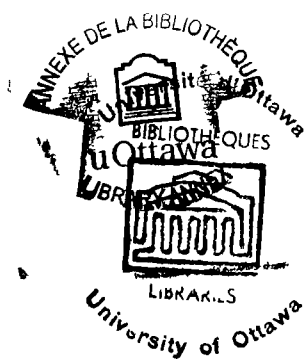


THE IMAGE OF THE EAST IN THE PLAYS OF  
MARLOWE AND SHAKESPEARE

by

Syed Mohammad Ahsan

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts  
of the University of Ottawa through the  
Department of English as partial fulfill-  
ment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy.



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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the forms of literature drama is, perhaps, the most faithful reflection of contemporary life. The ideals and aspirations, the prejudices and fears, the social, cultural and ethical values of a society find eloquent expression in its drama. The Elizabethan drama, in particular, being the product of a buoyant and self-confident age, is uninhibited in expression. References to the East abound in almost all dramatists of the age. These references, taken together, tell a story--the story of how the West felt toward the East. The present study aims at dealing with characters from the East and the allusions to the East in the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare. The picture of the East which emerges from the plays of the two greatest dramatists of the age is not of the same kind. Marlowe tried to make certain innovations, to deviate from the popular concepts of the East and to create a strikingly fresh East, closer to the reality, in his plays. But certain extra-literary considerations forced him to modify his picture of the East and he ended up by creating an East which represents neither the real East nor its popular image during the Renaissance. Shakespeare's plays contain most of the stereotyped ideas of

his age about the East and the picture of the East which emerges from his plays is a fairly close projection of the popular image.

The term "image" in the title of this dissertation has been used in the conventional sense of "a mental picture" or "an impression." The use of the term also implies that the picture of the East which came to be formed in the mind of the common man during the Medieval Ages and the Renaissance was a vague and hazy one. It was not based on accurate and reliable information but was projected through a curious combination of fact and fiction. It will be demonstrated in the following pages that the element of fiction predominates in the popular "image."

The term "East" stands for the vast area stretching from Turkey and Asia Minor in the North, to Egypt and Arabia on the South. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria form the western boundaries of the East, while in the East it extends to Central Asia, Persia and India. Spain and Sicily, though geographically a part of the West, had been under the rule and cultural influence of the Eastern Muslims for centuries during the Medieval Ages. These countries will be treated as the East for the purpose of this study.

The relations between the East and the West during the Medieval Ages and the Renaissance could be summed up in one word as a "confrontation." The deep-rooted hostility

between the two peoples made it impossible for them to look at each other objectively. Consequently the impressions they formed of each other were unfavourable ones, based on prejudice rather than on facts. This study aims to present certain facts about the East--its history, culture, social institutions, etc.--and, in the light of these facts, to examine some of the notions about the East that were in the air in those days and that have found their way into the plays of Shakespeare and, to a much smaller degree, into the plays of Marlowe. This method of approach will, it is hoped, reveal to some extent, the gap between truth and fiction, between reality and impression. It is also hoped that, read in the background of historical material, the allusions to the East in the plays of the two dramatists will assume a new significance: they will appear, not merely as erratic flights of the dramatist's imagination, but as parts of a living myth, as fragments of a body of beliefs and concepts that were the common property of the age.

For this purpose it has been found necessary to introduce some exploratory material in the first four chapters before dealing with the plays proper. These initial chapters deal with a historical survey of the East from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the end of the sixteenth century, the cultural achievement of the Muslims who were the people of the East from the seventh century onward, some notions about the East that were current in Europe at

the close of the Medieval Ages and during the Renaissance, and the points of contact between the East and the West, which made the interaction of ideas and transmission of information possible. If this background material helps in illuminating some of the allusions to the East in the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare, the purpose of this study will have been achieved.

## CHAPTER I

## THE EAST: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

THE ARABS

The Arabs belonged to the Semitic race. From times immemorial the Bedouin had led a nomadic life in the deserts of Arabia. He lived in tents made of goat-skin or camel-skin. Sheep and camel-raising, horse breeding, hunting and raiding the neighbouring tribes were his main occupations. The struggle for survival in the arid desert was hard enough and the Bedouin felt no inclination to indulge in metaphysical brooding. He did have a superstitious belief in jinns or demons which, he thought, inhabited the desert with him and were hostile to man. But this belief in spirits was very different from religious faith. The Bedouin did not worship the jinns; he hated and feared them. To him they were the engineers of all his troubles; the wild animal life of the desert which threatened him at every step and the sandstorms which drove him blind and blew away his encampments were manifestations of the ire of the misanthropic jinns. All his love went to his camel, his horse and his family: all his loyalty to his tribe.

