


The Principle of Composition  
and  
How to Introduce Beethoven to American Laymen  
by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

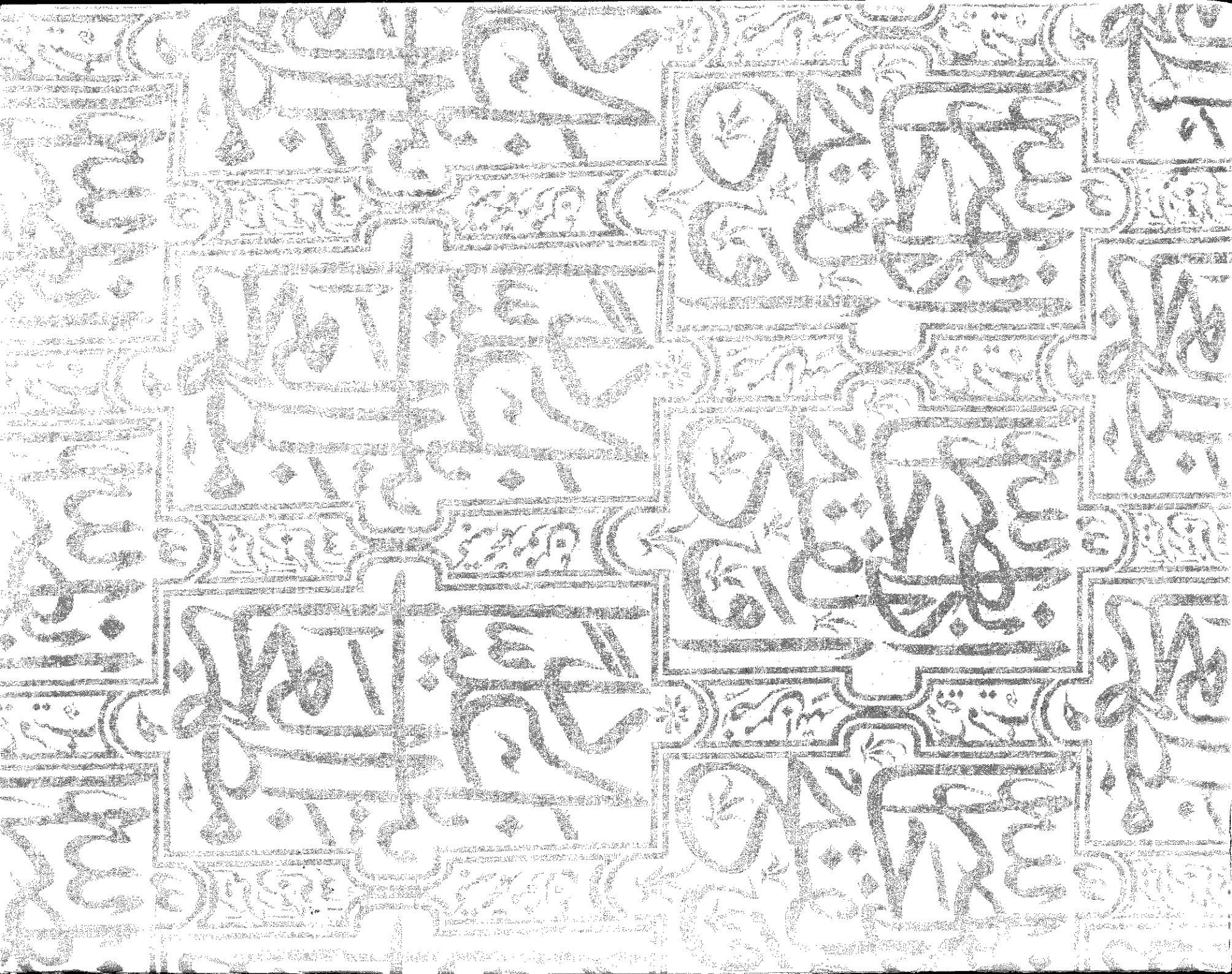
# the Campaigner

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Islamic Humanism  
Against The Dark Ages





# **the Campaigner**

CAMPAIGN FOR HUMANISM



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# CONTROVERSY

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## Should Anthropology As Well As Sociology Be Eliminated from University Payrolls?

In the course of a special research project, we have hit upon conclusive proof which dates the beginning of the so-called "Copper Age" to some thousands of years prior to 10,000 B.C. The evidence assembled from best sources also proves conclusively that all U.S. professional anthropology, as it is presently constituted, is an irreparable and willful hoax.

This particular finding was an outgrowth of attending to a secondary but not unimportant task included in preparing a competent English-language translation of Plato's *Timaeus*. We had to determine: How accurate or inaccurate can we presently show Plato's account of Atlantis to be? More important: To what purpose does Plato situate that within the successive writing of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*?

So far, we have identified about five thousand secondary sources on the Atlantis topic. A small ratio of these are not outright cranks or otherwise frauds. Within the scope of what might be termed relatively serious scholarship on the topic, the writings converging on a rigorous treatment of the evidence constitute a relative handful of texts and dissertations. By adding to the rigorous sources' treatments certain crucial geological, meteorological, and historical material, and by applying Plato's own method to the case, broadly conclusive and important results are established beyond reasonable objection.

There is no "lost continent of Atlantis"; there is the Western Hemisphere. There is almost certainly a *lost island* of Atlantis in the general vicinity of the Azores; this would be

an island now lying perhaps five hundred feet under the surface of the Atlantic, an island which would have existed perhaps twelve to eleven thousand years ago. It would have been lost through a combination of seismic catastrophes plus the general rising of the level of the ocean waters up into the second millennium B.C.

To situate the issue of a lost island of Atlantis in the vicinity of the Azores we are properly advised to work our way backwards from three points of evidence dated to the last centuries of the second millennium B.C. These events are the explosion of the Aegean island of Thera, the archeological and other

evidence bearing on the Peoples of the Sea, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The worst known Dark Age in human history occurred between the explosion of Thera and the resurrection of Aegean literacy between 850 and 800 B.C. In this period we locate, in the early phases, the historical fact of the siege of Troy and evidence that the voyages of Ulysses are also historical fact recorded with an astonishing degree of accuracy in detail. Barring the hopeful possibility that the damned British have squirreled away some invaluable documents, the Romans' criminal destruction of the literary record of the Etruscans and the destruction of the libraries at Baghdad and Alexandria otherwise bar us from the degree of detailed literary knowledge available in the

*Please turn to page 69*



*The author examining the stonework of the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán, during a recent visit to Mexico at the invitation of that nation's ruling party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Many aspects of Mexico's pre-Conquest culture indicate links to an advanced global civilization.*

## The Question of Leadership in Islam

Ayatollah Khomeini, a second-generation British intelligence operative, has unwittingly provided a valuable service to present-day Islam: he has forced leading Muslims in responsible positions in various countries to confront the central question which has been haunting the Islamic world since A.D. 1258: what are the prerequisites of leadership in Islam?

Let no one fool himself that the question which we address here is applicable only to Islam and the Arab world. As we define the qualities of leadership necessary to destroy Islam's sheeplike walk into the Dark Ages, the reader's mind will appropriately be simultaneously considering his own religion's leadership, and that of his political party or nation as well. It will avail little if we solve the problem of leadership in Islam while the rest of the world's leaders wallow in a sectarian swamp of popular opinion, and fail to learn the *universal* lessons we elaborate here.

No matter what propitiating buffoons like Yasser Arafat say in public, it is well known among the leading elites of Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim states that Khomeini represents that reprehensible type of misleadership which has repeatedly in the course of the last seven centuries brought the Islamic cultural domain of the human species to the state of near-bankruptcy in which it finds itself today.

Yet although Khomeini is recognized widely as typical of the obscurantist, antihumanist leadership in the history of Islam, those humanist-oriented elites in Muslim and Arab countries who are aware of this fact have not been able so far to provide an adequate, efficient conception of what actual humanist leadership ought to be in Islam.

Thus it is not accidental that despite the promptings and generous strategic assistance of the U.S. Labor Party, the existing Arab leaderships presently in positions of responsibility have so far failed to shape and implement any sort of competent counterstrategy to the Camp David caper that British and Israeli intelligence jointly pulled over Egypt.

### SCIENCE OF MIND

There is, however, a simple and straightforward solution to the present seemingly impossible impasse, a

solution which is supplied to us by Islamic history: the secret of adequate and efficient political leadership is, in point of fact, *epistemology*, the mastery of the science of mind. More accurately, the science of how to develop the minds of human beings so that they can be transformed from mere sensuality-ridden beasts to beings of Reason, to golden souls.

The most regrettable vulnerability of almost all present-day Arab and other Muslim leaders is located in their attitude toward the so-called masses, that legendary fiction behind which the flaws of inadequate leadership are usually concealed. The presently prevailing model for leadership in the Islamic world equates leadership with championship of the "aspirations" and "ideals" and even "interests" of the masses, whatever these "ideals" and "interests" may be perceived by the masses to be.

In this sort of arrangement between "masses" and "leaders," it is extremely simple to manipulate "leaders." A leader of this type need not be on the payroll of an imperialist agency, nor be blackmailed or otherwise corrupted. An imperialist manipulator need only manipulate what the oppressed, misinformed, and malleable "masses" perceive to be their "ideals" and "aspirations" and "interests." This is how the destabilization of Iran occurred: the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Zionist-controlled media in the USA and Western Europe, assisted by in-place agents of influence of the National Security Council, British intelligence, and the Israeli Mossad, conditioned the lumpen elements of the Iranian population to accept as "Islamic fundamentalism" a system of belief structures that was essentially engineered in the psychological warfare laboratories of the British Army at Tavistock.

### HASAN IBN-SABAH

Under these circumstances, the specific responsibility of the U.S. Labor Party, the party of LaRouche, is to supply to the Islamic world—and more especially to the Arab world—a conception of leadership that is fundamentally premised on a profoundly different conception of the needed relationship between "leaders" and "masses." This is the conception of leadership best exemplified by the splendid twelfth century giant Hasan ibn-Sabah—a true hero of the human race.

Among humanist political leaders through the ages, it is known that true leaders of the masses are the shepherds, not those who take it upon themselves to articulate the bleating aspirations of the sheep. And Hasan ibn-Sabah stands very high among the great shepherds of human history; he is a standard with which to measure the achievements of other shepherds. The revolutionary innovations that Hasan introduced in political practice, in the domain of strategic political intelligence, military science, psychological warfare, and political cadre training, can hardly be surpassed. Nicolo Machiavelli, through the heritage of the great Hohenstaufen, owes a great deal to Hasan ibn-Sabah. The greatest nation-builders of the present era, Benjamin Franklin and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, would cheerfully recognize their debt to Hasan, had they been informed of it.

Yet why is Hasan ibn-Sabah such a very little-known, mysterious figure, lost in the footnotes of history?

And what was it that made him such a towering great in the history of mankind?

The darkest secret of Islamic history is hidden behind the answer to these two questions. His case is useful to help one understand the extent of ignorance that prevails with respect to Islamic history. For most people, not even the facts about Hasan are available. For most among the educated elites of the West, Hasan is known as a perverse ogre, “The Old Man of the Mountain” presented by the crude propaganda of the Crusaders. And most of the educated Muslims who are familiar with the facts of the case of Hasan ibn-Sabah are unaware of the substance, the epistemological principle that Hasan’s case embodies.

Only a precious few among the educated Muslim elite, those who de facto belong to the party of LaRouche, are privileged with the deeper knowledge of the matter: Hasan ibn-Sabah represents the principle of creative reason imposing its dominance in the domain of practical political activity—on a global scale.

Once that is established, the basic historical, unresolved conflicts of the Muslim world are finally resolved. The conflict between Shia and Sunni, between Shia, Sunni, and Ismaili, between Mutazelite and Asharite, between secular and religious, between traditionalist and modernist, are all resolved by a single stroke: Hasan ibn-Sabah provided the resolution to these conflicts during the twelfth century by synthesizing in his person a humanist epistemological political leadership which defines as its sole task the uplifting of the bestialized masses of humanity to the level of Neoplatonic Reason. He thus defined leadership as the ability of the humanist leader to replicate in others his own qualities of humanist leadership.

This is the fundamental intangible of leadership: the

ability to bring forward in others that intellectual creative power which can identify with, attain atonement in that ontological principle which ibn-Sina, Hasan’s immediate predecessor, called the “necessary existent.” A leader is that person who motivates others to fulfill their existence as instruments of natural law.

### FULFILLING HISTORY

It is this specific point that most Muslim leaders miss today. It is the crucial point that the modern form of Arab nationalism misses today. Thus we are witnessing the pathetic spectacle of “Arab nationalists” who bask in the glory of the civilization of High Islam, who take childish pride in the unsurpassed achievements of their truly great predecessors, and who then go about impotently howling to the world about the grave injustice that is being done to them today.

A person of Reason, a *real* Muslim or a *real* Arab, is not the one who conveniently takes pride in his civilization’s past great achievements. Those achievements by themselves are not really important. They are merely the footprints, the by-products of something far greater than the achievements themselves: the achievements are only the partial fruits of an unfinished struggle.

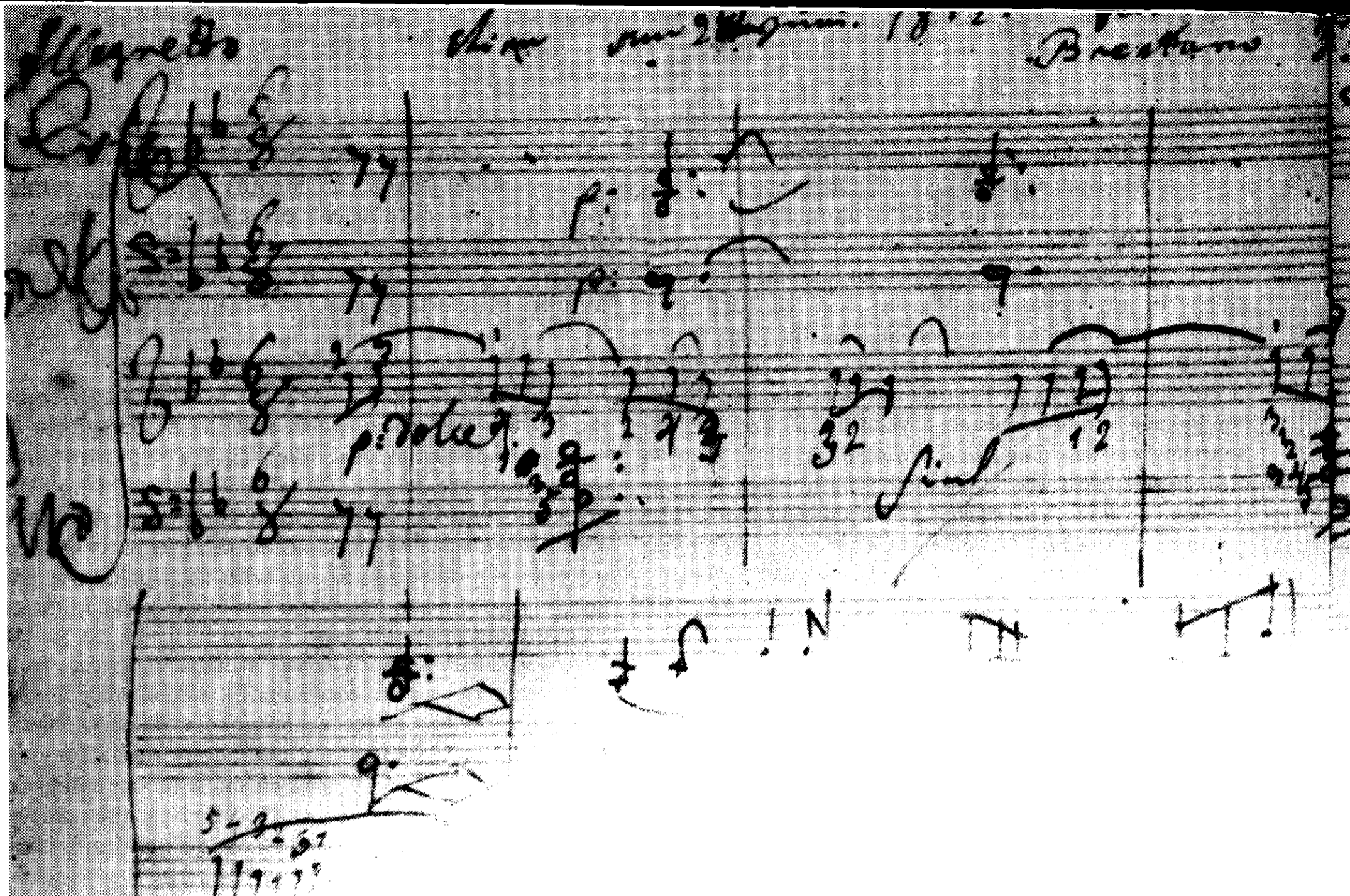
High Islam became a great civilization not because this humanist principle of leadership triumphed, but because the struggle for its imposition during the period of High Islam was more intense than in any other period of history, perhaps with the exception of the period of Alexander the Great’s Platonic campaign and the period of the American Revolution. That struggle was aborted when the Mongol hordes, in alliance with al-Ghazali’s “Muslim fundamentalism” and Western Europe’s Black Guelph aristocracy, and exterminated every last adherent of Hasan ibn-Sabah.

The history of Islam and of Islam’s contribution to the human species has been at a standstill since then. From 1258 onward, humanist Islam has been held under the terror of Seljuk, Mongol, Ottoman, and British barbarism. Its history, its values, and its traditions have been systematically subverted for the single purpose of breaking the continuity of Islamic humanism, for the single purpose of preventing any new generation of leaders from picking up and continuing the work where the great Hasan ibn-Sabah left it.

But now, in the midst of the present crisis of the Islamic world, Hasan ibn-Sabah is coming to claim his own. The party of LaRouche is deliberately reviving Hasan and his principles of leadership in order to oblige our friends and allies in the Islamic world to measure themselves against the standards of leadership provided by Hasan. They must not be found wanting.

—Criton Zoakos





# How to Introduce Beethoven to American Laymen

*by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.*

On reflection it should become clear to qualified musicians that the most efficient approach to educating American laymen in the principles underlying Beethoven's compositions begins with a study of Edgar Allan Poe's popular "The Raven." The importance of that poem for this purpose is that it was undertaken as an exercise for proving the poetic principle to a popular literary audience of the 1840s. In an essay from the same period of writing, his "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe explains how the effect of "The Raven" was successfully artficed. The essay coincides precisely in its explanation with the way the poem itself "works." Moreover, Poe's comprehension of the poetic principle is the correct one, the same poetic principle exemplified by Dante Alighieri and Friedrich Schiller, and otherwise exemplified in Beethoven's musical composition.

Obviously, the student cannot leap directly from the study of "The Raven" to mastering Beethoven. There are two preliminary steps to be accomplished in connection with "The Raven" itself. The personal satisfaction which the student rightly obtains through mastering the principles of the poem makes further inquiry in the same direction agreeable to the student. In adopting Poe's work for such study, we have pointed the student in the most fruitful direction for further inquiry.

The first phase in the line of further inquiry is a



study of the basic principles of poetic composition from the starting-point of reference of Plato's *Politeia* (*Republic*). This study can concentrate in part on the ABCs of rhythmical and prosodic-intonational principles of composition which can be abstracted from poetic composition. In this aspect of the further inquiry, the layman is made familiar with the common formal aspects of poetic and musical composition. The student is able to demonstrate adequately to himself that poetry and music were rightly viewed as the same matter in Plato (and other writings to the same effect).

Once the student has assimilated that additional grounding, he can proceed to the next, higher level of the principles common to poetic and musical composition. This is not only a higher level, but a more challenging level. The topical question posed for this phase of the inquiry is: "What kinds of ideas are properly associated with poetic and musical composition in the genre of Schiller and Beethoven, and how do the mechanics of poetic composition in terms of rhythmical and tonal development work to efficiently convey such ideas?"

The most useful test of effective study in this phase centers around Dante Alighieri's *Commedia*. If the student understands how Dante develops the *Commedia* to arrive, by successive steps, lawfully at the concluding strophe, the essential notion of poetical ideas has been assimilated. Unfortunately, there are barriers for those

not familiar with Dante's Italian, but a competent instructor can assist the student in getting past the difficulties of translation — at least, on the side of the idea-content.

This facet of the inquiry should, of course, take other cases. Despite the difficulties of language, Beethoven, Mozart, and Schubert's songs, chiefly based variously on Italian and German poetry, are appropriate sources of material for qualified instructors. Ironically, a certain degree of *unfamiliarity* with the language will be an advantage at this phase.

## SONGS

The prosodic aspect of the poem can be abstracted from the language with aid of proper recitations. This can then be compared with the prosodic qualities of rhythm and intonation of the corresponding song. A comparison of settings of the same poem by different composers in this frame of reference is most useful.

At this point of the student's inquiry, a number of barriers have been surpassed. It is sufficient for our purposes to identify but a few such accomplishments at this point in our writing.

The mastery of poetic meter demystifies the musical measure, and all of the rhythmical elaborations of musical composition. Thematic passages of definite durations are seen as equivalent to lines of poetry. The student has now abandoned the rhythmical features of so-called popular music of today to the proper species for such forms of recreation: the baboons, chimpanzees, and infant bed-rockers.

The prosodic intonation, the tonal side, has been comprehended as a body of systematic thought and practice, in its own way like the metrical features common to music and poetry.

The student is able to prove to himself that music in the same key signature throughout, in the same, repeated metrical patterns, is boring, unimportant. He is also able to prove that this problem is not solved by mere key transpositions in the course of recapitulating material, and is not solved by mere rhythmical equivalents of key transpositions. To attempt to relieve the monotony of a composition by introducing purely arbitrary variations in tonal or rhythmic material makes everything worse, not better. The introduction of arbitrary variation into music and poetry has the effect of both underscoring the banality of what is changed in this way, and also of underscoring the infantile arbitrariness of the irrational element of variation.

Seeing that the Joan Baez or Bob Dylan school of "folk music" is the pluck-and-strum version of the most boring banality, and that the "rock" medium is the most degraded of the banalities identified, the

student is led to inquire how such musically boring material could be made so "popular."

It becomes clear that Bob Dylan and similar sorts have been made popular exactly because they perform the most monotonously boring material, either with the pathetically unmusical voice of a Bob Dylan, or with attempts to emphasize child-like "blank" intonation. The rock cult's appeal is obvious by constructing a film montage, alternating images of a "disco" affair and an infant "rocking" in its crib. Starting with longer passages from each, as alternating elements of the montage, the tempo of the alternation should be increased to agreement with the common tempo of the disco and the infant bed-rocker. At that tempo, the "secret" of rock's popularity is revealed: *it is masturbation*. The masturbational quality of sexual relations among adolescent youth (and others) within the framework of the rock subculture, an infantile sexual ritual, a sensual gluttony, in perpetual flight from its own self-imposed pattern of ever-jaded appetites, coincides with this.

The student has thus begun to understand that "popular" music is not only boring, but also morally bad: it tends to produce infantile degeneration in the personalities which permit themselves to become habituated to it.

Ravel's "Bolero" is a useful point of reference for identifying pure evil in musical composition.

The student is now better equipped to comprehend the way in which lawful development provides the pleasing quality of poetry and music. Rhythmic and other prosodic qualities of composition must evolve. This evolution must not be arbitrary; the evolution itself must represent a coherent conception. The conception is experienced by the audience in much the same way a "light turns on in the head" as one discovers a solution to a tantalizing problem. A lawful development in music or poetry has the required quality of pleasure (beauty) as it resembles a satisfying lawful discovery in the minds of the audience.

The student is now in command of the prerequisites for a direct study of the musical principles of al-Farabi and his successors. A simple sort of classroom demonstration can show why a well-tempered scale is necessary for compositions in which some or all of the twenty-four minor and major keys of the twelve-tone octave scale occur in juxtaposition within the course of development of the same composition. The system in which each note of the twelve has the same frequency for all twenty-four keys is the only system which satisfies the requirements of music.

At this point, the student has made a great, important breakthrough. Without this specific breakthrough, there can be no comprehension of music as music.

To achieve beauty, music (in particular) must be

characterized by that continual variation which lies within the bounds of lawfully determined development. Arbitrary variation is disgusting, infantile; the variation must be within the bounds of a coherent principle of lawful development. This process of change has two aspects: metrical and tonic.

To accomplish this, all the domain of change must be governed by the lawful principles involved. The rhythmical systems must satisfy coherence throughout that facet of the domain of music. The principles of shift from one key to another must be lawful and coherent with the determination of the value of notes—such that a note situated within one key has the same frequency value as for its occurrence as a note of the staff in every other key, and the relative values within keys must be coherent with this.

This is necessary, because without such arrangements, the preconditions for true music (e.g., beauty through lawful variation) are impossible.

## THE TWO FACTIONS

This established, the student is now properly situated to comprehend the essential point of difference between the contrapuntalists of the al-Farabi, Zarlino, John Bull, Sweelinck, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven sequence, and the antagonistic school of Aristotle, Monteverdi, Rameau, Mendelssohn, Wagner, et al.

The antagonists of the contrapuntal or well-tempered faction in music have adhered to doctrines of tonality typified by Aristotle and the so-called Pythagorean doctrine. Even the great musical theorist Heinrich Schenker was sometimes muddy on this issue. The assumption was made that the natural tonal system was properly determined by the mathematically ordered systems of vibrating rods, and the ear's physiological ability to discriminate a smallest interval of difference among such vibrating rods.

Music was thus degraded by the Aristotelians and others of that strain to a matter of sensual effects, effects of acoustical effects as determined from an existing (mis)conception of inorganic physics.

The central theme of historical disputes in the name of music is thus made fully comprehensible in its essential features. The issue has been whether music was a matter of sensual effects, of whether, as with al-Farabi through Beethoven, the ostensible sensual effects were merely a form of mediation determined by the requirements of musical development.

If music is primary, then the well-tempered system is the natural system, since only such a system conforms to the requirements of lawful, contrapuntal development within music. If the so-called natural tonal system is physiologically primary, then there exists no music as al-Farabi, Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven understood it,

but only the name of 'music' applied to pragmatically, or arbitrarily, determined rules for producing meaningless sensual effects. The latter is the view represented by "trolley-car" conductor Leonard Bernstein in his notorious Harvard lectures.

This point is so important to the overall outcome of the educational effort that it should be restated once more, step by step.

First, let us consider the issue in terms of a purely formal problem.

Either the whole of musical development represents a coherent domain, and this coherent lawfulness is therefore the primary reality of music, or the notes of the twelve-tone scale are the self-evidently "atomic" sensualities of music. If the former, then the notes are determined in value by the requirements of a system which is coherent with respect to all of the lawfully ordered development within music. If the latter, then the values of the notes, as self-evident "atoms" of sensuality, can be determined by any variously arbitrary or consistent standards apart from music. In the latter case, music is axiomatically degraded to a matter of sensual effects.

The former standpoint is the Platonic (or, Neoplatonic) epistemological standpoint, as exemplified by Plato's *Timaeus*. The latter standpoint is that of Aristotle and his successors, and coincides with the classical arguments of the British Secret Intelligence Service in adopting Rameau as its prophet during the British monarchy's attempted inquisition against J.S. Bach during Bach's period at Leipzig.

The Aristotelian standpoint was also the common standpoint of Goethe, Mendelssohn, and Richard Wagner, among others, in those persons' philippics against the line of development of musical composition exemplified by Beethoven. The same issue was reflected, although in an often confused form, in both of the principal Wagner controversies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. between Wagnerians and Brahmsians, in the once case, and Wagnerians and Verdians in another. Although both Brahms and Verdi reflected the depressing influence of the romantic decay of nineteenth century musical (and other) aspects of European culture, relative to the Wagnerians they were the sane currents, and represented to that extent a continuation of the thrust of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, et al.

From the Platonic standpoint, the notes of the well-tempered system are *ephemerals*. The student must not be left misguided on the significance of that term. 'Ephemeral' is not equivalent to 'sloppy,' 'arbitrary,' 'illusory.' Indeed, individual life is an ephemeral in the whole development of humanity, yet an individual person is not only definite, but what he or she may do to secure a meaningful place in the process of human

development as a whole is also a definite matter. The notes within a well-tempered system have a determined, exact value as notes. There is no caprice, no margin for indifference within the range of audible discriminations, or within a tolerable range of beats produced by the variation between produced tones of the same nominal set of values.

When we insist that the values of notes are ephemerals, we are merely insisting that the values of musical notes are not determined a priori, independently of music. We are merely insisting that the principles of lawful development necessary to effect beauty within musical composition rigorously determine the values of notes, with no obligation to any aprioristic assumption of what those sensual values must be independently of beautiful music.

From the standpoint of the Aristotelian and irrationalist (empiricist-positivist) schools—such as the Frankfurt School's protégé Arnold Schönberg, downward through Webern into Stockhausen and John Cage—the values of the notes are either properly determined as if they were self-evident atoms, prior to any musical consideration, or purely arbitrary valuations might be given to them.

## POLYPHONY

Once the student has advanced to the point of being able to demonstrate the necessity for the well-tempered system for himself in this way, the next step is the study of polyphony.

In this phase of the study, the student must initially "overcorrect" for the banalizing doctrine of chordal harmonics. We outline what appear to us as the model approaches for accomplishing this next phase in the student's education.

The principle should be laid down that music is not fundamentally concerned with vertical harmonics. The great achievement of the best European music over every other sort of musical culture in the world to date is the fusing of the well-tempered principles of counterpoint with vocal polyphony. It is the horizontal parallel enunciation of voices which is the fundamental point of reference for music.

The vertical harmonics become significant as a by-product of the concern with the horizontal progression, not the other way around. A vertical arrangement of notes on the initiation of a common beat is an "instantaneous" horizontal progression, "an arpeggio of no perceptible interval between notes." The margin for performing a chord or other vertical sequences among parallel voices in respect of intonation and so forth is among the range of nuances crucial to musical performance.

A (horizontally) parallel enunciation of voices in

vocal polyphony is the essence of the great music produced in European culture. There is never truly voice-plus-accompaniment in good music. Every aspect of a good composition, for whatever instruments it is written, is a part of a polyphonic development equivalent to vocal polyphony. Every instrument of an orchestra, including the timpani, is a singing voice in principle, a voice of the same significance as a distinct voice in vocal polyphony. Any other view of music is an inhuman and therefore unmusical interpretation.

Every note in a keyboard composition falls under the same rule. In Beethoven's keyboard works, the performer who strikes chords, or who attempts a sentimental or pyrotechnic performance of thematic material plus figures, is performing something, but not Beethoven. Each Beethoven keyboard composition is a piece of polyphony equivalent to vocal polyphony. There are a definite number of distinct voices, each voice performing some essential part in the development of the composition—each voice necessary, and each voice singing as a voice. (For example, in the Ninth Symphony, the drums sing as never before in symphonic music.) Every instrument in an orchestra is governed by its own aptitude for replacing the singing of a human voice. The way to judge any Beethoven performance includes the requirement of asking one's self with respect to each note: "What voice is singing that note and to what musical purpose?"

Correspondingly, the requirement of a keyboard performer is not merely that of mastering the business of note-playing with all the nuances which the score and handed-down conventions specify. Such skills are to be respected for what they are, but they are not the essential qualities of a musical performance. The great challenge for the keyboard performer is that of hearing the voices of polyphonic development sing in his or her head, and to develop a controllable physical apparatus of hands, etc., to the effect of causing the instrument to reflect the music as so heard. A keyboard performer must think of himself or herself as a choral or orchestral conductor, producing not (for example) pianistic sensual effects for an audience, but human music, transforming the piano into a chorus. Music which does not require that approach to the keyboard should be reserved for beerhalls and fancy balls.

A good keyboard performer brings in a voice with a thought in his or her mind, "Now, old friend, is the time for you to come in and contribute your part." For related reasons, the Bach *Well-Tempered Preludes and Fugues* remain the indispensable training of youth today as they did in the musical education of the young Ludwig van Beethoven. This is not, however, an endorsement of keyboard specialists in Bach; once a musician has grown up as a musician, Mozart and Beethoven are his or her native musical environment.

It should not be imagined that playing Beethoven over and over again leads to boredom and exhaustion. If one takes duly into account the new development of counterpoint in Beethoven's late works, and looks at, for example, the last piano sonata, Opus 111, on this basis, one is on sound ground in stating that there is no known adequate performance of that sonata. The problem is not one of keyboard technique as such, or any ordinary sort of defect in musical scholarship among leading concert performers. The problem is that they have obviously not yet discovered the full significance of the composition, have not yet located exhaustively those coherent musical conceptions which are to be communicated by the performance as a whole.

In that cited example, as in the elaboration of the same new development of double-fugal principles of counterpoint in the more famous Opus 106, there is a certain phase of development of what confronts us in the Ninth Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, and the later quartets. The failure of music to progress qualitatively beyond the level of Beethoven is the failure of musicians to fully master what Beethoven accomplished.

Every serious musician, especially as he or she becomes truly matured as a musician, turns afresh to the principal works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven (in particular) and finds there, ever freshly, a basis for new, more profound—and exciting—insights. He or she discovers some new, important thing to learn—and to communicate to an audience.

Beethoven should not be viewed as a kind of "dead-end" last word in musical development. Musicians to equal Beethoven have not yet appeared—for reasons which are not accidental. We can have such musicians in times to come, provided we develop them, through developing a broad stratum of musically competent students, performers and audiences. Out of that stratum the great composers of the future will automatically appear. In the meantime, the performers who are enriching their insight into Beethoven (in particular) from the standpoint of vocal polyphony and the well-tempered faction in music are maintaining and advancing the level of musical culture in a way indispensable to the future of music.

#### NONLINEAR POLYPHONY

As soon as the student has understood polyphony as such, the student is in command of the prerequisites for examining the principles of lawful musical development. This should be considered first with emphasis on the tonal facet of prosody, with the metrical element then brought into the tonal side of the process as a matter of providing an adequate notion of development as a whole.

The student's attention must be focused first on the

problem of dissonance. Having established the sense of what dissonance signifies, we now proceed toward imparting a higher-level view of the matter. We emphasize that in lawful development, the composer removes the appearance of arbitrariness from a dissonance by situating the tone as an *ambiguity*, roughly analogous to a geometrical singularity, rather than an arbitrary deviation from consonance.

The student focuses first on the business of getting from one key into another, and examines the specific kind of dissonance associated with the notes which serve as leading tones. The student discovers that when certain sequences of tones are developed within the framework of one key, these sequences define an ambiguity, a "tension" which is relieved by such options as proceeding to another key.

The student is properly directed from a study of the simplest, basic mapping of pathways connecting the entirety of the twenty-four keys into the study of simple canons. In the study of canons, the student is confronted with the evidence that thematic material cannot be a matter of arbitrary choice; the sequences of notes within a usable thematic statement contain stated or implicit dissonances—dissonances of the significance of actual or potential ambiguities.

The student is thus situated to begin viewing the

business of composition from the standpoint of a Beethoven. The student has begun traveling along the track which later makes clear the significance of the theme, variations, and concluding fugue or fugue-plus-coda. If one hears a bit of thematic material from the vantage-point of even the simplest notion of standard pathways of connection within the twenty-four keys, some thematic material is obviously richer in its developmental potentials than other material. The beauty of thematic material lies in the possibility for bringing forth such potentialities to the mind of the audience through the process of musical development in composition.

Once this aspect of thematic material is understood, the student is advantageously situated to discover how metrical features of thematic statements affect the way in which potential tonal ambiguities are emphasized or deemphasized. The stresses and the relative stresses embedded in metrical features serve as relative stresses of tonal values within a sequence.

