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Islam

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From the Middle East arose the monotheistic religions of today: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Until recent times little attention was given to the Islam religion. Islam is not just a set of beliefs, but a way of life and a mind-set for millions. Muhammad the Seal of the Prophets faced many opposing forces, which make his success even more amazing. He was ridiculed and forced to suffer many indignities. Today Islam is no longer just a local religion of the Arabs. They comprise only 25% of the present population of Islam. Muslims are found in every country of the world. In 1978 the strength of Islam was measured at almost one-quarter of the world's population (Martin-8). Islam is a very structured and legalistic religion. One key to understanding of a religion is to look at it's roots. The Arabs were the building force during the birth of Islam. Their world was a turbulent and violent place, which brought about opposing factions and ideas within the Muslims. As the Arabs shaped Islam, so also did Islam shape the Arabs. It is the most fundamental and integral factor that influenced the Arab culture. Islam has penetrated all levels of the Arab society. Art, architecture, and writing all feel its domination. As in all religions it has had its great leaders and personalities who have either guided or brought forth examination and revaluation of the different aspects of the Islam religion. One clue to the understanding of a Muslim perhaps may be found in the name Islam which translates to "submission" and Muslim means "one who submits" (Martin-3).

Before Islam took root and before Muhammad became a prophet, Mecca was a great, rich, and worldly city. The trade of Eastern goods has always been a profitable venture. To bring these goods to Europe the safest route was to sail to Yemen and then to convey by camel caravan up the eastern shores of the Red Sea to Egypt and Syria (Glubb-24). Mecca was on this caravan route from which it drew much of it's wealth. Another source of income for the merchant

families was the huge pilgrimages to the Kaaba and the 365 idols therein (Glubb-26). The time of the pilgrimage was combined with an annual fair at which the traders were able to dispose at a profit of the piece-goods which they had brought down from Damascus (Glubb-26). The Meccan merchants were worldly men and the more wealthy had paid visits to the Byzantine court and the Great King of Persia. The merchant families controlled the trade, therefore they controlled all. Without the trade which was its lifeline Mecca would become just another small town with a sacred site. One of the greatest of the caravan and the trade families of Mecca was the Quraish. The Quraish held a considerable amount of power and into this house was Muhammad destined to be the prophet was born.

Muhammad was orphaned at an early age and his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, whom he came to stay with died, 2 years later. Muhammad then came to live with his uncle, Abu Talib, a kind but poor old man. An older rich widow Khadija, who owned a caravan he worked for, sent him a proposal of marriage. He consented and the marriage was bountiful and a success. They had two sons, who both died in infancy and four daughters. At age 40 a miraculous event occurred on what is held to be the Night of Power which changed his life forever. On a night late in the ninth muslim month of Ramadan the Archangel Gabriel visited him and commanded to:

"Recite in the name of the Lord who created,
Who created man of blood coagulated.
Recite! The Lord is the most beneficent,
Who taught by the pen,
Taught what they knew not to men."

(Koran 96: 1-5). When he told his wife of these occurrences, she declared her belief that he was to be the prophet of the Arabs. His first converts were;

Khadija; Ali, his cousin; Zeid, an adopted son; and a merchant named Abu Bekr, whom later would become the Prophet's successor. Muhammad then received an order to recite what he has been told. His message was simple: God was One and idols must be swept away. He was a messenger of God. One day the dead would rise again, the righteous to eternal happiness, the idolaters to hell-fire. He was here to bring the religion of Abraham which had been warped by the Jews, and Jesus was the spirit of God and he too had come to redeem the Jewish religion, but his message had been altered by his followers, the Christians. Muhammad received his facts through divine revelation, which after it had been recited by him was written down in the Qur'an.

With these teachings in mind we must now remember the merchants of Mecca. The Kaaba was a very important part of their lives. Not only were they proud to have such a temple, the pilgrimages brought in much needed business to the merchants. If the temple was destroyed great position and stature along with a boost to the Meccan economy would be lost. In other words he hit a rich man where it would hurt most, his wallet. Secondly his third teaching about Judgement Day meant that all their ancestors would go to "hell-fire". As a result Muhammad was extremely unsuccessful and exceedingly unpopular in Mecca. After four years he had only 70 disciples (Glubb-32).

