CHAPTER 5

RELIGION AND CULTURE

PREFATORY REMARKS

Islam is a religion. It is also, almost inseparably from this, a community, a civilization and a culture. It is true that many of the countries through which the Qur'anic faith spread already possessed ancient and important cultures. Islam absorbed these cultures, and assimilated itself to them in various ways, to a far greater extent than it attempted to supplant them. But in doing this, it provided them with attributes in common, with a common attitude to God, to men and to the world, and thus ensured, through the diversities of language, of history and of race, the complex unity of the *dār al-Islām*, the 'house' or 'world' of Islam.

The history of the Muslim peoples and countries is thus a unique example of a culture with a religious foundation, uniting the spiritual and the temporal, sometimes existing side by side with 'secular' cultures, but most often absorbing them by becoming very closely interlinked with them. It is with the relations between this existing culture and the strictly religious features concerned that we shall try to concern ourselves in this chapter.

Historical landmarks

Between the first/seventh and the ninth/fifteenth centuries, Islamic lands reached great cultural heights. We shall not attempt to outline here all the background of this, still less to draw up an exhaustive catalogue of works and of names. At certain periods the researches, the arguments of the schools and the political repercussions to which they gave rise, the intellectual achievements and the works of art were so abundant that to try to record them in a few pages would be to give an unjust picture of their dynamic qualities. The names which we shall mention therefore will be cited only as examples.

We shall, however, give a few landmarks. The Medinese period and the Umayyad age, particularly the latter, saw the establishment of the first Muslim culture, in which were combined the influences of ancient Arabia and of Byzantium. The Baghdād of the 'Abbasids continually

absorbed Persian influences. The greatest advance took place in the third/ninth century when the advent of Greek thought and learning caused the Arabo-Muslim, and soon afterwards the Perso-Muslim, cultures to embrace new methods of thought. The period of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd and a Persian mother, can be proclaimed as an age of brilliant humanism. More than once Sunnism and Shi'ism overlapped.

The reaction of al-Mutawakkil attempted to re-orientate the 'Abbasid empire, and particularly 'Irāq, towards a deliberately Sunnī domination. The triumph of Sunnism did not take place in a day, and under the Buyid *wazīrs* Muslim thought continued, either directly or through the Hellenistic *falsafa* (philosophy), to receive Shī'ī, and more precisely Ismā'īlī, currents. Samanid Khurāsān and its brilliant capital of Nīshāpūr, Hamadān under the Daylamī Buyids, Iṣfahān under the Kakuyid Kurds, were centres of intense cultural influence. Such was the background of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). The Aghlabid kingdom of Sicily in the third/ninth century was followed by the appearance, in the next two centuries, of the influence of the Cairo of the neo-Ismā'īlī Fatimids and its al-Azhar university. In the extreme west, Sunnī and Umayyad Cordova of the third/ninth to the fifth/eleventh centuries rivalled 'Abbasid Baghdād in brilliance. The Caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III and later the *wazīr* al-Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Abī 'Āmir (Almanzor) made the Umayyad court at Cordova into a centre of patronage of letters and arts. To borrow an expression from Sir Hamilton Gibb, it can be said that from the end of the second/eighth to the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century was a truly golden age, in east and west alike, not only of Arabic literature but also of Arabo-Muslim culture considered as a whole.

It is possible to consider the following period, from the fifth/eleventh to the seventh/thirteenth century, as only a silver age, to quote Gibb again. This is true if it is a question only of Arabic literature; but Muslim culture proper, at least Sunnī Muslim culture, established itself during this period with increased vigour. The second half of the fifth/eleventh and the whole of the sixth/twelfth century saw in the east the triumph of Sunnism with the Seljuk Turks and the arrival of the Turcoman tribes. Shi'ism remained active, but firmly supplanted and condemned this time in Baghdād, in Syria, and even in Persia by the Sunnī revival. This was the period when religious teaching was spread by the *madrasas*. The fall of the Fatimids finally took place in 567/1171, while the rigorist

Almoravid and then Almohad dynasties reigned in Morocco and Andalus.

This was the period of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, the famous Algazel, 'the reviver of religion', the period also when there were produced vast numbers of encyclopaedias and historical and geographical works. Sufism produced at this time the most noteworthy poetry. In Almohad Spain, where some Ismā'īlī tendencies surreptitiously insinuated themselves, there took place, with Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the last flowering of Hellenistic *falsafa*.

While the point should not be over-stressed, it can be said that the great classical age barely survived the Spanish capture of Seville (646/1248) and the decline of the Almohads in the west, and the capture of Baghdād by the Mongols in the east (656/1258). From the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century and throughout the eighth/fourteenth there were certainly cultural movements of great value but nothing to equal those of Baghdād or Cordova, or the writers patronized by the *waẓīrs* and the *amīrs* of the east. This period did not lack great names, however. The Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist, Ibn Taymiyya, who played such an important part in the Muslim revival of this time, the Maghribī social historian Ibn Khaldūn, who has achieved a following in the Western world, and the 'theological' work of 'Aḍud al-Ījī and of al-Taftāzānī all belong to the ninth/fifteenth century. Although there was an increase in the minor genres of annals, commentaries and glosses, it was also an age of syntheses and of wide perspectives.

Within this very broadly outlined historical framework, what were the dominant cultural values? And to what extent were they in accord or in conflict with the fundamental religious ideas?

MUSLIM CULTURE: ITS BACKGROUND AND ITS CONSTITUENTS

The Qur'ān as a religious cultural value

'. . . And this is speech Arabic, manifest.'[1] To the Muslim this is not a simple question of fact. The Qur'anic text emphasizes that God sent down to Muḥammad a revelation, or a preaching in the Arabic language,[2] 'wherein there is no crookedness'.[3] If we consider the veneration in

[1] Qur'ān, 16. 103.
[2] Qur'ān, 41. 3; 42. 7; 43. 3 etc.
[3] Qur'ān, 39. 28. R. Blachère translates this: 'exempte de tortuosité'.

which from the beginning Muslims have held their Book, it is possible to understand that for the devout believer every phenomenon of arabization is of directly religious significance.

In fact this 'preaching in clear language' was the first great Arabic prose text. The respect accorded to it by the Faithful, the incessant repetition of it (*dhikr*), and the recognition of it as the Word of God, were to have a profound influence on ways of thought. At the time of the lightning campaigns of the Umayyads, the Qur'ān was certainly not the only factor of arabization, but it was nevertheless an essential factor. To it the Arabic language owed the distinctively religious cadences which for centuries were to characterize so many expressions and vocables, and to impregnate it down to the primary meaning of the triliteral roots.

It is true that pre-Islamic Arabia, with its poets and its orators and with the whole organization of the life of its tribes, had an inchoate but authentic culture. The state of *Jāhiliyya* (Ignorance), which Islam attributed to it[1] is essentially a religious concept and takes no account of the human riches of this time of heathendom. There is no need to stress the attachment of the first generations of Muslims to their Arab past, to the forms of the ancient poetry, *qaṣīda* and *ghazal*, or to the essentially bedouin virtue of *muruwwa*[2] of which the Umayyad period continually boasted. It is probable that the development and establishment of an Arab culture would have been possible without the appearance of Islam, but it nevertheless remains that Islam gave its own form to the Arab culture which already existed historically. It does not seem that the borderline cases of its poetry and of its secular arts on the one hand, and of its wide acceptance of the foreign sciences on the other, disprove this statement.

It was in fact in an atmosphere which was already made up of Arabo-Muslim culture that the foreign sciences were received; and furthermore a secular literature, some poetic forms and some minor arts could not by themselves have given birth to a culture. If culture is in itself 'the flowering of the earthly city', and 'as such depends upon human effort on earth'[3], yet its development is normally accompanied by an awareness of human destiny, both personal and collective. At other points in

[1] Qur'ān, 33. 33; 48. 26, etc.

[2] Translated by L. Massignon, *Parole donnée* (Paris, 1962), 350, as 'considération, honorabilité mondaine (à l'intérieur du clan)'.

[3] Olivier Lacombe, *Existence de l'homme* (Paris, 1951), 114.

history an Arabo-Christian culture, for example, had been, and would be, possible. It may be that there will arise an Arabic secular de-islamized culture, just as in Europe there has been for several centuries a tendency towards a Western secular de-christianized culture. This is all hypothetical. In fact, and chiefly during the five or six centuries with which we are here concerned, it was in a Muslim atmosphere, or linked to Muslim values, that Arabic culture developed.

For it was the Qur'ān which was the primary vehicle of Arabic culture. Was this accidental? Or does the very expression of the Muslim faith necessarily entail arabization?

Certainly the Muslim faith presents itself as a universal religion. Every man, without distinction of race or language, is called to witness to the Oneness of God and to the mission of Muḥammad by the *Shahāda* sincerely pronounced. Consequently every man is called to adopt the *sha'ā'ir al-Islām* (the marks of Islam): that is, the personal obligations determined by the 'four pillars', prayer, statutory alms-giving, the Ramaḍān fast, the Pilgrimage to Mecca; and those rules concerning food, circumcision, family life, wills, cemeteries etc., with which the life of the believer is surrounded from birth to death. The statement of faith is simple, consisting of the four Qur'anic affirmations: 'The believers believe in God, in His angels, in His books, in His messengers'[1]—these will be explained in *Ḥadīths* which mention the future life, the resurrection, and the Divine decree.