For example, it is not difficult to demonstrate to the student that the stressed tones within a thematic statement can be abstracted from the thematic statement. It can be shown how alterations in metrical values imply changes in the stresses, and thus imply different possibilities for abstracting.



*"We can have musicians to equal Beethoven in times to come, provided we develop them..."*

The student is now prepared to study the significance of the second and third voices coming in in a simple canon. The note prior to the combining of voices in parallel is an ambiguous note. One pathway leads to the next note of that voice; another pathway leads from that note to the next note sung by another voice. In a similar way, a three-part canon opens up a rich range of such connections, such ambiguities.

The student should be led to focus attention on the way in which consonant sequences sung in parallel according to lawful constructions of canons lead toward the production of various kinds of ambiguities, variously emphasized. This understood, the student should have begun to grasp that the writing-out of simple canons for thematic material by a composer is the sort of exercise which aids the composer in conceptualizing the varieties of developmental implications the thematic material may offer in a more serious musical composition.

We remind the student at that point that if he or she is attempting to reach toward Beethoven's way of composing music, we must look at every particular actual or potential element of a composition from the standpoint of the notion of development within the twenty-four-key domain as a whole as the primary aspect of music, and any specific configuration of notes as merely relatively ephemeral. In other words, the composer might merely accept some given thematic material and develop an acceptable musical composition on that basis. The composer would prefer, if he or she were a good composer, to rework thematic material available, altering each slightly, tonally and metrically, until the theme appears as a seed containing the potentials the composer intends to bring forth as the basis for the characteristic development, which development will be the piece as a whole.

In other words, to reemphasize the crucial point at this juncture of our exposition, the theme in itself has no pleasing quality except as the developmental transformation mediated by internal ambiguities derives a beautiful composition through the mediation of that thematic material. Thematic material is not arbitrarily "nice" or "not so pleasant." It is the potential development the composer associates with a particular bit of thematic material which defines the "tension" projected into that thematic material. An audience that is itself encultured to contrapuntal, serious musical compositions reacts to the thematic material by gauging its own sense of the "tension" against what the composer reveals to the audience through the developmental process.

The instructor can strengthen the student's grasp of this point in various ways. Although the notion of counterpoint at this stage of instruction is not yet

adequately developed to take up the formalities of the fugue and so forth, the rudimentary notions of counterpoint and the role of the internal potentialities of the theme are established. Mozart variations, some features of Beethoven variations, and consideration of the reshaping of thematic materials in Beethoven's notebooks will aid in advancing the student from a formal understanding of the argument toward actual recognition of the subject in terms of examined music.

A composer, hearing and reflecting upon some potential thematic material might react, variously, as follows. "It is disgustingly banal." (In other words, give that rubbish to Joan Baez or Bob Dylan on condition they haul it out of the hearing of sensible folk. There are no interesting ambiguities in it.) Or: "With the following slight, but crucial alterations, something very good can be accomplished with this piece of rubbish." Or: "Aha, by approaching the problem of variations in a fresh way, I can make even this banal rubbish musically exciting—after the variations have been heard" (Beethoven's second thoughts concerning the banal little waltz of the publisher Diabelli).

The point being stressed again here is that thematic material must not be heard as a series of notes given in a certain metrical configuration. The theme must be heard as if it were a stretto given at the conclusion of the development of the entire composition.

It is useful at this point to expose the student to the connection between the canon and an elaborated composition with aid of Beethoven's canons—for example, the canon composed to tease Maelzel which turns up again in the Eighth Symphony. A canon in itself, like a simple fugue exercise, is not a finished, serious musical composition. Hearing a canon and a musical development of the same material included in a canon, back and forth between the two, enriches the student's preliminary insight into the difference in quality between the two phases of developing material into the form of a finished composition.

The canon, while trivial in itself, is a useful step in the digestion of thematic material: it aids us in hearing the potentialities. The classical fugal form serves the same purpose on a more advanced level.

### THE COMMEDIA EXAMPLE

The crucial problem in the conceptualization of music as music is that of communicating the notion of *development* as the primary substance of a composition. Ordinary prejudice is able (mistakenly) to imagine a movement in the classical sonata form as composed of themes and added subthemes (episodes). Ordinary prejudice, if educated, can think of the development of

thematic material as connection to the principles of themes and variations. It can also understand, in a formal way, the notion of double-fugal counterpoint. However, no matter how learned and professionally experienced ordinary prejudice becomes, it is unable to make the necessary leap to comprehending music as music. It thinks in terms of thematic material as molecules or self-evident particles in the Aristotelian sense, and defines development as logical operations which connect the successive, discrete phenomena of thematic statements and developmental derivatives of those statements.

The rules of the twelve-tone system or the slapdash of Stockhausen, et al. are merely parodies of the ordinary prejudices as applied to classical forms of composition in the well-tempered system's rules.

Ordinary prejudice has the primary and secondary realities reversed in name. As we have indicated, the quality of a theme is properly determined by the kind of developmental purpose it serves, through the ironies which the composer discovers as potentialities of that thematic material. A composer such as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, et al. will modify sketch themes until, by such modification of those sketches, a statement of attractive developmental potentialities has been achieved. The creative composer's mind does not work

from the theme to discover potentialities, but the reverse: from a preconscious conception of an overall quality of development to thematic material which belongs to that sort of development, in the way a certain quality of number-sequence corresponds to a transfinite notion of the domain of that ordered sequence as a whole.

The question whether the education is only partially or fully successful as a true introduction to musical thinking depends upon making this distinction a comprehensible and credible notion to the student. Here, the juxtaposition of music and poetry comes most efficiently to our aid again. The study of the composition of Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* from the standpoint of Plato's *Timaeus* and in comparison with Poe's "Raven" plus "Philosophy of Composition" is the obvious model of reference for this purpose.

The *Commedia* is constituted of three principal sections—Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise—each built of thirty-three *successive* cantos—that is, cognitively ordered successive cantos. Each canto of the Inferno leads to the next, and thus into the pit. This dead end, this *reductio ad absurdum*, leads Dante to begin the first canto of the Purgatory. Again, each canto determines its successor, until the dead end, the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Earthly Paradise, is reached. At that



"...through developing a broad stratum of musically competent students, performers, and audiences."



point, the first canto of the Paradise begins the succession to the Empyrean.

We have, thus, four ordering principles in the *Commedia* as a whole. Each section is ordered by a principle of succession of cantos. This corresponds to the notion of an *invariant* in physical geometry. We have three distinct such invariants. In addition, the ordering of the three successive sections represents a higher-order, subsuming ordering principle, a *transinvariance*. The process concludes (in a certain sense of conclusion) with the Empyrean. This conditional conclusion represents the perfect agreement between the conception of the final canto of Paradise with the transinvariance which has governed the development to that point.

These three qualitative sectionings are governed by the principle of the Platonic dialogue. The Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise correspond to the bronze, silver, and golden souls of the Phoenician myths Plato puts into the mouth of the literary Socrates in the *Politeia*. Another useful point of comparison is provided by the *Timaeus*, as viewed from the standpoint of the present writer's treatment of the successive ordering of the *inorganic*, *organic*, and *reasoning* as qualitative distinct orderings in existing human knowledge. (Compare *The Theory of the European Monetary Fund*.\*)

The *transinvariance* reflected in Plato's dialogues, in the *Commedia*, and in the present writer's treatment of transinvariance and reason as equivalents is the key to formal comprehension of Beethoven's method of composition—most emphatically, the major later works.

This connection is scarcely coincidence. The faction in music running through al-Farabi, Zarlino, John Bull, Sweelinck, Bach, the late Mozart, and Beethoven was governed by both a Neoplatonic philosophical outlook and a conception of art which most frequently, consciously associated itself with the *Commedia* as a model of reference.

Al-Farabi, ibn-Sina, and their European intellectual heirs continued the precept set forth in Plato's *Politeia*: that the function of music and poetry was to elaborate the *poetic principle of development* in such a way as to most directly reflect and stimulate the self-development of the creative-mental powers of both the composer and audiences. The object of great poetry and music elaborated according to Neoplatonic principles is to reach in one way or another toward the empyreal state identified by the last canto of Dante's *Commedia*, a

development's end result which coincides with the development principle characterizing the composition as a whole. It is that process of development, taken conceptually as a primary existence for the composition as a whole, which is the subject of the composition.

Poetic composition usually excludes the effort to express the conclusion of development by a literal statement of the outcome of development. Rather, as in Cantor's determination of the transfinite corresponding to an array, the predicates of successive phases of development imply the transfinite to the reflective powers of preconscious insight of the audience. The function of a poetic composition is to work out a succession of predicates such that only one transfinite conception corresponds to the process of development by which the ordering of successive predicates is determined.

For example, the elementary principle of poetic composition is what at first glance seems to the student to be a principle of "surprise ending." The concluding line of a poem forces the mind to abruptly change the direction in which the mind has been led up to that point. Goethe's power as a poet is his skill in effecting just such ironical conclusions. The last line forces the mind to reflect afresh on the entire development of the poem. The meaning is not located in the final line itself, but in the new conception the mind forms of the poem's development as a whole in consequence of the ironical content of the final line.

This is not to endorse Goethe—who did many evil things in the course of his life. It is to corroborate Friedrich Schiller's view of Goethe, as a person with a great talent, but lacking the moral qualities to realize the full potentialities of that talent.

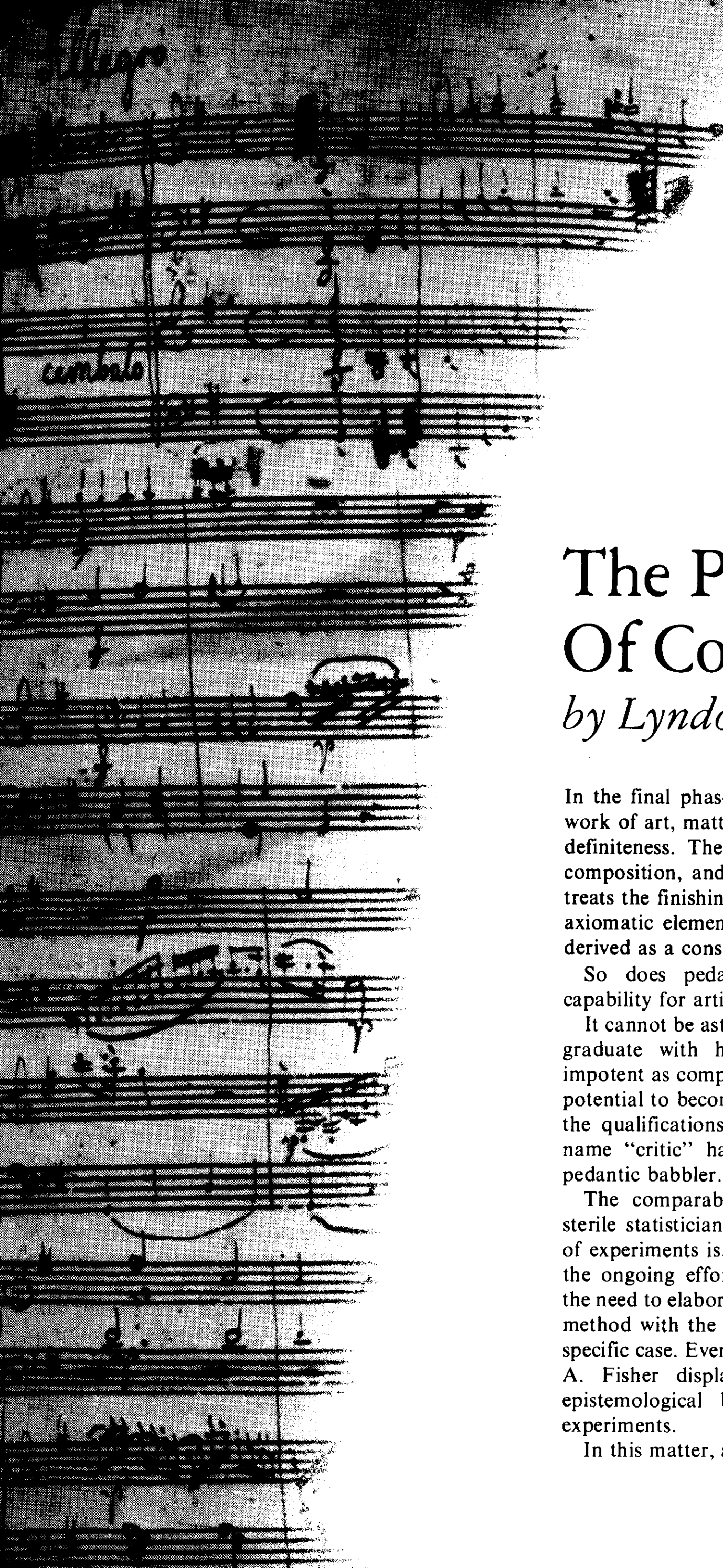
The transinvariance involved in this set of considerations is a direct reflection of the higher hypothesis (of Plato). The primary quality of great music, such as Beethoven's major late compositions, most notably, is that transinvariance, development of the composition as a whole. It is the function of poetry and music to approximate the mental state of the higher hypothesis in both the composer and audiences through making development the primary feature of the composition.

The double-fugal method of counterpoint employed in Beethoven's later works represents a major breakthrough in music in achieving exactly that purpose. Looking at Beethoven's later works (particularly) from the vantage-point we have summarized in regard to the *Commedia*, the vantage-point of such works of Plato as the *Politeia*, *Parmenides*, and *Timeaus*, is the proper approach to comprehension of the principles of music.

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\* Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., *The Theory of the European Monetary Fund*, Executive Intelligence Review Special Supplement, October 1978, New Solidarity International Press Service, New York, 1978.

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# The Principles Of Composition

*by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.*

In the final phase of perfection of a composition as a work of art, matters of detail are reduced to a rigorous definiteness. The pedant, ignorant of the process of composition, and focused only on the finished result, treats the finishing touches of detail as if they were the axiomatic elements from which the composition were derived as a construct.

So does pedantry contribute to destroying the capability for artistic composition.

It cannot be astonishing, therefore, that students who graduate with honors in the arts prove generally impotent as composers of art. They have given up their potential to become developed composers in return for the qualifications of an accredited pedant. Thus, the name "critic" has become a synonym for a sterile, pedantic babler.

The comparable case is that of the conceptually sterile statistician. The statistical theory of the design of experiments is, indeed, a work of art. It arose from the ongoing effort at perfection of scientific method, the need to elaborate particular applications of scientific method with the definiteness practice demands for the specific case. Even the British statistical theorist Ronald A. Fisher displays some sense of this historical, epistemological basis for an applicable theory of experiments.

In this matter, as in the case for art, the ignorant but

learned pedant starts from the finished result of the design of experiments. The pedant abstracts the accomplished definiteness of the final phase of the doctrine as if these determined elements had been the a priori initial particles from which the whole of science might have been derived as a construct.

The great hoax known as the Russell-Whitehead *Principia Mathematica* is exemplary of the latter case.

I have given the principles of composition for music and poetry in another location. Here, I shall take up a complementary feature of the topic from the vantage-point of emphasis I have introduced in these preceding paragraphs.

## WHAT IS COMPOSITION?

Looking at the purposes and essential content of composition, the accuracy of detail as such is the least important feature. On condition that detail does not violate the argument one is presenting, the detail need be only approximately precise. It is convenient to distinguish all composition properly termed composition into two general categories. This is accomplished by restricting the rubric of art to those forms of composition in which a certain kind of perfection of detail is the distinguishing formal feature of the effort.

For purposes of reference, let us imagine the case of a great orchestral conductor. He seems to groan out his heuristic demonstrations to the performers being directed in rehearsal. Is this groaning art? Yet the conductor has a clear conception in his mind. The performance being brought into existence with aid of this very useful groaning will be a work of art more perfected in detail than that of an orchestra which has simply followed the score meticulously under the direction of a sort of musical traffic cop acting at the podium. The groaning communicates a conception to the performers; the consequence of this communicated conception is the perfected detail of the rehearsed performance.

The distinctions within composition as a whole are implicit in that anecdote. The groaning of the conductor in rehearsal is an essential aspect of the overall process of composition. It is not, in itself, what we term artistic performance. If the performance is not given by the orchestra, the groaning is nonetheless within the domain of composition as a whole, but neither is, nor should be judged as, an artistic performance.

The principles of composition in general are located more in the conductor's groaning than in the perfected orchestral performance.

Who would buy tickets to hear a great conductor groaning? Accomplished musicians might, of course. It represents for them an efficient communication of

artistic conceptions. Aha! *Then the distinctions among different qualities of composition are those which correlate with purpose?* That point should not be stretched too far, but it does move our attention in a fruitful direction.

The point is better made by comparing the conductor's groaning with a corresponding phase in the work of the composer. As I have outlined in another location, it is the essential principle of the well-tempered system of composition that musical ideas are originally generalities of no performable definiteness. These generalities correspond to the whole process of development within a finished composition. The composer searches for a definite musical development which corresponds to his preconscious notion of a developmental whole. He works downward in this process toward definite thematic, episodic material, and to development of detail, down to the discrimination of each particular note written into the entire composition. Nothing is there—not a single note, not a shading of intonation of a single note—which is not necessary to the development as a whole.

In the process of development of the composition, the composer's conceptions are more or less analogous to the groaning of our hypothetical conductor. This phase is reflected concretely in the working papers of the composer, the jottings and canonical exercises which represent the development of the composition in mid-progress.

Against this sort of case, we have the cases in which composition's objective is something different than the final, perfected detail of a work of art. It is useful, at this juncture of the argument, to compare these other kinds of composers' efforts with the conductor's groanings or the working notes of a composer.

In the ordinary course of life, we are talking and writing to a purpose which corresponds to a group of composers discussing a composer's working papers of mid-composition. This talk, this writing is very much a matter of working papers. We are contributing, exchanging conceptions which are part of the working papers relevant to deciding on a definite course of action, or, more frequently, toward some exploratory form of action on a limited scale.

The principles of composition *which ought to regulate* our everyday speech and writing are the same which properly order the composer's progress toward the definite, detailed elaborations of a perfected work of art. It is the distinction of perfected works of art that they carry that process to its proper conclusion—whereas in the ordinary working-papers activity of life, this perfection of detail is neither accessible nor desirable. Yet perfected works of art not only celebrate the principles we ought to be employing in the

conceptual side of ordinary speech and writing; the elaboration of those principles in a perfected artistic form aids us in making our ordinary speech and writing more precise, more profound.

We shall now use a method of successive approximation to expose the connection we have just identified.

## HOW TO TELL A JOKE

It is generally agreed, and rightly so, that the broad distinction of humor—of jokes of all forms—is *surprise*. There are, or ought to be, certain basic, workable rough-draft distinctions among what is relatively bad humor and relatively better or good humor. Formally, these distinctions involve the way in which the element of surprise is worked into the quips. Among those qualifications of formality, the conceptual, social-outlook qualities of the element of surprise provide us the basis for reaching the final degrees of distinction to be made.

Formally, jokes (and attempted jokes) can be roughly analyzed as follows.

There is attempted humor in which there is no proper element of surprise, or in which a shocking element of language is arbitrarily introduced (e.g., the “Lennie Bruce school”).

There is attempted humor in which the element of surprise is irrationally arbitrary (e.g., British vaudevilian—“Goon Show”—varieties). There are secondary considerations which determine whether specific enterprises of this sort will or will not work to an audience which accepts such entertainments. Those distinctions are irrelevant to the point at hand.

Next, in order of ascent, there is the ordinary pun—and other forms of humor which achieve surprise in the same way.

In the ordinary musical canon there is the note of the first voice which immediately precedes the first note sounded by the coming-in of the second voice. The latter note is sounded within the same beat the first voice continues to its own next notes. So, the preceding tone sounded by the first voice represents an underlined point of ambiguity in the canon as a whole. That note leads both to the first note of the second voice and to the succeeding beat of the first voice.

The same “cross-voice” ambiguities are the basis for an ordinary punning within any reasonably effective joke.

That sort of punning or equivalent forms of joking are not very good humor, but represent only the outer threshold of good humor.

The higher form of humor requires the mind to “fill in” a missing element. The mind of the audience is surprised by the sudden eruption of that “filler”



“It is also very good to make the punch line a ridiculing of Henry A. Kissinger.” Here, Kissinger as he has appeared in the U.S. Labor Party’s newspaper *New Solidarity*.

conception in its own mind. An audience of several people responding in the same interval to such a joke in this way is provoked to a second wave of laughing by the laughter of others. The second wave of laughter is the experience of surprise at the evidence that others' minds have "discovered" the same fill-in conception in the same time interval.

At that point, a good humorist with a sense of timing of developments within the minds of most members of an audience can maintain an audience in rolling laughter by adding remarks which prompt the audience to make a filler-connection between the preceding "filled-in" conception and the next statement added as a "punch line" to the preceding statement.

In the latter case, the division of labor between the jokesmith and the performer arises. A performer who could never develop a good joke may be nonetheless an excellent performer, purely because of his insight into subtleties of emphasis and timing in delivery.

For example, consider the stage-comic who follows an effective bit of the indicated type of joking by nothing but a mugged expression. The audience which has been triggered into secondary laughter reactions fixes upon the performer as a person who is reacting. "I am hurt by what you are thinking," or "I am gloating over what you are thinking" compels one to fill in the explanation for this reaction. Once the rolling-laughter phase has been set into motion, this can be pyramided by effectively triggering meshed series of further secondary reactions.

The kinds of formal distinctions applicable to the development of audience-surprise in joking occur in musical composition. For example, compare the form known as the "musical joke" with the principle of the Beethoven "scherzo." In the musical joke, the principle is emphasis upon arbitrary surprise. In the scherzo, there is nothing arbitrary in the composition as a whole. Rather, the opening section creates the appearance of surprise. The trio effects a musical resolution of this surprise, so that the recapitulation of the opening section shows the whole affair to be entirely lawful well-tempered contrapuntal composition.

Another illustration of good joking is provided by the best form of Yiddish humor. Here, the trick is the second punch line's superseding and nullifying the apparent, first punch line.

I can illustrate this by a quip I wrote for *New Solidarity*:

#### DAYAN ENRAGED

Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan is reportedly furious at being upstaged by Prime Minister Begin at a recent Israeli cabinet meeting. Begin entered wearing two eye-patches. Dayan is rumored to suspect that Begin's actions were deliberate.

Without the final sentence, it is a very ordinary sort of joke. Hearing the next-to-last sentence, the audience thinks for a moment it has heard the punch line. Then, the real punch line is delivered, catching the audience off guard. If delivered, just the right timing should govern the separation between the two concluding lines, with the final sentence delivered in a parody of Henry A. Kissinger.

It is very appropriate to use modes of humor common to Yiddish humor. If one is to laugh at the lunatics of Jerusalem, good Jewish-style humor is the most appropriate. It is also very good to make the punch line an implicit ridiculing of Henry A. Kissinger or persons of that ilk. In short: "Let's get these crazy jackasses into a zoo, where they belong, and thus put them in a place where we no longer have to take such lunatics seriously."

On a deeper level, to any person who faces the fact that the Zionist leaders are largely responsible for unspeakable persecutions and other atrocities against non-Zionist Jews, it is good to let the dead and suffering Jews enjoy a bit of revenge against their Zionist persecutors. It is a good, moral thing to do. We can properly take moral satisfaction from ridiculing the lunatic, evil Zionists in "Yiddish."

Humor's proper content is social usefulness and good morality.

It is the combination of higher formalities and content which can make a joke a beautiful work of art.

I have introduced that emulation of Yiddish humor here to aid in turning our focus to the next basic principle of joking: the matter of content.

The hideous problem immediately confronting the world today is the danger that the British puppet-government of Israel will launch a "breakaway ally scenario" of nuclear-armed warfare in the Middle East. This, in turn, could trigger general thermonuclear war, in which most of us would be dead as a result of the first hour's strategic bombardment.

The point is to stop that lunacy, not to rush about in hysterical panic because of the serious possibility it just might occur. An essential part of mobilizing people to prevent such an occurrence is to foster the proper sort of outlook of insight into the Israeli government itself. One must laugh at that gang of paranoid-schizophrenic imbeciles. Laughter helps to relieve the threat of hysterical fear. It must do more. It must aid in promoting the right attitude toward the Israeli government, an insightful attitude.

The person who cannot compose a truly good joke occasionally, the person who does not appreciate a good joke, is a very miserable person, and is absolutely no musician.

All art is a good joke in that it requires the mind of

the audience to fill in a definite conception through its own mental processes of insight, and in that the conception brought into consciousness through that activity is a useful and morally good conception.

## THE BEGINNING OF COMPOSITION

Edgar Allan Poe simplifies a conception which was elaborated at great length and with great rigor by the fifteenth century Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. This is typical of Poe's practice. Although a thinker of considerable originality, Poe's writings are largely directed to introducing the great conceptions of leading European Neoplatonics to his American readers, using language and other elements of pedagogy to this specific purpose.

In Poe's version of this millennia-old conception (older than Plato), Poe distinguishes between knowing a star by looking at it or a few stars together, and spinning on one's heel on a mountain-top, to conceptualize the visible portion of the universe in that single act of conception. The heavens are not a construct based upon one-by-one perceptions of individual stars or groups of stars. The heavens are a unity, such that the included particularities exist only as necessary reflections of the characteristics of the universal process as a unity.

That standpoint, the conception, the method illustrated in that way by Poe, is the primary, fundamental standpoint of all true composition.

As the reader will discover from the new English translation of Plato's *Timaeus*, now in progress toward initial publication, the British hoaxster Jowett used every imaginable philological fraud to avoid translating what Plato has written, at the point where *Timaeus* describes the universe as something composed by a composer. This statement of the matter by *Timaeus* follows Socrates's own use of musical terminology to characterize *Timaeus*'s preceding remarks.

That is the reference point for the notion of *composition* we are using here. It is from that standpoint that we refer to Poe's case.

It is the same thing in the proper comprehension of the statistical features of the design of experiments. Like a star in the universe of the heavens, like a note in a late composition of Beethoven, the particular exists there because it expresses in some lawful process the necessary course of the development which has occurred in the whole. The principles of design of experiments are derived from the available most-adequate notion of an existing, lawful unity in the inorganic processes of our universe. That view, that most-approximately-adequate existing knowledge of such a universal lawfulness, governs the way in which we determine

whether or not a particular event can or cannot exist at a particular point in the unified whole under varying kinds of conditions. By predetermining what are lawful or unlawful consequences for alternative kinds of process-conditions, the existence or nonexistence of particular events informs us what sort of a process-condition is operative in that locality.

The same Bertrand Russell whose life's work was explicitly dedicated to bringing a New Dark Age into being on this globe made most emphatic his obsessive, hysterical hostility to the notion that *self-reflexive processes* or *universals* existed. In this Russell was a man entirely without true humor; excepting sadomasochistic *Schadenfro*h sorts of cruel wit, he was as inert in respect to good joking as the dead stones and dumb beasts he sought to have his duped followers emulate.

The notion of a self-reflexive universe is of a universe which includes action. (No competent statistician could deny that our universe does include action.) That being the statistical fact of the matter, the universe must either be a wind-up toy of some metaphysical entity entirely outside the universe, or the universe is the universe. In the latter choice of judgment, the universe is a self-composing composition, which is continually changing itself in a lawful way. The apparent lawful ordering of particular events at any one point in the history of that universe is relatively ephemeral. That inferior sort of lawfulness is not permanent, but subject to change. The lawful ordering of the universe is essentially represented by the laws which govern successive changes in the apparent lawful ordering of events.

One may spin on one's heel on the mountain-top as much as one chooses. Although one thus approximates an idea of the universe as a unified whole, if the existence of the particulars is lost to perception, the whole vanishes into a "night in which all cows are black." One does not attempt to lose sight of the particulars. One seeks to correct the "optical illusion" of thought, the illusion that the particulars are primary. One must now see the space as a whole as primary, and the particular stars as necessary mediations of the existence of the unified space.

That is exactly the state of mind of the great composer.

In those forms of composition which remain in a condition analogous to that of working-papers, we refrain from attempting to settle the final details perfectly, because the knowledge available to us for that purpose is inadequate. The adequacy which is essential to a perfected work of art is impermissible in the policy-making work of life and scientific inquiry. What is essential is a self-conscious examination of our processes of judgment and, with that, a critical view of

those forms of definite knowledge acquired with aid of judgmental processes found to have been faulty, inadequate.

It is that point of view which is the standpoint of true composition. Yet, the mind begs for finished compositions, which by their existence celebrate and strengthen our mastery of the principles of composition we require in daily life. We create special domains of visual and aural communication, in which we achieve perfection in respect to details. This we call art.

All art properly deserving of that name is governed by certain, definite principles. First, the principal subject of a work of art is the *higher hypothesis* as defined by Plato. The work of art must oblige the audience to become self-conscious of its own self-conscious processes for altering its simple-conscious opinions. (This we shall elaborate as much as is necessary to communicate the point.) Second, it accomplishes this by elaborating a lawful ordering of rules of composition, to the point that every element in a work of art must not be there unless its existence is necessary to the conceptual development of the whole, to requiring the audience to associate the development of the whole with correlatives of the higher hypothesis.

## GENIUS IS A GREAT JOKE

The higher formal ordering of joking, as we identified it above, is suggestive of the principles of creative genius. By being made conscious of lawfulness in the use of a good joke to bring forth important conceptions simultaneously in the minds of a substantial portion of a definite audience, the person experiencing that awareness is made conscious of lawfulness in the ordering processes of his or her own judgment.

Thus, a poor joke—or poorer joke—is one which simply plays upon the ambiguities of simple consciousness, without structuring the experience to bring into play a forced reflection on a process of a lawful ordering of insight.

What is required is a *truly great joke: art*. This must be a quality of joking one qualitative level higher than the evoking of self-consciousness by good joking. Instead of being merely conscious of the lawful ordering of one's preconscious processes, one must have a great joke which prompts one to be aware of a lawful principle for transforming those preconscious processes.

This achievement brings forth the laughter of great, fundamental scientific discovery. This brings to consciousness a knowledge of the lawfulness of those mental processes by which one may willfully effect a qualitative advancement in one's mental-creative powers.

With this transformation in quality of knowledge, there is an accompanying, profound moral transformation of the personality. One is liberated, both intellectually and morally, from what German-language conventions term *gründlichkeit*, from the Kantian-to-sub-Kantian way of looking at oneself in the world. Everything is practically and morally ephemeral except developing oneself and one's practice to further the development of the human species: our species's creative-mental powers, our species's power over the lawful ordering of the universe, and the advancement of the self-consciousness and practice of other members of the species to that same outlook.

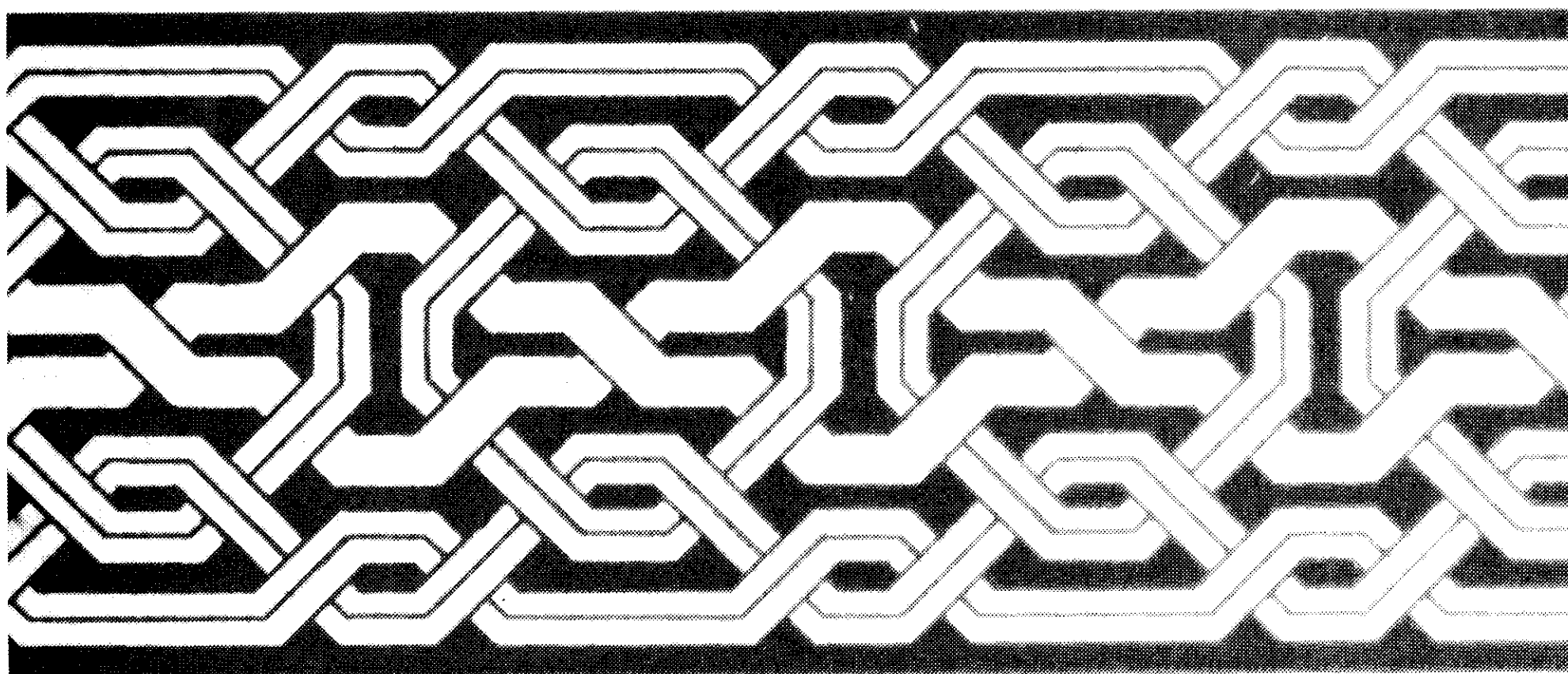
One vomits with hateful contempt upon Bertrand Russell's memory, because the Hobbesian-Lockean-Rousseauvian ordering of humanity, the jungle of evil in which wicked minds like Russell's roam, is totally wrong from the standpoint of knowledge, and is morally abhorrent to the fundamental principles of human existence.

Every person whose daily work is governed by those principles and outlooks is a conscious composer. Those persons who apply the same principles used in a composer's daily working-papers, to produce a work in which the details are perfected according to those same principles of composition, is an artist.

Details are important, just as a definite nutrition—not abstract nutrition in general—is necessary to maintain biological existence. The truly important thing for knowledge is not details as such. The human being who does not know how to eat definite, particular, detailed food, in definite bites, at a definite place, and so forth, will not long occupy an active place among the discussions of thinking persons. It is the improvement in human practice which concerns serious thought, a qualitative improvement in our command over and understanding of details. This is not accomplished, at least not primarily, by focusing upon details. It is accomplished by shifting the emphasis from the detail as such, to the way in which we think about the entire processes in which detailed occurrences are manifest.

It is a shift in a definition of what is primary, what is the subject of concentration, which separates squirrels gathering nuts according to their biological development from man examining his mental processes to develop better weapons for shooting squirrels for dinner. This is a matter of lifting human consciousness from a state of squirrel-minded preoccupation with the nuts of detail to a human condition. A squirrel in its own fashion knows that a universe exists; only human perfection of human processes of creative thought can improve the universe.

That, in summary, is the principle of composition.



# The Dark Ages of Islam

by Criton Zoakos

British Petroleum and Her Majesty's intelligence service have selected Ayatollah Khomeini to preside over Iran's return to the Dark Ages. And Khomeini has opened the gates of hell and let loose the forces of evil in a way that only an accomplished disciple of the satanic al-Ghazali could have done.

