

Mecca

Medina (before 622 CE, Yathrib)

Jahiliyya

Abraham

Ishmael

Ka'ba

sayyid/shaykh

## Lecture 2 Handout

**Names and Terms to remember from the previous class:**

Life of the Prophet Muhammad (ca. 570 - 632 CE)

Allah

Muhammad b. 'Abdallah

Khadija

Mt. Hira

al-Qur'an

hijra (622)

umma

Ansar ("Helpers") - in Medina

Muhajirun ("Emigrants") - from Mecca to Medina

Battle of Badr (624)

Battle of Uhud (626)

Treaty of Hdaybiyya (628)

Fall of Mecca (630 CE)

## **The Islamic World after the Prophet:**

**632-661: Era of the four “Rightly-Guided Caliphs who were close Companions of the Prophet**

**Caliph: from Arabic khalifa : “a Successor”**

**1. Abu Bakr: 632-634**

**2. ‘Umar: 634-44**

**3. ‘Uthman: 644-656**

**4. ‘Ali: 656-661**

**Circa 652: final written codification of the Qur’an.**

**Sunni: short for ahl al-sunna (“people of the custom [of the Prophet]”)**

**Shi’a: short for shi‘at ‘Ali (“supporters of ‘Ali”)**

**Umayyad dynasty: 661-750 CE**

**‘Abbasid dynasty: 750-1258**

Five Pillars: 1) shahada: profession of faith; 2) salat: prayer; 3) zakat: almsgiving 4) sawm: fasting; 5) Hajj:

**pilgrimage to Mecca**

# **Lecture 3 Handout**

## **Glossary of Terms:**

Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs: 632-661 CE

Umayyad dynasty: 661-750

Mu‘awiya: first Umayyad ruler

Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem: built in 691

‘Abbasid dynasty: 750-1258

Al-Ma'mun: famous 'Abbasid caliph

Bayt al-Hikma: "House of Wisdom," established in 830

Shari'a: religious law

Hadith: a saying of the Prophet Muhammad

Mamluks: 1250-1517

Mongols

Battle of 'Ayn Jalut: 1260

Crusaders

Ottomans: 1517-1924

Fall of Constantinople

Suleyman the Magnificent: ruled 1520-1566

Battle of Lepanto: 1571

Treaty of Karlowitz: 1699

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt: 1798

Sykes-Picot Treaty: 1916

League of Nations: 1920

Kemal Ataturk: founder of modern republican Turkey

Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser: nationalist leader of Egypt from 1956-1970 (d. 1970)

## **Lecture 4 Handout**

### **Glossary of Terms:**

Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs: 632-661 CE

Umayyad dynasty: 661-750

Mu'awiya: first Umayyad ruler

Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem: built in 691

‘Abbasid dynasty: 750-1258

Al-Ma‘mun: famous ‘Abbasid caliph

Bayt al-Hikma: “House of Wisdom,” established in 830

Shari‘a: religious law

Hadith: a saying of the Prophet Muhammad

Mamluks: 1250-1517

Mongols

Battle of ‘Ayn Jalut: 1260

Crusaders

Ottomans: 1517-1924

Fall of Constantinople

Suleyman the Magnificent: ruled 1520-1566

Battle of Lepanto: 1571

Treaty of Karlowitz: 1699

Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt: 1798

Sykes-Picot Treaty: 1916

League of Nations: 1920

Kemal Atatürk: founder of modern republican Turkey

Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser: nationalist leader of Egypt from 1956-1970 (d. 1970)

## **Lecture 5 Handout**

### **Glossary of Terms:**

Five Pillars of the Faith: 1) shahada; 2) salat; 3) zakat; 4) sawm; 5) hajj



Shi‘at ‘Ali: Shi‘a for short

Ahl al-sunna: Sunni for short

Fatima: daughter of the Prophet

Ali: cousin of the Prophet and Fatima’s husband

umma: transnational Muslim community

Imam: spiritual leader for the Shi‘a; prayer leader for the Sunnis

khalifa: “successor,” anglicized as caliph

shura: “consultation,” “electoral council”