In 619, Abu Talib and Muhammad's beloved wife Khadija died. Times were very hard especially since in his mode as Prophet family ties were extremely thin (Martin-34). The Hijra, when Muhammad escaped to Yathrib in 622, is the date that Muslim calendars begin (Fernaw-25). When Muhammad had discovered the plans for his own assassination, he said to Abu Bekr, "God has given me permission to emigrate." (Glubb-33), which at the time was a very wise thing to do. It was the turning point in Muhammad's prophethood. Ever since, Yathrib has been called Medinat al Nabi or simply Medina, the city of the Prophet (Fernaw-

25). Muhammad's religion and rule took grasp of Medina exceptionally fast, and many people converted. These converts came to be called the Helpers (Martin-35). In the remaining ten years of Muhammad's life, he had only three elements to surpass: pull the Islamic community together, deal with other religions, and end the Meccans antipathy. Those problems are by no means insignificant. While under persecution in Mecca, Muhammad was patient, and humble.

After coming to power in Medina, an entirely new side of the prophet was seen. Not only did he war on the Meccan caravans, in Medina he exiled the Jews and arranged for his own opponents to be assassinated. Soon after the hijra he married Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bekr who was nine years old, and he fifty-three. Muhammad then proceeded to marry nine others wives before his death, while his followers were permitted only four. It is amazing that they were able to submit and limit themselves to only four wives. Between the Hijra and Muhammad's death, a considerable amount of power was built up. A measure of the size of the state is that on an expedition towards Syria an the end of 630 Muhammad had 30,000 men behind him (Watt-1). Muhammad's conquering of Mecca was two-fold. First the physical aspect, he and his followers attacked or intercepted all caravans bound for Mecca, therefore hurting them economically. The other aspect was to take away the fear of losing the revenue and prestige the Kaaba brought. Muhammad declared that the Kaaba was the house of God, built by Abraham, and the Meccans had sinned by placing idols in the Kaaba (Glubb-39). Therefore the idols must be removed, and yet the pilgrimages would continue, as it would be a Muslim obligation. The same year as the Meccans accepted Islam, the Seal of the Prophets died in June 632. He had gone to meet his lord and the sacred time was over.

As Muhammad had left no clear successor, one can imagine that there was turmoil. Civil War was avoided however with the appointment of Abu

Bekr as Caliph or "successor of the prophet". From 632-661, is the era called the "rightly-guided caliphs" or the Rashidun (Watt-1). The Rashidun consisted of four caliphs: Abu Bekr, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman Ibn Affan, and Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Abu Bekr was the safest choice in the chaos that followed Muhammad's death. He was not as polarized as other candidates such as Ali and Umar. Abu Bekr managed to consolidate Islamic rule in Arabia and to send forth armies into Syria and Iraq, where they met with considerable success against the forces of the Byzantine and the Sassanian Empire before his death two years later in 634.

Abu Bekr's successor was Umar Ibn Al-Khattab or simply Umar. Under Umar I in the ten years of his rule 634-644, a phenomenal expansion took place; Syria and Egypt were wrested from the Byzantine Empire and Iraq from the Persian (Watt-1). Umar adopted fair means of treating the Jews and Christians, whom Islamic law referred to as "people of the covenant" or dhimmi in Arabic. Umar guaranteed basic rights and freedom of worship in exchange for a poll tax paid into the central treasury in Medina (Martin-41). Death came to Umar on November 3, 644 from the dagger of a Muslim governor's Christian slave.

The third member of the Rashidun was Uthman Ibn Affan who ruled from 644 to 656. He was a loyal Muslim during the reign of the other caliphs. He converted to Islam during the early Meccan Period of Muhammad's prophethood. The fact of his conversion was especially unusual as he was a member of the great Meccan family of Umayya (Martin-42). Under Uthman the official recension of the Koran was ordered. Today, most copies of the Koran are traced to the Uthmanic recension. At a trade discussion with a contingent from Egypt that turned violent, Uthman was murdered. The angry Egyptians lay siege to his house and headquarters in Medina. Uthman's reign is divided into a good beginning and a poor and ignoble end. It was Uthman's assassination that was a great dividing point in Islamic history. For Ali, the fourth caliph, and last of the

Rashidun age, did not go to aid Uthman; meanwhile the Umayyad forces of Syria had been dispatched, but too late.