As a result, the entire Islamic world is immediately threatened with being engulfed in the flames of the hell that Khomeini has fanned in Iran. Pakistan is ready to jump into the pit after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's legal

lynching. The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey are looking on with horror as the secret networks of British intelligence and Sir John Glubb Pasha's Muslim Brotherhood frantically prepare to spread Ayatollah Khomeini's march back to the Dark Ages to their own countries, as well as to Egypt, Sudan, Libya, North Yemen, Kuwait, and elsewhere.

The key to reversing this hideous offensive is to precisely understand what the evil eleventh- and twelfth-century figure of al-Ghazali represents in the history of





Islam. The present-day leaders in Islamic countries will either finally wake up to the pure evil that al-Ghazali has represented in their history or they will collapse into Khomeini's pit of hell, dragging their nations behind them.

The London *Economist* prankster who named Khomeini's "Islamic fundamentalist" movement in Iran a "return to the Dark Ages" was a fellow well-informed in history. The term 'Dark Ages' evokes in Islamic memories precisely the kind of events that the international wire services have been reporting from Iran. They are events eerily similar to what the historical record reports on the state of affairs in Persia during the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Iran has been reduced to a nightmarish hell in which a large number of reckless warlords and their thugs are holding the shattered remnants of the state. Beneath them, a hysterical population, reduced to bestial religious psychosis, roams about freezing and starving, looking, with maddened eyes, for targets for its destructive rage. Ayatollah Khomeini is sitting on top of this inferno, the titular head of the carnage authored by British Petroleum and the British monarchy.

But Khomeini's titular chairmanship over all this is not superfluous. He is meant to function, from that position, as the ideological rallying point for all the Dark Ages networks that have been arrayed by the British in every Islamic country. Khomeini is the symbol of the foreign policy that Her Majesty has assigned to her Iranian monster. Khomeini will draw his strength from the legacy and influence that his predecessor al-Ghazali still retains in every Islamic country. Either that influence is rooted out of Islam, or Khomeini, the deadly enemy of Islam's humanist heritage, will very likely doom every government that today attempts to lay a claim on that heritage.

What has occurred in Iran is identical to the situation that prevailed in Persia starting in the early twelfth century, when al-Ghazali emerged as the victorious religious influence in that country. Persia then had been reduced to a collection of anarchistic fiefdoms organized around Seljuk warlords; this artificial disintegration was maintained by an alliance of these warlords and their roaming "Wallenstein armies" and the psychotic mullahs and ulemas (priests) of the period. Al-Ghazali, just like Khomeini today, was the theological thug who was able to deliver the mullahs to this alliance with the armed gangs.

The result was that Persia was, within years, reduced from the jewel of Islamic culture and refinement to an ugly wasteland. Its industry collapsed, its high-technology agriculture, which had earned the country the name "Garden of Eden," was obliterated within one year. Starvation and cannibalism appeared for the first

time in that country's millennia-long history. Science and technology, then the most advanced in the world, were wiped out. The country was filled with beggars, peasant brutes, freaked-out religious maniacs, Sufis, hashish eaters. The population was reduced to a level of infantilism that it has not yet overcome.

At one brief point, al-Ghazali's fascist new order was challenged by the heroic efforts of the great Hasan ibn-Sabah, the humanist intellectual who, based on the traditions of the Ismaili humanist movement, created the most sophisticated political intelligence organization that the world has seen to this day, and deployed it on behalf of an international program to destroy al-Ghazali's faction in the domain of Islam. Hasan ibn-Sabah was near completion of his objective when al-Ghazali formed an alliance between his mullahs, the Black Guelph Christian Crusaders, and the Mongols. The mullahs invited the Mongol hordes into the Islamic world and had them destroy every vestige of Islamic humanism with exemplary brutality. Islam never really recovered from that blow.

#### WHO IS AL-GHAZALI?

Misinformed Muslim scholars who are gullible enough to trust what British researchers and historians say about Islamic history mistake al-Ghazali for a major theological and philosophical personality in Islam. However, as the historical record will bear out, al-Ghazali was a major political intelligence agent, first of the Seljuk military oligarchy and later of the Mongols and the European Black Guelph nobility of the Crusades. During the twelfth century he served as the chief political and religious advisor of the notorious Seljuk Grand Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, who was supervising the military occupation of Persia by the Seljuk Turk military gangs. The myth of Nizam al-Mulk as a great "administrative reformer" must be exposed as just that. The notorious vizier with his "administrative reforms" did to humanist Islam what the evil Ptolemy did to the humanist heritage of Platonist Alexander the Great: destroy the possibility for any further scientific and technological advance and lay the basis of a state which would administer society by mass-brainwashing cult techniques and total suppression of science. Al-Ghazali was to Nizam al-Mulk what the Lycaenum of Aristotle was to Ptolemy: the organizer of the priesthood and the intelligentsia into a manpower pool from which the fascist state could recruit its thought police and its brainwashers.

Any Muslim government or political leader in the world today who considers Nizam al-Mulk and al-Ghazali as legitimate Islamic innovators is defenseless against the kind of political warfare that Ayatollah

Khomeini represents today. Conversely, the only effective weapon that present-day Islamic governments can array against Khomeini is that weapon which al-Ghazali feared most, namely, the political and scientific writings and outlook of the greatest of all Islamic geniuses, the Persian scientist and philosopher ibn-Sina. Ibn-Sina, known in Europe as Avicenna, ought to be honored as one of the greatest heroes of world history; he was one of those giants who grace the human race approximately only once in a millennium. He occupies those rarefied heights of achievement and humanism in which seminal and immortal spirits such as Plato's and Leibniz's dwell.

In this ironic sense one ought perhaps to be thankful to the evil Khomeini, in that his evil activities have forced the issue of philosophy out into the open as a matter of primary state concern. Those governments today who fail to choose the right side in the ibn-Sina-al-Ghazali conflict are bound to succumb to Ayatollah Khomeini's destabilization.

Al-Ghazali's program for securing Persia's occupation by the Seljuk military looters was based on the central proposition that he had to destroy the rich Persian Islamic traditions of scientific and technological excellence. To do that, al-Ghazali realized, he had to demoralize those specific strata and communities of society that, over a period of centuries, had developed an authentic, deeply rooted pride in seeing their function as that of producing scientists, philosophers, artists, engineers, musicians, and trained administrators with the competence to serve the far-flung international community of Islam. These social strata, since the Abbasid caliphate, had produced brilliant statesmen, princes, and philosophers, and were predominant in two general zones—in the string of urban centers along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea up to Chorasmia, and in the commercial and administrative centers along the Khorasan road from Tabriz through Rayy (Teheran) to Samarkand. It was these populations that produced the great ibn-Sina and all his political and scientific collaborators, such as the great humanist Prince Ala al-Dawla, the famous al-Sayyda, the Lady of Teheran, and the great astronomer al-Biruni.

It was the communities and populations that produced these great personalities that rose to the defense of the cause of humanism when the reactionary mullahs allied with the military tribes of Seljuk Turks. After ibn-Sina's death in 1037, the primary concern of al-Ghazali's masters was to demoralize and otherwise disarm these populations. Al-Ghazali grew up in the midst of these concerns. After his aborted training in philosophy, he went through a profound psychological degeneration, displaying overt symptoms of dementia praecox. He ultimately succeeded in managing his

psychosis into a "functional" form, at which point he was accepted into state service. His first major operation was the mass burning of books throughout the domain, the prohibition of teaching of ibn-Sina, the shutting down of schools, and general terrorization of scientific and philosophical practitioners. All the spokesmen of the humanist tradition of Islam were either exterminated or forced to keep silent.

After this initial phase of terror, al-Ghazali, on behalf of the government of Nizam al-Mulk, launched a program around his notorious main book, entitled *The Destruction of Philosophy*, a program composed of two aspects: first, to demoralize the already terrorized heirs of ibn-Sina's scientific tradition and second, to train a shock troop from among the bestial mullahs. *The Destruction of Philosophy*, as its title clearly suggests, was a raving attack against the work of ibn-Sina and his illustrious predecessors such as al-Farabi, al-Kindi, and that heroic strain of Islamic science that in the preceding three centuries had, through sheer power of intellect, created the splendor of Islam.

The fight between al-Ghazali and ibn-Sina represents two absolutely hostile and irreconcilable views of man and the universe—but also two fundamentally opposed programs of how to organize society and the state. Al-Ghazali, an Aristotelian, views man as a slave to animal sense-certainty, a beast who must submit to the Malthusian imperatives of an impoverished nature and the psychotic "mystical" commands of a corrupt priesthood. Al-Ghazali decreed scientific practice to be a blasphemy against God, for the simple reason that it undermined the political rule of a degenerate, hashish-eating, sodomic priesthood.

Ibn-Sina, on the other hand, is responsible for one of the most fundamental contributions to the science of Neoplatonic epistemology. He not only carried forward the fundamental Platonic conception that man is man only to the extent that he acts as a being of reason, only to the extent that he continuously employs his powers of reason to expand his comprehension and command over the universe. Further, on a more fundamental level, ibn-Sina, with his celebrated formulation of the "Necessary Existent," demonstrated that this creative power of man is not merely the essence of humanity, but it is necessarily so—man by necessity is the creative-scientific master of the universe and, by necessity, only in this capacity is he capable of being in harmony, in communion, with the Creator, God, the ontological principle of creative power in the universe.

The struggle between ibn-Sina and al-Ghazali demonstrates conclusively that the state, the political organization of society, must ultimately be organized to serve either the one or the other conception of man

and the world. The Prophet Mohammed envisaged a political-moral organization of society that would educate its members to make their actions in life compatible with natural law, enable them to thus "submit" to the law of God. It was this commitment of Mohammed that accounted for the majestic civilization of High Islam. And it was the repudiation of this commitment by al-Ghazali, the enemy of Islam, that created, from the twelfth century onward, the sick, infantile, passion-ridden, and backward caricature of Islam with which the homosexual High Commissioners and orientalist of the British aristocracy are so infatuated.

Today it is sickening to see how even some of the best-educated Muslim and Arab intellectuals accept unquestioningly this perverse view of Islam, a view filled with jinns, mysticism, Sufism, a view in which the daring humanist *islam* (atonement) is replaced with bestial *kismet* (fatalism), a view of a sensualist, infantile Islam straight out of the Arabian Nights, a ridiculous view of a fake "spiritual" Islam held up against a "materialist" West. Those educated Muslims who hold this view of Islam (and this encompasses the majority of educated Muslims) happen to hold a view first generated by the high priests of British Near East intelligence. This is the view of Lawrence of Arabia, Saint-John Philby, Arnold Toynbee, the poets Fitz-Gerald and Browne, and all those ladies of London high society who readily faint at the first recital of Omar Kayyam's *Rubayat*.

Islam is contaminated by the current view of British historiography of Islam, and that British view was created to perpetuate the fraud of al-Ghazali, the enemy of Islam. That is what Ayatollah Khomeini is all about. He is, if you insist, the Evil Sorcerer of the Arabian Nights, the old ogre who terrorizes fair maidens, devours young children, entraps the souls of young lads in his leather purse, robs people of their reason, speech, and heart.

If you think this an exaggeration, a "fairy tale," then, dear reader, do apply your laudable rationalism on the case of al-Ghazali. If you fail to see the horror that al-Ghazali represents in Islamic history, then you will be unable to view that history from any worthwhile standpoint, that is, you will fail to determine what caused the collapse of the civilization of High Islam.

#### THESES FOR A HISTORY OF ISLAM

Indeed, over the last hundred years, the stubborn opinion prevails among professional historians, including Muslim historians, that "the causes for the fall of Islam are very complicated," and that "much more research will have to be done before we can authoritatively speak on this matter." This is dishonest garbage,

peddled by Oxford University and those Islamic scholars naive enough to fall for it. Al-Ghazali is the key to the fall of High Islam, and those who claim that the "causes are very complicated" are merely protecting the reputation of that mind butcher. But we warn: If the political and scientific leaderships fail to come to grips with the al-Ghazali issue, they will be defenseless against the hell that Khomeini has unleashed.

These governments have to learn what Khomeini knows only—that politics is the continuation of philosophy by other means.

Khomeini is deliberately awakening a bestiality that was instilled into the brutalized minds of Muslim populations by the brutalizer al-Ghazali. This bestiality was not carried down to our generation by any magical means. It was carried forward because al-Ghazali's concept of Islam was allowed to dominate the minds of peasant and artisan masses. This concept of Islam must be challenged. And first of all it must be challenged in the minds of the responsible spokesmen of the Islamic intelligentsia.

Toward this end, a preliminary clarification has to be made of the issue of What Happened in Islamic History, and also of What Happened in Islamic Historiography. This is an urgent political task that must be commissioned and fulfilled, and its findings given the widest possible publicity by the threatened governments of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Algeria, and so forth, by means of popular presentations, on radio, television programs, popular magazines, high-school and university lectures, lectures in the armed forces, and so forth. In short, a mass inoculation program has to be launched in short order to make the populations of these threatened nations impervious to the psychological warfare of Ayatollah Khomeini. This program must be based on an expansion upon the following fundamental theses on the history of Islam:

- 1.** The most brilliant watershed of Islamic history, the civilization of High Islam, the period for which every Muslim is obliged to be rightly proud, is the period from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. The greatness of that civilization is due to its exceptional scientific achievements and to the rate of realization of these achievements. This scientific excellence was made possible because the Prophet Mohammed organized society on the principle of the sanctity of man's task to know and master nature.

- 2.** High Islam started being undermined when Mediterranean-based commercial banking interests, most notably the banking House of Phineas in Abbasid Baghdad, succeeded in imposing economic and taxation policies over the caliphate. These policies

rapidly undermined the economic growth rates of the caliphate and thus gave occasion to the rise of a political opposition, the Brethren of the Purity, which was the scientific and philosophical general staff of the Ismaili humanist movement. The political-economic program of that movement was to return to policies of high economic growth based on continuous scientific and technological innovation of social practice—a program almost identical to the one formulated centuries later by Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America and its first Secretary of the Treasury after Independence.

**3.** In opposition to this Ismaili humanist movement, a reactionary-fascist alliance was gradually formed between Seljuk Turk mercenary soldiers and obscurantist, corrupted leaders of the religious establishment. When the Crusades started, this alliance joined hands with the ancient Black Guelph aristocracy of Europe, especially the Roman aristocracy, which at that time was controlling Vatican policy. The Ismaili humanist movement of Islam, on the other hand, developed international alliances with the humanist forces of Europe, such as the Hohenstaufen of Germany and Sicily and the Paleologues and Great Comneni of Byzantium. The final battle of this struggle between the Islamic humanist forces and the bestial-obscurantists, at the time led by al-Ghazali, was decided when al-Ghazali, his mullahs, and his European Black Guelph allies formed a pact with the Mongols. The Mongol military force was effective in its deployments because it was guided by “inside intelligence” provided by al-Ghazali’s mullahs and Vatican intelligence..

**4.** Islam’s humanist forces were delivered a final crushing defeat when the Mongols, under Hulagu, stormed and leveled to the ground the fortress of Alamut, the headquarters of the organization of the Assassins, the great Hasan ibn-Sabah’s political party. From that moment on, al-Ghazali’s forces, after a systematic massacre of the entire humanist movement in Islam, established mind control over Islam. The long night of Islam began then, and despite laudable efforts in subsequent centuries, the scientific splendor and material prosperity of High Islam were never reached again.

**5.** The first great attempt to revive the rich heritage of Islam was started by Egypt’s Mohammed Ali as a result of the reverberations of the American and French Revolutions. Mohammed Ali’s efforts created absolute panic in the British monarchy, then the deadly rival of the American Revolution and of Napoleon. In order to deny America and France any allies in the Middle East and the Islamic world, the British throne

deployed a very significant portion of its scientific and academic resources permanently in the area studies of orientalism and Islamicism. This was, and is, a fundamental strategic commitment of the British throne, and this explains why virtually all of the misconceptions of Islamic history originate in Oxford University.

**6.** The British, through their agent al-Afghani in the early nineteenth century, launched an “Islamic reform” movement as a strategic counterdeployment against the great Mohammed Ali of Egypt. It was then, and through al-Afghani’s treacherous work, that the bestial al-Ghazali found renewed notoriety and respectability. Eventually, Mohammed Ali’s efforts were defeated, and Islam never mounted an effective counteroffensive against the British interpretation of Islamic history. Thus, al-Ghazali’s damage of the twelfth century was never undone, and his fraudulent concept of what Islam is has remained hegemonic.

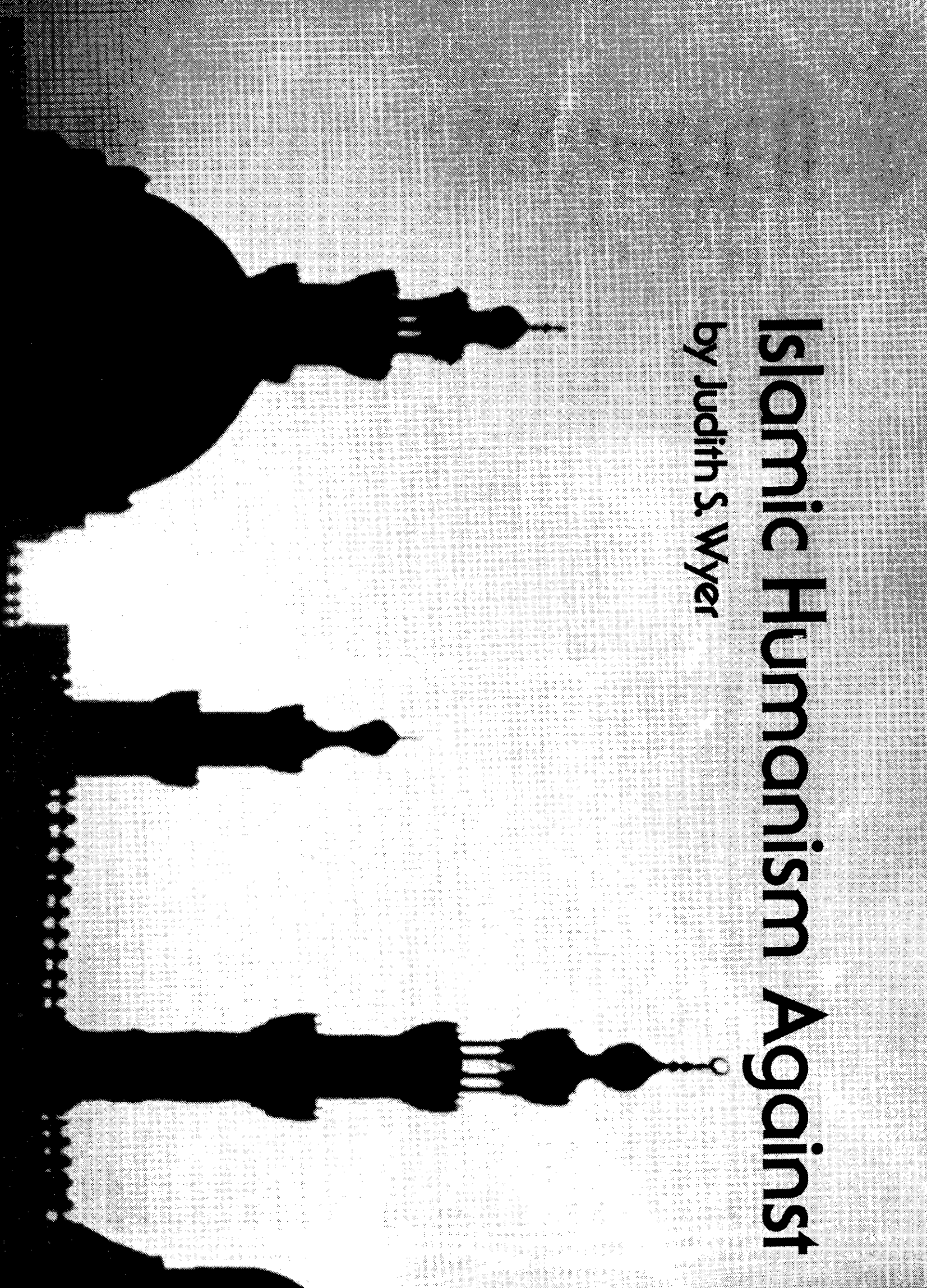
#### THE END OF THE NASSER ERA

Ayatollah Khomeini and the intelligence networks that put him in power in Iran have now posed some fundamental issues before the Islamic world, including the Arab world. He also represents a new psychological warfare technology for which the Arab and other Islamic governments have not developed an antidote with which to protect their populations. They are thus vulnerable to rapid disintegration. This situation has thus inaugurated a new era in Middle East politics. It is an era that started with the coming to power of Nasser and ended with the coming to power of Khomeini. It was an era in which numerous Muslim countries developed political leaderships sufficient for the task of leading their countries from the childhood of colonial tutelage to the adolescence of the first years of perceived independence.

The hell that British intelligence and its Khomeini have let loose will now cause the rapid emergence of a new humanist leadership elite in Muslim countries, one that locates its identity in the humanist achievements of ibn-Sina and High Islam. It is a leadership that will align with the coalition of forces represented by the European Monetary System, the Brezhnev leadership in the USSR, the U.S. Labor Party in America, a leadership that is determined to put an end to British control over the world economy which, in the aftermath of World War II, was continued under the auspices of the “special Anglo-American relationship.” Failing that, Ayatollah Khomeini’s inferno will spread, and the new Dark Ages of the bestial al-Ghazali will engulf the Islamic world, with devastating consequences for world peace.

# Islamic Humanism Against

by Judith S. Weyer



*“Written tradition is one of the species of hearsay—we might almost say, the most preferable. How could we know the history of nations but for the everlasting monument of the pen?”*

*“The tradition regarding an event which in itself does not contradict either logical or physical laws will invariably depend for its character as true or false upon the character of the reporters, who are moved by the divergency of interests and all kinds of animosities and antipathies between the various nations. We must distinguish different classes of reporters.*

*“One of them tells a lie, as intending to further an interest of his own, either by lauding his family or nation, because he is one of them, or by attacking the family or nation on the opposite side, thinking that thereby he can gain his ends....”*

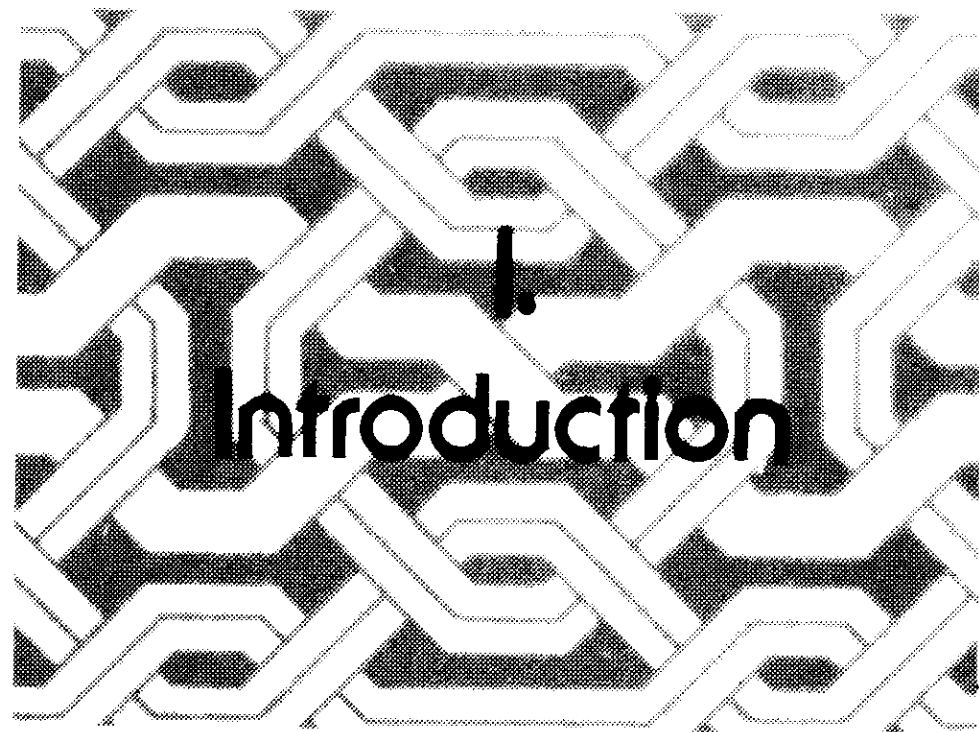
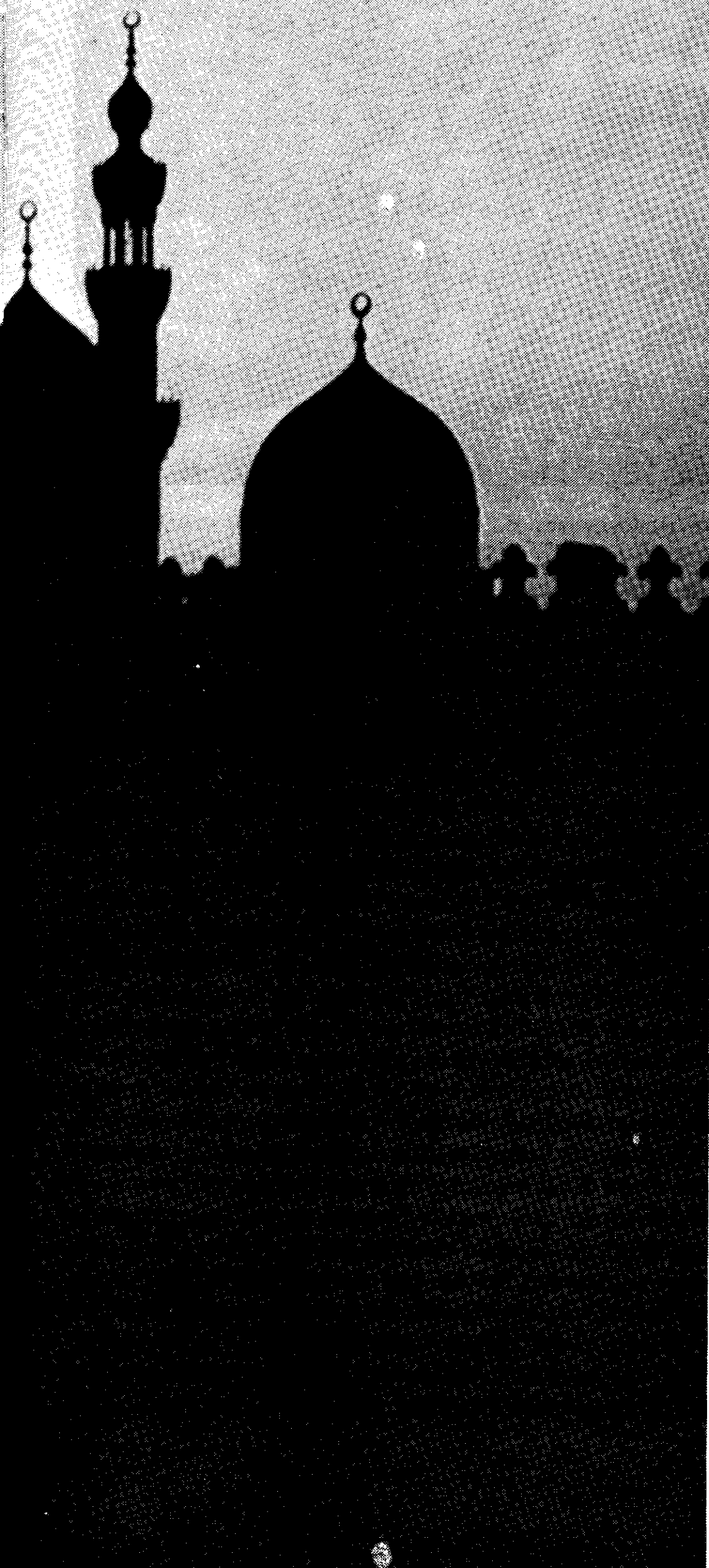
*“Another tells a lie because it is his nature to lie, and he cannot do otherwise, which proceeds from the essential meanness of his character and the depravity of his innermost being.*

*“Lastly, a man may tell a lie from ignorance, blindly following others who told him.*

*“If, now, reporters of this kind become so numerous as to represent a certain body of tradition, or if in the course of time they even come to form a consecutive series of communities or nations, both the first reporter and his followers form the connecting links between the hearer and the inventor of the lie; and if the connecting links are eliminated, there remains the originator of the story, one of the various kinds of liars we have enumerated, as the only person with whom we have to deal.”*

—al-Biruni

# the Dark Ages



For most supposedly educated Westerners, the period between the glories of Greece and Rome and the European Renaissance is a historical and cultural vacuum, a Dark Ages into which the world was mysteriously plunged and from which, centuries later, the world just as mysteriously emerged again.

The tenth century scientist and philosopher al-Biruni's observations about the historiography of his day are very much to the point here. The schools of history that have posed the Roman Empire as the first model of the state—particularly Oxford, Cambridge, and their emulators—have preferred to paint the decadence and collapse of the Empire as an inevitability in the eternal up-and-down cycle of world events. The true history of Islam in the medieval era, however, throws a very different light on the story, which is no doubt why the "Orientalist" wings of these same schools of history have insisted on a wildly mythologized version of Islam's past.

When Rome collapsed under the weight of its feudal and self-cannibalizing economic policies, Europe was plunged into what was indeed a Dark Age. What made European recovery possible was an East-West alliance developed with the political and economic intervention of the thriving Baghdad caliphate through relations it had established with the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne. This international alliance had economic progress as its foundation, and threatened to permanently depose its reactionary opponents. Therefore feudalists on both sides of the Mediterranean fought the ninth century Euro-Islamic axis, using every means of warfare, from military to economic. We see here a straight line of political continuity from Plato and the great humanists of ancient Greece, through the Islamic Renaissance, to the Renaissance in Europe and its political inheritors of our own day. Just as clear is the continuity of humanism's enemies.

The battle to unify the world economy into one self-



*Reservoirs built during the time of High Islam are still in use today.*

developing ecumenical unity has been an invariant of the programmatic thinking of humanists since the beginning of civilization. Significantly, certain forward-thinking leaders of the rapidly developing oil-producing nations of the Middle East, who favor a new international economic order today, have begun to fund projects to revitalize the real history of Islam and make it known to the West, an invaluable contribution to reconstructing history based on the continuity of the humanist struggle. It is this renewed interest in medieval Islam that motivated the present article, which aims to present a broad working hypothesis that can bring political and economic coherence to this tumultuous period, with major emphasis on the ninth and tenth centuries. In so doing, the author hopes to begin the process of resolving the still unanswered question: what moved Islamic civilization of the Middle Ages so rapidly to such great heights?

Contrary to much run-of-the-mill scholarship, Islam was not simply a conveyor belt of Greek ideas to Europe, but made qualitative contributions to Western thought. Islamic intellectuals drew critically on the preceding accomplishments of Greece, Alexandria, Persia, Hindu civilization, and China, to synthesize a higher order of knowledge. And most of the great thinkers of Europe through the seventeenth century, including Roger Bacon, Nicholas of Cusa, Leonardo

da Vinci, Giordano Bruno, Johannes Kepler, and Benedict Spinoza, drew in turn from the greatest Islamic scientific minds.

The work of ibn-Sina (Avicenna), ibn al-Haitham (al-Hazen), al-Razi, al-Kindi, al-Biruni, ibn-Yunus, al-Farabi, the great mathematician and poet Omar Khayyam, to mention but a few, was well known to European humanist circles. The remarkable sixteenth century English Tudor naval fleet could never have been built were it not for the advanced shipbuilding technology of the Mideast. Columbus could not have discovered the New World without the use of navigational and mapping techniques which initially emerged from the expanded trade networks developed by the Islamic world. Almost all of the major commercial and financial instruments of Renaissance Europe were borrowed from Islam. Moreover, European artistic activity rested on the theoretical accomplishments of the Mideast. Brunelleschi's dome in Florence drew on the theoretical work of Islamic mathematicians and engineers as that work was mediated through Gothic building techniques. The greatest city-building tradition surrounding the twelfth and thirteenth century Gothic cathedral drew directly on North African and Mideast engineers working with the early Knights Templar. Even the laws of perspective in European painting were influenced by the crucial improvements of Euclid and

Ptolemy's optics made by al-Hazen and al-Kindi, innovations in physics and optical science that were studied rigorously by Roger Bacon and Leonardo da Vinci, and were known to the revolutionary university of Leyden out of which came Rembrandt. European classical music tradition also rested squarely on the achievements of al-Farabi, ibn-Sina, and countless others.

Nor was the culture that produced these intellectual achievements an ethereal endeavor or scholastic ivory tower, an impression purveyed by distorted histories of Islam. Ideas were wedded to the drive to master the universe. The dramatic breakthroughs in Islamic medical science and the accompanying construction of hospitals and new medical schools are one facet of the case. Although source material on modes of production during this period is sparse, available evidence demonstrates an applied notion of improvements in technology as a means of generating increased social wealth and advancing labor power. One of the best-known examples is the major improvements in floating mills using the dense and in many cases man-made waterways of Mesopotamia. Innovations in milling technology significantly reduced dependence on backward rural labor as a means of grinding grain, and produced tremendous profits, since grinding became mechanized and much more efficient. A further development in milling technology, as a spinoff of the watermill, was the development of windmills in Afghanistan in the tenth century. Other sectors that showed marked progress were mining and metallurgy, pharmacology and chemistry, and the crucial development of a large-scale paper industry using technology borrowed from China.

One feature of the Crusades was a transfer of technology from the East to Europe. A Syrian-designed watermill that is still preserved in southern Germany, its construction dated to the early thirteenth century, serves as a monument to the Islamic contribution to scientifically awakening Europe.

Paralleling developments in Islamic science and technology was a drive for mass education. Throughout the Islamic realm, countless new schools, universities, and libraries were built. In Muslim Spain before the Christian reconquest, the rate of literacy in the southern portion of the peninsula was higher than it is today.

It must be emphasized from the outset that a rigorous distinction is being made between the Islam of the Middle Ages and the Islam of today. There has been considerable debate over just how to characterize the Renaissance that occurred in the Mideast in the Middle Ages. Here it is termed the Islamic, rather than the Arabic, Renaissance because of the international efforts that went into its making, and the term 'Islamic' has

been redefined to embrace the broadest conception of those diverse peoples that made the Renaissance possible.

In particular, Shiism is here identified as the faction within Islamic society that nurtured humanism. Today, sadly, Shiism has disintegrated into a mystical and reactionary cult. It is no exaggeration that British colonial domination of the Mideast destroyed almost every humanist tendency in the Islamic world, so that today only the regressive remnants of a once-magnificent civilization remain.

The vitality of Islamic humanism as it was experienced over a thousand years ago remains dormant primarily because contemporary Muslim intellectuals have been deprived of the knowledge of their historical heritage. It is to these intellectuals of today's developing Islamic nations that this work is dedicated.



The collapse of the Roman Empire left international commerce in shambles. The policies of the Byzantine Empire were a degenerate extension of Byzantium's degenerate Roman parent. Within the area surrounding the Mediterranean, including the devastated European continent, there remained not a single political and economic force adequately equipped to revitalize world trade.

World economic recovery depended on a combination of forces with links to those areas of Europe and the Mideast which had not been subjected to Roman domination, most importantly Celtic Ireland and the Persian Empire under Sassanid rule. The Celtic Irish experienced a rich scientific and cultural renaissance during this period and supplied Charlemagne's court with some of its greatest intellectuals. Like the Persian sector, the Celts were a repository of Neoplatonic thought. The diplomatic and trade ties established between Islam and the Celts account for the striking similarity between Arabic calligraphic art and Celtic Renaissance masterworks epitomized by the Book of Kells.