But it was the fact that this *credo* was accepted and lived first by the Arab tribes, and according to the Arabic expression of the Qur'ān and the Traditions, which was to give to the Muslim religion the special direction of its religious culture. There appear to be discernible in it three strands:

1. The cult which surrounded the text of the Qur'ān was to make Arabic the only liturgical language of Islam. It is possible to conceive an arabization which is not also islamization; the existence and the vitality of the Christian groups in the Middle East who adopted Arabic as a cultural language prove this. But all islamization of any depth is accompanied by a greater or less degree of arabization—an arabization which progresses sometimes rapidly and sometimes slowly, and which decreases proportionately as the native language and the past of the peoples to whom the message of the Qur'ān is preached make them less directly accessible to Arab influence. And the language of the Qur'ān,

[1] Qur'ān, 2. 285.

the only language in which prayer is liturgically valid, is nevertheless one of the chief factors in the cohesion of the Muslim world.

2. It would be a patent exaggeration to state either that every religious truth expressed in Arabic must necessarily concern the Muslim faith, or that a Muslim tenet can be expressed only in Arabic; but it is nevertheless once again a question of fact. The Arabic language, centred as it is on the verb, the extreme flexibility of the verbal forms, the frequent involutions of meaning, the correlatives which are simultaneously both complementary and opposite, the contrasting ambivalence of many roots in which opposites are joined, the probative value of allusion or metaphor which becomes a parable; all this combined to form a means of expression dedicated to the service of that relationship of radical discontinuity between the creature and the Creator, who is at the same time both close and remote, which is at the heart of the Muslim religious attitude. Future borrowings from the 'foreign sciences' were certainly to modify and sometimes to enlarge the basic vocabulary. It is none the less true that there is no religious statement in classical Arabic which does not suggest some reference to the Qur'ān.

3. This, then, is why the very early period, that of Medina and the beginning of the Umayyad era, began its religious culture, as it were, in terms of the scriptural text itself. It was not until the second and third centuries of the *Hijra* that there were developed as organized disciplines the readings of the Qur'ān (*qirā'āt*) and commentaries on it (*tafsīr*), and that in 'Irāq the schools of the grammarians of Baṣra and of Kūfa could attempt to pursue free researches and analyses. While the Kūfa school concentrated on exceptions and irregularities, that of Baṣra stressed 'systematization and analogy'.[1] In fact Baṣra, through the school of Gondēshāpūr, was to a certain extent influenced by Aristotelian logic. Khalīl, one of the few grammarians of Arab origin, was to remain the accepted authority on poetics and lexicography, and the grammar of his pupil Sībawayh was to remain a standard work. But whatever the long-term influences may have been, all Muslim reflection originated primarily from the aim to read and to understand the text of the Qur'ān.

The truly cultural ferment which the Qur'ān produced therefore cannot be overemphasized. It was of course the ferment of a religious culture, but of one which, through the semantic values involved, spread to inform all literary expression in its widest sense. Furthermore, the Qur'anic preaching does not deal only with the dogmas of the faith.

[1] R. Blachère, *Le Coran (Introduction)* (Paris, 1947), 110.

Great Muslim thinkers, such as al-Ghazālī in the fifth/eleventh century, and Ibn Taymiyya in the eighth/fourteenth century, were to distinguish in the text on the one hand the teaching of the religious truths (*'aqā'id*) and the regulations concerning worship (*'ibādāt*), both of them unalterable; and on the other hand a moral teaching and regulations concerning human actions (*akhlāq*), the application of which may vary according to circumstances; and finally everything connected with 'social relations' (*mu'āmalāt*) which to a certain extent depend on times and places. Although the first concern of non-Arab scholars, who had become arabized with their conversion to Islam, was with grammatical studies, the formulation of juridical rules occupied the attention of the Arabs of Medina as well as of the schools of 'Irāq or Egypt, though the 'Irāqī school of Abū Ḥanīfa and his disciples was chronologically the first. This was a matter of an intellectual application (*fiqh*) in which there was applied to the authoritative argument of the inviolable Text, either the judgment based on opinion (*ra'y*) of the *prudens*, or a reasoning by analogy (*qiyās*). *Qiyās* must be understood here as a mental activity bringing together or separating two terms, like to like or to its opposite, greater to less, less to greater; to which the Ḥanafī school would add the search for the cause (*'illa*), the first attempt to find a universal middle term. One has no hesitation, therefore, in considering the first impetus of Arabo-Muslim culture as being dominated by a style of thought which was indivisibly both juridical and semantic. These two methods of analysis are very typical of the Semitic spirit and the spheres which they cover are very much wider and more diverse than those comprehended by law and grammar in western cultures.

Therefore, although it is possible to speak of a Muslim religious culture, it is not merely a question of religious values which form part of the life of the believer and which may find many different modes of expression (rather as though we were to speak of a Christian culture expressing itself through a whole range of national cultures); it is not even a question of a culture whose first expression borrowed its vocables, adapting them, from the Arabic poetry and rhetoric of the *Jāhilīyya*; it is a question of a culture which was commanded by a text considered as directly dictated by God, and it was to be centuries before any translation of it was to be fully permitted. Or rather: a 'translation' of the Qur'ān can be nothing more than a commentary intended for teaching purposes. A devout Muslim, of whatever race, owes it to himself to approach it in the immutable text of its 'lucid' Arabic language. Furthermore, it

was from this Qur'anic foundation that there was to develop in the following centuries the corpus of the religious sciences and their subsidiary sciences, which was to become the main axis of Muslim culture. But in order to assess these sciences, we must first consider according to which dialectic, of integration or of opposition, other Arabic or 'foreign' contributions were added to the Qur'anic basis.

The contributions of Arabic secular poetry and prose

The Qur'ān treats severely poets accused of forgery.[1] Nevertheless the dominant of a religious culture linked to the expansion of the Islamic faith was to welcome the coexistence of a secular Arabic poetry and fairly soon of a secular prose also.

In poetry, until the arrival of the freer forms of the *muwashshaḥ* or the *zajal*, the two forms most used were the *qaṣīda* and the *ghazal*. In the Umayyad period many pre-Islamic customs continued. The lyricism of the ancient *Mu'allaqāt*, the Suspended Poems of the fairs at Mecca, was revived in *qaṣīdas* which combined the praise of bedouin customs and virtues with panegyrics of the reigning caliphs. Nor were there forgotten the great troubadours of the past, above all Imru'l-Qays and Labīd. It was thus that there were produced the *qaṣīdas* of the three great masters, Akhṭal the Monophysite Christian, and Farazdaq and Jarīr the bedouin satirists, or the *ghazals* of Jamīl and of Dhu'l-Rumma. The *Kitāb al-aghānī* ('The book of songs') of Abu'l-Faraj 'Alī, an indispensable source for knowledge of the arts and letters of the first centuries of the *Hijra*, describes an Umayyad army which has left Khurāsān to oppose a Kharijite revolt, but is mainly preoccupied with deciding who is the greater poet: Farazdaq, who mingled satires with bawdy songs, or Jarīr, who sang of bedouin honour, and whose poems show at least some religious impulses.

The beginning of the 'Abbasid period, in which the influence of Persian sensitivity and of the minor arts of Persia was so obvious in the amusements of the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd, was delighted by the chivalrous *ghazals* of 'Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf and by the brilliant satires and bacchic or erotic poems of Abū Nuwās (d. 187/803); while Abu'l-'Atāhiya (d. 211/826), a contemporary of Abū Nuwās, expressed himself in didactic and moral poems in which, perhaps for the first time, there appeared a direct concern with religious values.

[1] Cf. Qur'ān, 26. 224–6; 37. 36; 61. 41.

In the following century, poetry and politics (and very active politics) were to form the two extremes of the career of Abu' l-Ṭayyib, called al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), a wandering troubadour when he chose to be, also an agitator and rebel, tainted with Carmathianism (without belonging to the Carmathian movement), and patronized at the end of his life by the *amīr* of Aleppo, the Hamdanid Sayf al-Dawla, becoming his official poet. Al-Mutanabbī's *qaṣīdas*, which are his greatest works, combine with the classical form freer and more personal developments. A century later, they were to influence Abu'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 450/1058), a solitary, even a hermit, and a very great poet, who was hardly at all faithful to the Sunnī teaching and faith. His constant meditations on human destiny and his pessimism show very probable Hindu influences, and he seems to have considered all positive religion as merely a human creation. With Abu'l-'Atāhiya, the great Arabic poetry had changed from secular to religious, or at least it had a religious accent; with al-Mutanabbī it returned to Shī'ī inspiration; with al-Ma'arrī, in spite of certain prudent statements, it reached a vision of men and of the world whose most profound inspiration it would be difficult to call Muslim.

Prose literature was also held in high esteem. Under the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, the great writer al-Jāḥiẓ began a series of prose works in which descriptions, anecdotes, poetic quotations, proverbs, one might say a whole popular humanism, became the occasion for brilliant variations and pungent exercises in style. The master of classical Arabic prose was to be his contemporary Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who belonged to the Kūfa school of grammarians, and whose work, *'Uyūn al-akhbār* ('The fountains of story'), was to be for centuries a source of examples and references. Although in his *Ma'ārif* he was able to combine Persian with Arabic traditions, he nevertheless defended the Arabs and the Arabic language against the claims of the non-Arabs. In the following century, the solitary pessimism of al-Ma'arrī produced *Risālat al-ghufrān* ('The treatise of pardon'). But it is certainly in narrative, either mixed with poetry as in the *qiṣṣa*, or in the form of *saj'*, assonant prose, or in accounts of real or imaginary travels, that Arabic prose reached its highest level. From the fourth/tenth to the sixth/twelfth century there developed the genre of the famous *maqāmāt* (sessions), which very distantly foreshadowed modern short stories or novels. Al-Hamadhānī, and more especially al-Ḥarīrī, excelled in this.