Ali Ibn Abi Talib was Muhammad's cousin and son of Abu Talib, whom Muhammad had lived with as a boy. Ali was among the first to convert to Islam, and he also married Muhammad's daughter, Fatima. Those loyal to Ali after Muhammad's death believed that Ali was the first and foremost successor to the Prophet. It was here where the Shiites, or the partisans of Ali, broke with remaining body of the Islamic culture. They also believe that the term Imam, or religious leader, is preferable to Caliph. To the Shiites, Ali became a legend, characterized both as a saint and as a warrior, he is credited with killing 523 enemies with his bare hands in a single day. On Friday, June 5, 656 AD, many Muslims finally paid allegiance to Ali as Caliph in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina (Martin-44). Although there were many factors against Ali, he is still considered part of the Age of Rashidun. Ali's greatest rival was Mu'awiya of the powerful house of Umayyads, who controlled Syria. Mu'awiya claimed that Uthman's murder should have been avenged. Mu'awiya proceeded to proclaim himself Caliph and the fitna, or civil war, commenced. Ali was felled by an assassin's poisoned sword in an ambush in 661. Thus ended the Age of Rashidun.

The ascension of Mu'awiya to the caliphate marked the beginning of the Umayyad period. The Umayyads ruled from Damascus, Syria. The Umayyad's rule was the period of the consolidation of Arab rule and gradual growth of Arabic and Arab influence over the then existing languages and institutions of previous civilizations. Mu'awiya was the only Arab Caliph who did not have one rebellion during his reign. Mu'awiya's designated successor was his son Yezeed. Yezeed was a nonreligious, frivolous young man whose only real claim to power was heredity. So, what of the other caliphs' sons who were much better qualified? Husain, son of Ali and grandson of the Prophet, was pious, serious and virtuous.

On October 10, 680, he, his family and 72 retainers were massacred by a Umayyad force of 4,000 calvary (Glubb-75). Husain's murder was the cause of yet another struggle for power.

In Damascus, one caliph after another was acclaimed and then died in a fratricidal civil war which lasted 12 years. Caliph Abdul Malik whose reign lasted from 685 to 705, was recognized only by Syria, Palestine and Egypt. He defeated and killed the brother of his rival, Abdulla Ibn Aubair, when he took Kufa in December, 691 (Glubb-77). Malik's victory ended all resistance shortly thereafter. Under the reign of Abdul Malik, the accounts and all official correspondence were transacted in Arabic. This was also new, for previously Arabic had only been an oral language.

The fifth Caliph to ascend, after Abdul Malik, was his son Hisham. He was a capable, steady, hard-working and known for his good judgement and common sense. During his reign he was forced to put down many rebellions, which were due to the ineptitude and inadequacies of his predessors. Masudi, one of the earliest of the famous Arab historians, writes that the Umayyads produced three great rulers: Mu'awiya I, Abdul Malik ibn Merwan, and Hisham ibn Abdul Malik (Glubb-88). After the death of Hisham, the Umayyads declined rapidly and there was a succession of short-lived rulers thereafter. Merwan ibn Muhammad ibn Merwan, a great military commander-in-chief and governor, was proclaimed Caliph on November 23, 744. He was to be the last of the Umayyad Caliphs.

While the empire was in turmoil, from the Umayyad's decline and due to the several revolutions going on, the Abbasids had Abdulla ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Addulla ibn Abbas proclaimed as the Caliph and rightful Prince of the Faithful. Merwan was murdered on the 5th of August, 750 by Abbasid cavalry, and all members of the Umayyad family were indiscriminately massacred, except

one grandson who fled to Andalus, otherwise known as Spain, where he founded a dynasty. The Caliph Abdulla, whose nickname was Saffar, or "shedder of blood", did not reign long. He died of smallpox shortly after on June 9, 754. His brother, Mansoor, was even more ruthless than Saffar. Mansoor had Abu Muslim, the man he owed his throne to, assassinated when he feared that Abu's popularity rivaled and surpassed his own. Mansoor's most important act was founding the city of Baghdad, due mainly to his fearing to go to Kufa, which was infamous for its treachery.

It was here at Baghdad where the remainder of the Abbasid Caliphs ruled. The great Arab families had kept the power of the Caliphate checked for many years, with the Abbasid dynasty their influence was undermined by the use of mercenaries from Persia. During the Abbasid rule the growth of Persian influence was felt. The Persian families, who had supported the Abbasid Revolution, held many high offices in the new government. The Persian dominance was to be the downfall of the Empire. By relying too greatly on the East Persians and alienating the Arab tribes through the increasing despotism, the Abbasids sought to undermine the same qualities that had made the Islamic Empire great. The promise of the return of the "rightful" rule with the descendants of Ali in power was a myth. The Abbasids were as frivolous, decadent, worldly, and opulent as the Umayyads if not more.