Because the potentials for global recovery centered most directly on the Mideast, Persia took on the greater strategic significance, particularly with the advent of Islam. There were also, of course, Neoplatonic networks that continued to exist in those areas that had previously been under Roman domination and then later fell to the Byzantines. In particular, the closing of the Platonic Academy under Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the sixth century forced numerous Platonists into Persia, where they linked up with powerful underground Neoplatonic movements that had existed for centuries prior to the rise of Islam. These networks must be seen as distinct from the feudal Sassanid dynasty and its landed aristocratic allies. The humanists of Persia were comprised of an influential class of merchants, craftsmen, and artisans—the same layer which was to play such a fundamental role in the success of the Abbasid revolution in 750.

The Neoplatonic networks that persisted in the Mideast and the subcontinent through the turmoil of Rome and Byzantium were a product of the Alexandrian campaigns. The young Greek general Alexander had pursued a policy of economic growth based on the unification of the Orient with the West. Then, as centuries later, Persia was strategically crucial. Alexander's plan of building up the Babylonian region as a hub of a new commercial empire became a reality under Islam, with the construction of the city of Baghdad. The Babylonian region at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers was the meeting place for the lucrative Persian trade routes to the subcontinent and China, and hence was the major commercial link to the Mediterranean. As a result, Persia developed a chain of urban centers of trade and production. The famed "silk route," the Khurasan road, which traversed overland from Mesopotamia to China, was dotted with politically powerful trading centers such as Hamadan, Nishapur, Bukhara, Samarkand, and Merv. The sea route to China, the "spice route," began in the same Mesopotamian territory at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates, a center strongly identified with Greek science and philosophy.

The decades leading up to the rise of Mohammedanism were shaken by economic and ecological disasters that were the result of the constant warfare between the bankrupt Persian and Byzantine Empires. Under these crisis conditions, the young Mohammed, backed by clandestine Neoplatonic currents, intervened to build an alternative state under the banner of Islam.

Mohammed's strategy was twofold. First, through his marriage into the wealthy Meccan trading clan, the Quraish, he hoped to organize the powerful Meccans behind his perspective of using the wealth generated by the highly profitable Meccan caravans to aid in

building his movement. In turn, Mohammed hoped to extend the caravan business through his alliance with the merchant community in Yemen, large portions of which were closely tied to Persian merchant classes. The ultimate aim was to expand Persian trading activity, generating new wealth. The realization of this goal, however, had to await the Abbasid revolution over a century later.

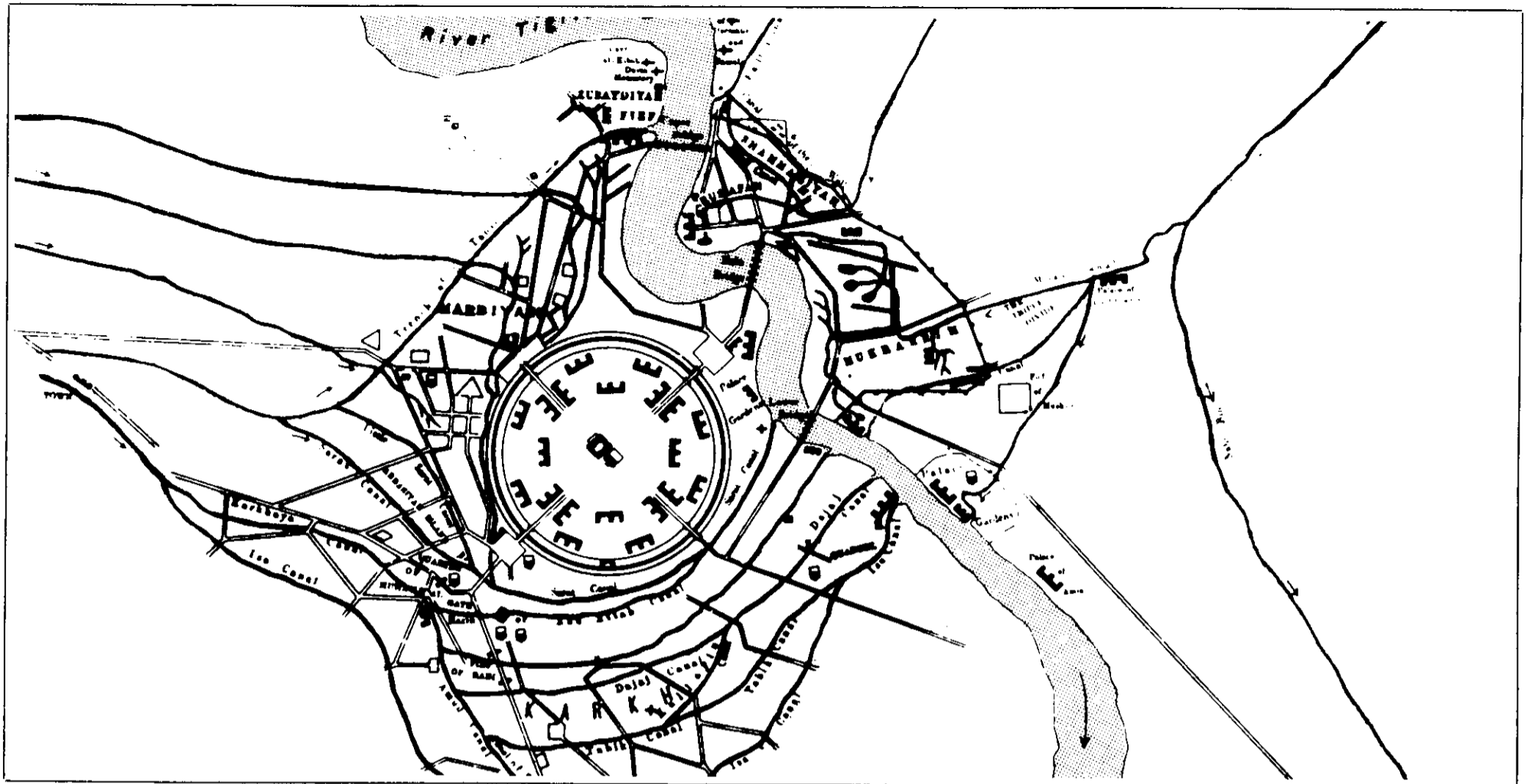
The second feature of Mohammed's strategy was to create a religion that would act as a unifying umbrella under which he could organize his supporters, most importantly the backward bedouin tribes of the northern Arabian peninsula. Mohammed brought together the tribes around the universal conception of one god, Allah, as opposed to their more primitive pantheistic religion, and the military power of the bedouins became the backbone of Mohammed's army.

The roots of the deep political split in Islam between the orthodox Sunni and the more progressive Shiite can be traced back to this earliest period of Islamic history. Underlying the Sunni-Shiite schism was not simply religious disagreements, as so many history textbooks would have it, but a fundamental difference which determined the course of the history of Islam throughout the Middle Ages.

Within the complex structure of the Meccan family elite in which Mohammed was vying for hegemony, there were two decisive factions, which can broadly be called the pro-Persian and the pro-Byzantine branches. Centered around the Abu Talib branch of the family was a small but influential group with ties to the Persian Mazdakians and other clandestine Persian networks. Mohammed's son-in-law Ali, married to his daughter Fatima, was one of the most outspoken members of that faction. On the other side was the large Umayyad wing of the Meccan clan led by Abu Sophian. This branch of the family valued its ties to Byzantine merchants and bankers.

Although historical material on early Islam is both sketchy and heavily overladen with myth, there is evidence that Mohammed favored the faction led by Ali, and that among Mohammed's most fervent enemies were Abu Sophian and his Umayyad allies. The earliest factional supporters of Ali came to be known as the Shia (which means 'party' in Arabic) or Alids, terms that will be used interchangeably in the course of this discussion. It is from the early Alid wing of Mohammed's Community of the Faithful that the Shiite branch of Islam emerged. And it is from this line that the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt was formed three centuries later, 'Fatimid' being derived from the name of Ali's wife Fatima.

Mohammed managed to gain political control over Mecca just prior to his death, but the continued



*A schematic of Baghdad showing the round city surrounded by a network of man-made and reclaimed canals that reflects the explosion of commercial activity in the region.*

factional splits within the Quraish clan either prevented him from naming a successor (caliph), or nullified his decision following his death. As a result, the conservative Abu Bakr was named the first caliph of Islam. Then began a long and bloody political campaign on the part of the Alids to gain control of the caliphate, which they asserted Mohammed had originally awarded to his close associate Ali.

Throughout the history of Islam to this day the Shiite movement has been riddled with factional splits. One product of that process was the Ismaili movement, which emerged in the eighth century. The Ismailis and their allied Brethren of the Purity, on which the later European Brethren of the Common Life as well as the Platonic wing of the Freemason movement were modeled, yielded some of humanity's greatest thinkers, culminating with the Persian physician ibn-Sina and the military strategist Hasan ibn-Sabah. Unlike their Sunni rivals, the Ismailis based themselves on the most advanced conceptions of science, education, and epistemology. They saw themselves not as Arabs—unlike the Sunni, who traditionally favored the Arabs—but as an ecumenical alliance of Arab, Persian, Jew, and Christian united around the first principle of creativity and scientific progress. This is the faction within Islam that, although heavily outnumbered, acted most decisively to shape society and influence later European developments.

Two revolutions between 600 and 1200 were critical

rallying points for the Shiite humanists: the Abbasid revolution in 750 and the Fatimid revolution, which was completed in 969 with the Ismaili conquest of Egypt's Nile delta. While it cannot be denied that these two political turning points represent landmarks in human history, the continuous political process which bore these two revolutions is the more compelling aspect of the history. For within this realm were born the most advanced notions of social organization and progress the world had seen. Out of this ongoing process of intellectual revolution emerged the magnificent civilization of city-builders, of which the Abbasid-built city of Baghdad and the Fatimid-built city of Cairo are the most renowned examples.

The Shia had fought since the death of Mohammed to install Ali as the caliph, and in so doing to enact the strategy of opening up the Indian Ocean and the sea and overland trade routes to the east as a basis for a global commercial revolution. This was seen as the first step in building up sufficient economic and military strength to gain economic hegemony over the Mediterranean, which was still dominated by Byzantium and the feudal nobility of Rome. The plan was to make Islam a world empire based, unlike Rome and Byzantium, on a program of economic growth and prosperity. That the strategy failed to materialize was in part because of the Byzantines' stubborn resistance to Islam.

Ali was finally proclaimed caliph on June 24, 656.

His first order of business was to relocate the seat of Islam from Mecca to Kufa, not far from what was to become Baghdad, on the Euphrates River, indicating his commitment to the strategy of building up relations to the east, since the Mesopotamia area was strategically central. But such plans were cut short by the assassination of Ali in 661, followed by the usurpation of the caliphate by the Umayyad Mu'awiyah, who moved the capital of Islam to Damascus.

The period between 661 and the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750 saw the largest and most rapid territorial expansion in history. In less than 100 years Islam had spread from Poitiers, France through Spain, across North Africa to the border of China. The Umayyads based this expansion on the military might of the Arab bedouin tribes. Of course, it should not go unmentioned that much of the territory gained had been under the control of either the Sassanids or the Byzantines, whose policies had become so oppressive that the populations often welcomed Islam if only to be relieved of hideous tax burdens.

But the Umayyad regime made a fundamental error in its reliance on the bedouin Arabs, an error that contributed to the downfall of Damascus. Inverting Mohammed's policies toward the bedouins, the Umayyads deliberately promoted bedouin primitivism as a means of appealing to the bedouins to wage *jihad* (holy war) against the non-Muslim infidels. Umayyad cultivation of the heteronomy of the bedouins led ultimately to the breakdown of their allegiance to Damascus's centralized authority.

It was also during this period that the orthodox Sunni outlook was codified. Umayyad theologians promoted the view that the individual had no active role in changing the world, but rather was bound by fixed laws (*sharia*) and the written word of the Koran. Nevertheless, these laws were subject to often arbitrary abrogation by the caliph's community of theologians.

The Umayyads furthermore were notorious for discriminating against non-Arabs (*mawali*). As a result, the Shiite ranks swelled with discontented *mawali*, and the Shia were able to prepare a skillful underground revolutionary apparatus centered in Basra, on the Persian Gulf, and extending into the restive Persian province of Khurasan. Combined with the crumbling of the Umayyad military command structure, the Shiite underground brought about the collapse of Umayyad rule and the rise of the newborn city of Baghdad as the center of an economic revolution.

Nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship has consistently approached the study of medieval Islam with a flawed methodology which is at its most obvious in the treatment of the Alid-Ismaili movement. Conventionally this branch of Islam is cast in primarily

religious terms, a distinction that traces to the British "fathers" of modern-day Orientalism, such as E.G. Browne and Bernard Lewis. These men, whose scholarly pursuits also brought them careers in British intelligence, have quite consciously subverted accurate historical accounting of the Platonic character of the Alid-Ismaili movement. Thus Browne, while admitting the political nature of this movement, attempts to delimit its purpose within religious considerations. And while Bernard Lewis clearly elucidates the ruthless political motivations of the Ismailis in his well-known doctoral thesis, written in the early 1940s, Lewis evades the more pressing issue posed by the Ismailis' method of political organizing, the connection between the advancement of epistemology and political power; for Lewis, a 30-year veteran of British intelligence manipulation of various Islamic separatist and tribal groupings, the Shia always remain simply "radicals."

For the most advanced strata of the Shia, and even more so for the intellectual leadership of the Ismailis, the development of a theory of human knowledge was the foundation on which their strategic goals of building a humanist state rested. But within the standards of modern academia, where fields of knowledge have become so rigidly compartmentalized, the necessary *synthesis* of epistemology and politics as components of the same active humanist universe could not possibly be achieved.

The late Duncan Black MacDonald, in a passage from his *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, shows that the British school of Orientalism knew the outlines of the Platonic conspiracy to create a humanist republic:

"It may be that it was only a natural drawing together on the part of all the different forces and movements that were under a ban and had to live in secrecy and stillness. It may be that the students of the new science passed over, simply through their studies and political despair—as has often happened in our day—into different degrees of nihilism, or, at the other extreme, into passionate searching for, and dependence on, some absolute guide, an infallible Imam. *It may be that we have read wrongly the whole history of the Fatimid movement: that it was in reality a deeply laid and slowly ripened plan to bring the rule of the world into the control of a band of philosophers, whose task it was to be to rule: that they saw—these unknown devotees of science and truth—no other way of breaking down the barriers of Islam and setting free the spirit of men. A wild hypothesis! But in the face of the real mystery no hypothesis can seem wild.*" (Emphasis added)

What MacDonald approaches here is a description of the relationship of the Platonic notion of the philosopher-king to the most advanced Shiite concep-

tions of secular statecraft. The eloquent tenth century philosopher and political scientist al-Farabi epitomized such bold political thinking in his writings, in which he maintained that an Islamic state premised on reason was committed to the construction of a “universal city” from which numerous new cities of reason could emerge. Al-Farabi was elucidating the process of spreading urbanization under the same program for expanded commerce that the humanist Shiite leadership was promoting. He saw no distinction between philosophy and politics; rather he ennobled politics by elaborating his political science as the philosophical ideal of the perfection of man, not as some sort of purely spiritual experience but through a systematic fight to change the world. In this connection he emphasized that only in an urban setting, as opposed to the backwardness of rural existence, could the human species perfect itself, through developing its social practice for acting in the world, its labor, power:

“Furthermore, it will become evident to him in this science of investigating the universe that each man achieves only a portion of that perfection, and what he achieves of this portion varies in its extent, for an isolated individual cannot achieve all the perfection by himself without the aid of many other individuals. It is the innate tendency of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform; this is the condition of every single man. Therefore, to achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of those who belong to the same species, which is why he is called the social and political animal. There emerges now another science and another inquiry that investigates these intellectual principles and the acts and states of character with which man labors toward this perfection. From this, in turn, emerge the science of man and political science.”

For al-Farabi, as for all his humanist brethren, the essence of identity was based on voluntarism. They saw their ideas as having a direct and practical political and material application in changing the universe for the good of the human species. This is the conception which is *the* missing ingredient in even the best of contemporary Islamic historiography—this active notion of man’s changing relationship to the universe that unifies all branches of human knowledge into one differentiated field of human inquiry into the universe, and makes history coherent.

From this standpoint of voluntarism, al-Farabi wrote in his treatises, *The Political Regime* and *The Ideal City*, of the necessary intellectual qualities required of the enlightened sovereign. In Shiite terms, the sovereign, like the Shiite intellectual and political leader, the imam, must be a self-subsisting creative force for all of human society, just as God, the “necessary existent,” is the pure creative prime mover of the universe in its

continual self-differentiation (the ongoing creation). These fundamental conceptions motivated the humanists’ role in shaping the Abbasid and later the Fatimid revolutions.



Following the overthrow of the Umayyads in 750 and the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty, the political hegemony of the Abbas family over the Baghdad caliphate lasted no more than eighty years. The decline of the Abbasids into mere pawns of their own Turkish mercenaries exemplifies a common malady plaguing Middle Eastern (and European) society throughout the Middle Ages. While most humanist leaders recognized the need for the creation of a state to unify the various peoples under the banner of Islam, the region’s turbulent tribal politics was still decisive in acting against such notions of statecraft, just as tribal and backward sectarian separatism still remain a problem for Islamic nations today.

It was against this backdrop that an emphasis on urbanization, as a means of undercutting tribal and familial pettiness, became the centerpiece of humanist strategy. Only under conditions of increased commerce and urbanization, accompanied by an upgrading of agricultural production, could there be any hope of outflanking the mercenary class and building a sound and educated militia. Unfortunately for the Mideast, it was Renaissance Europe, not the Islamic sector, that realized this perspective.

One of the predominant internal tensions of the early Baghdad caliphate was the pronounced antipathy between the Alids and the Abbasids. Despite the fact that the Alids had served as a major political force in overthrowing the Umayyads, the humanist elements within the Alid alliance realized early in the postrevolutionary period that the Sunni-inclined Abbasids would have difficulty in fully realizing the Alids’ revolutionary expectations. The period between 750 and 770 therefore was a crucial branching point for the

Shiite movement, and with it a strengthened determination to build a state run by a philosopher-king, an imam, who could stand for humanist principles above all else. Two centuries later this determination produced the Fatimid revolution.

Here it is necessary to digress briefly in order to explain why the Abbasid revolution resulted in putting a Sunni dynasty on the throne, when the Shia played such a primary role in undoing the Umayyads. The question also bears on the Fatimid revolution, since in neither case was the most advanced Shiite strategic and programmatic thinking ever fully realized.

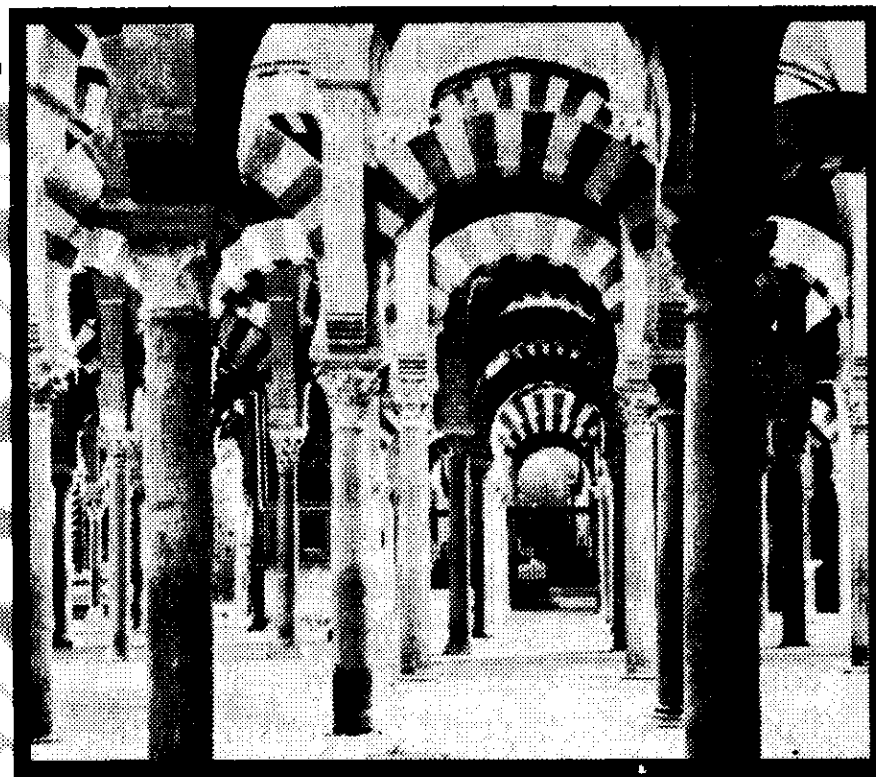
The pre-Abbasid revolutionary Shiite movement was comprised of numerous groupings that united with the common purpose of overthrowing the hated Umayyads. While the most intellectually advanced strata of the Shia had a defined notion of the state for which they were striving, much of the remaining allegiance to Shiism within this period was defined by more limited goals. Hence, following the revolution, the Shiite movement factionalized into networks that either supported or contested the Abbasids. Furthermore, given the confluence of diverse political currents united around the immediate task of overthrowing the Umayyads, the selection of the Abbasid family as the new dynasty was most likely a compromise.

All this gave more reactionary forces the leverage that ultimately allowed them to gain decisive political ground. The Baghdad bureaucracy was never able to check these monetarist forces' predatory financial gain off the wealth generated by the Baghdad caliphate. The growth of monetarist looting of state wealth, plus accompanying religious reaction and the regime's careless use of its Turkish praetorian guards, sowed the seeds of Baghdad's early demise.

With the exception of the Abbasid caliph Mamun, the Alids received uniformly repressive treatment from the Abbasid caliphs. Even the famed Harun al-Rashid walked a tightrope between his Sunni and Shiite allies. There are numerous accounts in early Abbasid history demonstrating the tensions between Harun and his enlightened Persian Shiite constituency. It was Harun's predecessor Mansur who ordered the murder of the military hero of the Abbasid revolution, Abu Muslim, for fear that the revered Muslim's growing power would threaten the throne of the caliph. Harun, against the will of one of his most trusted wives, herself a strong Alid supporter, destroyed one of the most powerful and wealthy Persian aristocratic families, the Barmakids. The Barmakids, in fact, had been entrusted with the task of educating the young Harun. Nonetheless, in 805 Harun deemed the Barmakids, one of whom

Mohammed and Ali

Mosque at Cordova



570

Birth of Mohammed

632

Death of Mohammed

661

Assassination of Mohammed's son-in-law Ali, leading to the usurpation of the caliphate by the Umayyads; capital of Islam transferred from Mecca to Damascus

711

Islamic conquest of Spain

acted as his personal vizier, a threat to his regime and had them either executed or imprisoned.

Except for Mamun, every Abbasid vehemently refused to adopt the title of imam. Nonetheless, from the time of Mansur the uneasy marriage of convenience between the House of Abbas and the innovative and enlightened Persian bureaucracy yielded a project whose scope was unparalleled in history, the building of the city of Baghdad, the "city of peace." Baghdad was designed as the center of a commercial revolution which would profit from a massive expansion of trade.

Both the city plan for Baghdad and its militarily and economically propitious setting suited it for the task. Situated upstream on the Tigris River, Baghdad was sufficiently close to the waters of the Persian Gulf to benefit from the vast trading activity through its port at Basra.

By the time of Harun al-Rashid (786-809), the agricultural output of the Sawad region to the south of Baghdad was at its peak. Under the governorship of the Umayyad al-Hajjaj, prior to the Abbasid takeover, a tremendous effort had been launched to reclaim the network of canals in the Sawad. The Abbasids not only continued this reclamation effort but constructed new canals, not just for irrigation and as power sources for mills, but also for transportation routes for goods

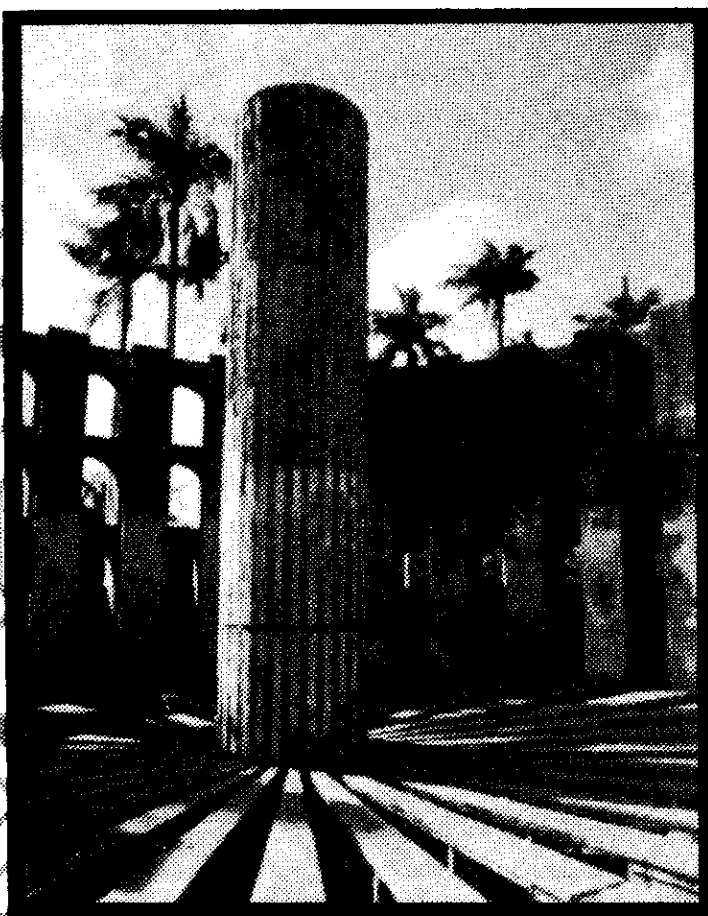
shipped up to Baghdad from the Gulf. These canals also served as a means by which the numerous goods produced by Baghdad's industrial districts were transported.

The caliph Mansur, who founded the city of Baghdad, expressed the reasoning behind the building of the city as follows:

"It is an Island between the Tigris and the Euphrates ... and a waterfront for the world. Everything that comes on the Tigris from Wasit, Al Basrah, Al Awhaz, Faris, Uman, Al Yamanah, Al Bahrayn, and the neighboring places, can go up to it and anchor at it. In the same way, whatever is carried on boats on the Tigris from Mosul, Diyar, Rabi'ah, Azerbaijan, and Armenia and whatever is carried on boats on the Euphrates from Diyar, Mudar, Al Ruddah, Syria, the frontier, Egypt, and North also be a meeting place for the people of the Mountain (al-Jibal) and Isfahan and Kur and Khurasan."

Mansur correctly boasts, "This is the Tigris; there is no obstacle between us and China; everything on the sea comes to us on it."

According to legend, Mansur called into his court all the best engineers and architects to design the city, whose walls were perfectly round. In the center of the city sat the royal offices and palace attached to the



Islamic architecture in India

Abbasid coinage



712

Islamic conquest of Sind (India)

718-732

Islamic invasion of France

750

Abbasid revolution; the Abbas wing of the Quraish family (the family of Mohammed) seizes power from the Umayyads

754

The great Abbasid caliph al-Mansur comes to power

mosque. The unification of Baghdad was expressed by the construction of a great dome at its center. The very concept of the city design coheres with the basic tenets of the Shiite doctrine as developed more explicitly in the later Ismaili epistles. In those treatises, the image of concentric circles diminishing in size to their common center was used to illustrate the relation of the universe to the source of all knowledge, God, or in ibn-Sina's term, the necessary existent. It was barely a year following the construction of the city, however, that its swelling population was forced to construct new communities beyond its surrounding walls. Within a few more years the fabulously wealthy city had grown beyond even Mansur's expectations.

One of the most extraordinary features of early Abbasid policy was the immediate diplomatic relations that were established with the Carolingian empire in Europe, forming one of history's most outstanding examples of an ecumenical alliance. The Carolingian empire was born in 754, only four years after the Abbasid revolution, and its centralized power declined roughly when the Abbasids' did, about a century later. In 762 the first diplomatic exchange took place, and following the ascension to power of Charlemagne in 771 and Harun in 786 even closer diplomatic relations were established. In 800 Charlemagne requested of

Harun that the Carolingians have expanded rights to Jerusalem in order to facilitate what were then thriving Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Lands. This request must also have incorporated features of an agreement consolidating commercial links for control over the Mediterranean. Harun replied by sending a top diplomatic entourage to Aachen, Carolingian headquarters, including a very close ally of the Baghdad court, one Ibrahim al-Aghlab, and a number of Jewish emissaries. Aghlab is reported to have arrived in Italy shortly thereafter, where he met Charlemagne and conceded new territorial rights to the Carolingians.

Following the return of al-Aghlab to Baghdad in the first decade of the ninth century, Harun appointed him the emir of one of the first semi-independent princedoms in North Africa, known as the Aghlabid emirate, which became an entrepot for quickening Euro-Islamic trade.

Baghdad's first serious political crisis erupted in 809 following the death of Harun. A fierce civil war broke out between Harun's sons, Amin and Mamun, for control of the caliphate. Amin was an Arab, associated with the Sunni, while Mamun was half Persian and backed by the strong mercantile interests mainly based in the strategic Khurasan districts.

The war, which lasted for four years and did great damage to Baghdad's economy, reflected an intense

Greek and Arab diplomacy

Charlemagne



762

First diplomatic contact between Carolingians and Abbasids

763

Foundation of the city of Baghdad, new capital of the Abbasid caliphate

771

Charlemagne becomes king of the Franks

786

Harun al-Rashid comes to power in Baghdad

battle over whether the Persian or Arab aristocracy would control the caliphate. But as future developments were to reveal, the internal strife that continued to gnaw at the political unity of the caliphate was fundamentally a *three*-way fight. The third factor was the emerging Ismaili movement, which made allies with both Persians and Arabs based on its universal doctrines.

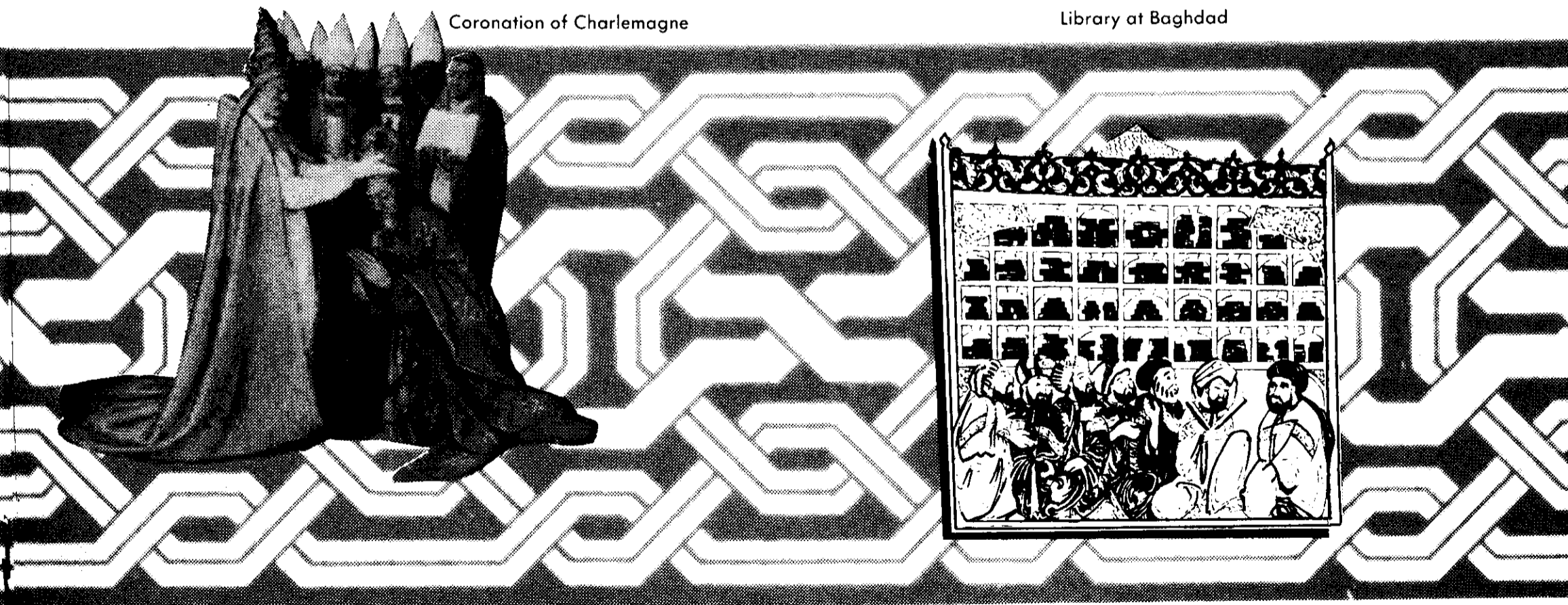
Amin had been named Harun's successor, a decision which Mamun initially did not contest. It was only after Mamun, then the governor of the Khurasan province, was prodded by his Persian constituency that the civil war began. Most likely the highly political merchant networks of Khurasan well remembered the disastrous policies of the Umayyads, with which in their minds Amin was associated. Mamun's wife, like his mother, was Persian, and Harun had appointed Mamun to manage the affairs of Khurasan; it was during Mamun's long reign following his victory over Amin that Persian influence over the affairs of the caliphate reached its peak.

The Alids got a breathing space of only a few years with the ascendancy of Mamun to power in 813. The civil war, however, represented the first major economic setback for Baghdad. Sections of the city, mainly outlying areas, were devastated during the melee, and

long after the war, violent demonstrations by Sunni oppositionists periodically rocked Baghdad.

Mamun's reign is a landmark in the history of the Baghdad caliphate; he was the only Abbasid to distinguish himself as a self-professed Alid. Known as the "radical" Abbasid, Mamun shed the black cloak of the Abbas family for the green cloak of the Alids. He daringly proclaimed himself imam, and shook the entirety of the caliphate in 826 when he declared that the Koran was not "uncreated," for years a point of intense theological debate between the Sunni and the Shiite raising the most profound philosophical issues of the day. For if the Koran were "uncreated," as the Sunni professed, then, argued the Shia, there would be two uncreated forces in the universe, the Koran and God, an assertion that put the omnipotence of God in question. What was at stake was the ontological issue of the relationship of God to the universe, the relationship of the particular to the whole, of the individual to the universe. The Shiites proclaimed that the creation had no beginning and no end and was an eternal process of becoming. Therefore, they asked, how could there be something in the universe, namely the Koran, that was outside God's unending creative relationship to the universe?

The politics behind the debate illustrate a defined



Coronation of Charlemagne

Library at Baghdad

800

Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor

802

Diplomatic agreement between Baghdad and Aachen to expand Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem; Charlemagne launches building projects in Jerusalem

812-813

The "Siege of Baghdad"—civil war between Harun's two sons, Amin and Mamun, over the throne

813

Mamun gains power; establishes the "House of Wisdom," the first centralized translating institution, to make Greek scientific and philosophical works available to the Islamic world



divergence in outlook between the Sunni and the Shia. For the Sunni the *fixed laws* of the Koran were the vehicle by which populations were forced to submit to feudal forms of government. There is no free will in such a system. But for the Shia the continual process of evolution of the universe includes man's necessary participation, implying that man, God's most perfect creation, is morally bound to alter his relationship to nature through qualitative creative interventions. The Shia waged an intensive epistemological war to break the fierce ideological chains which bound the minds of the Sunni, a war that, carried to its lawful conclusion, intended to disenfranchise the backers of the Sunni ideology, the reactionary landed classes of the east. The Ismailis were responsible for pushing the scientific and political application of the Shiite world view to a more intense level through the process that led to the Fatimid revolution and subsequent developments.