There should also be mentioned works—poetry or prose—of a more flexible and more popular nature: the epic of 'Antar, the love-poem of

Laylā and Majnūn, and the stories of the *Thousand and one Nights*. Although these were much enjoyed, devout believers were always willing to criticize the moral and religious laxity of the poets and prose-writers—particularly the poets. More than once the theologians stirred up opinion against them in the towns; and more than once famous writers owed their freedom of speech to the protection of the rulers alone. The rebellious attitude of al-Mutanabbī, and still more the haughty indifference of al-Ma'arrī, to all established religious values, were censured.

Nevertheless it is not possible to speak of a secular Arabic culture developing in radical opposition to all religious culture. Even the most secular works contained echoes of the Qur'ān. The bedouin poet Jarīr owed the patronage of 'Umar II to his reputation for piety; and it is said that the bacchic and erotic poet Abū Nuwās adopted asceticism (*zuhd*) in his old age. The prose-writer al-Jāḥiẓ was also a Mu'tazilite theologian. In fifth/eleventh century Andalusia, the very strict Ibn Ḥazm was to add to his Zahirite theology the courtly genre of his 'Necklace of the dove'. In contrast to this, the cult of the Arabic language, the language of the revelation, was to inspire commentators on the Qur'ān or theologians diligently to fathom out the precise meaning of the words, and in order to do this to turn to the famous poets, and especially to the pre-Islamic poets, to provide a verse or couplet as an example.

The way in which the two fields are interdependent may be summarized thus: in any history of Arabic culture, Islamic religious sciences must occupy an important place, while no study of *Muslim* culture as such would be complete without taking into account a certain *marginal* contribution made to it by secular literature.

The arts

The growth in the culture of the Muslim countries would not have been complete if the development of Arabic literature and religious thought had not been accompanied by a flowering of the arts.

In its strict sense Muslim art consists for the one part of the architecture and ornamentation of the mosques and *madrasas*, for the other part of the austere and very beautiful cantillation of the Qur'ān. Strictly speaking, these are the only arts which are fully permitted in Islam.

Religious architecture was affected by many influences—Byzantine, Persian and later Mongol—and there are many different styles of Muslim architecture. Nevertheless the adaptation of the buildings to the

liturgical prayer of Islam, and even a certain harmony between the basic pattern of this 'liturgy' and the very flexible use of arcs, vaults and columns, between the affirmation of the One God and the minarets which were necessitated by the call to prayer, created a unity characteristic of its kind, running through the different styles and schools, which can be said in one sense to have reconciled Sunnism and Shi'ism.

The simplicity of the Medina mosque was followed, among others, during the Umayyad period by the Great Mosque at Damascus with its integration of Byzantine influences, or the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem. In the 'Abbasid era architecture also was subject to Persian influences. The primitive 'Abbasid mosques of Baghdād and Raqqa have unfortunately disappeared, but there is the mosque of 'Amr in Cairo and above all the astonishingly successful mosque of Ibn Ṭūlūn (third/ninth century). Fatimid architecture (in the great mosque of al-Azhar) at one time joined to Persian inspiration influences from Umayyad Andalusia and particularly also from Tulunid art. There should also be mentioned the Turkish art of the Seljuks in the fifth–sixth/eleventh–twelfth centuries; and in the sixth–seventh/twelfth–thirteenth centuries the Mamluk art of Cairo with its many mosques and its City of the Dead or Tombs of the Caliphs.

In Ifrīqiya, the mosques of al-Zaytūna at Tunis, of Sīdī 'Uqba at Qayrawān, and of Sūs were to appear at the same time as the Umayyad art of the east and the beginnings of the 'Abbasid era. And here in the extreme west there appeared the sober harmony of Hispano-Moorish art, with its austere interlacing ornament, which is certainly one of the finest products of Muslim art, and one most characteristic of the spirit which inspires it. Muslim and Christian architects and craftsmen worked on it together. Berber, Byzantine and medieval European influences mingled with Eastern traditions to produce the almost unequalled masterpieces of the mosques of Cordova (second–third/eighth–ninth centuries) and Tlemcen (sixth/twelfth century), of the Kutubiyya at Marrakesh and the Giralda at Seville (sixth/twelfth century) and of the *madrasas* of Fez (eighth/fourteenth century).

The ornamentation of the mosques had to take into account the fact that the Muslim faith forbade any painting, and still more sculpture, which represented the figures of humans or of animals, in order the better to worship the Unique God and not to run the risk of even the smallest representation of idols. Who has not heard the pungent anecdote attributed to the Rightly-guided Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb?

To a Persian artist who, having become a Muslim, was lamenting the fact that he must renounce his art, 'Umar is said to have replied: 'Come now; you have only to give your figures the shape of a flower and cut off their heads.' Hence the triumph of a decorative art which tended all the time rather to dissolve the floral motifs themselves into a suggestive interlacing of geometrical lines, supported by, and sometimes themselves shaped by the splendid designs of the Arabic letters. In this, as in almost everything, the Maghrib paid more heed to the strict regulations; and it was perhaps this which enabled it to achieve in the interlacing of its bas-reliefs such a degree of perfection that without them there would be a gap in the history of sculpture.

This architectural and decorative art extended from the mosques and other religious buildings to the secular buildings. It is true that the architect of the Umayyad palace at Mshattā did not hesitate to use friezes representing animals and there is also the very beautiful 'Court of the Lions' in the Alhambra at Granada (seventh–ninth/thirteenth–fifteenth century), but the Alhambra as a whole remains as the witness (anticipating, perhaps, Indo-Muslim architecture) of a Muslim view of the world which concerned itself with the palaces of the rulers as well as the places of prayer. The same could be said of the minor arts: ceramics, pottery, metalwork. There were scarcely any beside the Persian miniature painters who refused to cut off the heads of their [human] characters. This miniature-painting, also a minor art, was accepted in eastern Islam so long as there was no question of using it in the decoration of mosques, and so long as the figures reproduced had no volume so as to cast a shadow. But it must be admitted that these minor arts, which included also the weaving of carpets and the ornamentation of rich silks and brocades—although they were forbidden by the strict jurists—went with a way of life which was dominated by the quest for pleasure and luxury.

Qur'anic cantillation (*tajwīd*), linked to the science of the readings (*qirā'āt*) and bound by precise rules, is not music in the true sense of the term, for all music was and still is set apart from liturgical prayer. This led the jurists and devout believers to regard the art of music itself with a kind of suspicion. However, the *samā'*, the 'spiritual oratorio', spread in Ṣūfī circles. In spite of the attacks of the offended traditionalists, al-Ghazālī defended its legality. It is an unaccompanied religious chant, purely modal and devoted to entirely spiritual themes. It is possible to speak of a Muslim religious chant but not of Muslim music.

The same al-Ghazālī in fact considered it a pious action to enter a house where profane music and songs were being performed in order to smash the instruments and scatter the singers. But in spite of this rigorism, the refined atmosphere of the courts of the caliphs was often lulled by the sound of harps, lutes, rebecs and flutes, and they were accompanied by very profane songs. The *Kitāb al-aghānī*, which preserves details of the most famous songs of the third/ninth century, gives much information on the composers and the male and female singers of the period.

Music (*mūsīqī*, or, especially in the Maghrib, *mūsīqā*) moreover was considered as a 'foreign science' in which the Greek tradition of the schools of Pythagoras lent its structure to the Iranian influences. The *faylasūf* (philosopher) al-Fārābī devoted a whole work to this, Ibn Sīnā was careful not to neglect the study of musical rhythms and numbers, and the encyclopaedia of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* devotes a large section to musical theory. All this contributed to the formation of the two schools, Eastern and Western, of classical Arab music—we no longer refer to Muslim music. Although it made no real use of harmony it devoted itself all the more to the endless ornamentation of variations on the melodic theme. The court at Baghdād in the third *hijrī* century had its own official musicians, the Mawṣilīs. Ziryāb, one of their pupils, fled to the Umayyad court at Cordova under 'Abd al-Raḥmān II, where he became both court musician and *arbiter elegantiarum*. It was this meeting of East and West which produced Andalusian music.

The 'foreign sciences'

An event of primary importance was the penetration of Greek thought into the Baghdād of the early 'Abbasid era. The aptitude of the Arab spirit for absorbing other ideas and its capacity for assimilation here received full scope, and there was a lively enthusiasm for translations of Greek philosophical and scientific works.

Even before the coming of Islam, translations from Greek into Syriac were not unusual, and the arrival of Islam was to give rise to many Arabic translations, either through the intermediary of Syriac or directly from Greek. At Baghdād, there were teams of translators, at first Christians, later Muslims, under the patronage of the caliphs. The most famous is that of the Nestorian Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq, his son Isḥāq, and his nephew Ḥubaysh. There was also the Jacobite Qusṭā b. Lūqā, a

little later Abū Bishr Mattā b. Yūnus (a Nestorian), Ibn 'Adī, Yaḥyā b. Biṭrīq, and others. These groups of translators enriched the Arabic language with works translated from Plato and Aristotle—and from Plotinus confused with Aristotle[1]—from Ptolemy, Galen, Hippocrates and many others besides. The libraries multiplied: among them were the *Bayt al-ḥikma* ('House of Wisdom') of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn at Baghdād with its many Greek manuscripts, and the *Dār al-kutub* ('House of Books') at Baṣra, with scholarships which students could hold there. A century later Fatimid Cairo was enriched by the huge Palace Library with 18,000 works of 'foreign sciences', and by the *Dār al-'ilm* ('House of learning') or *Dār al-ḥikma* founded by al-Ḥākim in the fourth/tenth century.