The Abbasid Empire lasted from 750 to 1258 (Martin-45). The Abbasid's rule was a period of high cultural achievement in Islam. Many scientific, literary, and philosophical treatises from Greece, Persia, and India were translated into Arabic and seriously studied. Abbasid intellectual tastes ranged from mathematics, astronomy, geometry, and optics to medicine, pharmacology, music, poetry, and the literary arts. The House of Wisdom was built in Baghdad by the Caliph al-Ma'mun who ruled 813-833 (Martin-46). Many Muslim

philosophers and theologians were to use the translations of Ishaq, a christian Arab scholar, in the elaboration of Islamic thought. Avicenna, the most famous figure to do so, wrote several commentaries on the Arabic translations of Aristotle's philosophy. As one can see there is great freedom of the mind during the Abbasid period, which is also known for its political upheaval. As the Caliphs became more worldly and Persianized, the allure of other, alien ideas was harder to resist. From the death of the Prophet in 632 to the murder of Mutawakkil in 861, the Arab Caliphs had enjoyed two hundred and thirty years of extraordinary splendor and power (Glubb-116).

From 833 to 974, the Abbasid Caliphs were no more than puppets. Thirteen puppet caliphs were appointed, of whom five were murdered, three were deposed and blinded, and five died a natural death. The real rule went to the Turkish commanders through military dictatorship. These commanders feuded amongst themselves, nominating one Caliph after the other, and then disposed of the Caliph when he became too tiresome, or seemed to possess any power. With the Turks coming to power the provinces all became independent and no longer recognized the Caliphs as their leaders. The fall of the Abbasid Empire, unfortunately for the Arabs, coincided with a Byzantine military revival. The Taurus passes, which were the key in the battles between the Islamic and Byzantine Empires, were captured and fortified by Emperor Basil I. He and his successors invaded Syria and ravaged the land with little to no opposition, carrying off great numbers of young women and children to be sold as slaves.

A third house that was a rival of the Abbasids was the Fatimads, or the decedents of Ali and Fatima, Muhammad's daughter. Ubaidullah al Mehedi, a claimant to the Shiite imamate*, assumed control of Qairawan in Africa, or Ifriqiyq in Arabic, and was proclaimed Caliph, Prince of the Faithful and Mehedi** (Glubb-142). The dynasty started by Ubaidullah would call itself the Fatimads.

Ubaidullah was an energetic autocrat, with larger ambitions than just Ifriqiya. He twice tried to conquer Egypt and failed. With the two failed attempts, Ubaidullah decided to conquer the rest of North Africa. In 922, he sent his army to the west, overran the Berber states and drove the Idrisids from their throne in Fez (Glubb-142). Abdul Rahman III, the great Umayyad ruler in Andalus, 929, out of jealousy of the Fatimads, also assumed the title of Caliph. There were now three rival Caliphs, and Umayyad in Andalus, a Fatimid in Ifriqiya, and an Abbasid in Baghdad.

At Ubaidullah's death he was succeeded by his son Qaim, in 934 (Glubb-142). In 944, Abu Yezeed, a Berber fanatic, preached a holy war against the Shiites, and therefore the Fatimads. He laid siege to the fortress where the Fatimads had taken refuge. The Sanhaja, a nomadic tribe of the Sahara, saved the dynasty, by giving

*The Imam is the Shiite leader who is a direct descendent of Ali.

**Mehedi is a name given by the Shiites to the prophet who will come and establish peace on earth.

support to the Fatimads. In May 946, the Caliph Qaim died and was succeeded by his son Ismail, who drove the remnant of the rebels back into the Atlas. Ismail in turn died in 953 and was succeeded as Fatimid Caliph by his son, Al Muizz il Deen Allah, "he who makes glorious the religion of God" (Glubb-144). He reconquered all of North Africa, which the Umayyads had taken while the Fatimads were attempting to put down the rebellion, and then proceeded with the conquest of Egypt. For a brief time the Fatimid Empire extended from Maghrib to Syria. In 984, however, the Sanhaja, under their ameer Mansoor, established an independent dynasty in Qairawan (Glubb-144). The Fatimads, having lost North Africa, were driven likewise from Syria by the invasion of the Byzantine emperor. The wealth of the Fatimads was unbelievable. A Persian visitor

once said, "I could neither limit nor define their wealth, and nowhere else have I seen such prosperity." (Glubb-146). Egypt was rich but militarily ineffective. The period from 1000 to 1071 witnessed a number of half-hearted Egyptian attempts to conquer Syria. The Fatimads were ambitious only to replace the Abbasids, not to fight unbelievers like their ancestors. They soon opened diplomatic relations with the Christians of the West, and the end of the long blockade of Europe was in sight. Under the Fatimads, Cairo became an important political capital; its institutions of learning and culture rivaled those of Baghdad. Today in Cairo, Muslim students from all over the world attend al-Azhar University, built by the Fatimads nearly a thousand years ago, two centuries before universities were established in Medieval Europe (Martin-24).