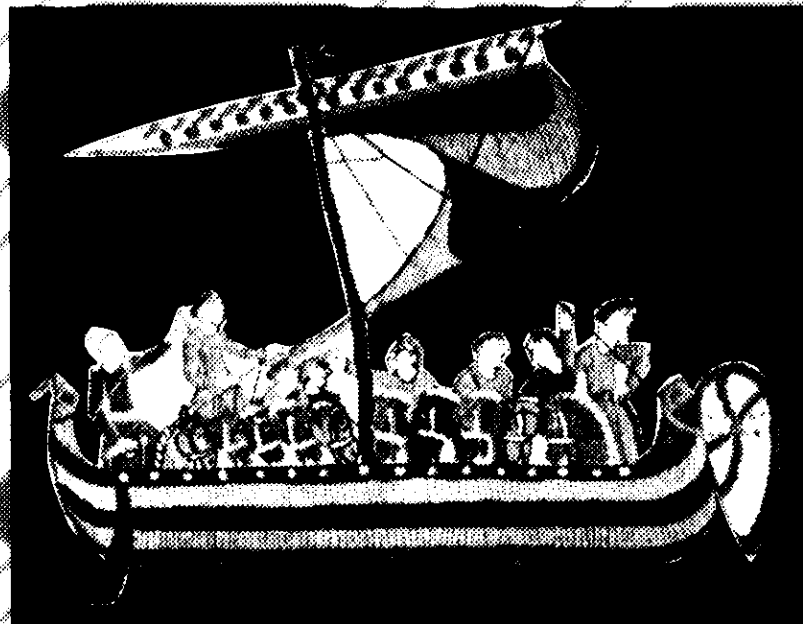
The Abbasids initially did make some significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge that laid the basis for major intellectual achievements in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The early Abbasids funded projects for the translation of every available philosophical and scientific treatise from previous civilizations, that were centralized in numerous libraries in Baghdad. Mamun made a noteworthy contribution to

this vast translation project through the founding of the House of Wisdom, which consolidated all the translation work primarily out of Greek into Arabic. As a result of this process, Arabic was revolutionized from a relatively backward language to one consciously transformed on the basis of Greek syntax to be able to convey advanced scientific conceptions. It was science and the accompanying development of poetry that were ultimately responsible for the creation of the classical Arabic language.

During Mamun's rule, which ended in 832, Baghdad reached its high point as the intellectual leader of Islam. But while Mamun's achievements clearly represent a milestone in early Abbasid history, the hostile dynamic between his predecessors and the Alids had already manifested itself in a conspiracy to subvert and destroy the anti-Abbasid wing of the Alids. Such developments go back to the reign of Mansur, who in the second half of the eighth century colluded with elements of the Alids to create a "manageable" pro-Abbasid wing within the Shiite movement. Mansur's political ally in this endeavor was the Alid imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. As a result of this operation the Ismailis split off and formed a new movement.

Ja'far's intention was to propagate a "softer," less threatening political doctrine, one that would allow for

Norman conquest



814

Charlemagne dies, leaving Louis the Pious, a far weaker leader, to rule

827-843

Islamic conquest of Sicily and southern Italy

833

Death of Mamun

845

The Normans, Europe's counterpart of the Mideast's Turks, launch major invasions into England and France

accommodation between the Shia and the caliph. Hence Ja'far openly attacked the controversial Alid notion of the enlightened imam as the ruler of the Islamic realm, and called for the enlightened imam to merely "theoretically" advise the caliph. Ja'far's assertion was designed to undercut the Alid notion that the one qualification that determined the fitness of the sovereign was intellect. This secularized notion of the state was, of course, designed to throw into question the qualifications of the ruling Abbasids. Not surprisingly, upon Ja'far's death in 765, Mansur acclaimed him as the most outstanding Alid of the time.

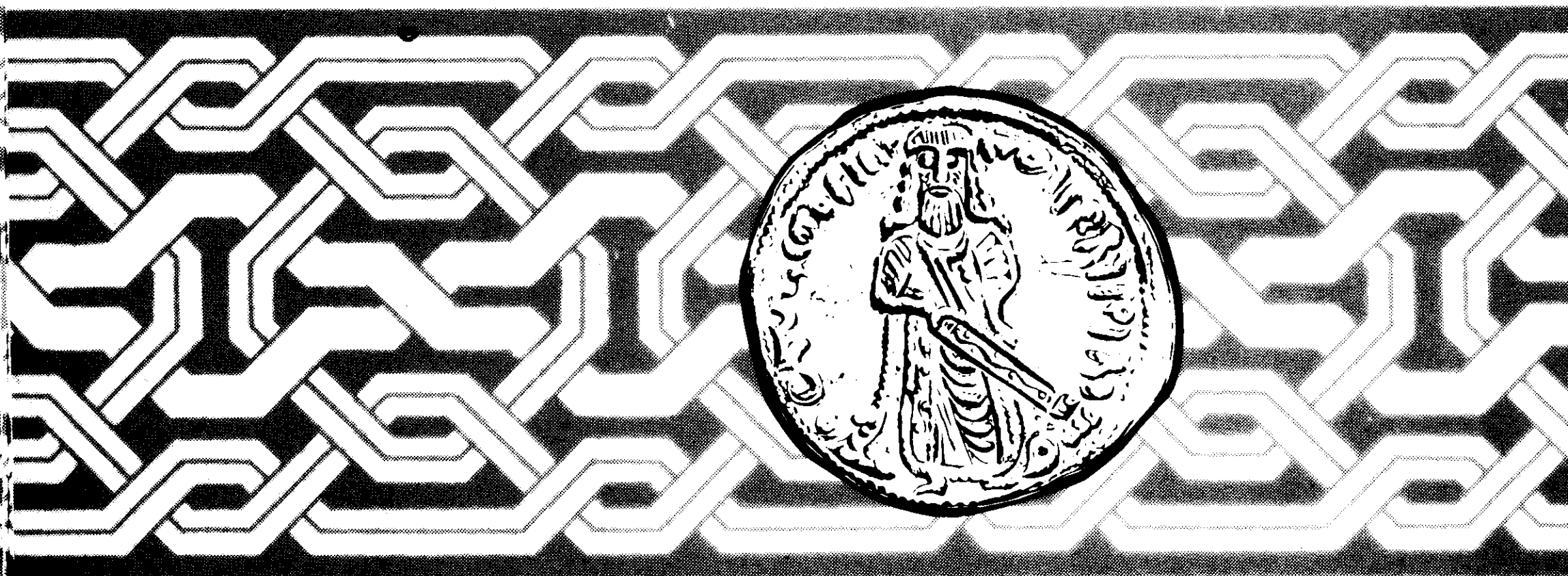
The circumstances around Ja'far's efforts brought existing intense differences within Alid ranks to a head. As a result Ja'far's "radical" son, Ismail, with backing from a group of Kufan bankers, formed the Ismaili movement. On the other hand, Musa, a younger son of Ja'far, kept alive the moderate wing of Shiism, which came to be known as the orthodox "twelve" Ismailis. Through the course of Islam, the Ismailis suffered further factional splits. Both the rampant destruction of Ismaili writings by their factional opponents the Sunni and the Sunni-allied Shia, and the intense secrecy of the Ismailis make a reconstruction of the history of the movement, particularly of the 100 years following its creation, nearly impossible.

We can only surmise both from scanty historical accounts and more detailed histories of the period prior to and following this point what the general strategy of the Ismaili movement must have been. Certainly on the surface both the Ismailis and the Abbasids favored expanding eastern trading activity. There is, however, a more profound and qualitative difference separating the two, which centered on the question of labor power. Both from the standpoint of theory and its application to political organizing, the Ismailis were emphatically committed to the development of the human mind, not abstractly, but through bold education programs to create a skilled urban workforce. The Abbasids, however, still promoted slave labor, although to be sure there had been a dramatic reduction in slavery since the Umayyads. Nonetheless, the use of slaves—primarily from east Africa—in large public work sites such as those south of Baghdad was politically exploited by the Ismailis against the Baghdad caliphate.

#### ISLAMIC FINANCE AND THE CONCEPT OF THE STATE BANK

From the earliest time of Mohammed's Community of the Faithful, there existed a concept of building state institutions to mediate economic growth. Perhaps the

Fatimid coinage



847

Caliph Mutawakil accedes to the throne; Turkish guards more and more active in determining caliphal policy

861-974

A succession of thirteen caliphs rules Baghdad, including, toward the end of this period, the Buwayhids; five were murdered, three deposed and blinded, five died natural deaths

909

Establishment of the Fatimid caliphate in Mahdiya, near modern Tunis, by the Ismaili movement, as a countercaliphate to degenerate Baghdad

912

The Umayyad emir Abu al-Rahman takes power over what is now Spain and launches an intellectual renaissance, names himself caliph in 929

most striking example of this perspective was the Bayt al-Mal, the state bank. While the bank was never fully exploited as a centralized credit institution for the caliphate, nonetheless there is evidence to demonstrate its potentialities in that direction. It is also as yet not known whether the Ismaili tendency and its predecessors going back to Ali had envisioned an expanded use of the bank to check the rampant heteronomy of private money-changers and bankers.

Under the Abbasids, the bank served two functions: the funding of agriculture and the funding of commerce. But surrounding the bank was a sea of private financiers, whose banking networks, while the most sophisticated in the world up to that time, were uncontrolled and ultimately the root of an unchecked inflationary process that consumed the caliphate.

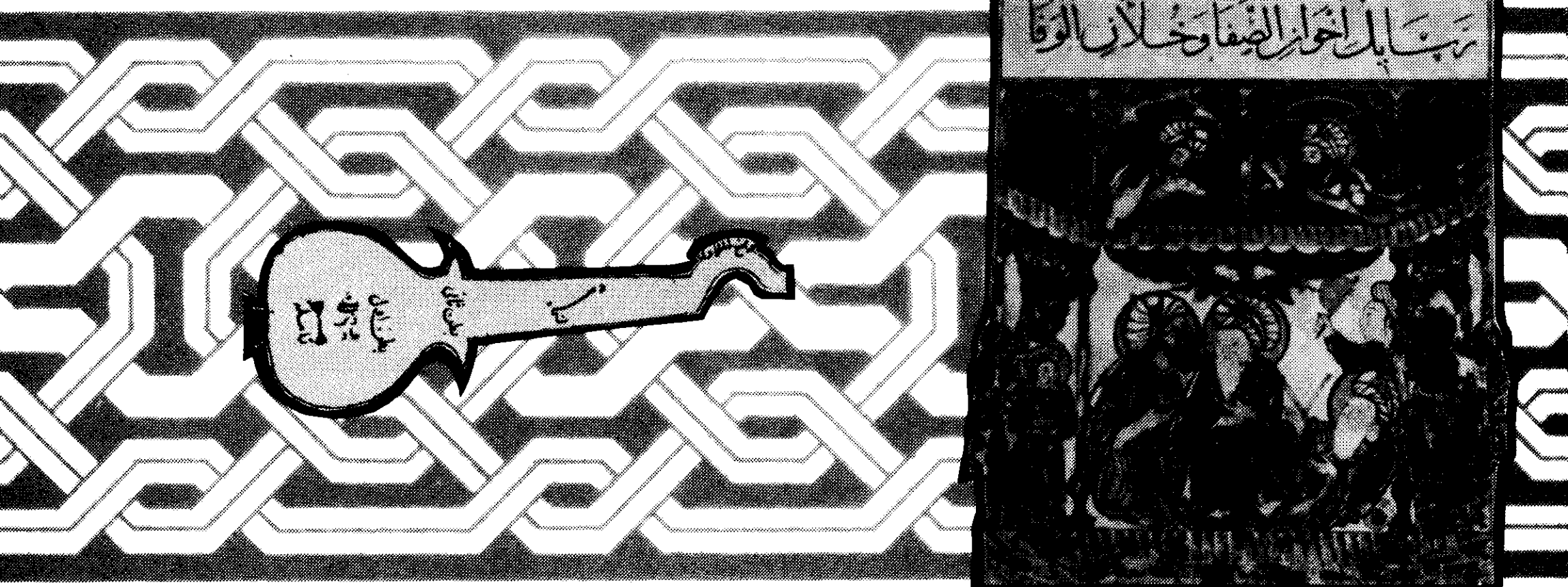
Exemplary of the highly centralized and streamlined mode of financial activity was the limited functioning of the state bank. From the limited available data, it is known that the bank served an important commercial function. For example, a merchant could buy commodities in Baghdad with funds borrowed from the bank, take his goods to the Hijaz on the western side of the Arabian peninsula, and sell them there. He could then repay a branch of the bank in Hijaz for the initial loan at a relatively low interest rate. Essentially the bank

had the capacity to act as an international commercial clearing house.

It has not yet been determined whether the Bayt al-Mal made loans to developing industries. Aside from the bank's funding for agricultural ventures, present sources only indicate state credits to new businesses and partnerships concerned primarily with trade. Most lending activity, however, was handled by private banking enterprises.

Evidence of early Abbasid taxation policies toward the agricultural sector indicates a commitment to encourage the use of advanced technology in cultivation. A plan was adopted during the reign of al-Mahdi (775), known as the "contradistinctive and productive rate system," which was a graduated land tax based on the degree of mechanization of agriculture. If the land was very fertile and required no labor, the farmer gave half of the crop to the government as tax payment in kind. If irrigation was artificial, difficult, and expensive, then only one-third of the crop was surrendered, and if still more difficult requirements were needed for cultivation, then only a fourth was taxed, going even to the rate of taxation of one-fifth. Mamun is known to have later reduced the rate of land taxation even further between the years 819 and 820. During his reign, in the most fertile parts of the arable lands, the tax was fixed

Islamic string instrument



943

Samanid emir Nasr publicly converts to Ismailism in an effort to block the ascendancy of the Buwayhids

944-967

The emir of Aleppo, Said al-Dawlah, sponsors philosopher and music theoretician al-Farabi

945

A Buwayhid emir takes the throne in Baghdad, leaving the caliph only a figurehead

969

Fatimid caliph al-Muizz conquers Egypt from the Abbasids

at two-fifths instead of a half. In certain parts of the empire, a permanent land settlement system from the time of the Islamic conquests of Babylonia, Chaldea, Iraq, Mesopotamia, and Persia, most importantly the Khurasan region, was established so that no changes could be made in the rate of taxation. This evidence of the financial policies of the caliphate, although scanty, indicates that had the proper political preconditions been established the Bayt al-Mal could have gone much further in promoting crucial development within the agricultural sector.

Aside from its lending capabilities, the Bayt al-Mal also had the ability to borrow for the state in time of emergency, a privilege which, as we will see, became the vehicle for a monetarist penetration into the political machine of the caliphate. At its highpoint, the Bayt al-Mal must have been a large and extremely important institution, for the treasurer of the bank was considered to be one of the most prominent public servants. The bank was divided into three sections, the Muslim Bayt al-Mal, the caliphal Bayt al-Mal, and the secular wing. The secular branch covered the needs of the commercial and agricultural sectors and hence offered the greatest capacity to fund a centralized, growing economy. However, the burgeoning activity of the private money-lending sector ultimately rendered

the state bank a bystander to the economic boom of the early Abbasid period. These private money-lending institutions were almost invariably tied to merchants whose trading surpluses were used to extend credit.

There was virtually nothing that late medieval Europe possessed in the way of banking and credit instruments and institutions that had not already been established centuries before in the Orient. In fact, much of the banking expertise of the great medieval Lombardy banks of Northern Italy had been transmitted from the Islamic East via Jewish merchants and money-lenders. (Byzantium, of course, also played a definable role, particularly in Italian banking via Venice.)

The most noteworthy feature of Islamic banking was the international use of paper money to mediate trade—an innovation borrowed from the Chinese. The widescale use of the *suq* (check) and the bill of exchange enabled Islamic traders to conduct business from Europe to the Pacific coastline of China. The bill of exchange normally had a life of forty days during which, for example, it could be issued in Baghdad and cashed at a bank in North Africa. Travelers and merchants could be issued a check (a kind of traveler's check) worth thousands of dinars which could then be honored thousands of miles away from the point of

ibn-Sina

Invasion of the Turks



972

Cairo founded as the new capital of the Fatimid caliphate

980

Ibn-Sina born

1029

Seljuk invasions of Khurasan

1037

Ibn-Sina dies

issue. While such developments produced the most unified and expansive trading networks ever, the misuse of the resulting wealth set the stage for the demise of Baghdad as the center of a commercial empire.

### THE ROLE OF THE JEWS

The primary flaw in the economic policies of the Abbasids was their inability to enforce a dirigistic government policy whereby the massive surplus value generated by newly expanded trade would be reinvested as social surplus to insure a higher level of social productivity in the future. Certainly the institution of the state bank and certain features of the highly efficient and complex Abbasid bureaucracy could have supplied the technical means to this end. But the political alignments around the Abbasid court militated against such a development, and caused the Ismailis to break with the Abbasids. As we shall see, too much of the immense wealth of the Abbasid caliphate was lost in various speculative ventures which ultimately destroyed the very basis of the realm's most basic form of production, agriculture.

Specifically, the city of Baghdad went through an economic boom-bust cycle, in which profit-hungry

Arabs, Persians, Christians, and Jews jointly contributed to the city's economic and political collapse. The roots of this monetarist cancer extended back in time long before the advent of Islamic civilization, to the days of Ptolemaic Alexandria and even further back to ancient Babylonia.

The populous Jewish trading communities of the east and the Mediterranean area had always played a prominent role in international trade and finance. For this reason, with the advent of Islamic civilization Jewish merchants had an equally important function in extending worldwide trade. One of the most renowned of the Jewish trading clans was known as the Radiniyya, or Radinites. Based in the Ahwaz district of Babylonia, the Radinites had trading colonies during the Islamic period that extended from the Rhineland in Europe across North Africa and through the Far East to China. As was the case with numerous other Jewish tradesmen, the Radinites had been trained in all facets of international trade and money-lending and money-changing, and thus were best situated to play a unique role that neither Muslim nor Christian could fill. This is most dramatically borne out by Caliph Harun al-Rashid's deployment of Jewish merchants to the court of Charlemagne, to function as diplomats, tradesmen, and bankers. Whereas a Muslim "infidel" would have

The Crusades



1055

Capture of Baghdad by the Turk Tughril Bey

1095

Beginning of the Crusades

1146

Fall of Fatimid rule in Egypt

1204

Pope Innocent launches a bloody crusade against the Lanquedoc in southern France, a major cultural center for transmitting Islamic philosophy and science

had some difficulty in being accepted at the Christian court of Charlemagne, Jewish bankers from Baghdad were readily welcomed.

A brief reference to the Radinites by the ninth century historian Abu al-Qasim 'Ubayd ibn Khurradadhbah in his *Book of Routes and the Kingdom* points to the prominence of the Radinites:

“These merchants speak Arabic, Persian, Roman, Frankish, Spanish, and Slavonic. They travel from the east to the west and from the west to the east by land as well as by sea. They bring from the west eunuchs, slave girls, boys, brocade, beaver, skins, martin furs and other varieties of furs and swords...”

Ibn Khurradadhbah describes the extensive trade routes of the Radinites spanning the entire Old World. The Radinites are believed to have set up the first international banking operations at the court of Charlemagne, having established comparable operations in Palermo, Terracina, Gagliari, Naples, and Merida. Moreover, the Franks employed these same Jews as bankers and merchants in Cologne, Magdeburg, and Narbonne.

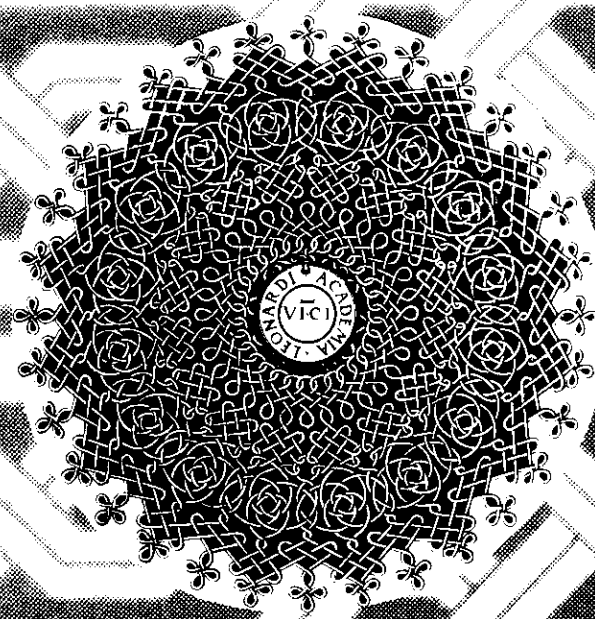
So widely dispersed were Jewish merchants that throughout the eighth and ninth centuries the word 'Judaeus' was synonymous with 'mercator' (merchant).

Whatever trade was conducted in the Mediterranean was dominated by Jewish merchants. In the Middle East, Jewish tradesmen had colonies in all of the leading commercial centers, and large volumes of trade to India and points further east were handled by Jewish trading colonies extending into China.

The Jewish community did not escape the political polarization of Islamic society. Both the Ismaili tendency and the Sunnis with their politically allied “moderate” Shiites found support from various factions among the Jews.

It is a sad and curious fact of current historical accounts of the Jews in medieval Islam that very little emphasis is put on the Jewish cothinkers of the Ismailis. A case in point is the highly respected book on the subject by Dr. Walter Fischel. Fischel's discussion of the significance of Jews in the development of Islamic society, correct as far as it goes, is restricted to the contributions of Jewish bankers and merchants. Unfortunately, Fischel ignores a more provocative and fundamental aspect of Jewish participation in the development of Islamic society, within the realm of thought. No modern-day historian of the Jews in the Middle Ages has adequately detailed the political and philosophical contributions of Jewish intellectuals to developing humanism within Islam.

Logo of Leonardo da Vinci



1220-1225

Genghis Khan devastates Persia

1258

Mongols capture Baghdad, ending 500 years of Abbasid rule

1343

The Black Death sweeps Europe and the Mideast

1438

Plethon Genesthos, the great Byzantine economist and philosopher and a student of Islamic thought, goes to Florence at the invitation of Cosimo de Medici to found the Florentine Platonic Academy, center of the Florentine Renaissance

Fischel lauds the Jewish bankers of Baghdad who were not in the lineage of Jewish humanism, but rather were allied to monetarists in the Arab and Persian camp who were ultimately most responsible for the destruction of the city of Baghdad. Ironically, Fischel compares these bankers of medieval Baghdad to the Rothschilds of our own epoch.

Fischel's observation regarding the similarity of the Baghdad bankers to the Rothschilds is stunningly accurate. The two partners in Baghdad's largest Jewish banking house, Aaron b. Amram and Joseph b. Phineas, emerged in the early tenth century possessing a level of power unprecedented for private bankers within the Baghdad government structure. Like the Rothschilds, they had begun as merchants, eventually (as was common in the period) using their profits to extend credit for further return. They acquired some of their extensive wealth initially through tax-farming their native Ahwaz district at a time when agricultural productivity was declining along with the economic output of the entire eastern sector.

The question of credit and usury was an intensely debated political subject within Islam. While Judaism condoned usury, Islam only approved of credit within the restricted arena of purely commercial use. The fine legal points of credit, therefore, became a crucial political fight between various schools of legal thought. The eleventh century legal scholar Sarakhsi declared that "selling on credit" is an absolute feature of trade:

"We hold that selling for credit is part of the practice of merchants and that it is the most conducive means for the achievement of the investor's goal which is profit. And in most cases, profit can only be achieved by selling for credit and not selling for cash..."

"Proof that selling for credit is an absolute feature of trade is found in His statement, may He be exalted, 'unless it be local trade that ye are conducting amongst you.' This shows that trade can also be long distance, and that the latter type cannot come about except by selling on credit."

The debates over credit focused on the question of just how liberal terms of issuance should be, and involved principally the two predominant legalist schools, the Hanafi and the Shafi. In one known instance the fight involved the legal question of extending loans to newly formed business partnerships. The Hanafi argued in favor of giving credit to a partnership based on good reputation, whereas the Shafi insisted that some capital had to exist within the new partnership to insure its credit-worthiness. While these legal disputes raged, there occurred a monstrous increase in speculation in every imaginable form. This speculative binge was paralleled by a constant decline in real economic growth in the ninth and tenth centuries. In this context, Fischel notes that at about

the same time Baghdad came under the financial domination of its own Wall Street, Aun Street, which was "cornered" by Amram and Phineas.



By the end of the ninth century the golden years of Baghdad were over, undone by a calcified and hideously reactionary ruling elite. At this point the Ismailis began to accelerate their propaganda campaign through the caliphate. Knowing that the city of Baghdad was irrevocably lost to their cause, the Ismailis embarked upon one of the boldest political ventures in human history: they began to actively organize for the creation of a new city to be the center of world trade. Nearly a century later their efforts bore fruit with the founding of Cairo, the "city of victory," the newly constructed capital of the Fatimid caliphate. Yet alongside this revolutionary drive, Baghdad was plunged into the throes of deepening internal political strife as a result of a collapsing economy—a process that left the city in shambles, and all too soon extended to Cairo as well.

Despite the achievements of Mamun, his reign saw the beginnings of a process of increasing political instability led by the Sunni. Backed by reactionary feudalists and aristocrats of both Persian and Arab stripe, the Sunni violently opposed the alliance of enlightened aristocracy with those among the merchants, artisans, and intelligentsia who favored a humanist outlook. It was this orthodox ruling elite that was behind the emergence of rabid Islamic sects such as the Hanbalites and the Asharites. The confluence of rising agricultural taxation and declining production, which forced farmers and peasants into the cities, plus the emerging reactionary orthodox movements, made for a volatile combination which was used against the humanist networks opposed to the caliph. Despite Mamun's efforts to stop the Hanbalites through a state-ordered inquisition, the demonical sect and its Kuranic fanaticism persisted, and ultimately was responsible for subverting and destroying the Alid Mutazilites at the end of the ninth century.

As a result of the continued instability of Baghdad,

Mamun's successor, Caliph Mutasim, a man of considerably weaker character, relocated the seat of government to a newly constructed site north of Baghdad, Samarra. The move had a twofold impact on Baghdad's economy. First, the economic cost of construction of Samarra was enormous, and put a tremendous strain on the finances of the caliphate. Second, and even more important, Baghdad was depopulated and its lucrative markets experienced serious losses because of the move. The construction of Samarra signaled an irrevocable turn by the Abbasids that marked the end of Mamun's policies. Mutasim, shortsightedly, made perhaps the most fatal decision in the history of the caliphate when he began to insulate himself from Mamun's progressive Alid constituency by using increasing numbers of Turkish mercenaries to strengthen his command over the military. This immediately created tremendous resentment throughout the Persian sector, and from that time onward the Turkish guard gained ever more strength at the caliphal court. By 847, newly appointed Caliph Mutawakil announced the official end to caliphal support for the Alid policies of Mamun. Mutawakil, meanwhile, like his short-lived successors, became the political pawn of the backward and ever more numerous Turks.

This situation was read by the Persians as the ultimate act of alienation, and marked an escalation on the part of the enlightened emirs to establish their own independent power bases aloof from the central government. In so doing they solicited the aid of some of the world's most brilliant minds. Accompanying this process, the politics of the eastern sector of Islam came increasingly under the influence of the Ismailis through their efforts to establish a new economic order, a new Ismaili government. A central feature of Islamic politics became whether or not the Ismailis could win political support from a sufficient number of princes. While they welcomed the transformation of their respective capitals, such as the famed Bukhara, into metropolises that rivaled Baghdad, they hesitated to fully back the strategic alternative offered by the Ismailis. Nonetheless, during the period spanning the tenth and early eleventh centuries these various satellite emirates rekindled the great renaissance of thought begun in the original Baghdad center. This renaissance was further stimulated with the construction of some of the east's most acclaimed learning institutions in Cairo in the last half of the tenth century.

Islamic civilization at this time faced a profound political crisis. Without open political support for the Fatimids from these emirs, particularly those east of Egypt, the entire Islamic realm faced total collapse.

Two interrelated factors shaped that political reality. As the Sunni-Shiite-orthodox faction began to increase its reliance on Turkish mercenaries, it created an

uncontrollable Frankenstein which decisively contributed to the destruction of the caliphate. Second, the enlightened emirs' inability to effectively fight this alignment was reinforced by the presence of orthodox networks implanted throughout the eastern sector which threatened revolt if this or that local emir tried to renounce his allegiance to Baghdad. The case of the Samirid emirate is a classic example, where a fight broke out within the ruling elite over continued allegiance to Baghdad versus to the Ismailis. In sum, the stark choice that every emir faced as Islam went into the tenth century was to break with Baghdad's ancien régime before it was too late to salvage it, or be consumed by a Sunni-Turkish alliance. It was this intense conjuncture that produced the great Bukharan philosopher and strategist ibn-Sina in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.

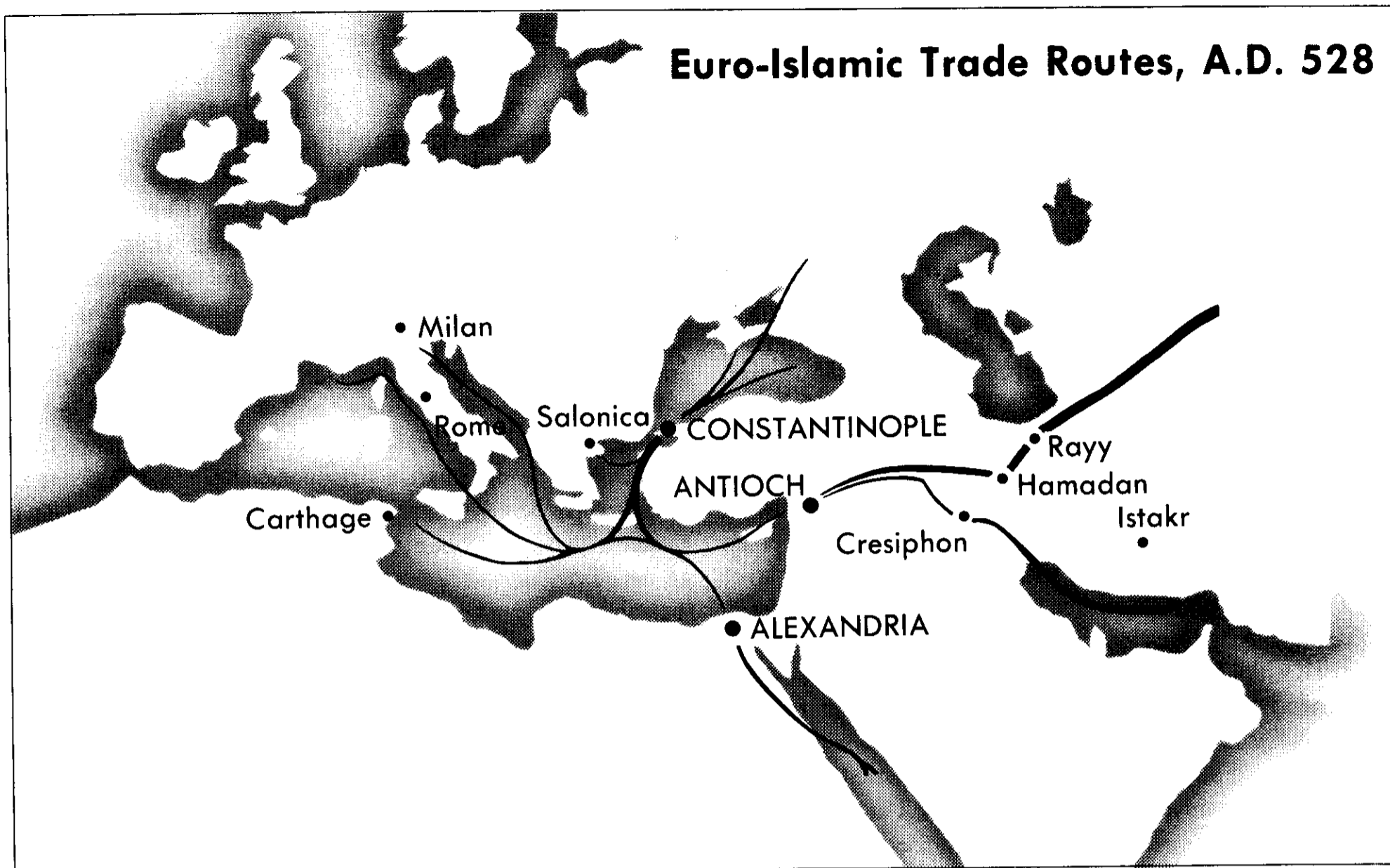
As early as 800, but particularly after 900, the caliphate fragmented into a number of semi-independent emirates, many with discreet pro-Ismaili sentiments, such as the Hamdinids (whose most revered emir, Said al-Dawlah, patronized al-Farabi and the poet al-Mutanabi). During this same period a set of events further undermined the power of Baghdad by hindering its vital trade routes to the east.

In the year 869, the worst slave rebellion in the history of Islam broke out in the marshes east of Basra. Known as the Zanj rebellion, it did not end until 883. In 878, Baghdad's chief far eastern trading partner, Canton, which through the course of intensive trade with Islam had become a virtual city-state with a large Muslim trading community, was suddenly swept by a bloody insurrection anticipating the replacement of the weak Tang dynasty by the Sung. The two uprisings seriously set back Baghdad's trade with the east, which had passed primarily through the port of Basra, on which the violent Zanj rebels inflicted severe damage, as well as on other crucial trading depots on the upper Gulf. Significantly, this turn of events caused a portion of Baghdad's trade to be diverted to the Red Sea and Egypt.

The Zanj rebels were known to have had the backing of the Ismaili-allied Carmathian sect, which had a strong political influence on the eastern side of the Arabian peninsula and was actively involved in the struggle to undermine Baghdad; it was on this basis that the Carmathians worked with the Ismailis, although this alliance was often turbulent and at times completely severed.

In the latter half of the ninth century the Ismailis began a process of colonizing North Africa in order to build up the political foundation for the eventual establishment of a countercaliph to Baghdad, one strategically positioned to gain economic hegemony in the Mediterranean. Egypt was regarded as the center-





piece of such a strategy. The Ismaili leader Ahmad ibn-Maymun, in collaboration with Madhi (Imam) Ubay-dallah, began the North African colonization, with the goal of capturing the Nile delta. In tandem, the Ismailis began to step up their propaganda campaign, which historian Philip Hitti correctly termed "the most subtle and effective politico-religious propaganda the world of Islam ever experienced."

One of the most formidable aspects of this organizing effort was its emphasis on education, for which purpose the Brethren of the Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa) was formed. Estimates are that the Brethren issued at least 50 volumes, which unified all branches of human knowledge into one compendium. Contributors to the work, known as *The Epistles of the Brethren of the Purity*, included the most prominent humanists of the day, notably ibn-Sina and al-Farabi. The *Epistles* were produced over a long period of time to serve as the basis for waging an intense intellectual battle against the orthodox Shiite-Sunni alliance, using education on the highest scientific level to build a cadre force in support of founding a new humanist state. In this critical respect the Brethren of the Purity was strikingly similar in its mode of operation to the European Brethren of the Common Life organized four centuries later. By no coincidence, the founders of the European

brotherhood were versed in the most advanced Islamic thought.

The Carmathians' role in supporting the Ismailis cannot be underestimated. The Bahrain-based sect was primarily instrumental in setting up numerous guilds and political cells that acted as a forceful backup to the Ismailis. Noted French Islamicist Louis Massignon has put forth a convincing argument that the Carmathians in fact organized the guilds explicitly as a political strike force.

A section of the *Epistles of the Brethren of the Purity* directly takes up the question of labor power and its relationship to the perfecting of the craftsman and the artisan. The Ismailis were not superficially discussing a worker as a simple laborer, but as an individual with an absolutely necessary role to play in the perfecting process of the human species as it acted on the universe:

"Know that the perfect manufacturing of an object indicates the existence of a wise and perfect artisan when he is veiled and inaccessible to sense perception. He who meditates upon botanical objects will of necessity know that the being of the reign issue from a perfect artisan."