This directly Hellenistic influence, added to the Perso-Greek (and Hindu) contributions of Gondēshāpūr, produced a whole activity of scientific research in the modern meaning of the word: mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry, medicine. Although astronomy was still mixed with astrology and chemistry with alchemy, it was in the Arab and Persian Muslim countries that very remarkable progress was made in science at this time, and for several centuries following. Whole chapters and monographs have been written on Arabian science and its riches are still far from having been fully listed.

The sciences continued to be interwoven with philosophy. The impetus thus given encouraged a whole intelligentsia in the exercise of a free thought which took little account of the literal interpretation of the Qur'ān, and which was, moreover, anxious to break out of the entirely semantic and juridical bounds of the earlier culture. In certain milieux, Greek influences existed side by side with dualist Mazdean and Manichaean influences. They are found actively at work within some more or less esoteric circles, even those which were to be denounced as *zanādiqa* (sing. *zindīq*, a term, adapted from Sasanid usage), which can be understood to mean both 'unbelievers' and 'agitators', and hence blameworthy and sometimes condemned by the authorities. One of the best examples of these extremist tendencies was, in the third–fourth/ninth–tenth centuries, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, the medieval physician Rhazes. His thesis of the Five Eternals (the Creator, the Soul,

[1] It was probably in the sixth Christian century that a Jacobite Christian translated into Syriac some glossed extracts from *Enneads* IV–VI. The Syriac work, translated in its turn into Arabic, was to become the *Theology of Aristotle* (*Uthūlūjiyā Arisṭūṭalīs*). It was to have a profound influence on Avicenna, who wrote a commentary on it.

Matter, Time, Space) makes God into nothing more than a demiurge, and his atomistic cosmology is very close to that of Democritus, while his treatise *Fī naqd al-adyān* ('On the refutation [or destruction] of religions') is a protest against all positive religion. The esotericism of the Ismā'īlīs or the Carmathians was influenced by al-Rāzī. He certainly professed a radicalism far more absolute than that professed in the following century by 'the three great *zanādiqa* of Islam', as they were to be called: the philosopher Ibn al-Rāwandī, the gnostic Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and the poet Abu'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī.

The jurists and moralists had reproached the court poets and prose-writers for their lack of any sense of religion and for the sensuality of the themes they chose. Secular Arabic literature was criticized by the developing Arabo-Muslim culture. But it cannot be said that there was organized opposition between them. Rather did the massive arrival of the influences of ancient Persia and of classical Greece create, within the same Muslim culture, as it were a state of tension which was constantly being renewed, and which was to govern its future development. The results of this were far from being merely negative. The necessity to defend the beliefs of the faith against doubters and deniers was the origin of all the future philosophico- or theologico-dialectical developments. The whole history of *'ilm al-kalām*, the defensive apologia of Islam, was to be the proof of this.

The influence of Hellenism was the direct source of a discipline, certainly marginal in relation to the 'religious sciences', which the pious and 'people of the *kalām*' continually opposed, but which became one of the finest ornaments of the cultural splendour of the Muslim countries. We have mentioned the *falsafa* (very probably a transcription of φιλοσοφια) of al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in the east, before Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd contributed to its fame in the Maghrib. The attitude of the philosophers (*falāsifa*) was by no means one of opposition or of revolt, like that of the earlier *zanādiqa*. They aimed to establish an agreement between the revealed Law (*shar'*) and their philosophy, both one and the other being accepted as a basic datum and as being on the same level of intelligibility. Hence their tendency to treat the text of the Qur'ān according to a method of interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of which another and very similar example is found in the Shī'ī gnosis. While it is easy to understand the mistrust with which the supporters of official Islam regarded the *falāsifa*, the fact remains that the acuteness of the philosophic thought of the greatest of them, linked with the loyalty to Islam

which they retained, led them to the most impressive elaborations and syntheses. From the sixth–seventh/twelfth–thirteenth centuries onwards, through the translations from Arabic into Latin of the period, they had a profound influence on the medieval West.

Languages other than Arabic; the quarrel of the Shu'ūbiyya; *the 'sects'*

Falsafa was written mainly in Arabic, though there exist some important works of Ibn Sīnā in Persian. Addressed to rulers of Persian culture and origin, they usually consist of a compendium of the great Arabic treatises, with which are included some new analyses. In fact Muslim or Muslim-inspired culture extended beyond the Arabic-speaking area. We have already emphasized the process of arabization which accompanied the Islamic conquests, but the degree of its completeness depended on the peoples and countries concerned. Apart from the survival (which continues to the present day) of local languages and dialects, there must be mentioned the considerable cultural importance which was retained by Persian. It certainly became arabized, adopting the Arabic script and borrowing from Arabic its poetic forms and the clearest of its religious terms, but whereas there was no *Muslim culture* in the Greek, Syriac, Kurdish, Coptic or Berber languages, there developed very rapidly a great Perso-Muslim culture. The Turco-Muslim culture, both religious and secular, did not begin to assert itself until the seventh–eighth/thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, and was at first to be under Persian influence.

In addition, the use of Persian was regarded from the second–third/eighth–ninth centuries, as an assertion of rights. This was the phenomenon known as the quarrel or revolt of the *Shu'ūbiyya*. *Shu'ūb* originally meant the non-Arab tribes (the Arab tribes being known as *qabā'il*) and this is the meaning which the commentators were to give it when glossing the Qur'anic text, *Sūra* 49. 13: 'We have formed you in confederacies (*shu'ūb*) and tribes (*qabā'il*).' Later, *Shu'ūbiyya* came to mean the 'foreign' peoples who had embraced Islam and who, themselves invoking Muslim principles, protested against the contempt shown to them by the Arabs. At a later time some of them, proud of their own past, considered themselves in their turn to be superior to the Arabs.

In the Umayyad period, those who had newly embraced Islam (and become arabized) became the clients (*mawālī*) of Arab tribes; their political and social claims hastened the coming to power of the 'Abbasids.

The quarrel of the *Shu'ūbiyya* was a kind of repetition, but now on a cultural rather than a political level, of these early claims. Moreover it appeared in very different forms in the west and in the east of the *dār al-Islām*. The *Shu'ūbiyya* of Andalusia were as active as the true Arabs in promoting the Arabic culture and language. They claimed, and in the name of Islam, their integration with the Arabic ethnic group—that integration which the Syrians and the 'Irāqīs, founders of schools of grammar and of law, had formerly so successfully achieved. But the Syrians and 'Irāqīs were very close to the Arabic ethnic group, and their Syriac language was a sister language to Arabic, while the Andalusians were foreigners. In Persia, on the other hand, the movement aimed to restore the authority of the Persian language; it thus took the form of a claim to cultural autonomy.

The preservation of Persian literature and art was certainly not achieved by the *Shu'ūbī* movement alone. It would undoubtedly be an exaggeration to attribute to it that line of court poets which extends from Rūdakī and Kisā'ī in the fourth/tenth century to Kirmānī in the eighth/fourteenth century, and which reached its zenith in the sixth/twelfth century, under the Seljuk Turks, with Anwarī. It is nevertheless true that the *Shu'ūbī* claims helped to arouse a new interest in the Persia of the Great Kings, in its history and its myths. There need be mentioned only, in the last years of the fourth/tenth century, the great epic work of Firdawsī, the *Shāh-nāma*. Although the *Shāh-nāma* was written in a Muslim atmosphere, it remains a major witness to purely Persian culture. It can hardly be classed as a part of Muslim, or even of Perso-Muslim, culture.

It is otherwise with the Shī'ī works in Persian. For one thing, although Shi'ism expressed through the ages a religious phenomenon which was eminently Persian, it was Arab in origin; and secondly, some very great Shī'ī thinkers who were ethnically Persian, such as the Ismā'īlīs, Abū Ḥātim Rāzī and Sijistānī in the fourth/tenth century, or the Imāmīs, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (seventh/thirteenth century) and 'Allāma Ḥillī (seventh–eighth/thirteenth–fourteenth centuries) and many others, were to continue to write in Arabic. In the fifth/eleventh century, the Ismā'īlī, Mu'ayyad Shīrāzī, was to write sometimes in Arabic and sometimes in Persian, and the Ismā'īlī encyclopaedia of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* is also written in Arabic. Until the reform of al-Mutawakkil, the Arab atmosphere of 'Abbasid Baghdād was, through its Iranian *wazīrs*, as much Shī'ī as Sunnī, and as often Ismā'īlī Shī'ī as Imāmī. The

amirates of Hamadān and of Iṣfahān, where Ibn Sīnā lived, were profoundly impregnated with Shi'ism. To ignore these historical facts would be to fail to understand the significance and the value of the writings of al-Fārābī and of Ibn Sīnā and of the whole of the cultural phenomenon of *falsafa*. In Cairo the dominant culture of the brilliant Fatimid empire was also Arab. And there continued to be expressed in Arabic, in the seventh/thirteenth century, the Western (i.e. Yemeni and Egyptian) Isma'ilism which was forced by the Sunnī repression of Saladin to operate clandestinely.

Nevertheless, in the extent to which Imāmī Shi'ism spread among the Persian people, it was to give rise to a whole Persian religious literature; hymns and poems, and especially dramas, resembling mystery-plays, which recount the sorrow of Fāṭima and the martyrdoms of 'Alī and Ḥusayn. They are all the more remarkable in being the only literature in Islam written for theatrical performances. Furthermore, from the time that they had to dissimulate before established authority, Persian Ismā'īlī groups preferred to express themselves in Persian. Among their most notable representatives was Nāṣir-i Khusraw (fifth/eleventh century).