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born at Mecca in about 571 A.D. He came of the highly respectable tribe of Quraysh. He assumed prophethood and began to preach Islam in 610 A.D. when he was about forty. The gist of his early message has been summed up by Hitti in the following words:

The message of the Arabian Muhammad was a parallel of the message of Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament. God is one. He is all-powerful. He is the creator of the universe. There is judgment day. Splendid rewards in Paradise await those who carry out God's commands, and terrible punishment in hell for those who disregard them.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad found some followers among his kinsmen and the low-class people of Mecca, but the influential Quraysh chiefs turned against him and started a persecution of his followers. Finding the climate of Mecca unfavourable for the propagation of his new faith, Muhammad migrated to Medina in 622 A.D. The people of Medina gave him a warm welcome. The ranks of his followers began to swell. The dissident chiefs of the Quraysh also joined the ranks of believers. Almost the whole Arabian peninsula had come within the fold of the new religion before Muhammad's death in 632 A.D. For the first time in their history the Arab tribes had come together under the banner of Islam. The small religious community in Medina was the nucleus for the vast Arab Empire which grew rapidly after the Prophet's death.

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip K. Hitti, The Arabs: A Short History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 25.

The Arabs who emerged from their desert lairs to pounce upon the Middle-Eastern states found the conditions ideal for such an enterprize. The great world powers in those days, the Byzantine Empire in the West and the Persian Empire in the East, had frittered away their resources in incessant wars against each other. All the Middle-Eastern countries had been under the control of one or the other of these two great powers for centuries. The rulers had imposed heavy taxes on the subject-peoples to meet the cost of their never-ending wars. Moreover, there was no racial kinship between the rulers and the ruled. The natives of Syria, Palestine, Iraq and Egypt belonged to the Semitic and Hamitic races while the Byzantines were Latins and the Persians were of Aryan origin. They were impatient to be rid of their alien masters. Just at this moment the Arabs appeared on the scene. Needless to say they received the full support of the subject-peoples wherever they went. In addition to these propitious external factors, the greater mobility, the higher morale and the tremendous power of endurance of the invading Arabs contributed in no mean degree to their phenomenal successes.

After the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D. Abu Bakr succeeded him as Caliph--the spiritual and temporal head of the Muslims. Umar followed him (634-644). Next came Usman

(644-656). With Ali, the fourth Caliph. (656-661), the Caliphate came to an end.

In the early years of the Caliphate the great Arab general Khalid ibn-al Walid marched against Syria, which had been under the Byzantines for nearly a thousand years. Damascus surrendered after a siege which lasted for six months. Heraclius, the ruler of the Byzantine Empire, tried to check the Arab advance. His forces were wiped out by Khalid in the battle of Yarmuk on August 20, 636. The Arabs were the masters of Syria. The conquest of Syria raised the prestige of the Arabs in the eyes of the world. It also provided them with a spring-board for launching attacks on Mesopotamia, Georgia, Azarbayjan and Asia Minor.

Next came the turn of Iraq, which was a province of the Sasanid Persian Empire. Ctesiphon, the capital of Iraq, surrendered within a few days.

Encouraged with their easy victories, the Arabs marched on to Persia proper. The Persian army was a well-organized and tried force. The Persians fought for every inch of their land; they fought for six years. But eventually they had to surrender in 641 A.D.

While Khalid was following his victorious career in the East, Amar ibn-al Aas, another great Arab general, marched on Egypt, a rich province of the Byzantine Empire, with only four thousand cavalry. He captured Babylon.

Alexandria, the well-fortified capital, fell shortly afterwards.

After the death of Ali, Muawiyah, the Umayyad ruler in Damascus, assumed the title of Caliph. From this time onward the term Caliph became merely a synonym for dynasty. Three powerful Arab dynasties ruled over the Muslim world from the seventh to the thirteenth century; the Umayyads in Damascus (661-750), the Abbasids, who moved the capital to Baghdad (750-1258), and the Fatimids with their capital in Cairo (909-1171). A branch of the Umayyad dynasty ruled over Spain from 929 to 1031, with Cordova for its capital.

Muawiyah and his successors made several attempts to wrest more territories from the Byzantines but their efforts proved futile. They attacked Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, three times but the town proved impregnable.