With the invasion of the Mongol hordes, the Age of the Caliphate came to an end. Originating in Eastern Siberia, the Mongols swept through Russia, China, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Ironically, in just a few decades the Mongol lords who occupied the "Abode of Islam" themselves became Muslims, and the general shape of Islamic civilization remained remarkably the same. The Mongols worked according to a carefully organized drill. They carried off the young men for labor gangs, and on reaching a walled city, they immediately surrounded it with a rampart and ditch, using the captive labor. These captive were then force to fill in the moat and to lead the assault, once a breach in the wall had been made. Therefore the Mongols suffered little to no casualties as the prisoners did all the dangerous work. When the city was taken, the women were raped and then all inhabitants were butchered. The Mongols were led by Khakans or supreme Khans. Jenghis Khan ruled from 1206 to 1227. From 1211 to 1216 he consolidated his power, and in 1219, he began his campaign in the West. Jenghis Khan spent 1220 to 1225 reducing East Persia to an uninhabited desert. A Persian historian once wrote, "In the Muslim countries

devastated by Jenghis Khan not one in a thousand of the inhabitants survived...If from now until the day of the Resurrection, nothing hindered the natural increase of the population, it could never reach one-tenth of its density before Mongol conquest." (Glubb-197)

Jenghis Khan's four sons, inherited on their father's deathbed his steppe empire. Juji received the country north of the Caspian, and his decedents formed the Khans of the Golden Horde. Jagatai received the land east of the Jaxartes, and his decedents became the Khans of the Trans-Oxiana. Ogotai inherited the Imil valley and as supreme khan, Persia and China. Tului received the Mongol homeland round Lake Baikal. After Ogotai, and his son, Quyuq, died, a tribal council was held and Mangu, the son of Tului, was named supreme Khan. Mangu's brother Hulagu was sent to conquer Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. In doing so, he sacked and completely destroyed Baghdad. Hulagu's decedents became the khans of Persia. Qubilai's, Mangu's other brother, decedents form the line of the Emperors of China.

The Mamluks who came to be the masters of Egypt and Syria, are from an unknown genealogy. The word Mamluk means owned (Martin-25), and they were strict Sunni Muslims. The regime established by the Mamluks was not based on heredity. The commanders and all leaders had to work themselves up from the rank of slave-recruit. The constant flow of new blood from the hardest and most warlike tribes, rescued the Mamluks from the recurring decline found within the various governments of the Muslims when they acquired wealth and power. The Mamluk Empire was one of the most powerful in the world.

During Jenghis Khan's invasion of Persia in 1220, a small Turkish tribe had fled from Khurasan to Asia Minor to escape the Mongol conqueror. The son of the chief of the Turkish immigrant's name was Othman, and he converted to Islam. His descendants founded a mighty Muslim empire and they call

themselves the Othmanlis or Ottomans. There were ten great Ottoman Sultans and thereafter the dynasty degenerated. By 1516, Ottoman forces had seized Damascus, and in the following year they entered Egypt, shattering the Mamluk forces by the use of the Turkish cannon (Kennedy-10). At the height of their power, the Ottomans took possession of much of the western portions of the Abode of Islam and marched as far as Austria in Europe before they were repulsed (Martin-26). The Janissaries, a highly trained paramilitary force, used hand guns and artillery which put them far ahead of all contemporaries. Through the use of the Janissaries, the Ottoman sultans were able to capture and control large territories with relatively small forces. They were the greatest Muslim challenge to early modern Europe. In the beginning of the sixteenth century the Ottoman's domain stretched from the Crimea and the Aegean, to the Levant (Kennedy-10). In 1453, the Ottomans captured Constantinople and made it their capital, renaming it Istanbul (Martin-26). Syria and Palestine were to remain under Ottoman rule for four hundred years. Not until 1917 did the British army from Egypt and the Arab army from Arabia commence the task of the Ottomans eviction (Glubb-227).