Ghadir Khumm

mawla

Shari‘a

Imamiyya: Twelvers

Zaydis: Fivers (named after Zayd b. ‘Ali)

Isma‘ilis: Seveners (named after Isma‘il)

Fatimids: 969-1171

Al-Azhar university in Cairo

Salah al-Din (Saladin): defeats the Fatimids in 1171

Druzes, Alawis, Shabak: secretive sects

Ayatollah

## **Lecture 6 Handout**

### **Glossary of Terms**

Druze: Shi‘i off-shoot group in Syria, Lebanon primarily

Alawi: as above

Copts: predominant Christian group in Egypt

Kurds: Sunni Muslim Kurdish-speaking ethnic group in primarily Turkey, Iraq

Berber: ethnic group in North Africa

Ahl al-kitab: “people of the book;” term for Jews and Christians

dhimmi: “protected person,” used for a Jew or Christian, later also for a Zoroastrian in Persia, and Hindu in India

Monophysites: Eastern Christians who believed that the human and divine natures of Christ were fused into one; regarded as heretics by the Byzantine church

Council of Chalcedon: 451 CE

millet: autonomous religious communities in the Ottoman empire

Maronites: followers of St. John Maroun (d. 410), primarily in Lebanon

Bahai: off-shoot of Islam, now independent, ecumenical religion

## **The Islamic City Handout**

### **Glossary:**

Chebayis: tribal community in southern Iraq

mukhtar/ ‘umda/ katkhoda: village headman

Shaikh: tribal chieftain

waqf: charitable endowment or foundation

mehallet: neighborhoods

tariqa: Sufi brotherhood

suq: public market

adhan (commonly pronounced azan): the call to prayer five times a day

### **Cities and terms referred to in the video:**

Jibla and San‘a, Yemen

Qayrawan, Tunisia

Istanbul, Turkey

Islamabad, Pakistan

Cairo, Egypt

ziggurat

minaret: tower of a mosque from which the adhan is given

Fatehpur Sikri, India

Marrakesh, Morocco

University of el-‘Ain in the United Arab Emirates

Fez, Morocco

## Lecture 8 Handout

### Glossary of terms:

tasawwuf: “mysticism”

ma‘rifa: “gnosis;” “spiritual knowledge”

Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiya: famous woman mystic (d. 801)

al-Hallaj (d. 922): another famous male mystic

dhikr: “remembrance/mention of God”

Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 1273): famous Turkish mystic

## Lecture 9 Handout

### Glossary of useful terms:

Shariah: Islamic Law

ulama: learned people, religious scholars

Kharijites: early Islamic extremist faction (7th century), marginalized by mainstream Islam

Ibn Taymiyya: influential Muslim theologian and jurist (1268-1328)

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791): founder of Wahhabism

Muhammad ibn Saud: linked up with ibn Abd al-Wahhab and gave his name to Saudi Arabia

Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud: firmly establishes the Saudi kingdom in the early 20th century

Jahiliyya: the pre-Islamic era, re-appropriated and invested with a new meaning by radicalists

hiraba: “brigandage,” “terrorism”

convivencia: “co-existence,” used particularly in reference to Andalusia (Muslim Spain)

**Three important ideologues of Islamic reformist-activism/later radicalism:**

Hasan al-Banna: (1906-49), founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928

Mawlana Mawdudi (1903-79): founder of the Jamaat-i Islami party (the Islamic Congregation Party) in 1941 in India, later moved to Pakistan

Sayyid Qutb (1906-66): Egyptian activist who radicalized the ideas of al-Banna and Mawdudi, considered the godfather of Islamic radicalism

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## **Discussion Questions for Esposito's Unholy War**

- 1) What were the factors in the radicalization of Bin Laden? How did Qutb's thought in particular play a key role in this transformation?
- 2) How do radical groups subvert mainstream understandings of jihad?
- 3) So where DO WE go from here? What are the various factors that Esposito discusses to nuance this issue and to suggest possible remedies?
- 4) How are the voices of reform and dialogue impacting the current situation?