The victorious march of the Arabs continued in the East. They crossed the Oxus and moved into Central Asia. Soon they were masters of Bukhara, Samarquand, and Tashkent. Further south an Arab column under Muhammad ibn Qasim marched into India and captured Sind.

The most spectacular triumphs of the Arabs were to come in North Africa. This part of Africa had been a province of the Roman Empire since the first century B.C.

The Romans called it Mauretania.<sup>1</sup> With the fall of the Western Roman Empire at the close of the fifth century Mauretania was inherited by the Eastern Roman Empire of Byzantine. The natives, known as Berbers, belonged to the White Hamitic race. They were Christians or Jews or pagans. The Berbers on the eastern coast, who had been in close contact with the Romans and Byzantines, were civilised, whereas those living in the interior were semi-barbaric, nomadic people. In 647 A.D. Uqba ibn Nafi defeated the Byzantine army, and Mauretania (modern Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) came into the possession of the Arabs. Within a few years a majority of the native people had accepted Islam as their faith and adopted Arabic as their language.

In 711 A.D. Musa ibn Nusyr, the Governor of North Africa, despatched a force of seven thousand men, mostly Berbers, under a Berber general named Tariq, to Spain. Tariq landed at Gibraltar, a place that still bears his name (Jabal al Tariq: the mount of Tariq). Soon after landing he found himself pitched against a force of twenty-five thousand men under the Visigoth ruler of Spain, King Robert. The Muslims fought with the intrepidity of men who had utter contempt of death and the Spanish army was routed. Within a few months

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<sup>1</sup>The Romans called the inhabitants of Mauretania "Mauri," a Phoenician word meaning "western." The Spanish "Moro" and the European "Moor" have been derived from the Latin "Mauri."

the kingdom of Spain was reduced to a province of the Caliphate at Baghdad. Within seven years the whole Iberian peninsula came under Muslim rule.

Arab inroads into Sicily began in 703 A.D. but serious attempts to conquer the island were made only after 827. The Byzantine Emperor Michael III found himself powerless against the successive waves of invaders. Local resistance to the Arabs was, however, strong and slowed down the pace of conquest. A major portion of the island came into Arab hands by 878, after the fall of Syracuse, but Rametta, the last Byzantine stronghold, held on till 965. Arabs from North Africa migrated, en masse, to Sicily during the period of Arab occupation and a large number of local Christians were converted to Islam. Sicily became an Arab state not only politically but also culturally.

The Norman conquest of Sicily by Roger I began in 1060 and was almost completed by the end of the eleventh century. Roger I did not make any radical changes in the existing laws and administration. He treated his Arab subjects, who formed a majority of the population, with generosity. Through the liberal policy of Roger I and his successors, Arab culture not merely survived but thrived in Sicily after the Arabs had lost their political power. Sicily, as will be seen later, became an important center for the transmission of Arab culture and Arab learning to the

rest of Europe. An unusual fusion of Muslim and Christian cultures also took place in Italy during the Norman rule.

#### FALL OF THE ARABS

The rise of the Arabs had been meteoric. According to Chirol:

It was under the early Khaliphate that Islam spread throughout the Orient with an astounding rapidity which has no parallel in the history of any other of the great world-religions. The small band of semi-barbarous Arabs, who rushed forth from their desert homelands in the first half of the seventh century with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other, carried everything before them in an irresistible tide of conquest, until within less than a hundred years they had swept eastward through Persia to Central Asia and to the confines of India, and westward along the north coast of Africa across to Spain and into the very heart of France.<sup>1</sup>

The Arabs reached the height of their glory during the ninth and tenth centuries, but power began to slip rapidly out of their hands from the eleventh century on. The death blow to the Arab Empire came from the Seljuk Turks who emerged from Central Asia in the middle of the eleventh century. The Turks possessed the characteristic vigour, intrepidity and alacrity of a semi-barbaric race. In 1055 their leader Tughril Beg, who had become a Muslim, conquered Persia and marched on to Baghdad. The Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad Al Ka'im welcomed him and conferred upon him the

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<sup>1</sup>Valentine Chirol, The Occident and the Orient (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 12.

official title of "Sultan." Al Ka'im saw in Tughril a strong ally against the Shi'ite<sup>2</sup> rulers in Central and Western Persia whose rule was ill-tolerated by the orthodox Sunni Abbasid Caliph.