Finally, the seventh/thirteenth century was to produce some great Ṣūfī works in Persian. It is sufficient to mention 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and Sa'dī, and above all Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whose *Mathnawī* remains one of the purest literary glories of Persia. But at the end of this century, the rule of the Īl-Khāns (663–736/1265–1337) was a period of decline for Persian culture. Until the age of the Safavids, the only period during which it came to life again was in the second half of the eighth/fourteenth century, under Tīmūr. This was to be the age of the melodious *ghazals* of Ḥāfiẓ and of Sa'dī and then, in the ninth/fifteenth century, of the mystic Jāmī.

It may be useful to summarize briefly the preceding remarks. Concurrently with Arabic culture, the *dār al-Islām* from the second/eighth to the ninth/fifteenth centuries produced a brilliant Persian culture. But whereas Arabic secular literature remained as though attached to Muslim culture, Persian poetry and literature were intentionally a presentation of purely Persian claims. On the other hand, our knowledge of Muslim culture as such would be incomplete if we did not include as part of it many Shī'ī works (and Ismā'īlī Shi'ism in particular) or Ṣūfī works which were written in Persian. But it would be a historical misinterpretation to consider that the only expression of Shi'ism was in Persian. Some very great Shī'ī works are written in Arabic.

It is nevertheless true that Shi'ism, Arab in origin and born of an Arab fidelity to 'Alī and to the 'People of the House', could not have constituted itself in its 'sapiential theosophy' without the contribution of the 'foreign sciences', i.e. of the Greek and Persian traditions. It thus became one of the acting forces of that tension mentioned above, which was to serve as the very mark of the absorption of non-Arab values by the Muslim world. This tension, far from having a destructive effect, was on the contrary to inspire and to universalize the Muslim culture, and especially the Arabo-Muslim culture, of the classical age.

THE ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE INTO ITS CONSTITUENT DISCIPLINES

Study of the sources of religion, the Qur'ān and *Sunna*, began from the time of Medina. It was the stimulus exerted by the non-Arabs, especially in 'Irāq, which gave rise to the schools of the grammarians. The invasion of the 'foreign sciences' led the doctors and jurists of Islam to defend the dogmas of their faith by rational methods. Sciences, in the modern sense of the word, and literature were cultivated in profusion. There is the well-known *Ḥadīth* which commands: 'Pursue learning (*'ilm*) from the cradle to the grave even as far away as China.' In the eyes of the believer, this learning or knowledge which is to be acquired is that which is related, directly or indirectly, to God, to the things belonging to God and to the Word of God. But the aphorism was frequently applied to all legitimate human knowledge. It is in any case a proof of the respect which Muslim thought was always to have for intellectual research.

Having analysed the constituents of the historical culture of the Islamic countries, we shall now consider in detail the sum of the traditional achievements thus acquired. We must evidently give the most important place to the 'religious sciences'. To these we shall add a mention of the sciences known as 'instrumental', not omitting others which were, it is true, somewhat marginal, but which brought great honour to the cultural climate in which they originated.

The development of the religious sciences

The progressive development of the 'religious sciences' was an innate characteristic of the Muslim mentality. We have mentioned the libraries, plentifully supplied with the works of the 'foreign sciences'.

But there should, nevertheless, be emphasized the importance, from the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh centuries onwards, of the colleges (*madrasas*) in which the strictly Muslim disciplines were taught, the role of the great mosque-universities—and the great mosque of Cairo founded by the Fatimids was the first state university—the bookshops in the vicinity of the great mosques, the corporations of students who frequented them, and their influence on the social and even the political life of the cities. To the brilliant life of the palaces and the courts, where often it was secular art and literature which predominated, there corresponded a cultural life of the markets and mosques, centred round the religious sciences and the debates between their various schools. It was often the literate people of the towns who protested against the freedom of thought or the licence in the habits of the great. The triumphs of Sunnism in the fifth/eleventh century, and especially perhaps the Ḥanbalī reaction, were to have their roots in popular movements.

It is possible to enumerate as constituent disciplines five 'religious sciences': that of the 'readings', of Qur'anic commentary, of *Ḥadīth*, of law, and of *kalām* or defensive apologetics. The first four came into being in the Medinese period and the beginning of the century of the Umayyads, the fifth, which arose from the confrontation of Ṣiffīn, was to come to its full development only under the impetus of the 'foreign sciences'. We shall attempt to characterize each briefly.

The Qur'anic sciences

First we have the Quranic science of the 'readings', *'ilm al-qirā'āt*. The first *qurrā'* ('readers' or 'reciters') were devout believers such as Ibn 'Abbās or Anas b. Mālik, Companions of the Prophet. Many 'readers' were also 'bearers' of the Qur'ān, that is to say, they knew it by heart, and meditated on it. After Ṣiffīn, the reading of the Book sometimes became an occupation performed by freed prisoners, who allowed political intrigues to mingle with religion. It was not until the third/ninth century in Baghdād that the readers formed themselves into a corporation and that their function became once again respected.

The influence of the schools of the grammarians was great. Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' and Thaqafī at Baṣra, and, a little later, al-Kisā'ī at Kūfa, were both grammarians and 'readers'. It was towards the middle of the second/eighth century that there had been admitted the principle of a plurality of authorized 'readings'. The early Qur'anic recensions of

Ubayy and of Ibn Mas'ūd were sometimes, under the cover of this pluralism, partially reintegrated into the *corpus* of 'Uthmān. The situation, however, still remained somewhat confused during the second half of the second/eighth century. The Shī'īs continued to prefer the 'Irāqī recension of Ibn Mas'ūd, criticizing the vulgate of 'Uthmān for having suppressed texts favourable to the 'Alids. But towards the middle of the third/ninth century there was established a consensus which avoided any divergence from the Qur'anic vulgate, allowing to remain only some variants connected with the vocalizations and with certain consonants. A list was drawn up of seven canonical readings, each of which was referred to a 'reader' of the early generations of Muslims, only two of whom were Arabs.

The science of the Qur'anic commentaries or *tafsīr* ('explanation') is certainly one of the poles of Muslim culture. If it is true that not only a *corpus* but also a *tafsīr* are to be attributed to Ibn 'Abbās, the cousin of the Prophet who died in 68/687–8, then this science began at a very early date. It was to overlap more than once with other disciplines, especially the science of *kalām*, the schools of which were to vary according to their respective tendencies the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of certain disputed texts. *Falsafa*, and above all Ismā'īlī gnosticism, were to practise largely an allegorical *ta'wīl*. The Sunnīs, who usually favoured the meaning which was clear and evident (*ẓāhir*), were to be in opposition to the *Bāṭiniyya*, or those who upheld the hidden meaning (*bāṭin*).

Two major rules were later to emerge: first, to make the maximum use of lexicography and grammar in order to grasp the exact significance of sentences and words in the Arabic spoken at Mecca in the time of the Prophet; and, secondly, to ascertain precisely, as far as possible, all the circumstances of the revelation, even if this meant using Jewish or Christian sources (*Isrā'īliyyāt* and *Masīḥiyyāt*). But recourse to these sources was treated with suspicion by strict Traditionists.

We shall limit ourselves to citing a few who were to become accepted as authorities: al-Ṭabarī the annalist (d. 310/923), whose commentary reproduces many *Ḥadīths*, and who was not averse to an apologetic and polemical approach; al-Zamakhshārī (d. 539/1143), who was to have a considerable influence, in spite of the accusation of rationalizing *tafsīr* which was brought against him by his enemies; al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685 or 691/1286 or 1291), whose *tafsīr* was to be the type of manual used in teaching and by ordinary literate people. In addition there should be mentioned *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* ('The great commentary'), called also

Mafātiḥ al-ghayb ('The keys of the mystery'), of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), the well-known author of *kalām*, who does not hesitate to apply *ta'wīl* to the anthropomorphisms of the Qur'ān, to raise many philosophical and theological problems, and to sketch out some scientific commentaries inspired by the Greek science. As G. C. Anawati says, 'it belongs to the type of commentary which is both philosophical and *bi'l-ra'y* i.e., it does not rely on tradition alone, but on the considered judgment and reflection of the commentator. Into it al-Rāzī put all his philosophical and religious learning.'

The science of Ḥadith

The science of *Ḥadīth* or of Traditions (*riwāyāt*) arose from the devotional attachment of the Muslims to the 'traces' (*āthār*) of the Prophet and his Companions. The collectors of the *Ḥadīths* were numerous. The expression 'people of the *Ḥadīth*' (*ahl al-Ḥadīth*) is used of those who devoted themselves to this task; it refers also to their concern for accuracy and can be used intentionally as a synonym of *ahl al-sunna wa'l-jamā'a* ('people of the tradition and of the community'). They concentrated all their effort not on the criticism of the text (*matn*), but on the establishment of the chains of transmitters (sing., *isnād*), and on their authenticity. It was a matter of ensuring, first, that it was possible for transmitters to have met one another in a direct line, going back to the Prophet, and secondly, that each one of them was completely truthful and trustworthy. This research was the origin of the *ṭabaqāt*, which were collections of biographical notices of the early Muslims, the most famous collection being that of Ibn Sa'd. The genre was extended to cover later generations, and Arabo-Muslim literature was enriched for example by the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn al-Farrā' devoted to the Ḥanbalīs, by those of al-Subkī devoted to the Shafi'ites, and by those of Sulamī on the Ṣūfīs.