5) How should we as Americans and global citizens engage all these dizzying complexities?

## A History of Palestinian-Israeli Relations

**The following are some of the key events to understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:**

**15th-19th Century:** Palestine is a part of southern Greater Syria under Ottoman rule.

**1882:** The first wave of Zionist mass immigration to Palestine begins. Baron Edmond de Rothschild of Paris provides financial support for Jewish colonization in Palestine.

**1896:** Theodor Herzl, an Austrian Zionist leader, publishes “Der Judenstaat,” advocating the creation of a Jewish state. As to its location, Herzl wrote, “We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by public opinion.”

**1897:** The first Zionist Congress meets in Basel, Switzerland and establishes the World Zionist Organization (WZO).

**August 1, 1914:** World War I breaks out. The Ottoman Empire joins the war on Germany’s side.

**1916:** Correspondence between Sherif Hussein of Mecca and Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt, concludes with the Arab understanding that postwar independence and the unity of Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine, are ensured. The British and French governments sign the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divides Arab provinces under the Ottoman Empire into British and French governed areas.

**1917:** [The Balfour Declaration](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/balfour.htm) - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/balfour.htm> . a letter sent by British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron de Rothschild, pledges British support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

**1920:** [The San Remo Conference](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/britman.htm) - <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/britman.htm> gives France control of the former Turkish territories of Syria and Lebanon and awards administration of Palestine, Transjordan and Mesopotamia (Iraq) to Great Britain.

**1922:** The British government issues a white paper on Palestine to reaffirm the Balfour Declaration, but it limits Jewish immigration and excludes Transjordan from the scope of the declaration. The U.S. Congress endorses the Balfour Declaration.

The League of Nations approves the [British Mandate of Palestine](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm) - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm> without the consent of Palestinians. The WZO succeeds in having the terms “historical connection” and “reconstitution” of the “national home” included in the final text of the mandate.

The first British census of Palestine reports a population of 757,182 (11% Jewish).

**1931:** A second British census of Palestine reports a total population of 1,035,154 (16.9% Jewish).

**1937:** [The Peel Commission Report](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/peel1.html) - <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/peel1.html> is published, recommending the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

**1939:** The “MacDonald” white paper proposes a limitation on Jewish immigration and land purchases, disclaims any intention of creating a Zionist state and limits power-sharing and independent Palestinian rule. There is strong opposition from both Jews and Palestinians.

**September 1:** World War II breaks out.

**1942:** WZO President Dr. Chaim Weizmann urges the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine after the war.

The Zionist Biltmore Conference is held in New York. Delegates formulate a new policy, called the “Biltmore Program,” to create a “Jewish Commonwealth” in Palestine and to organize a Jewish army.

**1945:** [The Covenant of the League of Arab States](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/arableag.htm) - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/arableag.htm> , formed for the purpose of securing Arab unity and emphasizing the Arab character of Palestine, is signed in Cairo by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan and Yemen.

The United Nations (UN) is established.

U.S. President Truman asks British Prime Minister (PM) Clement Attlee to grant immigration certificates to allow 100,000 Jews into Palestine, but Attlee rejects the request.

The British government issues Defense (Emergency) Regulations, authorizing military rule in Palestine.

**1947:** Great Britain submits the Palestinian problem to the UN, which appoints a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). The committee submits its report, recommending an agreement to terminate the mandate, but it provides no solution to the Palestine Question. A majority favors partitioning the land into two states with special

international status for Jerusalem, but the minority proposes a federal state comprising of an Arab state and a Jewish state, with Jerusalem as the capital of the federation. The U.S. and Soviet Union endorse the partition plan, but the Arab League rejects it.