The connection between the creative potential of the wise and perfect craftsman to that of the creative potential of God is stressed here. Importantly, the

notion of the veiled or inaccessible artisan is a direct reference to the clandestine nature of the Ismailis and their political cadre.

The issue of the political guilds became an arena for fiery confrontation between the Ismailis and their Sunni opponents, who repeatedly attacked the guilds. Later, under the Fatimids, the guild organization enjoyed great freedom and unprecedented prosperity.

Corresponding to the usurpation of caliphal power by the Turkish mercenaries following the death of Mamun, the latter half of the ninth century saw a rise of organized reaction. Movements, notably the Hanbalites and the Asharites, were created in order to undermine the growing support for the emerging Ismaili tendency. During this period converted Mutazilite al-Ashari became the key spokesman for the reaction and devoted himself to devising the counter-epistemology to that of the Ismailis. Like his successor al-Ghazali, al-Ashari set out to build a synthetic ideology that would linguistically give religion a gloss of reason, while denying the content of reason as developed by the Ismailis. Stanley Lane-Poole wrote in the late nineteenth century of al-Ashari:

“He saw that without logical training of their opponents, the orthodox party could not hope to maintain their ground, and he at once introduced into traditional Islam the dialectical system of the heretical sect (the Mutazilites—JSW) in which he had been educated. This was his work; not to give the people a heaven-born revelation, not even to elaborate a new interpretation of Mohammed’s obscure sayings; to teach the upholders of the tradition how to defend themselves against the skillful arguments of their adversaries ... it effected nothing less than the overthrow of the liberal school, and the establishment of Asharite Islam, or at least forms of Islam mainly founded on Asharite principles, over the greater part of the Mohammedan world to this day.”

On his deathbed, al-Ashari is reported to have uttered his last words: “The curse of God be on the Mutazilites; their work is a delusion and lies.”

### INSIDE BAGHDAD’S ANCIEN RÈGIME

The history of the Phineas and Amram banking house and its insidious role in the development of the post-900 Baghdad caliphate is a textbook example of the destructive power of monetarism. Extant historical accounts from the period put Phineas and Amram’s emergence within the Baghdad political arena at circa 912-913, though there is sketchy evidence that they may have become active earlier. Notably, the two merchants, who are reported to have cornered the Baghdad financial markets and hence to have domi-

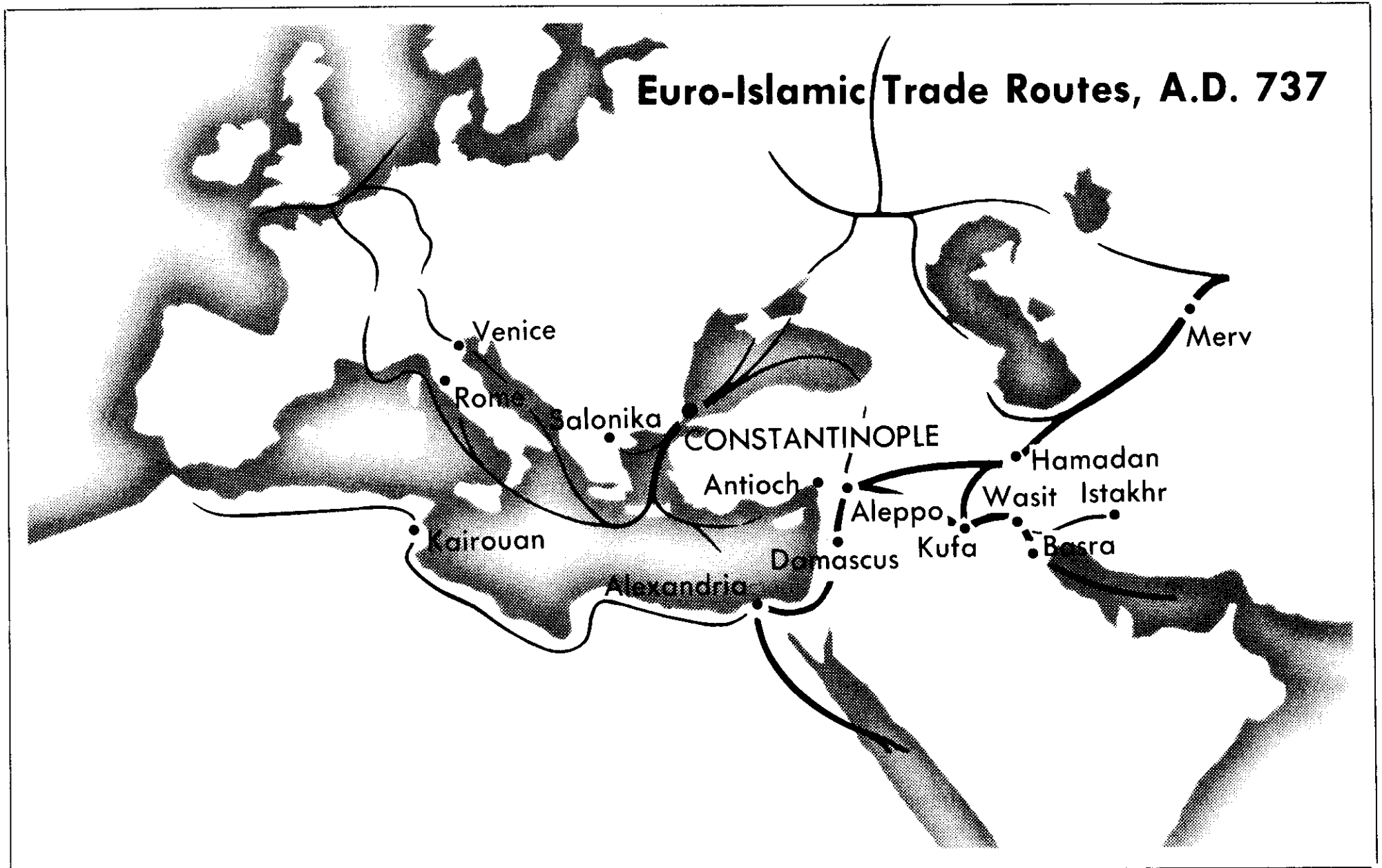
nated Aun Street, were engaged in a full-scale conspiracy with Baghdad’s most inscrutable vizier, ibn-al-Furat. Thanks to the influence of al-Furat, they became the official court bankers to the caliph. By 926, in the midst of the devastating collapse of the bureaucratic structure so critical to the well-being of the Baghdad government, a diwan for the *Jadhbah* (a finance ministry) was established to oversee the morass of loans being made to the floundering Bayt al-Mal.

By 932 the Baghdad Treasury, only 100 years before the richest in the world, was seriously depleted. The rancid heteronomy of Baghdad’s elite, grabbing for every last bit of wealth as it went down with the rotten Abbasid court, and the accompanying increase of exorbitant loans to the state, account for the accelerating rate of Baghdad’s economic collapse. Between the first quarter of the 900s and 1258, when the Mongol Turks ravaged the city, Baghdad remained little more than the corpse of its own magnificent past.

Amram and Phineas acted not only as the major funders for the rollover of Baghdad’s mounting debt, but also as the secret repository for “hot money” from Baghdad’s elite. Al-Furat is known to have placed two million gold dinars—much of it acquired through bribery and other forms of graft—in secret deposits with Amram and Phineas.

The position of vizier within the Baghdad bureaucracy was an extraordinarily powerful one, and following the return of the caliph to Baghdad from Samarra in 883, the office took on even greater responsibility in running state affairs, since the caliph at that point was nothing more than a religious figurehead. Ali ibn-al-Furat, more than any other of his forty-nine predecessors, used the power of his position to accrue a fortune thought to have exceeded 10 million gold dinars. The morality of al-Furat is best summed up by a remaining fragment attributed to him: “At bottom to rule is naught but a game of chance, a piece of jugglery. When one does that well, it is called politics...In matters of government, progress, even if not always in the right direction, is preferable to standing still.” Al-Furat in fact legitimized piracy as a means of debt collection, by giving his debt holders the right to loot ships docked at Basra containing imported goods from India.

Al-Furat’s wreckless financial policies were followed by the more austere efforts of Ali ibn-Isa. Ibn-Isa attempted to cure the economic ills of Baghdad through severe cutbacks, which, however, culminated in even greater financial dependency on the Amram and Phineas banks. According to accounts from a historian of the time, ibn-Isa had corresponded with a leading member of the Carmathian sect, Abu Tahir, who issued a strong warning to ibn-Isa expressing the growing discontent towards Baghdad:



“You and your master (the caliph—JSW) are unbelievers. You take what is not yours. God must have a Hujja (an Ismaili personage whose importance ranks just beneath that of the imam—JSW). Our Imam is the Mahdi Mohammed b. Futan b. Futan b. Muhammed b. Ismail b. Ja’far as Sadiq, who is in North Africa.”

The most disastrous expression of the widespread corruption enveloping Baghdad was the destruction of the Sawad, the agricultural system centered primarily to the south of the city. Through intolerable taxation and land speculation, and the use of the valuable lands for bribes and payoffs, much of the land became fallow and in many instances reclaimed by swamp. The situation is graphically illustrated in a description from the medieval Islamic account known as the *Tajarib al-Umam*:

“To his leading officers and to his courtiers and to the Turks he (the caliph) granted out land belonging to the state and to persons who had gone into hiding and to Ibn Shirzad (the leader of a small emirate—JSW), who owed dues to the Treasury on estates in private ownership. The result was that the lower part of the Sawad ceased to pay taxes and passed out of the control of the government officials—only a small part of it remained liable to taxation and of that taxation was *farmed out*. Most of the diwans became unnecessary

and ceased working, as their controlling branch and the whole body of offices were incorporated into a single diwan.”

The practice of making grants of land in the Sawad, even in many instances when that land was desolate, increased as the economic crisis intensified. In most cases the land was retained purely for speculation.

“Grants of land which had been recalled were often granted to persons whose sole object it was to get what they could throughout, to account for a part of it only, and to make no attempt at cultivation...the grantees managed their estates solely by slaves and factors, kept no accounts of profits, losses, and did nothing to further productiveness or improvement.

“The management of each district was handed over to a leading Dailimite who regarded it as a private abode and estate for his lifetime; these were surrounded by dishonest officers, whose plan it was to delay and to keep things from changing from year to year.”

The remaining cultivators were subjected to oppressive tax farming and looting:

“The weak were plundered...and the practice was abolished under which accounts were sent in to the diwans, or liability was enforced against an official, or a man’s grievance received attention, or a clerk’s advice

was accepted, all that was done in the matter of reckoning with the tax farmer was to recount the articles of the original contract, and so much of them remained valid but no inquiry was made into the dealing with the occupiers and whether they had been treated justly, nor any investigation whether waste had been avoided or had been admitted, or into undue collection of taxes, or into fines amounting to sheer acts of injustice or into arbitrary additions to the assessment or into items of outlay which are quite unwarranted.”

The practice of making land grants in the rich Sawad region dramatically exacerbated the economic crisis. The land’s value artificially increased through numerous short-term exchanges of ownership, upping its taxable value. The remaining cultivators became subject to oppressive tax farming, another form of looting by the government. Lawfully, this process was accompanied by ecological decay and depopulation. The results became strikingly evident during the tenth century, when large areas of Babylonia became swampland.

During the 930s the vizier to the caliph al-Radi paid back state loans by selling off crown lands. Throughout the course of the late ninth and early tenth centuries there were also random raids on wealthy merchants, many of whom were decidedly opposed to the caliph. These raids not only silenced opposition but yielded yet another source of plunder. A contemporary account describes the method:

“And to many prosperous merchants of gold and precious stones it was said: with you the Government has large deposits. And he rejoined: no, by God I have neithr little nor much. I have only made money in trade and never have I cheated... But they fumigated him with smoke from burning straw and singed him with heated bricks until life became a burden to him, and despirited, said he, would that all this money were in hell! He gave them what they wanted and then was he sent away, stiff and weary and sad.”

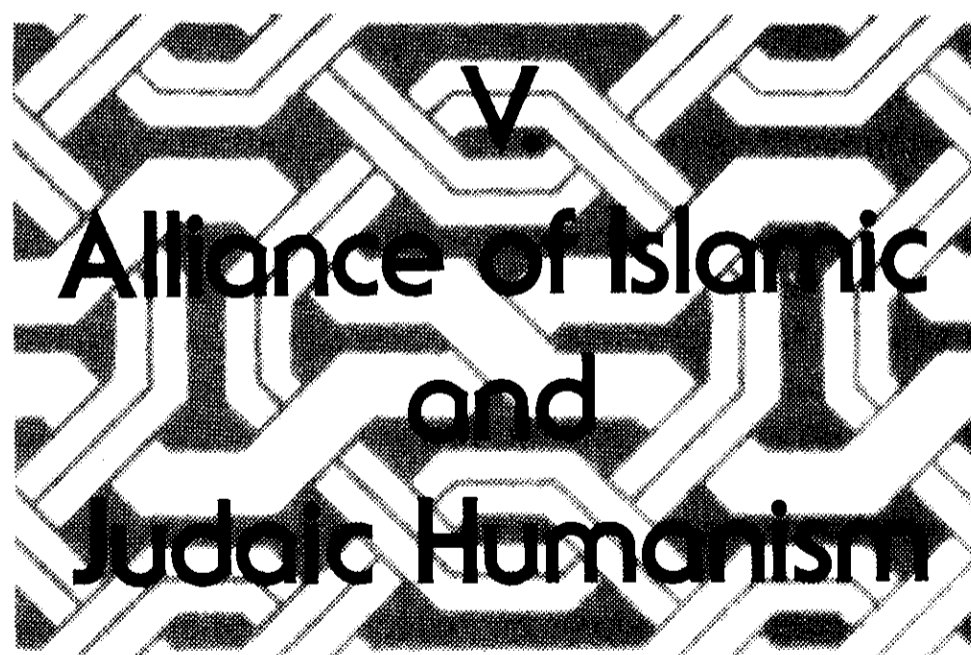
The rate of speculation on all vital commodities, most importantly food, also fueled the crisis. Baghdad had always been a center for speculation. As early as 800 instances of food speculation are reported, including one case in which two financiers speculated on so large a scale on the Babylonian harvest that they nearly gained a profit of 12 million dirhams, and then reaped a massive loss thanks to a last-minute “slump,” according to a ninth century report.

One of the worst side effects of the decline of Baghdad’s productive sector was a reduction in the tax base. This was further complicated by the periodic secession and refusal to heed the heavy tax demands of the central government by a number of provinces. For example, when the Saffarids established independence

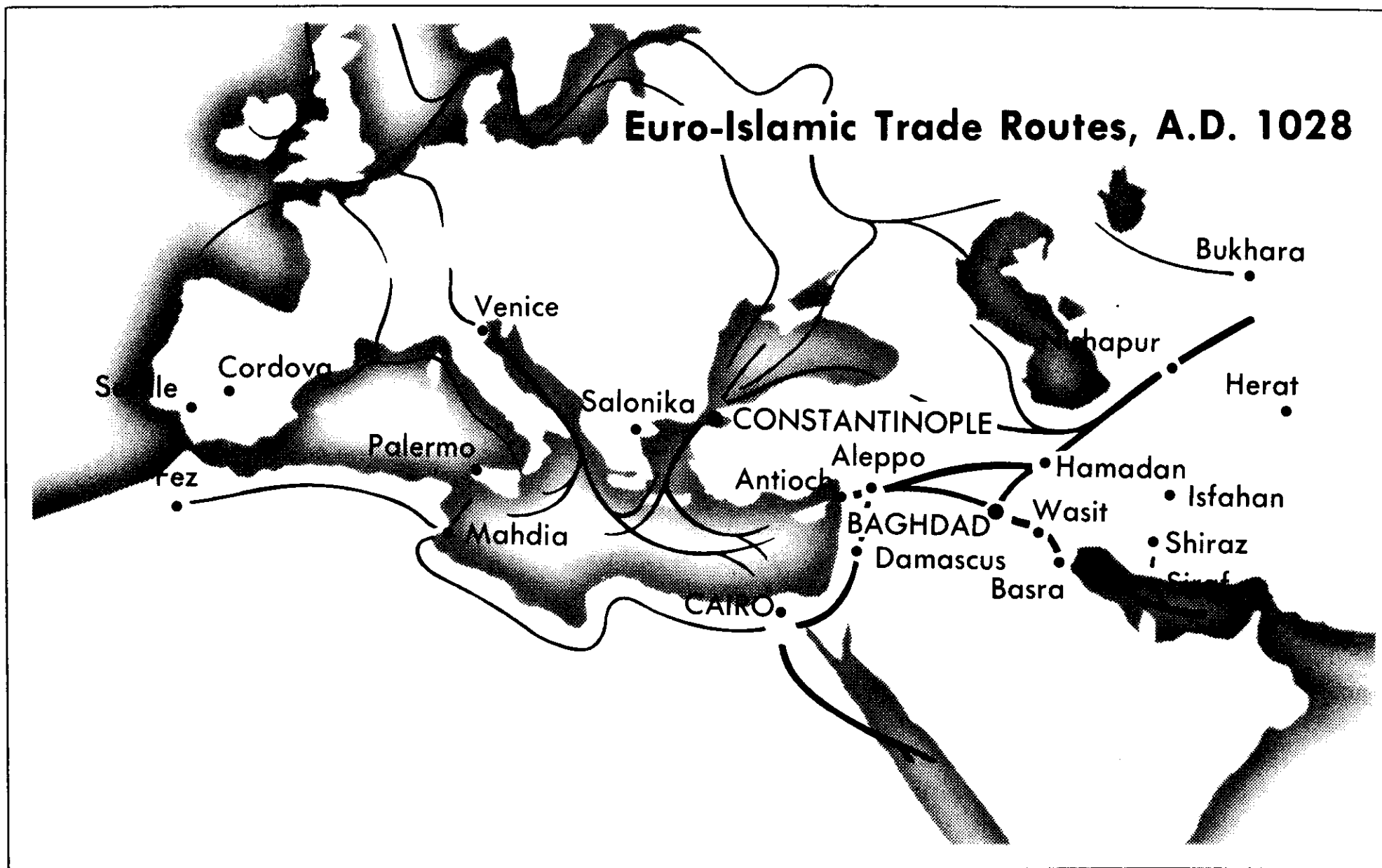
they took one of the most agriculturally productive regions, Fars, with them. As a result, the Caliph al-Muwaffiq attempted to call for a gigantic levy of funds from “merchants and even clerks and Treasury officials” for a military expedition to reclaim Fars.

Phineas and Amram began tax-farming the wealthy district of Ahway at about 912, right at the time when tax revenues from that district took a nose dive. A number of districts began to hold back tax payments in response to the central government’s financial policies. The dramatic decline in tax revenues, plus accumulating debt, forced the government to relinquish crown lands to debt holders. By no coincidence, Amram and Phineas received repayment for loans with Babylonian crown lands at about the same time. The process of economic decay peaked in 940 and was dramatically symbolized by the collapse of Baghdad’s great dome in that year.

In 945 the city put up little resistance when the Buwayhids extended the territory of their emirate to include Baghdad. In an effort to clean out Baghdad’s corrupt bureaucracy, their first move was to purge large sections of Baghdad’s banking community, a move that must have amounted to a de facto debt moratorium which then allowed the Buwayhids to embark on a program of reconstructing parts of the city. Comparable attempts were made in the agricultural sector by easing the tax burdens on the remaining cultivators. But Baghdad was never to reattain its former glory.



The Jews and Muslims who together professed the Ismaili commitment to a new phase of economic prosperity based on developing man’s intellectual-productive powers provide a powerful historical precedent for a resolution to today’s Mideast conflict. The Ismaili strategy aimed to bring to the Mediterranean an unprecedented level of commercial activity, based on increased trading alliances with Europe. The role of the Ismailis’ Jewish allies in realizing this strategy was



crucial. Without looking at the participation of the Jews in the Fatimid revolution, it would be impossible to assess developments either before or after the revolution.

The roots of the rationalist tendency within Judaism certainly precede Islam. As was mentioned above, certain Persian-linked Jews were valuable allies of the early Alids. The first institutionalized expression of the rational Jewish tendency within Islam occurred within the early Karaite movement in the eighth century. The Karaites shared the center of organizing with the Alids in the pre-Abbasid revolutionary center of Basra. Like the Shiite-Alids, the Karaites were splintered into several factions. Among the early Karaites a cult-like “Zionist” tendency emerged as a counter to the movement’s rationalist wing, which favored moving the center of world Judaism to Palestine, and therefore dismantling the Babylonian talmudic priesthood—a move essential to the success of the Fatimid revolution. Symptomatic of the fight between the two factions was an incident in the eighth century when Karaite leader Anan ben David was refused a high position, the Exiliarch (governor of Jews of Babylon) by the talmudists, despite his legitimate hereditary claim to the post. Anan, described as a “heretic” in standard Jewish histories, is quoted as saying, “If I had every

Talmudist in my body and committed suicide that would be the end of them all.”

Another Jewish intellectual whose role has been downplayed in the history books is the Persian Jew Hivi of Balk (Hivi al-Balki), whose thinking closely approximated that of the Ismailis. Hivi daringly opposed the Torah and the Talmud in his writings, the best known of which is his *200 Questions*, a series of ironical charges against the incoherence of the Torah.

The rationalist strain within the Jewish community opted for breaking with Baghdad and the caliphate’s allied orthodox power center in Babylonia. Paralleling the Ismaili efforts to organize a new caliphate, to be seated in Egypt, large numbers of Jews emigrated into the Palestine-Egypt region as well as into North Africa, and from both areas played a crucial role in establishing the Fatimid caliphate. So powerful was the Jewish motion around the Fatimid revolution that one less enlightened Jewish commentator from the period characterized this ecumenical thrust as threatening “the very existence of the Jews.” Although primary writings from leading Jewish Platonists of the time are today virtually nonexistent, it is known that the second leader of the Karaite movement, Benjamin Nahavendi, taught the Neoplatonic concept of the Logos as it was later developed by the great Jewish Platonist, Philo of

Alexandria. It was this rationalist segment of the Jewish people living under Islam that constituted the Sephardic tradition of Judaism, which laid the foundation for some of the greatest thinkers in Europe by dispersing new ideas in science and philosophy to the continent via Spain and Portugal.

Talmudic orthodox Jews and the Sunni orthodox Muslims were united against the Ismailis and their rationalist Jewish allies. Just as the Sunni leadership on more than one occasion formed countermovements to the Ismailis, so too a complementary phenomenon occurred on the Jewish side, in the person of one Saadya Gaon. Saadya emerged at the end of the ninth century to “revolutionize” orthodox Talmudism, performing a service parallel to that which al-Ashari performed for orthodox Islam, at precisely the time when the Ismaili-Carmathian alliance was beginning to gain momentum toward the Fatimid revolution. Saadya, who had direct political ties to the circle of Amram and Phineas, had long been engaged in an intense polemic against the ideas of Anan ben David and the early Karaites. So while al-Ashari was working to destroy the rationalist tendency within the Alid Mutazilites, Saadya was working against their Jewish cothinkers, the Karaites.

Both the conservative talmudists and the caliph were disturbed by the activities of the Jews and Arabs inclined toward Platonic reason, no doubt because of their potential alliance with the Carmathian-Ismaili movement. As one Jewish scholar quite correctly writes, “This was a time of disintegration of established beliefs, anti-Jewish and anti-religious movements couldn’t be combatted with mere traditional answers.” Hence the usefulness of an ideological “revolutionary” like Saadya.

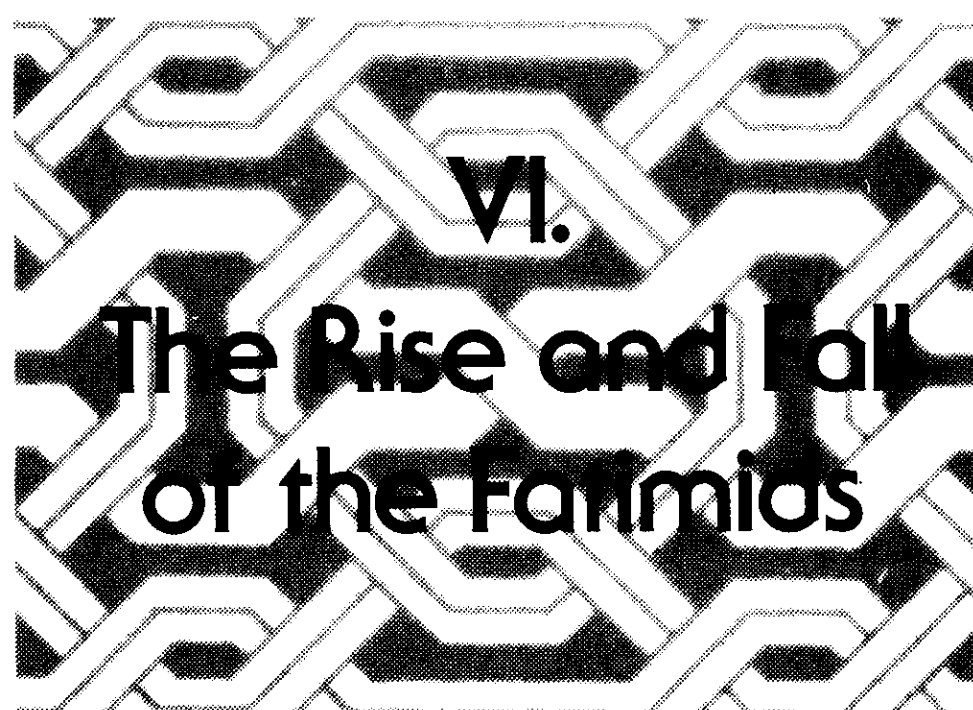
Certainly the nearly bankrupt caliph was keen on the survival of the orthodox talmudic wing of Judaism and its allied financial arm, for it was during this time that Amram and Phineas were making their first appearance at the court of the Caliph Muqtadir. In fact, the Geniza fragments record that none other than Saadya Gaon was a go-between for the Amram-Phineas concern and the caliph.

“And thus whenever you have transactions with the Government I admonish you to let us know about them, that we may consult with the prominent members of the Baghdad community in the midst of which we dwell, namely the sons of R. Netira and the sons of R. Aaron... and then the Government will deal with you according as the Lord will aid your helpers. Thus do ye and not otherwise.”

Extensive research convincingly indicates that the speaker in the above was Saadya Gaon, and that both

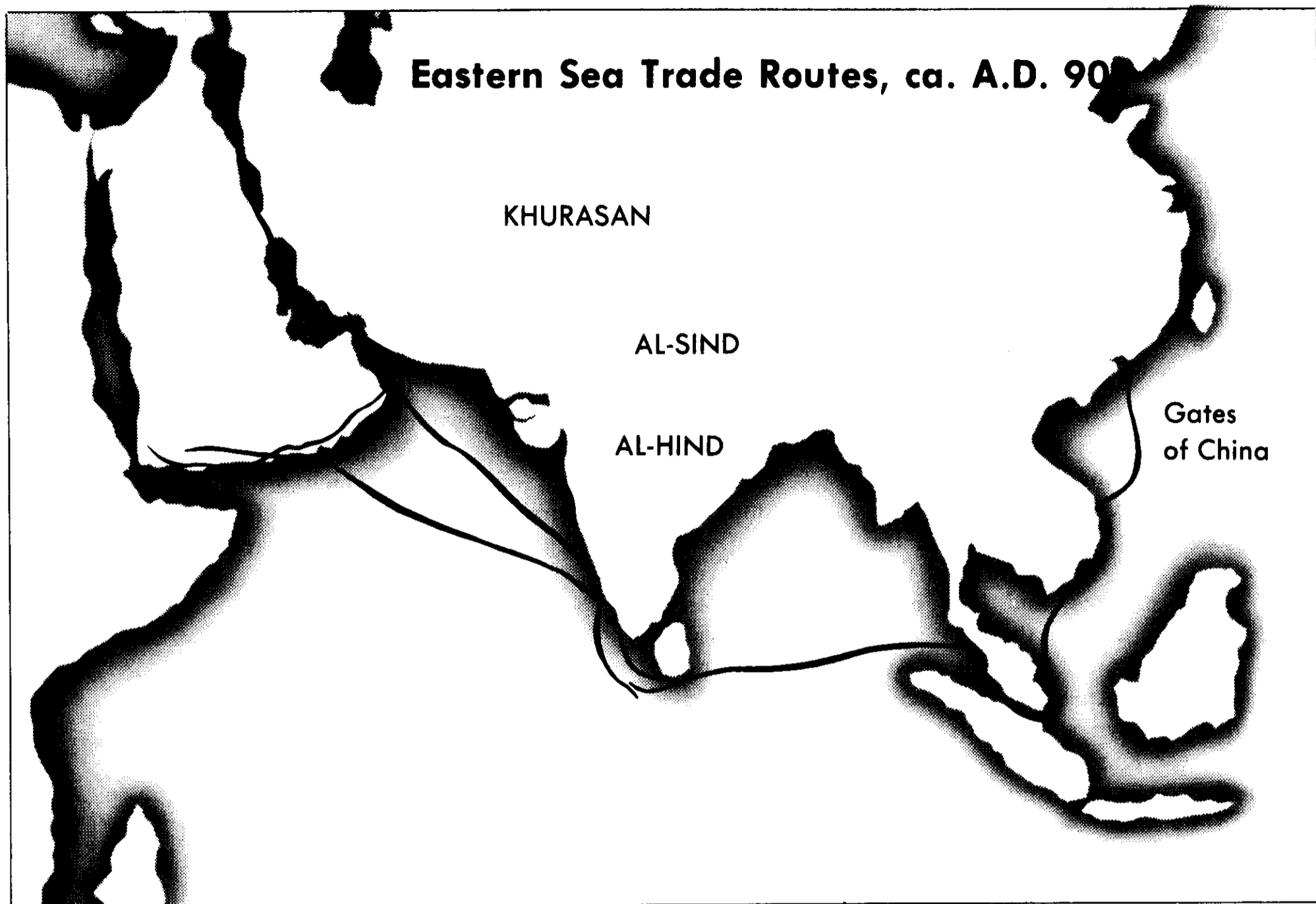
R. Netira and R. Aaron, of aristocratic Jewish lineage, were of the same families as Amram and Phineas.

Those currents against which Saadya was polemicizing were the immediate forebears of the great seventeenth century thinker Benedict Spinoza, who was a direct hereditary product of the best humanist Sephardic currents from the Iberian peninsula. It was primarily the Sephardim which made Spain bloom as an economic and intellectual center in Europe prior to the Hapsburgs and their monetarist-inspired inquisition against the Jews. The best of ibn-Sina’s and al-Farabi’s thought was expressed in the great intellectual tradition in Spain in the 11th and 12th centuries. The Jewish poet and philosopher Solomon ibn-Gabirol (Avicebron) produced a wealth of treatises and poems just following the death of ibn-Sina which profoundly express the great Persian’s thinking and acted as an important transmitter of ibn-Sina’s thought to Europe.



Efforts to trace back the Islamic origins of the Sephardic movement have been limited by an eerie paucity of surviving documentation on the humanist side of the Jewish community. According to scholars of the period, no early Karaite writings that have survived from the eighth and ninth centuries are sufficiently coherent to tell the modern historian much of anything. We can only surmise from numerous references in general histories of the period, as well as more specialized Jewish histories—limited as they may be—the overwhelming participation of the Jews in the Fatimid revolution, but it remains an area of research demanding concerted attention from qualified specialists.

Some clue to the extent of Jewish activities in the period leading up to the Fatimid revolution is offered by a number of assertions by historians, including Philip Hitti, that the first Fatimid *mahdi* (Imam) in North Africa, Ubaydallah, was in fact a Jew. And it is



widely appreciated that the mastermind of the Fatimid conquest of Egypt was Yacub b. Killis, a Jew converted to Islam.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews acted as invaluable intelligence agents. Because of their widespread mobility as merchants, they had the best knowledge of the politics and economics of any area where trade was conducted. This was certainly the case with Yacub b. Killis. Born in Baghdad, as a merchant he gained extraordinary knowledge of the Nile region following his emigration to Palestine. He then systematically shared with the Fatimid leadership this knowledge as they prepared a campaign to take the agriculturally and commercially rich Nile delta territory.

Shortly after the Fatimids established themselves in North Africa in 909, they shook the entire Islamic world by proclaiming a countercaliphate to the Abbasids. So dramatic was the gesture that the Umayyad emir in Spain, who was also domestically threatened by the Ismailis' underground organizing, proclaimed himself caliph as well. Islam suffered not just a schism, but a triple schism.

The pronouncement by the Fatimids was calculated

to radically intensify the factional battles ripping through the Persian sector of Islam. The Ismailis and their allies, the Brethren of the Purity, were at that time fighting with every available political and philosophical weapon to win the powerful emirs, primarily in the eastern section of the Islamic realm, to proclaim their allegiance to the newly founded Fatimid caliphate at the expense of Baghdad. Had they succeeded, the long-held Ismaili goal of a world economic empire would have been markedly advanced.

But the Fatimid revolution fell prey to the same monetarist disease that had destroyed the Abbasids, and the Ismailis' most important conceptions were never implemented.

The Fatimid caliphate slid into the corrupt clutches of rival Sudanese and Turkish mercenary forces. Correspondingly, monetarist financial interests made their appearance in Cairo, predominantly embodied in the Jewish Sahl Brothers bank. To the east, the reactionary Ghaznavid emirate was established by a Turkish mercenary from Bukhara. By 1055, the zealous orthodox Seljuk Turk Tughrel Beg invaded Baghdad and vowed to cleanse Egypt of its Ismaili "heresy." By the end of the eleventh century the situation within the

fragmented Islamic Empire was complicated by the first round of European Crusades. Against the backdrop of the intensifying heteronomic folly that riddled the political fabric of Islam, the stage was being set in Asia for the culminating round of destruction, the invasion by the Mongol Turks. The first omen of the impending Mongol sweep southward into Islam occurred in 1123, when the Khitan dynasty in China was overthrown by the Tatars. As a result, a member of the deposed dynasty fled to Turkestan to assemble a broad array of Turkish tribes around him. As the self-proclaimed Great Khan, he conquered Transoxiana in 1141, destroying the established Seljuk control of that eastern section of Persia. A little over a century after the collapse of Transoxiana, the Mongols sacked Baghdad and ended the 500-year Abbasid caliphal dynasty. The Ismaili leadership recognized impending doom, and valiantly fought for a unified effort to halt the Mongol catastrophe. Ultimately it was the shortsightedness of too many in positions of leadership, caught up in local intrigue, that was responsible for allowing the Mongol onslaught to consume what was once the richest area of the civilized world.

By the end of the eleventh century, the Ismailis had lost control of the Fatimid caliphate, ultimately thanks to a complex political intrigue scarring the history of the Fatimids. The two brothers who ran the Sahl Brothers Bank, Abu Sa'd and Abu Nasr, began their political ascendancy during the reign of Cairo's most psychologically troubled caliph, al-Hakim (996-1021), perhaps best known for his persecution of Jews and Christians alike. Following the death of al-Hakim, his successor, al-Zuhair, welcomed the assistance of Abu Sa'd, who became his personal purveyor. Abu Sa'd, like his predecessors Amram and Phineas, became intimately involved in court intrigue, and after the death of al-Zuhair in 1035 he entered into a conspiracy with the mother of al-Zuhair's infant successor, al-Mustansir, to seize full control of the caliphate; she, a Sudanese, was a slave girl who had been sold to the caliph through the good services of Abu Sa'd himself. Following al-Zuhair's death Abu Sa'd became her personal vizier and helped her build up her power base among the Sudanese mercenary forces. There were thus two competing viziers within the caliphate, one the mother's, the other the son's.