The Safavids of Persia, another Islamic government, ruled from 1500 to 1779. They carried on active propaganda in Azerbaijani and the surrounding regions. As a result they acquired such influence that they were almost a theocratic state. They were a Shiite dynasty who gained control of Persia the same time the Ottomans were establishing themselves in western Islam. The Safavids made Shiite Islam the state religion of Persia (Fernaw-44). This step of the Safavids strongly and decisively marked the place of Persia in the Muslim world. The Safavid's rulers were called shahs or kings. Perhaps the greatest of these was Shah Abbas the Great. He regained Baghdad from the Ottomans, and successfully ruled for forty-two years. Isfahan, the capital, was made one of the

most beautiful cities in the Islamic world. Instead of establishing relations with the Safavid's Islamic contemporaries, such as the Ottomans, they made diplomatic and economic ties with European powers. In art and architecture a distinctively Persian expression of Islamic culture developed while the Safavids were in power.

The final important regime are the Mughals⁺ of India. The Mughals consist of the Turkish and Afghani warlords who moved into India to establish their own Islamic Empire. (Mughal is perversion of Mongol.) The Mughals controlled India for two hundred years (1526-1730) (Martin-26). Unlike the Safavids they were Sunni in religious persuasion. The Mughal rulers made Delhi their capital, and built impressive and majestic royal palaces and mosques. The best known of these is the Taj Mahal (Martin-27). What is surprising is that while they lasted for two hundred years, the majority of the population was Hindu, not Muslim. In India, Sufis, or mystics, were particularly at home. One of greatest and most fascinating leader of the Mughals was Akbar, reigning from 1556-1605 (Martin-50). Under Akbar, a radical religious movement including elements of Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity were combined along with Islam to create a new religion. The Mughals of India were not directed by a central Islamic caliphate. In India there was great religious turmoil, in which Akbar's apostasy and heresy was a symptom not a cause. The Muslims could not forge a mutual understanding with the religions of India. Zoroastrian's dualistic view and the Hindu's mystical outlook could not coexist according to strict Islamic interpretation of the Qu'ran. The everyday Muslim subjects were in error just by their contact with the other religions. Indian historians see Akbar as a liberal Muslim. Aziz Ahmad commented on this view saying, "the Western assessment, of Akbar's apostasy, is based on the polemical position that Islam is incapable of liberalism, and since Akbar was a liberal he must have necessarily

ceased to be a Muslim. The Hindu historians who wished to evolve a modus vivendi with Islam in India regard Islam as a liberal religion and Akbar as a good Muslim with some heretical views." After Akbar's death his religion was shortly discontinued by his son and successor, Salim.

The Koran or Qur'an, not the prophet, is the word of God. The divine nature of the Koran is often comparable to the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The Koran is God's not Muhammad's communication to humankind. It is the Muslim path to salvation. In literary form the Koran comprises 114 suras which vary in length from a few to over two hundred ayas (verses). The word Koran comes from the arabic verb which means "to recite" (Martin-6). As Muhammad did not write or read, when a "divine" revelation came to him, which the prophet claimed was sent to him by the angel Gabriel, he would recite it and then his followers would memorize it. An important mark in the Muslim life is reached when a Muslim is able to recite the Koran in its entirety. A separate Muslim profession is devoted to the reciting of the Koran. They are called reciters and are in constant demand for special occasions. The Koran is also the miracle of Muhammad's prophethood. Muhammad, as an illiterate and uneducated man, should not have been able to spout such poetry and complicated thoughts; he must have then been influenced by divine revelation. In the Koran, Islam's law are set down, Muhammad's sayings and teachings are recorded and examples to live by are given.

In brief, the Five Pillars of Islam are what guide all Muslims no matter what sect of membership. The shahada or witness is the first of the five Pillars of Muslim faith. The witness is that "there is no God but Allah" and that "Muhammad is His Apostle" (Martin-4). The Islam religion stresses the oneness and unity of God. Christianity's Trinity and Zoroastrian dualistic concepts were, according to Islam, aberrations and perversions. The second phrase of the

shahada declares that Muhammad is God's messenger, who brought the final positing of divine truth, and thus he is the Seal of the Prophets. Under the second phase of the shahada, a Muslim's duty is to study and learn from the Prophet's life, which is recorded in the Sunna.