Soon the Seljuks were masters of Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor. Tughril's successor, Alp Arslan, defeated the Byzantine army at Manzikert in 1071, opening Asia Minor to the influx of nomadic Turkish tribes. Seljuk power was at its peak during the reign of Malik Shah (1072-1092), whose Sultanate extended from Afghanistan to Byzantine borders. Salahuddin, of crusades fame, was a Seljuk Turk.

The Seljuk sultans used to have a bodyguard of white slaves who had been carried off from the conquered territories. These slave-warriors were chiefly Turks and Circassians from Russia and Central Asia. Gradually they grew into a strong faction until, in 1250, their leader Kotuz (Mozaffar Saifuddin) seized power from the last weak Seljuk ruler and made himself the Sultan of Egypt. Kotuz was slain and the Sultanate was seized by another Mamluk captain, Bibar, in 1260. From this time the Mamluks remained in power till 1517, when their regime was overthrown by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I. During its heyday the Mamluk kingdom

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<sup>1</sup>The Shi'ite Muslims supported the principle of hereditary succession to the Prophet of Islam. They claimed that Ali, the fourth Caliph, who was a cousin of the Prophet and was married to his only daughter Fatima, was his rightful heir and the first three Caliphs were mere usurpers.

comprised Egypt, Syria, Hejaz and Northern Nubia.

In North Africa a local dynasty, known as Almoravides pushed out the Arab rulers and took over power from them. The Umayyad Caliphate of Cordova fell in 1031. A number of petty Muslim states, most of them with Berber rulers, grew up in its place. Constant struggle for power and mutual dissensions and squabbles among these states encouraged the Spanish Christians, who had never reconciled themselves to the Muslim conquest of their country, to make fresh attempts to drive out the alien rulers. Their campaigns against the Muslims were successful. Toledo fell in 1085. Cordova followed in 1236 and Seville in 1248. The two powerful Christian kingdoms in Spain, Castile and Aragon, were united in 1469 through the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile. This union sealed the fate of the Muslims in the Spanish peninsula. Christian troops defeated the Nasrid ruler of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, in 1492. Forcible conversion of Muslims to Christianity followed the conquest. Those who refused were either deported or executed. All Arabic books on Islam were burnt. The reconquest of Spain by the Christians was complete.

#### THE RISE OF MODERN TURKEY

After the victory of Alp Arslan in the battle of Manzikert in 1071 nomadic Turkish tribes began to move into Asia Minor. Most of these tribes settled down in the area.

At the end of the thirteenth century Asia Minor was divided into numerous small states the rulers of which were known as Uj-Bays. Osman, the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, was an Uj-Bay holding some territory on the Turkish-Byzantine frontier. Osman's son OrKhan embarked on a career of expansion and conquered all the territory up to the Dardanelles in the West. He crossed the Dardanelles and occupied Galliapoli in 1355. At the same time the Ottomans expanded eastward to Ankara. Murad I, who succeeded OrKhan after his death in 1359, conquered the greatest part of the Balkans and acquired a bulk of the Anatolian territory through conquest or purchase or matrimonial alliance. The triumphant career of the Ottomans continued during the reign of Bayazid I, the successor of Murad. Bayazid overran all the coastal emirates in the south-west and north-east of Anatolia. His rapidly growing power alarmed Europe and a new crusade was organized under King Sigismond of Hungary and some French nobles. The crusaders' army was defeated at Nicopolis on the Danube in 1396. Next Bayazid pushed on from Macedonia into Thessaly and northern Greece. His victorious career came to a sudden and ignominious end at the hands of the great Tartar general Timur, Marlowe's Tamburlaine.

Bayazid died in Timur's captivity in 1403. After a dispute of succession among his four sons, which lasted for ten years, Muhammad I (1413-1421) emerged victorious.

Muhammad expanded his dominions farther into the Southeast at the expense of Karaman, waged a war with Venice and sent raiders into Hungary. His real achievement was the renovation and the consolidation of the Ottoman empire, which had been badly shaken up by the Tartar rampage.

Murad II (1421-1451) besieged Constantinople in 1423 but failed to break through the strong fortification of the town. The Ottomans fought another war with Venice and captured Salonica in 1430. Murad tasted the first defeat of his career at the hands of John Hunyadi, an illegitimate son of Sigismond. In 1442 Hunyadi drove the Ottomans out of Serbia; in 1443, at the head of an army of Serbians and Hungarians, he defeated the Ottomans again and captured Sofia. Murad was forced into signing the truce of Szegeddin, by which he recognized Serbian independence.