[UN Partition Res. 181](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm) - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm> is approved. It provides for the establishment of a Jewish and Arab state and recommends that Jaffa be a part of the proposed Palestinian state and that Jerusalem and Bethlehem be a corpus separatum under a special international regime administered by the Trusteeship Council on behalf of the UN. [This map displays the boundaries of this UN Partition.](http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/cf02d057b04d356385256ddb006dc02f/3cbe4ee1ef30169085256b98006f540d%21OpenDocument) - <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/cf02d057b04d356385256ddb006dc02f/3cbe4ee1ef30169085256b98006f540d%21OpenDocument>

**April 1948:** On the 9th, Irgun and Stern Gangs, led by Menahem Begin and Yitzhag Shamir, massacre 245 Palestinians in the village of Deir Yassin, a western suburb of Jerusalem. Two days later, the Haganah destroy the village of Kalonia, and after driving out the Palestinians, they occupy all Palestinian quarters of west Jerusalem on April 30. David Ben-Gurion, leader of the struggle to establish a Jewish State, orders the Jerusalem Haganah to conquer Arab districts around the city and resettle them with Jews.

The State of Israel is proclaimed on May 14, ending British Mandate.

The All-Palestine Government is formed at the Palestinian National Conference in Gaza.

[The UN General Assembly Res. 194](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad171.htm) - <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/decade/decad171.htm> supports the right of Palestinian refugees to return. During the Jewish invasion of Palestine, 737,166 Palestinians were forcibly evicted from their homes and land. Under this resolution the refugees and their descendants have a right to compensation and repatriation to their original homes and land, because they have suffered “loss of or damage to property, which, under principles of international law or in equity should be made good by the government or authorities responsible.”

## First Response Paper

Explain what Edward Said means when he states “Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is -- and does not simply represent -- a considerable dimension of modern political intellectual culture [in the West], and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with “our” world. [P. 12]. Similarly, he states on p. 21, “that what is commonly circulated by it [i.e. Orientalism] is not ‘truth’ but representations.” In other words, in both instances he is saying that the constructed Orient of the Orientalists (who include scholars, government officials, journalists, etc.) has very little to do with the real “Orient” but more to do with Western perceptions of the Orient and of power structures in the

world – in order to maintain European colonial supremacy in an earlier period (and now, he would argue, with maintaining American hegemony in the world). What kind of examples does he provide to back up this statement? Do your impressions from viewing the film “Battle of Algiers” help to confirm the severe negative effects of European colonial occupation of much of the Middle East that Said refers to, effects which helped created Orientalism?

The essay should also conclude with one paragraph in which you explain whether you agree **or** not with Said’s overall position and give a couple of reasons for your position. **The essay should not be more than 2 pages long (nothing beyond the second page will be read!), typed and double spaced. Please include your name and SAVE A COPY OF YOUR PAPER IN YOUR COMPUTER.**

## Possible Paper Topics

Pick one of the following topics and prepare and submit an essay. **The essay should not be more than 2 pages long (nothing beyond the second page will be read!), typed and double spaced. Please include your name and SAVE A COPY OF YOUR PAPER IN YOUR COMPUTER.**

- 1) Orientalism and its Continuing Effects Today
- 2) The influence of Sufism
- 3) The life and times of famous mystic Rabi’a al-Adawiyah (feel free to substitute some other Sufi figure, eg. al-Hasan al-Basri, al-Hallaj etc.)
- 4) The status of women in Islamic law
- 5) Gendered identities in Islamic Societies
- 6) The contemporary popularity of al-Rumi
- 7) Specific aspects of the Arab-Israeli Conflict
- 8) Clash of Civilizations or the Alliance of Civilizations?
- 9) The life and thought of Muhammad Abduh, a major modern reformist thinker in Islam (or substitute other figures)
- 10) Islamic revivalism
- 11) Compatibility of Islamic Thought with Democracy
- 12) Islamist movements and extremism
- 13) Effects of Globalization on specific Islamic societies
- 14) Islamic Societies (pick a couple to compare and contrast) in the Age of Cybernetics