The science of *Ḥadīth* had as it were two functions in Muslim religious culture: historical research on the lives and the characters of the men who belonged to the very first generations, those of the Companions and of the Followers; and the attribution of a rating to each *isnād*, the value of which it was to determine. This latter normative function should not cause us to forget its historical function. Thus the *Ḥadīth* was pronounced 'sound' or 'good' or 'weak'; according to another view, it was *mutawātir* (with very many chains of transmitters), or simply

'known' or 'uncommon' or 'unique'; or yet again 'well-founded' or 'interrupted', etc. During the second–third/eighth–ninth centuries, six great bodies of *Ḥadīths* were collected and came to be regarded as reliable: those of Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī and Ibn Māja. The two first, known as the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, that is to say those which reproduce only authentic *Ḥadīths*, were accorded a preferential authority. To them should be added the famous *Musnad* (i.e. based on uninterrupted *isnāds*) of Ibn Ḥanbal, collected by disciples after their master's death.

Shī'ī Islam also had its collections of traditions (usually called *akhbār*): some of them admitted also by the Sunnīs, others peculiar to Shi'ism, which stressed the 'Alids and their role in the community. The main Shī'ī collections date from the fourth or fifth/tenth or eleventh century, and were written by Kulīnī, Qummī, Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, and 'Alī al-Murtaḍā.

The science of law

The fourth religious discipline is *'ilm al-fiqh*, the science of the law. From the cultural point of view, with which we are concerned here, we confine ourselves to two observations.

The schools of law are concerned with a much wider area than that which is strictly juridical in the Western sense of the term. In Islam, each of them is the expression, in addition to certain ways of thought, of a certain attitude, which is both practical and intellectual, with regard to the day-to-day behaviour of the devout believer. Many of the speculative quarrels between the schools of *kalām* can be understood in their historical context only by reference to the various schools of *fiqh*: one need only mention the relations between Hanafism and Maturidism, Shafi'ism and Ash'arism, and the opposition and later the welcome which the last was to encounter in the Malikism of the Maghrib. Finally the Ḥanbalī school, which challenged even the legitimacy of *kalām*, did not hesitate to assume responsibility for the defence of religious beliefs. Ibn Ḥanbal remains the typical figure of the 'Devout Elder', and his six professions of faith (sing., *'aqīda*) were the subject of a great deal of meditation and commentary. The Ḥanbalīs, Barbahārī and Ibn Baṭṭa in the third–fourth/ninth–tenth centuries, and the great Ibn Taymiyya in the seventh–eighth/thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, not to mention the Ḥanbalī Ṣūfīs, al-Jīlānī or al-Anṣārī, are among the most important figures in the history of Muslim religious thought and culture.

In the same connexion should be mentioned the cultural importance from the third/ninth to the sixth/twelfth century of the Ẓāhirī school, made famous by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064). It was to be conclusively rejected by official Islam. In it all forms of personal judgment or of reasoning were put aside in the process of juridical elaboration, and the emphasis was placed on the literal meaning of the texts in their most obvious sense (*ẓāhir*). The systems of analysis adopted were specifically semantic, according to a very narrow definition of the meaning of 'name' and 'named' (*ism* and *musamma*) and of their connexions. We have here an extreme example of this double method of analysis, both semantic and juridical, which deeply influenced the early directions in which Muslim culture developed.

Finally there should be noted the not inconsiderable influence of the Ibāḍī and Shī'ī schools of *fiqh*. The *Iqtiṣār* of the neo-Ismā'īlī Nu'mān, the chief *qāḍī* of Fatimid Cairo (fourth/tenth century) belongs to the school of Medina (Malikism), but according to the Shī'ī point of view by which the consensus of the doctors (*ijmā'*) was not considered valid without the approval of the *Imām*.

Defensive apologia

The fifth and last religious science, *'ilm al-kalām*, the science of the word (on God, or of God), or *'ilm al-tawḥīd*, the science of the divine Oneness (or of its proclamation), is generally known in the West as theology. We shall dwell on this briefly.

It seems to us more exact, according to the definitions of it given by its doctors, to consider it to mean a defensive apologia, the function of which 'is firmly to establish religious beliefs by producing proofs, and to cast aside doubts'.[1] If we wish to speak of an 'Islamic theology' in the meaning of this word in the Christian West, it is certainly necessary to add to *'ilm al-kalām* many elements which come from *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the sources of the law), and still more widely, many professions of faith or short catechetic treatises grouped under the title of *uṣūl al-dīn* (the sources of religion). It is certain that the great Ḥanbalīs mentioned in the preceding paragraphs would deserve the title of theologians as much as, if not more than, many of the doctors of *kalām*.

'Ilm al-kalām is a specifically Muslim religious discipline. Its origin goes back to the doctrinal ruptures which resulted from Ṣiffīn. However,

[1] Al-Ījī, *Mawāqif* (*apud Sharḥ al-mawāqif* of al-Jurjānī (Cairo, 1325/1907), I, 34–5).

and in contrast to the *tafsīr* for example, for the treatises and the schools to be organized it required an external stimulus: discussions at Damascus with Christian theologians, the influence of Greek science and thought at Baghdād, and the defence of the values of faith against this influence. From this point of view, it is impossible to dissociate from *kalām* the study of the very numerous treatises on heresies which played an important part in the history of Muslim thought.

In the Umayyad period the first debates took place between Murji'ites (who were faithful to the established power and who committed to God the eternal status of the sinful believer), Qadarites, or supporters of human free-will, the Jabarites, who were linked to the strict Traditionists and defenders of the absolute all-powerfulness of God. The 'Abbasid second–third/eighth–ninth centuries were to see the formation of the Mu'tazilite schools, in their two great traditions of Baṣra and of Baghdād. The solutions given in various quarters to the problems concerning the divine attributes, divine justice, the respective fate of the believer, the sinner and the unbeliever in the next life ('the promise and the threat'), the intermediate state between faith and impiety, the obligation of the community to order the good and forbid the bad—all these solutions could vary among the Mu'tazilites according to tendencies and the subdivisions of the schools. But they were animated by a common spirit: the recognition of the value of reason (*'aql*) in the defence of religious values (*'aql* even becoming the criterion of the Law), the anxiety to purify the idea of God from all anthropomorphism, the wish to defend the faith and to justify it against the enticements of Greek thought and the attacks of the *zanādiqa* (free thinkers). The Mu'tazilites called themselves 'the people of Justice and Oneness' (of God). Thus it is seen that this is not, as was formerly thought, a matter of rationalism, but of a religious apologia which aimed to use rational methods. It was in this spirit that the school developed one of its central theses, that of the created (*makhlūq*) Qur'ān, in contrast to that of the 'Elders' who considered it to be the eternal and uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*) Word of God.

Mu'tazilism triumphed for a time and even appeared as official doctrine under the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. It can be said that it belongs to the great humanist age of third/ninth century Baghdād and Baṣra. Among its great writers were Jāḥiẓ (one of the greatest of all Arabic prose-writers), Naẓẓām and 'Allāf. As it became successful, it began to persecute its opponents, and this was the period of the great *miḥna*, the great 'trial',

when the devout elders who defended the uncreated Qur'ān, chief among them being Ibn Ḥanbal, were dragged before the courts, condemned to corporal punishment, imprisoned, and even executed.

This triumph was to be short-lived. The Ḥanbalī influences, which were firmly entrenched in popular circles of 'Irāq, campaigned for the return of 'the old religion' (*al-dīn al-'atīq*). This was the reaction of al-Mutawakkil. The Mu'tazilites in their turn suffered persecutions, condemnations and exile. It is a great loss to the history of ideas that the majority of their works were destroyed, and for centuries were known only through the attacks of their adversaries. It was only recently that some of them were rediscovered and published. However, a direct Mu'tazilite influence was to continue in the Kharijite and Shī'ī sects.

After this, the teaching in the great mosques was to be shared between two great schools of *'ilm al-kalām*: the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī tradition, which arose from al-Māturīdī of Samarqand (d. 333/944), and particularly the Ash'arī school, founded by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. *c.* 330/941), who was a former adherent of Mu'tazilism, and whose treatise on heresies, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* ('The opinions of Muslims') remains a documentary source of primary importance. It is possible to distinguish between Māturīdīs and Ash'arīs by emphasizing the intellectualist and also psychological tendencies of the former, and the absolute divine voluntarism of the latter.

The Ash'arī school had to fight continually on three fronts. Against Hanbalism (and at one time against Zahirism), it had to defend the legitimacy of a certain use of reason in matters concerning faith. In his *credo*, al-Ash'arī stated his reverence for the teachings of Ibn Ḥanbal. Nevertheless the Ḥanbalīs were formidable enemies, who, on the day following the death of al-Ash'arī, went so far as to overturn his tombstone in the graveyard at Baghdād. Against Mu'tazilism the school challenged the ontological validity of human free-will and of secondary causes, condemned the theory of the created Qur'ān, and affirmed the separate reality of the divine attributes. Finally, from the fifth/eleventh century, it denounced as tainted with impiety the emanationist theories of the *falāsifa*, their theory of cognition, their tendency to treat allegorically (at least in the cases of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā) beliefs as fundamental as the resurrection of the body.

These arguments were not carried on without borrowing from the *falāsifa* many methods of reasoning or of procedure, and the later

Ash'arīs in their analyses, and even in certain of their conclusions, are sometimes very far removed from their master and founder. They had no hesitation in taking up on their own account the logical, cosmological and ontological problems which *falsafa* had propounded. Nevertheless the philosophies proper to *'ilm al-kalām* could be formulated around either the occasionalist theory of 'atoms' or the conceptualist theory of 'modes', and it is most striking that these two theses, so consonant with the Ash'arī vision of the world, should both be of Mu'tazilī origin.