The second Pillar is Salat, or the prayer (Martin-14). Five daily prayers are considered a duty for all Muslims and ritual purity is required. The prayer is performed facing the direction of Mecca, and may be done anywhere. The third Pillar is Zakat or alms (Martin-14). The third Pillar is obligatory only upon those who have the means to do so. Normally this should be done before the beginning of the month of Muharram, the first of the new year (Martin-14). The fourth Pillar is the Siyam or fasting (Martin-15). This, like the alms, is an expression of thanksgiving. All Muslims fast during the ninth month of Ramadan (Martin-15). During daylight there is no drinking, eating or sexual activity. After sundown, anything goes. The fifth Pillar is the Hajj, or pilgrimage (Martin-16) is unlike the other four in that it is required only once a lifetime. The Hajj is performed during the season which begins annually in the tenth month and lasts until the middle of the twelfth month, Dhu al Hijja. The Hajj today is a spectacular gathering of Muslims at Mecca from all over the world, numbering about two million people each year (Martin-16). The Jihad, or striving, is not an official Pillar. The full meaning of Jihad is "striving for moral and religious perfection," and since Islam regards itself as a universal religion, another definition can be "holy war". One who so strives is called a Mujtahid. A Mujtahid, follows a number of forms of public and private devotion. Examples are not eating pork, nor drinking alcohol, and some stricter sects prohibit dance.

There is another term which is central to the Islam faith - Iman or "faith" (Martin-16-17). There are six parts to the Iman. The first is God and His attributes. This is the belief in Allah and His Unity; it is also the knowing of his

ninety-nine names or attributes. The second Iman is the prophets, starting with Adam and going to Muhammad; each prophet is an ordinary mortal sent to bring the divine message to humankind. The third Iman is the angels. Angels are numerous invisible beings who execute the commands of God. The most important angels are Gabriel, God's messenger to the prophets; Michael, in charge of the natural world; Israfil, the trumpeter on the Day of Judgement; and Azrael, the angel of death. The Sacred Books, such as the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David and the Gospel of Jesus in addition to the Koran, are the fourth Iman. The Day of Judgement, upon which there will be an accounting for everyone's sins, and the concept of a purgatory, is the fifth Iman. The final part of the faith is the omnipotence of God. Man has free will to decide, yet Allah already knows what the outcome of those decisions will be.

The main body of Muslims is known by the term Sunni. Sunni Islam developed four schools of thought to interpret the Koran and Sunna to apply them to everyday life. Each school takes its name from a famous founder. Hanifites are named after Abu Hanifa who died in the year 767. The Hanifites' school leans towards an orthodoxy which was purely intellectual and was universally accepted, while an element of performance or works was required by other Sunnite schools (Watt-24). The Malikites were named after Malik ibn Anas who died in 795. Shafiites, the third Sunnite school, was named from Muhammad al-Shafii. The last Sunnite school is the Hanbalites, named after Ahmad ibn Hanbal. These schools answer a variety of questions, but for a Sunni the answers are not arbitrary but must be earnestly sought from the traditional bodies of opinion of one of the four schools. These schools are law, and at the same time, theological schools. Under their jurisdiction come questions of purity, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The doctors of law belong to an elite class called Ulema (Watt-34). The sources whereby the schools may justify their decisions are (1)

the Koran, (2) the Sunna, (3) the consensus of the Ulema, and (4) reasoning by analogy (Martin-11). Shariia is the term for the concept of the revelation of God's will to the historic community of Islam (Martin-12). Understanding and living by the Shariia with the help of the Ulema have and continue to play important roles in the social and religious affairs of Sunni Muslims.

An unfortunate side effect of the majority of Islam being Sunni, is that most Western scholars have considered Sunni the norm and all else heresy. However, there is a significant minority of Muslims, known as Shiites, who have differed from the Sunnis from the beginning of Islam. Today about 10% of the Islamic population of the world is Shiite (Martin-12). The Shiites appear to differ little from the Sunnis, and yet there is great cultural friction between the two groups. The greatest dividing point is the question of the caliphs. Shiites believe that the Prophet's rightful successor was Ali, Muhammad's cousin. The Shiites accepted Ali's descendants as their Imams, or religious leader. There are three types of Shiites; Zaydi, Ismailis or Sevener, and Twelver Shiites. In the eighth century some claimed that Zayd, a grandson of Husayn, was the real Imam. His followers, known as the Zaydis, established communities south of the Caspian and in the Yemen. They were considered the moderate branch of the Shiites. The Ismailis or the Sevener Shiites were the more radical and revolutionary branch, at times attacking Sunni strongholds. They trace their spiritual heritage to Ismail, a son of the sixth Imam. The Ismailis believe that Ismail did not die but instead went into occultation (Martin-57). The majority of the Shiites are Twelver. Twelvers believe that there was 12 true Imams and the twelfth Imam went into occultation, and will one day return as the Mehedi, the divinely "Guided One," the restorer of religion and faith to Islamic Umma or community. Actual leadership since the twelfth Imam was done by representatives of the "Hidden" Imam. The Safavids were Shiite, and the present state of Iran is predominantly Twelver Shiite