Abu Sa'd's financial services expedited a build-up of the Sudanese troops, which were then deployed against an equally abundant number of the opposing faction's Turkish mercenaries. According to the medieval historian Maqrizi, "The mother of the Caliph al-Mustansir, who ruled over the realm, being ill-disposed towards the Turks, incited her master Abu Sa'd al-Tustari to exterminate them; and the negroes were strengthened

as a consequence." Abu Sa'd, however, was caught by his Turkish adversaries and murdered in 1047.

There were two contrary processes working simultaneously within the Fatimid caliphate. One, mentioned above, was the moral decline in the life of the court that was responsible for a coup against the legitimate Ismaili lineage that had established the Fatimids in North Africa and Egypt. The other was the remarkable scientific and economic progress made despite that situation. For a little over a century the Fatimid capital of Cairo was the jewel of learning and commerce for the entire Mediterranean, and ushered in a new era of prosperity for the region. From Cairo's free universities, which were open to all peoples, the Ismaili code continued to spread internationally via a tightly organized team of educators. According to the contemporary French historian Guyard:

"The Ismaili doctrines were publicly taught in Cairo, universities richly endowed and provided with libraries, where crowds assembled to listen to the most distinguished professors. The principle of the sect being that men must be converted by persuasion, the greatest tolerance was shown towards other creeds. Mu'izz (the fourth Fatimid caliph) permitted Christians to dispute openly with his doctors, a thing hitherto unheard of...."

The famed Ismaili propagandist and poet Nasir i Khusraw, who was in Cairo in the middle of the eleventh century, at the time of the reign of al-Mustansir, reports what he saw:

"Everyone has perfect confidence in the Sultan, and no one stands in fear of myrmidons or spies, relying on the Sultan to oppress no one and to covet no one's possessions. There I saw wealth belonging to private individuals such that if I should speak of it or describe it, the people of Persia would refuse credit for my statements. I could neither limit nor define their wealth, and nowhere have I seen such prosperity as I saw there."

Nasir i Khusraw was of the same generation as the Promethean Ismaili strategist Hasan ibn-Sabah, the leader of what came to be known as the "assassin order" of the Ismailis. Following the death of al-Mustansir, his legitimate successor, Nasir was disenfranchised of his position as caliph in favor of the younger al-Mustali, whose selection was based on continued control over the affairs of the caliphate by an Armenian vizier.

The young Nasir at this point founded the Nasirite Ismailis, through which the legitimate Ismailis tradition was directly extended to the battle waged by Hasan ibn-Sabah to regain the Persian sector. Following a short tour of duty in the court of the Seljuks, ibn-



Sabah converted to Ismailism and went to Cairo, there becoming a leading Ismaili. He then returned to Persia to set up an Ismaili center at the mountain stronghold of Alamut, an impenetrable fortress in northern Iran. Although a detailed discussion of the heroic organizing drive of the Ismailis in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that the Ismailis built up a dense and intensely committed following that drew from all classes of society. They based their organizing on a program of agricultural and industrial growth, and wherever Ismaili outposts existed there was remarkable prosperity, appearing as oases in the increasingly impoverished Seljuk domain.

Hasan ibn-Sabah's epistemological adversary was the Ghaznavid theologian al-Ghazali, who considered Hasan ibn-Sabah the most dangerous man alive. Al-Ghazali attempted to devise a counterepistemology to that of the Ismailis through the ruse of mystical Sufism. He, like his equally evil predecessor al-Ashari, espoused the doctrine that man was ultimately impotent before God, and that the mind could not be known except insofar as a particular idea was first grasped; the development of an idea, for al-Ghazali, was sheer "revelation." He saw metaphysics as the "fruitful breeding ground of the errors of philosophers," and condemned anyone who studied the systems of ibn-Sina and al-Farabi.

The primary enemy of Hasan ibn-Sabah and the rest of the great humanists of Islam, however, was subjective—the hideous and enduring tradition of Oriental heteronomy. This, in the final analysis, was the ultimate cause of the destruction of Islamic society.

Although Ismaili presence was eventually shattered with the Mongol destruction of Alamut in 1258, the tradition of the Ismailis did not die. The ecumenical tradition of Islamic humanism continued to evolve in Europe, in the Platonic revolution at the twelfth century Cathedral School of Chartres and its allied translating center in Toledo, Spain, in the Hohenstauffen court of Frederick II, in the universities in Spain under Alphonso the Wise, and at the Oxford university of Grossteste and Bacon. These were the men and institutions most directly responsible for reawakening the intellectual life of Europe, which blossomed in the fifteenth century Renaissance in art, science, industry, and progress, in the spirit deriving from the best of Islam. This spirit is most eloquently articulated in a fragment from a twelfth century Syrian Ismaili:

"Know, oh my brother, that universal Reason is divine light which illuminates the surfaces of the universe. All which lives beneath it receives from it the clarifying power. Man, being nearer to it from his origin, receives the overflow more than all the other creatures. The light is science, and science is human reason."



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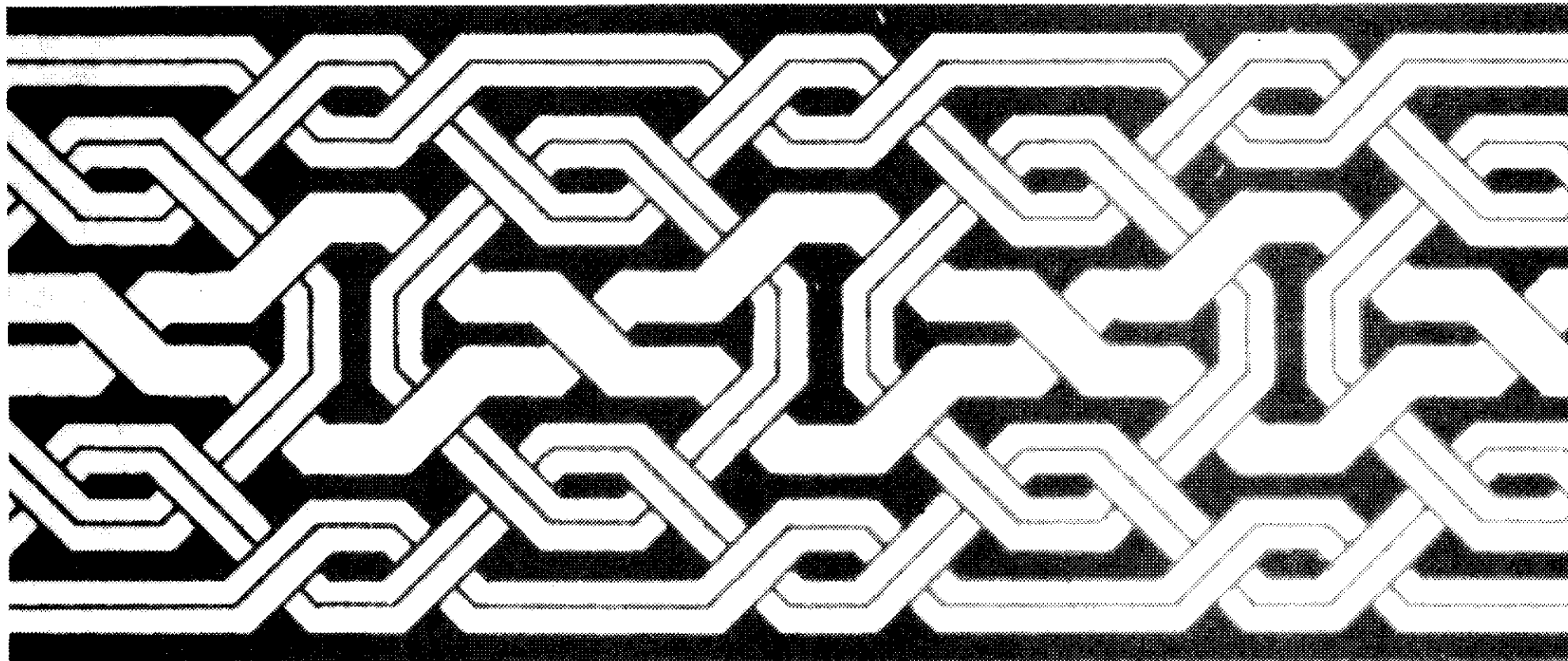
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# Al-Farabi and The Grand Book of Music

by Valerie Banks

In the coming months, Campaigner Publications will mark another milestone in its publishing history by printing for the Humanist Academy the first English translation of part of the *Kitab al-Musiqi al Kabir (The Grand Book of Music)* by Islamic scientist and philosopher al-Farabi. While sections of this, the first known music textbook, have been translated in part into Latin, German, Russian, Hebrew, Italian, and in toto into French, no portion of it has ever been published in English. This first by Campaigner is long overdue, for it will bring to the U.S. population, to Arab scholars, music students, and lovers of truth in general, a reaffirmation that the existence of the science of music is historically the reality of musical development.

Al-Farabi was a city-builder, that is, a scientist who mastered all areas of natural, philosophical, and political sciences. While he was by profession a musician and philosopher, his music and philosophy were determined by his political life. He was a musician because music was "within him" and because he considered it the highest of the "teaching sciences" through which the character and soul of a nation are built.

Born in Transoxiana, now part of the Soviet Union, near Samarkand, in A.D. 870, al-Farabi was educated mainly in Baghdad, which between the years 861 and 974 was ruled by a succession of caliphs who were

under the control of various Persian-dominated political factions, including the Buwayhids. The destruction of humanist-dominated rule in the city of Baghdad had been an ongoing product of the "Siege of Baghdad" civil wars, out of which came some of the most remarkable, as well as some of the most destructive, projects launched during the Arab Renaissance.

Al-Farabi was a music theorist but also a practical musician of great fame. His voice was said to be of exceptional quality, and his ability to move an audience through a number of emotional states with his singing was legendary. His practical talents gave him a distinct advantage over other theorists, who generally adhered to the common practice of separating theoretical from practical music.

Little is known about his life. Under the patronage of the Hamdanid sultan, Saif al-Daula, he settled in Aleppo, north of Damascus, where he died around A.D. 950. Under Saif al-Daula's patronage, al-Farabi wrote his most important works, including the *Kitab al-Musiqi al Kabir*, and earned a reputation as the greatest of Arab philosophers.

It should be noted that most leading figures of the Arab Renaissance enjoyed fame during their lifetimes as well as after, the population being highly politicized by years of factional battles between humanist and monetarist networks. So it was for ibn-Sina, for

example, who was known to lecture in marketplaces on questions of anatomy in medicine. There are accounts of a lecture that he gave on one occasion on "why the muscles of the leg are in the back rather than the front." As with those of ibn-Sina, al-Farabi's political works were published and read as political pamphlets by large sections of the population.

Though he spent most of his life in Aleppo, al-Farabi's contributions to music and political science were, and are, universal. In his autobiography ibn-Sina recounts that it was through reading al-Farabi's treatises on Aristotle and Plato that he, as a young man, finally came to understand metaphysics. Numerous other musicians and philosophers in Europe attested to the contributions to their work made by al-Farabi. It is highly probable that Guido developed his system of musical notation on the basis of al-Farabi's work. For example, al-Farabi's *Classification of the Sciences*, which was translated into Latin in the twelfth century by both John of Seville and Gerard of Cremona under the title *Des scientis*, was already known in Jewish schools by this time. It had been used by Moses ibn-Ezra (c. 1140) and condensed versions were still in use in Hebrew 200 years later as a standard guide for studying the sciences. Parts of the *Kitab al-Misiqi al Kabir* were also translated into Latin and used for courses of study.

#### THE GRAND BOOK AND UNIVERSAL LAW

Al-Farabi was called the "second Aristotle" during his lifetime and afterward. We can only speculate that this particular slander was inspired by the same networks that repeatedly attempted to assassinate him. If anything, al-Farabi was a follower not of Aristotle, but of Plato; his treatises on both men attest to this, and his *Attainment of Happiness*, for example, quotes extensively from Plato's *Timaeus* dialogue.

While al-Farabi's major work was the *Grand Book of Music*, he also wrote several other treatises on philosophy and political science, including critiques of the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, the *Virtuous City*, the *Political Regime*, and the *Attainment of Happiness*. Ironically, these much smaller works, though important in themselves, have since been graced with volumes of commentary, while the *Grand Book*, which is "larger than a breadbasket" and is agreed to be al-Farabi's major work, is treated with a degree of neglect that immediately calls into question the quality of the work that has been done on his other writings. There is a particular case in point we will deal with in this article concerning Mr. Moshen Mahdi, the foremost translator and commentator of al-Farabi in this decade.

The *Grand Book of Music* was the major music textbook of the so-called Middle Ages. It was taught not only in Islamic schools but in Jewish and Christian schools as well. In this book al-Farabi establishes the rigorous basis for the diatonic system, or even-tempering. His computations for defining the pitches of the musical scale, particularly the perfect third (which he considers a consonant interval) and the sixth, are exactly those used by J.S. Bach 900 years later. Technically, al-Farabi is indisputably correct; and it is his understanding of universal law, in which this work is grounded, that is the origin of this musical milestone. It is the same lawfulness that he applies to his understanding of philosophy and the natural sciences, and all for the creation of the Virtuous City.

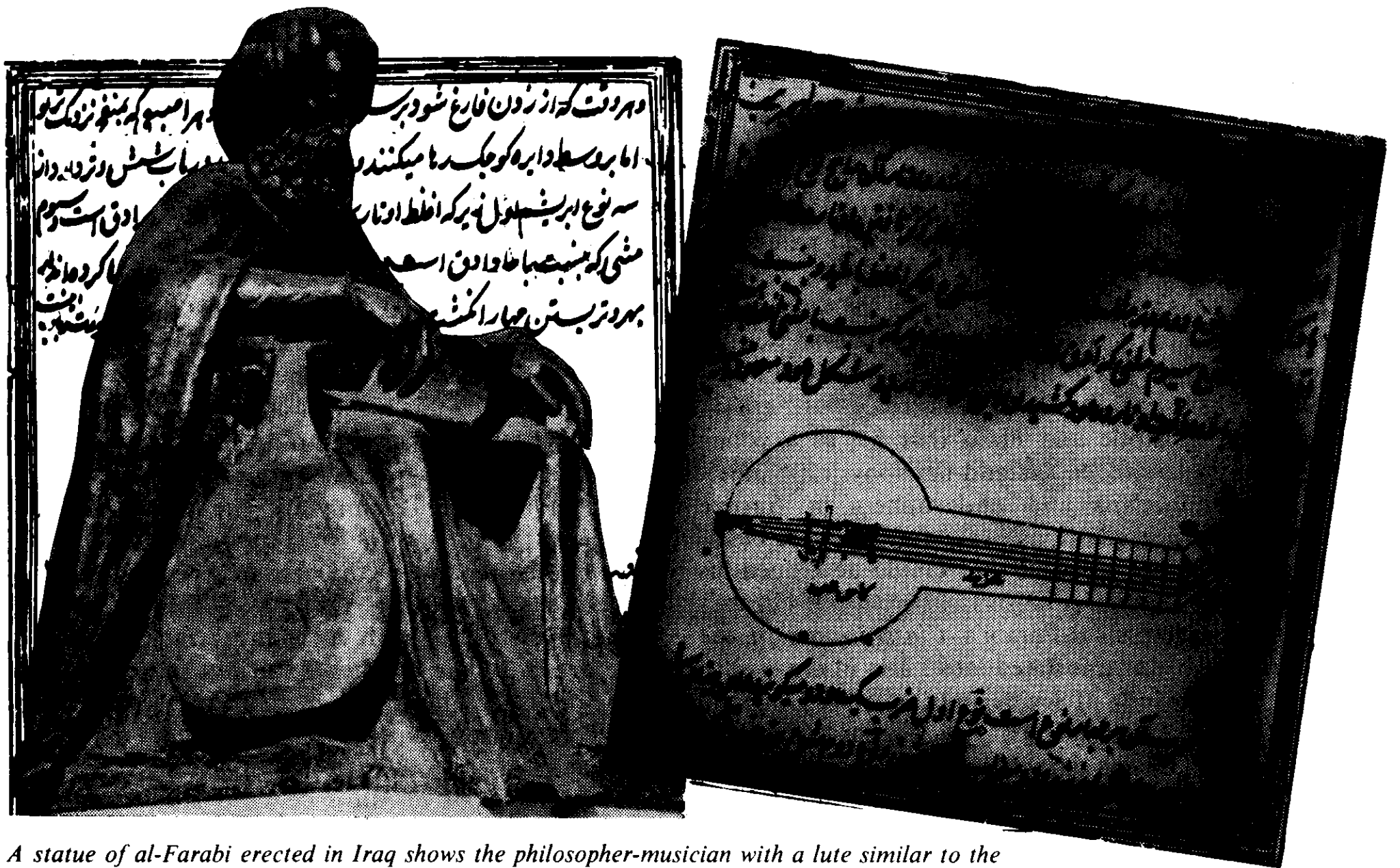
From this standpoint, the *Grand Book of Music* is al-Farabi's most important "political, philosophical, and scientific" writing. With as many Arab scholars as there are, why has this book still not been translated into English? The portion of the preface being translated by the Humanist Academy makes the answer apparent.

The *Grand Book of Music* contains insights into, for example, the fact that there existed during this period a keyboard instrument which could play through all the keys and was performed on by its inventor throughout the region—implying a dramatic rewriting of music history. The notion of a "step-wise" development of musical breakthroughs, in the construction of instruments as well as in musical composition, is refuted through this kind of information and supports more and more the notion that man, as long as he has lived in cities, was never a beast but was always man, the thinker and inventor, comparable to man today.

Man's only distinguishing marks are his ability to capture and use more efficiently the energy of the biosphere through his inventions. This idea, of course, puts anthropologists like Margaret Mead and others exactly where they belong, in a zoo. Al-Farabi states that the diatonic system in music is as old as human history! General ignorance of this fact demonstrates the importance of "who controls music." For example, St. Isadora of Spain wrote a treatise on even-tempering 200 years before al-Farabi.

The trash being spewed out at concert halls in this country under the guise of music should indicate the importance of "who controls music." No one with even a trace of musical sensitivity could swear before God or man that Mick Jagger can sing. I don't believe that anyone has ever confused screaming with singing, or the grinding of the belly with the playing of a musical instrument.

Nor would anyone with an appreciation for the quality of conceptual abilities required by musical



*A statue of al-Farabi erected in Iraq shows the philosopher-musician with a lute similar to the one described in a fourteenth century treatise on music.*

conducting mistake Leonard Bernstein for a conductor, and *never* for a composer. Ego mania, which Mr. Bernstein possesses in clinical quantities, may be effective when applied to the conducting of Stravinsky's works and other tribal rites, but never could a conductor with that kind of problem render a performance of Beethoven as it should be. Bernstein's "Mass" represents a milestone in this respect—it supplies clinical evidence that an egomaniac cannot celebrate God because he has no god other than that pagan figure known to some men by the name of "Sell Fish." Men in the "Sell Fish" line of work always tend to have a certain odor about them.

Why are people who do nonmusical things allowed on stage to do things that decent people would not dream of doing even in the privacy of their own homes (lest they be committed to the nearest mental institution for psychiatric tests)? There is only one reason—music is political. It always has been. It is used politically either for the creation of the virtuous city or nation, or for its destruction.

An important aspect of the British operation against music is the perpetuation of the lie that music is not political. "It's a matter of taste." "I like what makes me feel good." Horsefeathers! If one does not know what determines one's taste in music, then one has no taste because one cannot explain, lawfully, its existence.

If that is the case, then taste is but an opinion, given to a person in the form of a lie perpetuated by a string of "dead souls" paraded across television screens, in concert halls, and in the pages of gossip magazines. With perfectly capped teeth, they smile as they wiggle and glow, like so many dead fish washed ashore by the tide. The truth of music as it exists today is that there is but one conclusion: one can purchase it in a variety of forms from any drug dealer in the street. That's the politics of music as the British peddle it.

#### THE POLITICS OF MUSIC

Al-Farabi's conception of the politics of music is that it is the highest of the teaching sciences, that is, it moves the soul to desire the virtuous life and in doing so to find true happiness in the discovery of knowledge. That knowledge must in turn be applied to the solving of problems in the world, so that the development of society is perpetuated through the contributions its members make to discovering new solutions to problems on a continuous basis. This is what the British oligarchy has historically fought against — the attainment of knowledge by the general population such that it no longer tolerates the existence of the oligarchy.

Music is life. A political outlook that subscribes to austerity and death cannot produce music. Music is

regenerative. It can ease a troubled mind, mend a broken heart, but more important, it can move the soul, and therein lies its beauty. It is a mover: it provokes the desire that guides the will of man to take ideas, those products of the imagination, and through a sense of morality, force them to be born into reality.

Music is a science. Therefore, like all branches of science, it is based on certain fundamental principles. These principles are the same for all of science. According to al-Farabi, whether one pursues music, the highest of the teaching sciences, or physics, the highest of the natural sciences, or politics, the highest of all sciences, the principles that determine the development of knowledge in all scientific disciplines are the same. To attain the highest knowledge of any science is to understand the principles that generate knowledge.

Pity the poor biologist who looks for the secrets of life only through the lens of his microscope. If he would but focus his keen eye on the scores and his ears on the sounds of great music, he would find himself closer to making discoveries in biology. Likewise the philosopher who will not look at music, or, even worse, the musician who will not look at the science of politics.

This understanding is the key to al-Farabi's genius in the field of music. He understood that the principles that define music are the same as those which determine the highest political leadership. He wrote the *Attainment of Happiness* from this standpoint, and from this standpoint he proceeded to teach.

In *Attainment of Happiness* he states at the beginning: "The human things through which nations and citizens of cities attain earthly happiness in this life and supreme happiness in the life beyond are of four kinds: theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues and the practical arts." He then elaborates on these virtues and demonstrates how each is achieved. He develops a principle of achieving knowledge, which he then applies not only to the different branches of science, but to the city as a whole. The principle for discovery he develops as:

Having ascended to a principle B through things (A, A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>) that are known and that owe their existence to this principle, it is possible that there still will be other unknown things (A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>4</sub> ...) that owe their existence to this principle. Originally, the latter were hidden from us and we had no knowledge of them. But once we employ this principle B (which is now known to us) as a premise and proceed to know these other things (A<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>4</sub>, ...) that originate from it, B will supply us knowledge of both *whether* those other things are and *why* they are. For it is possible that many things (A, A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, ...) be originated from a single principle B, and that, when we begin, only one of them A is known to us, while the principle and the other things (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, ...)

that originate from it remain hidden. We ascend from one thing A that we know to gain knowledge of the principle B, and this one thing A will supply us the knowledge *that* the principle B exists. Then we employ the other hidden things (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, ...) that originate from it, and thus proceed to know both that they are and the cause of their being. If this principle B has a further principle C, we employ B again to explain its principle C; B will in turn supply us with knowledge that its higher principle C exists. We are thus employing B to explain two things: in the first (that is in the principle C) it supplies us with the knowledge only that it exists, while in the second, that is, the thing(s) that originate from it, but were at first unknown to us (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, ...), it supplies us with both the knowledge that it exists and the cause of its being....

This encompasses the development of the principles in the realm of theoretical virtues. In the deliberative virtues, these principles are applied to the real world. The reason is given in the example of the architect whose idea is there to be realized in the construction of a building. When, out of necessity, things that are perceived by the intellect become real, they bring with them not only their state as known by the intellect, but accidents which must accompany them if they are to have real existence.

These things perceived by the intellect are of two kinds, the natural and the voluntary intelligibles. Natural intelligibles exist outside of the soul and in nature only and, therefore, bring with them in their "species oneness" their "accidents." The voluntary intelligibles exist through the will of man and are accompanied as well by their accidents and states.

The deliberative virtues are necessary at this point, according to al-Farabi,

because voluntary intelligibles do not belong to things that are numerically one, but in their species or genus, the accidents and states that must accompany them vary constantly, increase and decrease, fall into combinations that cannot be covered by all invariable and unchangeable formal rules.

Thus the need for the deliberative virtue is established. In the preface of the *Grand Book*, al-Farabi states a similar conclusion about the science of even-tempering:

Although song is as natural to man as to the birds, it is not for this that music can lack the observations of the art which modifies it; because very rarely is this perfection presented in nature, and no perfection in all its parts.

This he has established as being grounded in the existence of accidentals both in the natural intelligibles and in those created by man. Therefore, it is in fact natural that the intervals as they exist in nature are not

perfect, but need the application of the deliberative powers of man (reason) to act on them in the way that al-Farabi does in the *Grand Book*. In this way, music becomes human, just as all science through the application of reason brings into being those things which are necessary for mankind's perfecting.

When the higher principle of humanizing nature is understood, then it is clear that the principle that determines the content of and quality of deliberation is the moral virtue. Thus the case of Aristotle.

## WHY WE NEED A COMPETENT TRANSLATION

If ever there was a man who reeked of immorality, it was Aristotle. If ever there was a man who could make Mick Jagger sit down in awe of the immensity of his filth, it was Aristotle. Apart from his inhuman feats, such as the poisoning of Alexander the Great, Aristotle is the only philosopher in history whose sum total of creative genius could fit on the head of a pin. His crimes are as numerous as the words (most of them stolen) he employed to say nothing. His legacy of the most evil doings in history against the human mind extends across centuries.

Al-Farabi, of course, understood this man and his musical theories as well as the rest of his philosophy. There are two examples worth noting. The first is al-Farabi's *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. This work, as well as the *Attainment of Happiness*, has been translated into English by Mr. Moshen Mahdi. Mr. Mahdi's work is representative of the best work in translation of al-Farabi and, therefore, serves as a good example of the problems involved.

In the first sentences of his work, al-Farabi states the following about Aristotle: "Aristotle sees the perfection of man as Plato sees it and more." Mr. Mahdi, in his translation, obviously had some problems with this because he writes in a footnote:

The expression "wa-akthar" ("and more") occurs also in al-Farabi's *Political Regime*. Like *polus*, *pleistos*, *pleion*, and so on, it can mean "more," "for the most part," "very much," "much too much," but also "go beyond the bounds," "have (or claim) too much," "do too many things," which again may be intended as praise or blame. This ambiguity characterizes al-Farabi's account of Aristotle's philosophy as a whole.

Mr. Mahdi is wrong. This ambiguity characterizes a joke on Mr. Mahdi and others who treat the question of their work on the philosophy of al-Farabi much too academically and, therefore, miss all of the "sign posts" to a good laugh. Al-Farabi was, after all, a great musician. He is just playing a little musical joke.

The second example is from the translation-in-

progress of the preface of the *Grand Book*. Before entering into a discussion of the derivation of the intervals of the scale through even-tempering, al-Farabi recounts how the different factions among the Greek philosophers stood on the subject. Aristotle was against even-tempering because it was "unnatural" to alter the intervals derived from the natural proportions, even though, for the most part, these intervals were unsingable without the aid of an instrumental accompaniment to keep the singer in tune.

The "natural" inclination of the human voice is to locate the relationships between tones, rather than to try to establish some "natural pitch," which is in fact unnatural. That is, when the human voice travels from one key to another, it sings the second key relative to the relationships between the intervals of the first. This is easy enough for the voice but represents a problem that can only be solved scientifically for musical instruments. Establishing harmonic proportions for these relationships so that instruments could be tuned to universal keys, such that one could play through the different scales, relatively, was the problem that al-Farabi took on, doing so from the standpoint of all that has been said about his philosophy.

In the preface of the *Grand Book*, al-Farabi comments on the positions held by the Greek philosophers on the subject. Both sides of the debate, he says, had knowledge of what the other was proposing in terms of the tuning of the scale. As for Aristotle:

Aristotle, in his second analytics, knowing the same, had already said that many combinations of speculation in the sciences are not borne out in experience, because things which are not necessary for the virtue and perfect substance of a thing are foreign to it and mere accidents: thus those results of proportions of the Greeks were outside the virtue of science, since with them the intervals of the Negam (scale) or natural modulation were altered, and the Itifaket or consonances that are formed or can be formed from the combination of their intervals were not perfected. This the Learned One said of Greek musical theory, not knowing, perhaps, the most delicate aspects of the science. What would he have said if he had been instructed and practiced in the delicate questions of it? He would have said, without doubt, that what was given out as beautiful invention was harmful wickedness: that it was corruption of music, and just as prejudicial to it as is to the body that which opposes and is contrary to its principles. Thus is the way all novelties of division and differences of calculations are; they cannot fail to pervert music, as long as they are not established on the most natural principles of science.

If Mr. Mahdi missed the first joke, perhaps he will

catch this one. Al-Farabi's opinion of Aristotle is far from ambiguous. He dislikes the man. Many scholars who have taken on the task of translating and commenting on the works of al-Farabi have missed the point. Though this problem is not irreconcilable, it exists because the translators refuse to learn from al-Farabi. The lesson here is very simple: if you want to know his philosophy, you have to know his music. But when asked recently about his knowledge of al-Farabi's music, Mr. Mahdi replied that he was only interested in al-Farabi's philosophy.

The principles that generate al-Farabi's music and philosophy are the same. For all its good intentions, Mr. Mahdi's forthcoming work on al-Farabi will fall short of its mark because he refuses to play for more than academic peanuts and, as the rules of the proverbial shell game go, only the keeper of the shells and the pea ever wins. Mr. Mahdi's work will be scholarly, but it will not be on the mark.

#### SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MAN'S SOUL

Compare Mr. Mahdi's response to that of the theoretical commitments now being undertaken by members of the World Community of al-Islam in the West. The motivation for a change in outlook was determined by the necessity to transform the human spirit at this point in the history of this nation. The theoretical virtue is abundant in this country, but the deliberative virtue, guided by a strong sense of morality, is lacking. Too many Americans are ruled by the laws of the "Blahs"—they "Plop" and "Fizz" on the weekends and go flat for the next five days. While they insist that this is "a matter of taste," it is only a symptom of a war being waged against them.

The deliberative virtue cannot be separated from the moral virtue. Through them is found a true happiness, but, without them, a society rots.

Neither the survival nor the destruction of a society is accidental in the banal sense; both are determined by the will of a population to create virtue, as expressed through the quality of its leadership. This is why al-Farabi places political science, the creation of the virtuous society, at the head of all the sciences. But the teaching of virtue rests in the hands of the educators. If their intellectual ability is not guided by this sense of morality, generations of children are lost, as in the United States today.

The teacher who smokes dope and enjoys the "Plop" and "Fizz" weekend syndrome perpetuates the problems of immorality among his students. Instead of educating, he stands in front of a classroom as a pitiful excuse for the rottenness the children before him are

subjected to. The teacher cannot build character if he has lost his.

In most cases, it is to the handful of students who reject the gutter of dope and rock culture that you must direct your efforts. This can only be done, however, if you get out of the gutter. Then, provided you know something of worth or, more importantly, are willing to learn from the work being done by the Humanist Academy and other institutions, like the U.S. Labor Party, you can begin to teach.

This approach works. The pot-smoking, LSD-tripping students will become the outcasts in an environment geared toward learning and exciting the imagination. They will be seen as abnormal rather than the ugly norm everyone else has to accept. There are few things worse than a classroom in which those few students who have come to learn are treated as abnormal and are not tended to by the teacher. An eighth-grader who "nods out" in class has no right to feel comfortable, and should be made to understand that he is wrong, even if it's the only thing he learns the entire year.

The teacher who thinks that through allowing such occurrences he is being "socially relevant" is wrong. Although it is not the child's fault that he lives in a gutter, it is your responsibility, at least, to make clear to him that the gutter is not a home, no matter how many prominent "wrigglers" inhabit it. He is not in good company.

The rock and drug culture in this country will have its counterpole. The Humanist Academy will supply that counterpole through its work, for example by releasing a part of the *Grand Book of Music* in English. Music that is appropriate to the idea of mankind as inventor and creator of higher orders of nature must be created if we are to free this country of the banal, throbbing noise it is subjected to.

We, of course, cannot do this alone. Others who understand this need in music and the arts in general must apply the principles for attaining happiness as al-Farabi expressed them 1,200 years ago. Only through this kind of approach can we begin the process of creating a generation of musicians in this country who can assimilate and produce music on the level of Beethoven or Mozart or Bach or al-Farabi.

It will take at least a generation to accomplish, but it means the future of man's soul. The entirety of the *Grand Book of Music* must be translated into English, so that everyone who is willing can learn through this man what music theory really is, in its active sense. Through this work, we guarantee the future; without it, the happiness all mankind should know on earth will never be known by most people.



# REVIEWS

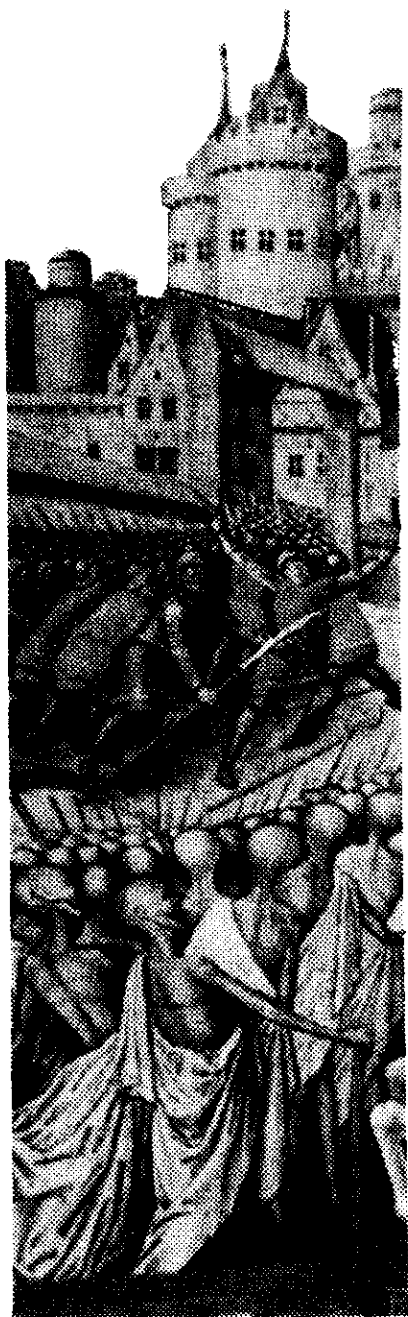
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## A DISTANT MIRROR by Barbara Tuchman

Alfred Knopf, Inc.

1979 677 pp.

cloth: \$15.95



## Distortions in the Distant Mirror

Anyone looking in a bookstore window in the past few months was probably struck by the cover of Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*. Window shutters open onto a courtyard where two armies converge: one a king's standing army in full martial dress, armor, and mail, the other, led by a nobleman in all his finery, an army of marching human skeletons. This depiction of the "Dance of Death" aptly indicates the message of a book that, as of this writing, has been on the bestseller lists for twenty-two weeks, has been chosen as a selection by the Book-of-the-Month Club, and has been widely acclaimed as an insightful reflection of our own time.

The period discussed by Tuchman's book is the "calamitous fourteenth century." For Tuchman, the significance of this century for our own lies in the Black Death and the Hundred Years' War—in the fact that it was one of the most cataclysmic periods of human history. And just as disaster then was "natural" and inevitable, her book implies, so it is today.