We should not omit to mention some writers belonging to the Ash'arī school, such as the *qāḍī*, al-Baqillānī (d. 403/1013), his contemporary, al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), famous especially for his survey of the sects, and al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085). The latter was the teacher in *kalām* of the celebrated Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (450–505/1058–1111), who produced a treatise of *kalām*, the *Iqtiṣād*, and is famous for his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* ('The incoherence of the philosophers'). In it he refuted al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā after having faithfully and objectively set out their principal theses in the *Maqāṣid*.[1] Al-Shahrastānī, his contemporary, was to attack the same adversaries so successfully that he earned the nickname of 'the overthrower of the *falāsifa*'.

One of the last truly original works of the Ash'arī school was to be the *Muḥaṣṣal* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, the only manual of *kalām* studied by Ibn al-'Arabī. Then in the eighth and ninth/fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there appeared the treatises of al-Taftāzānī—perhaps more Māturīdī than Ash'arī—and of al-Ījī with commentary by al-Jurjānī. At this period, and in the following centuries, the Ash'arī school known as 'of the moderns'[2] continually added to its philosophical preambles so as to produce a sort of mixed genre, belonging both to *kalām* and to *falsafa*, which became lost in the endless labyrinths of constantly renewed discussions.

'Instrumental sciences' and related subjects

Many Muslim writers, Sunnīs and Shī'īs, *falāsifa* or people of the *kalām*, or librarians such as Ibn al-Nadīm, have left catalogues of sciences. They frequently mention sciences which may be called 'instrumental', i.e. knowledge which in itself is secular put to the use of the 'religious sciences'. The study of the Arabic language and of its

[1] Whence the contradiction of the Latin Middle Ages which, knowing only the *Maqāṣid*, made 'Algazel' into an Aristotelian.

[2] The expression is Ibn Khaldūn's, in *Muqaddima*, Cairo, 327.

resources is indispensable in order to penetrate the meaning of the texts, and thus is justified the great influence exerted by the grammarians, and even the renown of the poets and prose writers. Astronomy is essential to establish the lunar calendar, the dates of the fast of Ramaḍān and of the Pilgrimage; without recourse to arithmetic, the jurists would not be able to divide legally the shares of an inheritance, and so on.

But these sciences, instrumental though they were, were in fact to develop widely in their own right. We have already mentioned the schools of the grammarians. There should be noted, in the second–third/eighth–ninth centuries, the work of two philologians of Baṣra: the Sunnī al-Aṣmā'ī (d. *c.* 213/828), renowned for his knowledge of poetics, and his rival, the Kharijite Abū 'Ubayda (d. 209/825), who drew attention to the traditions of the pre-Islamic Arab tribes and was one of the authorities cited by the *Shu'ūbiyya*. It should be particularly emphasized that in mathematics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine the Muslim world had no difficulty in continuing the work done by the Indians, the Persians and the Greeks; and that its original contribution was to have an irreplaceable effect on the advancement of science. One need only mention for example Gondēshāpūr, the lively centre of learning at Khūzistān in the second/eighth century, the invention of algebra by al-Khuwārizmī in the third/ninth century, or the works on astronomy by the majority of the *falāsifa*. Yaḥyā al-Khayyāṭ and al-Kindī himself had been preceded by, and prepared by, astrology; algebra had been preceded by gnostic speculations on letters and numbers, such as the famous work attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Shī'ī *Imām*; and alchemy was held in much esteem. But distinctions were made. Ibn Sīnā devoted himself to astronomy at the request of 'Alā' al-Dawla, *amīr* of Iṣfahān, adding to it also researches and discoveries in cosmography, geometry and arithmetic. He was able to make progress in chemistry, which, unlike al-Kindī, he clearly distinguished from alchemy, and his great medical work, *al-Qānūn fi'l-ṭibb*, was still regarded as authoritative by medieval Latin scholars. In the fifth/eleventh century, the mathematician al-Bīrūnī was famous not only for his contribution to the science of numbers and to astronomy, but for his knowledge of Indian culture and his glossed translation of the *yoga-sūtra* of Patanjali. The list of the principal scholars writing in Arabic would be a long one. The apologists freely concede their right to exist in Islam, since the Qur'ān commands to 'reflect on the signs of the universe'[1]; they regard them

[1] Cf. Qur'ān, 2. 164; 3. 190; 6. 99; 13. 2–3; 24. 43–54, etc.

with suspicion only in so far as hypotheses advanced by them contradict the professions of faith.

Finally we must not omit history and geography. The *ṭabaqāt* which we mentioned in connexion with the science of *Ḥadīth* was perhaps the first form of historical narrative in Islam. There were very soon added to it many monographs, which were, however, more annals than history proper, and it was not until the eighth/fourteenth century, with the masterly work of Ibn Khaldūn, thathi story took on the dimension of an explanatory synthesis of the facts. On the other hand, the Muslims, being great travellers, discoverers of countries, organizers of empires and experienced traders, were very early in inaugurating a scientific type of geography. The influence of Greece, of the translations of Ptolemy among others, was decisive. We often find in geography the same names as in astronomy or mathematics: al-Khuwārizmī, al-Bīrūnī and others. In addition we shall confine ourselves to mentioning al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897), al-Maqdisī (or al-Muqaddasī) and in particular al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956), al-Idrīsī (d. 549/1154), Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 770/1368–9). This list is by no means exhaustive. Such geographical works as studies on latitudes and longitudes, the science of 'climates' (the Greek *κλίμα*) and the making of maps (it was in Islamic territory that scientific cartography developed) sometimes turned into travel journals in which much space was devoted to the descriptions of the inhabitants of various countries and their customs. These descriptions were mixed with legends and they are still reflected in popular literature, such as the tales of Sinbad the Sailor.

Two 'marginal sciences'

To complete our investigation a brief excursus may be permitted. In fact the traditional classification of knowledge into 'religious sciences', 'instrumental sciences' and 'foreign sciences' is by itself inadequate to express the complexity of the facts.

For example it risks leaving in obscurity that 'marginal' science, which was at times condemned and even brought before the courts, and at times accepted—*'ilm al-taṣawwuf* or Muslim mysticism. We shall not deal with it directly here. It suffices to mention the very great importance of many Ṣūfī works, and even of the life led by the Ṣūfī circles, in the cultural history of the Islamic countries. There are Ṣūfī poems and prose, analyses of spiritual states or gnostic meditations, and even

didactic manuals, which are most certainly the highest expression of Arabic or Persian literature. At the time when Sufism was being attacked by established Islam, the second and third/eighth and ninth centuries produced the incomparable testimonies of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Rābi'a, al-Muḥāsibī, al-Bistāmī, al-Ḥallāj and others. The manuals of the following age, and especially the *Iḥyā'* of al-Ghazālī were to procure them acceptance. The sixth–seventh/twelfth–thirteenth centuries produced the masterly work of Ibn al-'Arabī and the very fine poems of 'Umar b. al-Fāriḍ, and we have already mentioned the influence at the same time of Persian Ṣūfī writings. It was no longer a question only of that chiefly formal beauty which characterizes classical poetry and prose; this was a transcription sometimes of personal experiences, sometimes of broadly gnostic evocations, but expressed with such a poetic and literary gift that Arabo-Muslim or Perso-Muslim humanism can be justly proud of it.

Let us reconsider briefly that other 'marginal' discipline, *falsafa*. It belongs so to speak to a fringe-position between the 'religious sciences' and the 'foreign sciences'. Its chief exponents were, as we have seen, both philosophers and scholars, or physicians, and were often involved in the political affairs of their time. The early relations between *falsafa* and *kalām* were far from being hostile. Al-Kindī, the first of the 'philosophers', was often considered as belonging also to the Mu'tazilī *kalām*, and *'ilm al-kalām* has its place in the 'Catalogue of the sciences' (*Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*) of al-Fārābī. It was after the triumph of Ash'arism in *kalām* that the break between the two disciplines occurred.

It is easy to understand how this rupture came about. Only al-Kindī, but still in a very inchoate fashion, gives us a kind of first outline of what could be called a Muslim philosophy in its true sense. From al-Fārābī onwards, the vision of the world of the *falāsifa* was built on an eternal creation, willed certainly by the First Being (God), but necessarily emanating from Him; and if it is possible to speak of an agreement between the prophetic revelation and the intelligible apprehension of the philosopher, it is, we are told, that the first expresses the second according to the usage of the 'vulgar' (*'awāmm*) in the form of symbols and allegories. It is only the field of worship which specifically belongs to it.

Such an attitude of mind raised no acute problem at the time of the Eastern *falsafa*, from the third/ninth to the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century; but matters were not to continue thus. Eastern *falsafa* in fact existed in an atmosphere profoundly impregnated with Shi'ism; Western *falsafa* in the sixth/twelfth century was under the patronage of the

Almohads, and it was Sultan Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf who asked Ibn Rushd to produce a commentary on Aristotle. Not only did al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā enjoy the patronage of princes, but the milieu in which they lived, accustomed to Ismā'īlī ideas, was not likely to take offence either at their emanationist cosmology, or at the kind of intellectualist mystique which coloured their theory of knowledge, or at their secret preference for an interpretation (*ta'wīl*) which found in the texts of the Qur'ān their own view of the world. On the contrary, the Almohad milieu obliged the Western *falsafa* to present a defence of its Sunnī Muslim faith. Certainly it is true that the philosophy of Ibn Ṭufayl, and in particular that of Ibn Rushd, sometimes opposed some theses of Ibn Sīnā; beyond Ibn Sīnā, he often ended by agreeing with al-Fārābī, though not without affirming his own originality. Also, Ibn Rushd was often faithful to Aristotle, whereas al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were open to neo-Platonic influences and even to influences from ancient Persia. But they all retained essentially the same basic attitude to established religion. The apologia undertaken by Ibn Rushd in his works of self-defence should not be allowed to deceive us over this.