(Martin-57). The Jafari school of law serves the same function as the four schools of Sunni. It is based on the teachings of the sixth Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (Martin-13). No matter how wide the differences between the branches of Islam they still have the common denominator of the Koran, the Sunna, the Pillars and the Iman.

There are several unifying forces that contribute to form an Islamic art style. Of all these factors the Islamic religion's domination is felt quite keenly. Another unifying force was the population's mobility. A ritual process that had enormous social and economical impact was the pilgrimage to Mecca, with its circulation of ideas and knowledge. One important theme throughout Islamic art is abstractness. When Allah through Muhammad said to throw away all idols, they took that thought to art, and so there is little representational art. Not only is nonrepresentational art considered more suitable for the spirit, but the portrayal of figures was at times even suppressed. As the Koran specifically mentions statues among the works of Satan, Sculpture is almost totally lacking from Islamic art. Despite attempts to suppress representational art, it nonetheless continues to exist, after a fashion. Abstract art finds itself expressed in two forms; the arabesque and the straight line (Martin-71). For geometric patterns the straight line is used. To represent growth and change, the arabesque is found. The geometric and arabesque patterns are often found used together in harmony for intricate configurations which amaze the mind as well as please the eye. Calligraphy is considered the ultimate achievement in the Islamic arts (Martin-72). The word is a very power symbol, as creation by words of command, and the prophet's divine revelation. The influence of Islam has made writing much more a cherished and honored profession than that of drawing, painting and other such arts.

The only real Islamic architecture is expressed in the mosque. However there is no set and fixed form of the mosque. The general form is based

upon the Prophet's house in Medina. The only required feature is the Qibla wall, or the wall facing Mecca (Martin-74). Inside this wall a Mihrab, or focal point of the mosque, is found. Generally, in front of the main building of the mosque is a courtyard with a fountain. In the courtyard, Muslims perform ablutions, the ritual cleansing before the prayer. Outside traditional mosques there are one or more minaret towers. The style of the mosque, like language, varies from place to place.

Music is not exactly forbidden, but it is not encouraged either. The two main types of music in Islam are folk music and art music. Folk music is the common people's music. It is often sung without instruments. Again this is due to the importance placed upon the word. Art music is usually performed for the aristocracy. In art music trained professionals are required, for it has certain rules. The singer, however, is foremost in importance. In the world of Islam, the key to music virtuosity is the ability of a performer to improvise on a particular melody or rhythm in an innovative way (Martin-81). Music does have some important functions: the call to prayer, certain hymns on special days, and even the recitation of the Koran. Among the Sufis, music and dance play important roles. Sama, mystical orations, meaning "listening," are spiritual music exercises. Sufis believe that music can lead to spiritual knowledge by echoing the beauty and the harmony of the universe, urging the worshipper to go beyond the pedestrian feelings and concerns of this life (Martin-82).

Muhammad's following which started with as little as 70 Meccans now has literally a world of believers. Islam is much more than a cult of the Arabs. It has come to populate the world and its following is growing to rival both Christianity and Buddhism, the world's two largest religions (Martin-8). The Abode of Islam knows no boundaries. Islam is no longer a single political entity. The leaders of Islam like all men were mortal, and like all mortal men they had their faults and greatness. Many have been made saints and fewer have been

made scapegoats, yet all lived and died, with most trying faithfully to serve their god, Allah. The Islamic culture is rich with its own achievement. Great cities such as Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, and Isfahan, have all been important hubs of Islamic culture. Accomplishments in art and architecture such as the mosques and the royal buildings clearly have stated Islam as a religion of the city as well as the desert, even though less than 30% of the Muslim population are urban dwellers (Martin-10). Today, for Islam the challenge will be to educate the ignorant and overcome the prejudice and fear of those who are biased.

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