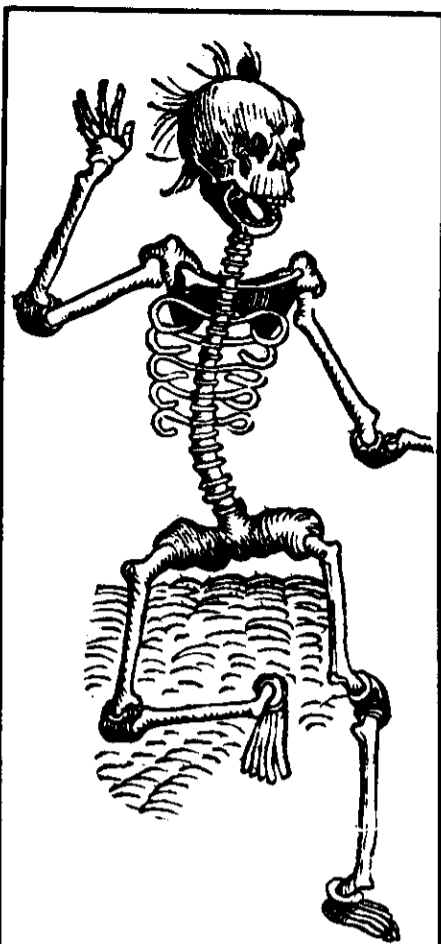
The devastation wrought against human civilization in that era was indeed staggering. From India to Iceland, over one-third of the population died from the Black Plague. Whole towns were erased from the map. The Hundred Years' War, the Middle East crisis of the fourteenth century, encompassed half of two centuries and crippled not just the principal adversaries, England and France, but the

entirety of Europe.

But what Tuchman does not say is that the fourteenth century was also the age of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, men whose Neoplatonic spirit—and actions—countered the forces of chaos and decay with policies of city-building and industrial growth. Their battle against the dark age Tuchman celebrates set the stage for the Renaissance in the following century.

Dante's *Commedia*, completed between 1301 and 1320, posed the task for humanity's struggle within itself and with the world at large, out of the confusion and heteronomy of the *Inferno*, to a level of understanding, and finally, inspired to one of reason. Dante laid out the terrain of the battlefield quite clearly; in his ascent to the summit of Divine Love, he pointed out the names, crimes, and vices of specific members of the oligarchy who stood in the way.

Forced into exile by these same individuals or their descendants, Dante left Florence with his closest friend and his family. Nevertheless, his work was carried on. One of the sons of his friend was Francesco Petrarca, and Petrarch, together with Boccaccio and Chaucer, built on Dante's accomplishments, going on to lead one of the greatest humanist conspiracies in recorded history. Under this conspiracy's direction, Florence became a republic, and by the first decade of the fifteenth century was the spring out of which the Renaissance flowed to touch all



of Europe and all the world.

Integral to the flowering that began in the fourteenth century was the development of early industry. While the city of Florence employed as many as 20,000 in the cloth industry, England burst forth with industry and commerce at a rate never before seen. Edward III built an industrial and commercial alliance for the cloth trade between England, Gascony (the Bordeaux region of France), Calais in Brittany, and the Low Countries. From the 1360s onward England became the leading wool producer in Europe.

By 1410 the Brunelleschi Dome was being completed in Florence; and the Renaissance city we know today was taking shape. In the next decade Henry the Navigator, the grandson of Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt, founded a school of navigation, gathering around him pilots, cartographers, scientists, and shipbuilders, enriching the dawning Renaissance beyond all recognition. Henry V of England had brought the Hundred Years' War to an end with a treaty between France and England, uniting the countries under one crown, based on peace and development. By the early 1430s Nicholas of Cusa and other great intellects steeped in Neoplatonism were streaming into Florence, and the Renaissance was fully underway.

#### DEPRAVITY AND DISASTER

Is it possible that in the seven years she reportedly spent researching a period marked by such great human achievements, Barbara Tuchman was unable to discover anything but depravity and disaster? Hardly. Tuchman's book is a deliberate fraud.

Instead of reality, Tuchman presents the reader with the whole gamut of sexual activities, real and imagined, of the aristocracy, as the true determinant of the future of human civilization. To make it possible to maintain a reader's interest through 650 pages of such drivel, Tuchman draws out a central character, Lord Coucy, whom she chooses to call "knight of the century." He turns out to be the Pied Piper of France, leading brigands and warring barons on a looting drive East, first against the Hapsburgs, and

finally against the Turks, in the course of which he loses his life.

In a recent television interview, Tuchman allowed that there was a method in her madness. Her purpose, she explained in a revealing figure of speech, was to tell the history of the fourteenth century "from the worm's-eye view."

Like so many British and would-be British historians of the Arnold Toynbee genre, Tuchman embraces the "cyclical view of history," according to which worm-like man is a mere victim of nature, subject to whatever way the wheel of fortune might turn—sometimes you're up, sometimes you're down. In the case of the period Tuchman writes of in *A Distant Mirror*, humanity, she would have us believe, was down for 150 years and there was nothing anyone could do about it. And the Renaissance? Apparently just a "chemical reaction": "Times were to grow worse over the next 50-odd years," she writes about the year 1400, "until at some imperceptible moment, by some mysterious chemistry energies were refreshed, ideas broke out of the mold of the Middle Ages and into new realms, and humanity found itself redirected."

Of course the other side of the "cyclical view of history" is the pseudo-Marxist, Fabian notion that mob rule—the masses rising up angry—is the worms' own contribution to the "natural processes" that determine history. Writes Tuchman, quoting a fourteenth-century friar, "A day will come when the worms of the world will devour the Lions, Leopards, and Wolves." She then describes the unleashing of the psychotic *jacquerie* uprising in the 1350s in France and the Peasant Revolt of 1381 in England, both for her "natural," purely spontaneous phenomena.

In fact, the battle of the city-builders versus the land-based oligarchy was the vector that drove history forward in the fourteenth century, as it does today. That struggle determined history's ups and downs, including the "spontaneous" actions of the masses. Therefore despite all the commentaries touting Tuchman as a scholar of the period, she has missed all the important achievements that were responsible for ensuring the survival of hu-



manity out of the cataclysm of the fourteenth century—and her own existence as well.

### THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Even if as a researcher Tuchman could not come up with any new answers about the period, at least she might have raised some of the right questions about the disasters of the 1300s. What, for example, was the precise chain of events that led to the economic collapse of the 1340s, which preceded the Black Death of 1349?

England's king, Edward III, had built an industrial and commercial alliance with Gascony, Calais, and the Low Countries based on wool and the cloth trade. Backing up its extremely advanced industrial development, England was also a real breadbasket, able to produce far more grain than any other country in Europe for several hundred years. What England didn't produce agriculturally was made up for by Gascony, then a part of England; together the two areas produced enough food to sustain a modern industrial workforce.

Edward began to parallel this industrial and commercial development with military defense, which gradually provided the basis to go on the offensive against the French-based oligarchy that created the major obstacles to further growth by its continued threats of war, along with the French Pope, who sucked up revenue through tithes to build the French army. The Hundred Years' War, then, began as a humanist alliance of industrial-commercial allies pitted against the French land-based oligarchy (controlled by the Knights of St. John) and the Guelph Papacy.

The question Edward faced was financing this humanist axis. In 1339 he took all the wool available to be sold on the open market, took loans in cash, and paid the assembled armies for their first year in battle in advance. The interest-free loans were to be paid back out of the customs duties on further wool sales.

But suddenly the wool market "mysteriously" dried up—what Tuchman would describe as the wheel of fortune deciding to turn at that crucial moment of history. Instead of the £276,000 the wool should

have brought according to the normal sale value, Edward's agents brought back only £66,000 from the Bruges exchange. Edward, now desperate, defaulted on most of his previous loans from his major creditors, the famous Houses of Bardi and Perruzzi, the key financial institutions of Europe, and brought them down like a house of cards. The result was a major depression throughout Europe, as credit dried up and austerity increased at an accelerating rate to make up the difference or prove oneself "creditworthier than thou."

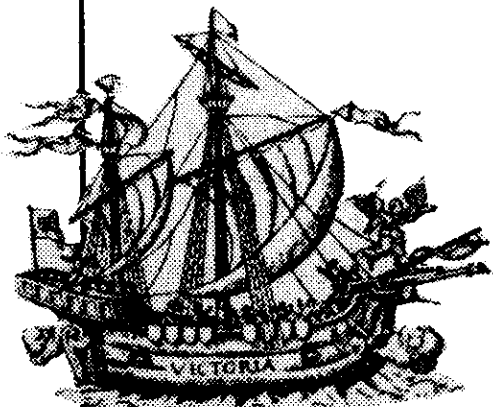
By 1349 living and health standards had been driven down so low that disease and decay began to spread uncontrollably. The Black Plague was on its way. It wasn't the wrathful hand of God, or nature evening out overabundance, or the "natural" depression cycle of capitalism—the plug had been pulled on the wool market deliberately as a means to stop Edward's advance.

Who was responsible for the death of a third of Europe's population? The question has not been answered in over 600 years!

Tuchman is not interested in finding the solution, however, but in concealing it. Her overwhelming commitment is to deny human intervention into history. Counterposed to the efforts to universalize humanity's conception of itself through city-building, what one might call the Dante-Petrarch conspiracy of the fourteenth century, another conspiracy also made history. It is to this antihumanist conspiracy that Tuchman, by method, sentiments, and more, is allied.

### THE ANTIHUMANIST TRADITION

The Guelph Popes of the fourteenth century played the Hundred Years' War as a means to keep the various countries of Europe warring with one another and thus under control. The King of France used the same "divide and rule" tactic to keep his barons and Knights of the Order in line, by forcing them to compete with one another for favor, much as children in a big family compete for their mother's attention. The same child-like fear of the real world is the worm's view that Tuchman offers her readers.



## A DISTANT MIRROR

By presenting the "worm's-eye-view" of the "calamitous century," Tuchman purports to give an insight into the present. Was it coincidental that Tuchman's book was released shortly before Zbigniew Brzezinski announced the "arc of crisis," a belt of Islamic countries on the southern border of the Soviet Union which, he predicted, were ripe for revolt and destabilization? The British-controlled Muslim Brotherhood and its cohorts have since fulfilled that prediction, fourteenth-century style, in the guise of religious purification, by unleashing a wave of destabilization among these oil-producing countries, and once again setting the U.S. and the Soviet Union on a course to nose-to-nose confrontation, and the world to the brink of World War III.

Interestingly, Brzezinski's National Security Council, heavily involved in orchestrating these affairs, includes on its staff none other than Jessica Tuchman, Barbara's daughter.

In fact Barbara Tuchman is not the misunderstood housewife-turned-amateur-scholar, struggling through seven years of research, that the New York Times described her as in a recent interview. Her grandfather was Henry Mor-



genthau, author of the infamous Morgenthau Plan for dismantling the industrial capacity of Germany after World War II, and replacing it with Third-World-style agricultural underdevelopment, a dream of the oligarchy since the Knights of St. John sponsored Luther's call for the same program. Tuchman's father was the creator of *The Nation*, then one of the more influential mouthpieces for oligarchic "liberalism" in the U.S. Her own career as literary hatchetlady and her daughter's place on Brzezinski's NSC show that the family tradition is still going strong.

Now look again at the method of *A Distant Mirror*—and its vulnerability. Tuchman's insistence that humanity has no capacity to willfully fight its way out of the Inferno and into a world of understanding and reason is why she, her family, and their allies will misjudge their opponents. Let us hope that history will repeat itself, not by nature's whim, but by the deliberate actions of men and women who will sweep away the "arc of crisis" scenarios and their architects, so that our own time will, like the "calamitous fourteenth century," precede a new renaissance.

—Rodney Huth

## AMERICAN CAESAR: DOUGLAS MACARTHUR 1880-1964

by William Manchester  
Little, Brown  
1978 793 pp.  
cloth: \$15.00

## MacArthur: No 'American Caesar'

A number of recently published books on the American armed forces and its leaders have painted a dismal picture of the country's military tradition and those who have sought to carry it forward. This phenomenon has less to do with either truth or the "temper of the times" than with the ongoing factional battle inside the military and intelligence community, and U.S. ruling circles generally, over what sort of political policies ought to determine strategy.

Just as opponents of the China card, "Israel right or wrong," limited nuclear warfare, and other Rand-computerized updates of the worst of the British Empire's doctrines are being harassed, silenced, and disarmed inside the U.S. military, the public at large is being

treated to one account after another of the impotence and even evil of the American military tradition that originally developed in opposition to those British doctrines and their political-policy corollaries. Here the loyalties of some of the biggest powers in publishing, the media, and the entertainment industry are disgracefully clear.

A case in point is William Manchester's new offering, which seeks to codify as history the lies and distortions that trailed General Douglas MacArthur during his lifetime.

The Caesarian epithet that Manchester attaches to one of America's few twentieth-century leaders is more than a hack's literary wristflick; it is central to Manchester's purpose. Caesar, who com-

**AMERICAN CAESAR:  
DOUGLAS  
MACARTHUR  
1880-1964**



manded Rome at its penultimate phase of decay, embodied the antithesis of everything MacArthur so passionately believed in. Manchester tries to make the label stick by mangling fact and fiction to show a MacArthur whose admittedly great acts were marred by acute egomania. Defining MacArthur's single-minded purpose as mere ambition, his self-assurance and sense of historic purpose as arrogance, Manchester, himself a protégé of the great anti-American H.L. Mencken, proves he is sincerely unable to comprehend that a fundamental morality and the exercise of reason can rule a man's passion and self-interest.

The parallel should instead be with Plato and his pupil Alexander the Great. In studying MacArthur's life, one sees a great figure, born into the highest American military and political traditions, struggling to become one of Plato's "golden souls." Through 700 pages of pseudofactual details spliced with maudlin clichés, Manchester obfuscates the continuity between that Platonic tradition and MacArthur's tremendous achievements during World War II, the occupation of Japan, and the fight to restore America as a leader for world progress.

#### WORLD WAR II

MacArthur's conception of war and military strategy transcended the mere mechanics of destroying the enemy's capacity to wage war. He saw the outbreak of the Pacific War as an act of God: its extremity of destruction would have to resurrect an era of peace. For MacArthur, the peace was premised on a conception of a Grand Design whose cornerstone would be the destruction of British imperialism and the creation of an entente between the Soviet Union and the United States as the world's two great industrial republics. Japan would not be treated as a vanquished enemy but rebuilt into a humanist republic, with its technological capacity harnessed as a transmission belt for the rest of Asia. Industrialization and humanization of China and a ring of independent nations carved out of Britain's empire would be the crucial task for the great powers.

MacArthur's years of experience throughout the Orient had enabled him to grasp the vulnerabilities of the feudal Bushida cult that dominated the wartime Japanese military with its die-to-the-last-man ethos. Through the strategy of envelopment he termed "hitting them where they ain't," he used his limited resources to strike at the Japanese weak points; bypassed and isolated the strongholds; and "left them to die on the vine," along with Japan's capacity to wage effective war.

This book's lumping of MacArthur's strategic conceptions with the geopolitical British doctrine that Russia must be the primary enemy of the United States is a thorough and witting inversion of the historical record. One example among many is Manchester's refusal to report how MacArthur called on Dec. 8, 1941 for the Soviet Union to invade Japan in a "master stroke." In a totally misrepresented quote Manchester does cite MacArthur's message to the defenders of Stalingrad: "The world situation at the present time indicates that the hopes of civilization rest on the banners of the courageous Russian Army.... The scale and grandeur of the smashing counterattack mark it as the greatest military achievement in all history."

MacArthur saw America's real adversaries as the geopoliticians of Great Britain and its collaborators who sought to manipulate Japan, Russia and the United States in their bid to control the Eurasian land mass. An alliance with Britain he likened to "sleeping with a corpse."

At the close of the war, MacArthur proposed to deploy the U.S. Navy to shut down the British drug trade in all of Asia. He in fact succeeded in driving the scourge of opiates from Japan during his proconsulship in the Occupation.

MacArthur saw his effort to wipe out British drug trafficking as merely a necessary part of his offensive to bring the American system to Asia. Unable to liberate all of Southeast Asia because at Potsdam Truman had torn up FDR's trusteeship plans for the colonies, MacArthur worked relentlessly to un-

**AMERICAN CAESAR:  
DOUGLAS  
MACARTHUR  
1880-1964**

shackle and develop the "American" tendency in Japan. His targets were the racist, feudal countertendencies that had been exploited and manipulated by the British and their Mitsui allies.

**OUTLAW WAR**

MacArthur revamped Japan's constitution, retaining the best of the Meijis' while drawing upon American and Europe to frame a democratic republican form of government. The most controversial clause, that of outlawing Japan's prosecution of war as a means for settling disputes, expressed MacArthur's deep commitment to the outlawing of war by all nations and his veto of British hopes to use Japan against the USSR. To the end of his life he voiced the wish that both the U.S. and Soviet Union would append such a clause to their own constitutions.

As the 1950s began, unable to secure

MacArthur's dismissal as Supreme Commander of the Far East, the British played their "China card" and rigged the Korean War with their Peking allies.

Here a parallel with the nineteenth century American General Winfield Scott, whom MacArthur admired, is illuminatingly close. Scott was lured into fighting the 1840s Mexican War through a British ploy to destroy him and the urban industrial tradition he represented, in order to use the United States to protect Britain's imperial interests in Latin America.

Similarly, the Korean War was arranged to lure the U.S. into a "limited war" and thereby into the anti-Soviet NATO alliance in Western Europe, an alliance politically stalled up to then by MacArthur's constituency. The long-range perspective was (and is) to cede Asia as a sphere of influence to an anti-Soviet China.

—Dean Andromidas

**BRECHT:  
A BIOGRAPHY**

by Klaus Völker  
Translated by John  
Nowell  
The Seabury Press  
1978 \$14.95

## From Munich to Hollywood to East Berlin

The apotheosis of Bertolt Brecht to the status of premier twentieth century playwright and premier communist writer is one of the most amazing public relations coups of the century—and one of its greatest political scandals. To date, unfortunately, the Brecht biography industry has been largely dedicated to furthering the apotheosis, including even the anticommunist, anti-Brecht biographers.

In this respect the recently published Brecht biography by West German writer Klaus Völker departs little from its predecessors, except in the useful direction of informing the reader what a scoundrel Brecht was in his personal life. Otherwise, the Völker book is a rehash. This is a shame. What is needed is a biography that will explain the not negligible role that Brecht's cynical and sentimental theater pieces (and poetry) played in corroding the industrial-republican and Rapalloist impulses in the Weimar Republic and, after World War II, his role in reinforcing the most

subversive impulses in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

This social-epistemological aspect of art as the most powerful organizing instrument for shaping the consciousness of future generations has been well understood by artist-elites on both the humanist and antihumanist sides. (Witness Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* in the first case, and Ezra Pound and James Joyce's stated self-conceptions of the role of the artist on the other.)

**BRECHT'S ROLE**

Brecht was an employee of the anti-humanist elite, performing three crucial services, coinciding with the three phases of his career.

In the first, Weimar, phase, his celebration of lumpen culture, its amorality and nihilism, and his violent assaults on key working-class institutions played a major contributory role to the rise of fascism. In the second, World War II, phase, he deployed to Hollywood, along with his

**BRECHT:  
A BIOGRAPHY**



colleagues of the Frankfurt School, to lay the groundwork for a similar Weimarization of the postwar U.S.—for today's pothead, "New Left" youth culture.

In the third, post-World War II phase, he went to East Berlin to attempt to rectify the "backfiring" of the Weimar-Hitler project: the loss of Eastern Europe. Brecht's summons before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947 was designed to give him the credibility required for this move. Subsequently, BBC program director Martin Esslin worked to get Brecht canonized as "Communist Laureate" in the West.

The truth is, Brecht was never anything other than a nihilist. At its core his work expressed no more than the dime-store sentiments of any other Hollywood scenarist—thus its touted "humanity"—but laced with enough anarchist's cynicism to cut the saccharine—thus Brecht's "revolutionary" quality.

His first notable play, *Spartakus*, was a celebration of the psychotic 1918-1919 leftist uprising in Bavaria, a provocation that set the stage for the murder of the German working-class leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Berlin. Brecht's play features a "revolutionary" who repudiates his ideals for the more tangible gratification of a good lay. Brecht first staged this and his other early plays in Munich, where he was active at the same time as Adolf Hitler. Both based their work on the same Bavarian lumpen café-and-beer-hall culture. Both were patronized by the same circles linked to the "black aristocrat" Wittelsbachs.

After Hitler's 1923 beer-hall putsch was suppressed, Brecht moved to the German capital of Berlin. By the late 1920s he had become a "communist"—through studying Watson's writings on behaviorism and a few chapters of *Das Kapital* with the British leftist agent Karl Korsch. The product of this "intellectual ferment" was Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, a major hit in the late 1920s that has remained a symbol of Weimar culture. The play is a celebration of the mores of the gangster Mack the Knife, his betrayal of his numerous wives and whores, and their betrayal of him.

During the same period Brecht also wrote his "pure communist" *The Measures Taken*, which features two communists deciding to advance their Cause by executing a third communist. German Communist Party leaders who saw the play thenceforth regarded Brecht as *persona non grata*.

**ATTACK ON SCHILLER**

Brecht was aiming for higher stakes than merely celebrating gangster culture and discrediting labor organizations, however. A key target of Brecht's ire was the German playwright and humanist leader Friedrich Schiller. Brecht's *Mother Courage* is an attack on Schiller's *Wallenstein Trilogy*. Both center on the Thirty Years' War, but Brecht focuses his version of the war on a female camp follower who sells soldiers' provisions. Pathos is added in the guise of the war deaths of her three children. What for Schiller was an epic, Brecht transforms into soap opera.

Drawing on his cachet as a successful sentimentalist, Brecht moved to Hollywood during World War II along with the rest of the artistic types in the Frankfurt School. During his Hollywood sojourn, Brecht was above all close to Theodor Adorno, the father of rock-and-roll.

In between Hollywood commissions, Brecht wrote *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. The play's heroine has her fiancé and adopted child removed from her, following the years of poverty and humiliation she suffers. She is rewarded at the end, however, through the *deus ex machina* of an oddball judge. There is no lawful order of justice in the play, just a Hollywood ending. Then HUAC retooled Brecht's reputation for his third and last deployment as East German house communist.

Brecht biographer Völker, unfortunately, misses the import of all this. Nevertheless, he does successfully capture the frigid narcissism that was Brecht's personal life—down to the clutch of squabbling mistresses Brecht manipulated for a lifetime, then capriciously cut from his will.

—Richard Schulman

# CONTROVERSY (CONT'D)

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## Should Anthropology Be Eliminated?

*Continued from page 3*

time of Plato through the Christian patristics. Nonetheless, some fragments of historical record plus archeological, geological, and other evidence do enable us to work our way backwards toward the tenth millennium B.C. with surefooted accuracy.

Leaving the details of this to be covered in other locations, we go directly to the crux of the matter before us.

### A World-Encircling Culture

As we work our way back from the Peoples of the Sea migrations into the period before Thera, we find ourselves in the midst of a declining, formerly world-encircling chalcolithic maritime-littoral culture. This culture is generally inaccessible to land-based archaeological digs for the elementary reason that the populated littoral sites were sunk through the rising of the ocean's waters over thousands of years into the seismic trauma of the second millennium.

This culture traveled with ships generally like the later Viking long ships, ships which, when copper-sheathed, had an optimal cruising speed of six knots. For example, the meticulous account of essentials in the *Odyssey* shows that Ulysses was using a long ship, probably copper-sheathed, for his voyage through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Caribbean (at about 1100-1000 B.C., according to current best estimates available).

The fact that Ulysses did visit the vicinity of Yucatan, and that this was a region putatively known to him by reputation, causes us to focus our attention more emphati-

cally on central America. It is unquestionable that the next breakthrough in archeology will be aided by special satellite studies and high-altitude aircraft photography, as well as with bathyscaphes specially developed for the purpose in view.

Our collaborators in Mexico have already made some preliminary reviews of the evidence known there. It is clear that the "slash and burn" agriculture of the known Mayan period does not coincide with the sophisticated astronomy of an earlier Mayan culture. It is implied, but not yet pinned down adequately, that even during the first millennium B.C. Mayan civilization had suffered a dark-age catastrophe paralleling that which occurred in the Aegean prior to 850-800 B.C.

The probable catastrophe of the pre-Thera period has two principal points of evidentiary access. The rise of the evil Fifth Dynasty of Egypt (circa 2750 B.C.) coincides with evidence of some major catastrophe located at the beginning of the third millennium B.C. Ostensibly more backward, pastoral peoples did swarm over the shards of higher civilizations which had been weakened by combined geological-meteorological trauma, including the rising of the levels of the oceans. We date the reign of Hammurabi as reflecting a renaissance in Mesopotamia and associate the Hittites and Sesostris with a renaissance in Egypt and Asia Minor. By comparing the physical evidence of the explosion of Thera with the 1883 explosion of Krakatoa, we have excellent indications of what occurred in the Aegean region as a result of the disturbance of the fault-line running through the Mediterranean and out

up to Iceland in the Atlantic. On this latter point, Plato is explicit in describing the general nature of the effects.

Also most relevant is the evidence of the largely sunken megalithic culture of the northern European coasts, especially emphasizing the sunken region around Helgoland. The evidence tracing the ancient Greeks to this origin is more or less overwhelming, and suggests an initial Greek colonization-invasion into the Mediterranean from the North Sea littoral, followed by waves of riparian movement along such routes as the Rhine-Danube into Greece by way of the Black Sea and Balkan peninsula. It is also suggested that the pre-Celtic populations of Britain, Brittany, and the Iberian peninsula and the Berbers of northern Africa were distinct from the Greeks' ancestors, but part of the maritime-littoral chalcolithic culture of the Atlantic-Mediterranean region.

The indications are that the maritime-littoral culture of the Atlantic-Mediterranean during the second millennium's pre-Thera period was a relic of a culture which had prevailed prior to some earlier catastrophe. This correlates with strong evidence of a series of geological-meteorological catastrophes which must have occurred from about 10,000 B.C.

Returning our attention to central America (and, probably, Peru), and noting evidence of an eastward as well as westward maritime connection from Egypt and Mesopotamia, the archeological evidence available points to a globe-girdling maritime culture, in a line converging upon the vicinity of 10,000 B.C. The existence of such a level of culture at about 10,000 B.C. puts the beginnings of the chalcolithic sev-



eral thousand years earlier. It also strongly indicates that the relevant archeological sites are several hundred feet beneath the oceans' surface.

This turns our attention to the apparent emergence of riparian civilizations during a period centering, fore and aft, on about 4,000 B.C. Rather than attempting to account for such riparian cultures as autochthonous developments ("hydraulic" cultures), we are obliged to view riparian cultures of that period as offshoots of a maritime-littoral culture antedating the earliest riparian sites.

An interesting bit of corroborating evidence turns up in study of Achean Greek sites in the Mediterranean during the pre-Thera period, including the indicatively megalithic-derived architecture of Mycenae. The characteristic of these colonies is a littoral culture protected by a hillside inland fortress. The picture into that period is a tradition of maritime-littoral culture of a relatively advanced, metal-working character, contemporary with backward, neolithic cultures in the hinterlands.

Another crucial bit of corroborating indication is the millennial conflict between the priesthoods of Amon and Thebes in Egypt. The worship of the bull and cow (Osiris and Isis) in Nubian culture, versus the Thoth-Amon culture of lower Egypt, shows the kind of origins which produced the reactionary, bestialist oligarchical faction in civilization. The conquest of advanced, maritime-citybuilder cultures by backward "hordes" of relatively bestialized, more primitive, rural-pastoral peoples tended to occur whenever catastrophes weakened the maritime-littoral culture.

#### The Case Against Anthropology

Although the evidence is broad-brush and top-down, the general conclusion is indisputable. Most of

the so-called primitive cultures with which anthropology purports to deal are permeated with philological and other characteristics which are degeneracies—analogueous to the case of the North American Digger Indians, which is clearly a case of massive degeneration of those people from an earlier, higher level of cultural existence.

It is not necessary to argue against the faction of professional anthropology termed 'cultural relativist.' That branch of anthropology is a pure swindle, an offshoot of the British Colonial Office, which was at pains to rationalize and implement a policy of enforced backwardness upon subject colonial populations. The modern function of 'cultural relativist' anthropology is purely that of aiding in the design of cults, such as those proliferating together with the Jones Peoples Temple cult in Ukiah, California of the 1960s. 'Cultural relativist' anthropology is not merely incompetent, but a criminal practice.

Our focus of serious attack is on the essential incompetence of what is called cultural evolution.

What we deprecate as clearly incompetent is the view of cultural evolution which reduces change to some set of mechanistic or mechanistic-like principles of autochthonous, successive stages. The evidence that most of what has been classed as primitive cultures are degenerations from earlier, higher conditions of culture immediately invalidates the kind of ordering of data customarily employed in the cultural-evolutionary arguments.

This does not mean that there is no principle of progress governing culture. Rather, the lawful ordering of progress occurs in the form of *Necessity*, a lawful determination of what degrees and directions of progress must be willfully effected. The consequence of the failure to achieve the indicated degrees and kinds of progress is a general

catastrophe, a large-scale depopulation and descent toward relative savagery, accompanied by famines and epidemics. The essence of the matter is that *man must choose progress*. If man fails to choose progress, under the pressure of lawful necessity, then a degeneration of mankind or of a culture must occur as a penalty for that failure.

Most of the primitive cultures so-called are nothing but living records of a people reduced to relative degeneracy by their culture's failure to fulfill the lawful requirements of progress.

The case of American Indian anthropology is clearly one of the most wretchedly incompetent aspects of anthropology in general. First, it is clear that most of the so-called primitive Amerindian cultures were reflections of cultural degeneracy, and did not represent even in approximation an autochthonous course of development or necessary form of adaptation. Second, the mythical aspect of the Columbus "discovery of America" has obscured the fact of secularly continuous European visits to and colonization of the Americas over thousands of years before Columbus. The Mandan Indians are strongly suspected of having been a product of an Irish-Scandinavian colonization; the site at Newfoundland is as important for its implications as the mere fact of its existence and dating. The case of the Nahautl language and its phoneme characteristics among the southwestern Lipans obliges us to discount the view that the Aztecs were a late-comer feature of the civilization of Central America; a far more complex and much longer history lies behind their resurgence to power—a "slash and burn" agriculture could not have built the Mayan urban centers.

The same rigor must be applied to Africa and to such regions as

Micronesia and Polynesia. Easter Island is clearly an ancient navigation station of some importance to an ancient trans-Pacific culture.

The fraud of British and other oligarchical anthropology is exposed as a matter of intentional fraud by the notorious Bachofen. Bachofen, a raving reactionary, explicitly hateful of the industrial-republican developments occurring in nineteenth-century Germany, conceived his fraudulent anthropological babblings as political propaganda in behalf of bringing back something darker than medieval feudal oligarchism. There is a direct and intentional line of connection between Bachofen and the cultism of the Nazis, as well as to the cultism of the oligarchical Pan-European Union scheme of the Hapsburgs et al. today.

The British, as exemplified by the case of the liar Arnold Toynbee, suppress the nature and issue of the combat between the priesthoods of Amon and Thebes, in order to make a case for a "yin-yang" theory of history cycles of waxing civilization followed by inevitable catastrophes (the latter attributed to "overcivilization"). As the British succeeded in isolating and virtually crushing the German philological-archeological school of researches, the Comtean, positivist doctrine of sociology and anthropology was made hegemonic in those universities and professional strata under British domination and strong influence. It was out of this that the "best," "cultural evolutionist" varieties of anthropology were developed during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, a kind of anthropology which consists of credulous follies and incompetent methods superimposed on the premises of intentional fraud.

It is time to place existing academic anthropology into its proper category as a "consumer fraud."

—Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

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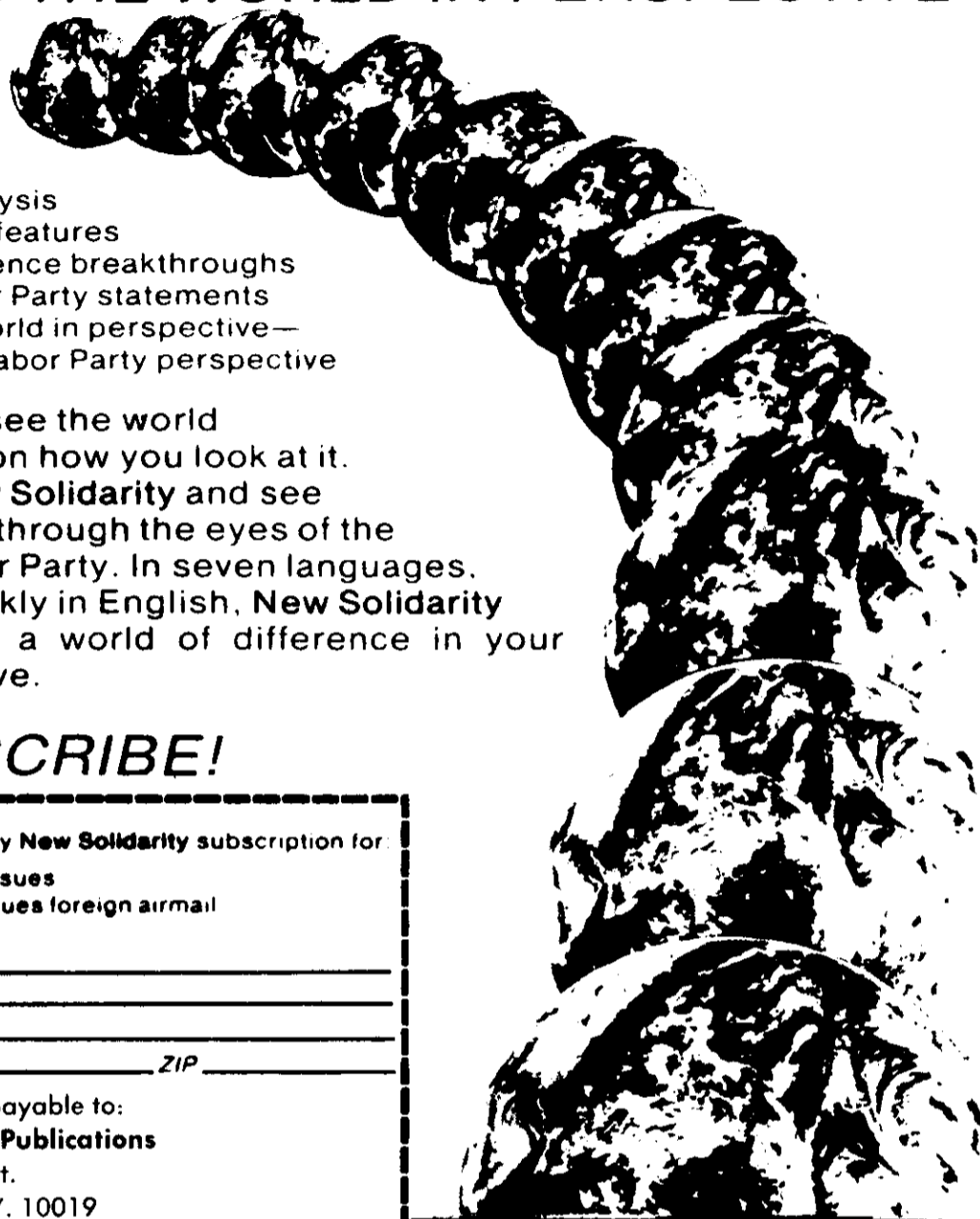
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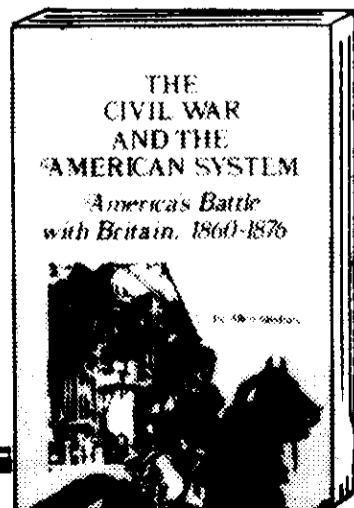
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