The hundred and fifty years which separate Ibn Sīnā from Ibn Rushd had seen the triumph of Sunnism over Shi'ism, and the launching of the massive attacks of the 'people of the Tradition' or the doctors of *kalām* against *falsafa*. The *Tahāfut* denounced as dangerous seventeen propositions drawn from the works of the eastern *falāsifa* and declared four of their theses to be tainted with impiety (*takfīr*): the double eternity of the world *ante* and *post*, the denial of a true divine knowledge of singular realities, and the denial of the bodily resurrection. The Shī'ī disciple of Ibn Sīna, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, undertook the task of justifying his master. Ibn Rushd, in his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* and in his *Faṣl al-maqāl* concentrated his efforts on the defence of *falsafa* itself, though not without some criticism of Ibn Sīnā. In the latter work he openly expresses his contempt for the dialectic of the people of the *kalām*, 'sick minds' who do nothing but 'shatter the law of religion in pieces'.[1]

The 'quarrel of the *Tahāfut*' is justly famous, but the rejoinder of the second *Tahāfut* was by no means decisive. In fact the traces of Shī'ī influence, which had marked the beginning of the Almohad reform, had been forced to give way in the face of official severity. The position of the Western *falsafa* was always to be an uncomfortable one, placed as

[1] *Faṣl al-maqāl*, Fr. ed. and trans. by L. Gauthier, (Algiers, 1942), 29; cf. again Ibn Rushd, *Kashf 'an manāhij . . .*, *apud Falsafat Ibn Rushd* (Cairo A.H. 1313 and 1328), 68.

it was between the intermittent favour of the rulers and the easily offended strict codes of the jurists. Ibn Rushd's self-justification, such an important document in the history of ideas, did nothing at all to disarm the latter. His works were burned in his own lifetime and this Cordovan ended his life in exile at Marrakesh. In short (and unlike al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā) Western *falsafa* had scarcely any influence on Muslim thought but was to exert all its influence on medieval Europe.

Broadly speaking, it can be said that the conqueror in the quarrel of the *Tahāfut* was al-Ghazālī, and we should not end this chapter without returning, however briefly, to this interesting figure. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī is without doubt one of the most famous figures in the history of Muslim culture. His biography is well known: his period of scepticism, then his finding certainty again in first principles, his investigations in *kalām* and *falsafa*, his refutation of the Ismā'īlī extremists, and finally his conversion to Sufism considered as a personal experience. His great work *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* ('Revival of the religious sciences') goes beyond the traditional cadres of the 'religious sciences', and concerns them all. The modern Ḥanbalī tendency represented by Ibn Taymiyya was to accuse al-Ghazālī of having watered down Islam first by his broad eclecticism—in which were mingled Christian, Jewish and neo-Platonic influences—and secondly by the affective values which he incorporated in his faith. Some of them even, rather hastily, cast doubts on his sincerity. However, being a Shafi'ite by allegiance, he found among the Shafi'ites passionate supporters, such as al-Subkī, and he was to retain the title of 'Proof of Islam' (*Ḥujjat al-Islām*). It is true that he failed in his task as reformer, and that he failed in the last resort to promote a reasoned understanding of the faith; but after his conversion to Sufism in 488/1095, he produced many pages of spiritual writings on repentance, humility, surrender to God, and the love of God which continue to foster in Islam a genuine piety. They reach beyond the age in which they were written to remain a priceless heritage for men of all time.

CONCLUSION

Thus the cultural movement in the Islamic countries from the first/seventh to the ninth/fifteenth century appears as an extremely rich and complex collection of disciplines. It has its religious field—its 'religious sciences' or learning; it has its field of free philosophical and scientific research, which was at times permitted and protected by the authorities

and at times regarded with suspicion by official Islam; and it has its field of the religious and secular arts, and of secular poetry and prose. The question arises whether a distinction should be made between a *Muslim* culture proper, inspired by Islamic values and particularly by the text of the Qur'ān, and a culture which existed *in Muslim territory*, and which either interpreted the religious beliefs of Islam in its own way, or ignored them or even opposed them.

It is certainly true that this distinction has some correspondence with the facts and it can serve as a useful principle for the classification of works and genres, with the proviso however that one should not attribute to it such a sharpness as it would possess, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Christian world. Although the Islam of the jurists and the doctors condemned the licence of the Umayyad or 'Abbasid courts or of the *amīrs* of Syria and Persia, yet the patronage of the princes produced literary and artistic masterpieces, and a way of life which contributed to the brilliance of one of the great civilizations.

Nevertheless the fact is that Islam is, in its deepest sense, *dīn wa-dawla*, 'religion and city', and too rigid a classification into separate sections would not be true to the historic reality. In the Muslim countries neither science nor secular literature or art were separated from religion in the way that certain branches of modern humanism have been in Europe. They were affected by Muslim values. To make again the distinction between *dīn* (religion) and *Islām*, it could be said that they belonged to Islam considered as a community, as a temporal city, without being attached, nevertheless, to the sphere of religion.

Taken as a whole, both religious and secular, Muslim culture of the classical age was always by preference to be Arabic in expression, and even exclusively Arabic in the region from Baghdād to Cordova. There should not be ignored, however, the authentic Persian culture which was contemporary with it. The Turkish culture was not to begin its development until the eighth/fourteenth century; even then it must be remarked that, until the ninth–tenth/fifteenth–sixteenth centuries, in the islamized Turkish countries Arabic was to remain in current use in the field of religion and Persian in that of literature.

Similarly Persian territory should not always be identified with Persian culture. According to the periods and the authors, the chosen language of culture would sometimes be Arabic and sometimes Persian, even within one amirate. In the fourth–fifth/tenth–eleventh centuries, Ibn Sīnā, a native of distant Bukhārā, wrote all his great works in Arabic

but adopted Persian for his *Dānesh-nāma* composed at the request of the *amīr* 'Alā' al-Dawla. Firdawsī and al-Ghazālī were born in the same town of Ṭūs. Firdawsī, who wrote of ancient Persia, and only in Persian, seems to have intended to manifest his attachment to the Muslim religion by composing after the *Shāh-nāma* the poem of *Yūsuf u-Zulaykhā*. Nevertheless on his death he was excluded from the Muslim cemetery. Yet a hundred and thirty years later, al-Ghazālī, also a native of Ṭūs, of Shafi'ite and Ash'arite allegiance, was to earn the name of 'Proof of Islam', and his influence was to extend as far as the Almohad reform in the Maghrib.

The third/ninth century saw the development of the basic religious sciences of *tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh*; the fourth/tenth century produced the great schools of *kalām*, and these two centuries were at the same time the golden age of the freest philosophical and scientific research. In this, Shi'ism, chiefly in its Ismā'īlī branches, played its usual role of catalyst. *Falsafa* cannot be called a Muslim philosophy in the strict meaning of the term: it was rather a Hellenistic philosophy, Arabic or Persian in expression, and with Muslim influences. But it became a vigorous leaven, through its influence, direct or indirect, and through the very refutations which it provoked. The triumph of Sunnism from the fifth/eleventh century onwards is paradoxically a proof of this. Although al-Ghazālī declared himself to be primarily a spiritual writer whose concern was with interior religious experience, yet without *falsafa* his work would have lacked an entire philosophical dimension. In order to oppose *falsafa* effectively, he studied it closely, and carried the debate even into the territory of his adversaries. In this way he had to introduce neo-Platonic elements into the very structure of the traditional problematic. Traces of it are found in the objective summary of the 'religious sciences' to which Ibn Khaldūn devotes several chapters of his *Muqaddima*.

It is probably possible to see in the powerful Ḥanbalī influence one of the most profound and sustained expressions of Sunnī Muslim thought as such. But Ḥanbalī thought was continually enriched by its struggles, sometimes against Shi'ism, and at other times against all trends of *'ilm al-kalām*. A prime example of this is the *Dhamm al-kalām* of the Ḥanbalī Ṣūfī, al-Anṣārī; and even Ibn Taymiyya himself owes many refinements of his analyses to his principal Shī'ī adversaries Ṭūsī and Ḥillī.

The great cultures which came later, the Safavid restoration in Persia and the Mughal civilization in India, were no longer involved in the same

way with the *dār al-Islām* in its entirety. It seems, on the contrary, that it was to the combination of its basically Muslim inspiration, to the predominance of the Arabic language, to the patronage accorded (though not always unreservedly) to the arts and literature, and finally to the extensive welcome given to the 'foreign sciences', that the culture of the classical age owed its specific character and influence, and its own complex unity from the Indus to the shores of the Atlantic.

From the ninth/fifteenth century onwards, the 'religious sciences' scarcely developed at all. We cannot consider here the reasons for this. But it is possible to suggest that it was the tension between secular and religious elements which produced the greatness of the Arabo- and Perso-Muslim classicism, and that the presence of both of them was necessary for this. And it may be that a clearer recognition of unity of contrasts will enable Islam as a culture to be accorded its rightful place in the history of universal culture.