The Hungarians soon broke the truce and marched on Varna with an army of twenty thousand. Murad met them at the head of an army which was twice as big and inflicted a crushing defeat on Hunyadi in 1444. The tide had turned in favour of the Ottomans, for the Hungarians were defeated a second time in the field of Kossovo in 1448.

Muhammad II, the successor of Murad II, achieved the greatest feat in Ottoman history--the capture of Constantinople in 1453. The fall of the Byzantine capital, which had withstood successive Muslim attacks for eight hundred years,

spelled the doom of the Byzantine Empire. Europe was alarmed and demoralized. In the words of Glubb:

The Byzantines had always claimed to be Romans. For a thousand years they had held the eastern gateway of Europe. Many have criticized them for their intrigues, their revolutions, their assassinations and their superstitions. But whether or not these accusations were justified, the Byzantine Empire had lived longer than any other empire in history. Then, when at last her end did come, she died heroically in the face of overwhelming odds and abandoned by the Europe she had so long defended--an ancient Roman death--with her emperor at her head.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad II also conquered Albania and parts of Serbia. After a long war Venice was forced to surrender Scutari, her sole possession in Albania and some of her Aegean possessions.

Muhammad's eldest son Bayzid II (1481-1512) continued the campaigns on the Polish frontier and on the northern shore of the Black Sea with minor gains. He lost Cyprus to Venice but subsequently defeated the Venetians in naval engagements and pestered them constantly with land raids.

Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty in Persia, had assumed power in 1500. A struggle for supremacy between him and the Ottoman Sultan Selim began early in the sixteenth century. Moreover, the Persians belonged to the Shi'ite sect of Islam, whereas the Turks were orthodox Sunnis. Sectarian differences between the two peoples further

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<sup>1</sup>John Bagot Glubb, The Lost Centuries (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), p. 477.

accentuated their mutual hostility. Salim defeated the Persian forces in the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 and the Persians had to surrender some of their territory to the conquerors. Egypt, which had supported Persia in its struggle against the Turks, was annexed and made a province of the Ottoman Empire in 1517.

The Ottomans had the upper hand in their conflict with Persia throughout the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566), the greatest ruler of the Othmanali dynasty. Turkish armies occupied Tabriz, Azerbaijan and Baghdad<sup>1</sup> in 1534. Tabriz and Azerbaijan were soon recovered by the Persians but Iraq remained in Ottoman hands. A fresh war between the Turks and the Persians broke out in 1548 and Tabriz fell into the hands of the Turks once more. But the Persians launched a counter-offensive shortly afterwards and attained Erzurum. Suleiman, who wanted to be free to fight his Christian adversaries in the West, had to sign a treaty of peace with the Persians in 1555; by the treaty he retained Iraq but had to relinquish Tabriz.

In Europe Suleiman captured Belgrade, the greatest fortress on the Danube, in 1521. He inflicted a defeat on

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<sup>1</sup>Baghdad remained the capital of the Abbasid dynasty until 1258, when it was completely devastated by Halaku Khan, a grandson of the great Mongol leader Chenghiz Khan. The Mongols could not retain control over it long and it became a bone of contention between the Turks and Persians soon after they left it.

Hungary in 1525 but he did not annex Hungarian territory till 1541, when he captured it for the third time. A small strip of land along the Austrian border was held by Ferdinand, the Austrian Emperor, who agreed to pay a tribute for this to Suleiman.

In the Mediterranean Suleiman captured Rhodes from the Knights of St. John; in 1556 he acquired Tripoli but his attack on Malta was repulsed in 1565. From 1537 to 1540 the Turks were engaged in a war, first with the Venetians and then with a league consisting of Venice, Austria and the Pope. Venice had to surrender some of its Dalmatian and Aegean possessions to Turkey at the end of this war.

Selim II (1566-1574) demanded from Venice the cession of Cyprus. A holy league with Venice, the Pope, Spain and several Italian states was formed to fight against the Turks. A great naval victory was won by the fleet of the league at Lepanto in 1571. But soon, in a counter-attack, the Turks gained control over Cyprus.

Hostilities between the Turks and the Persians were resumed in 1577 and continued intermittently until 1590. Persia had to yield Azerbaijan, including Tabriz, to the Turks at the end of the war.

Fresh wars between Turkey and Austria broke out in 1596 and continued up to 1606. Except for the Ottoman victory at Keresztes in 1596 the conflict remained

inconclusive and was ended with the treaty of Zsitvitorok in 1606.

## PERSIA

### Achaemenid Period (553 B.C.-330 B.C.)

The history of Persia begins with the Achaemenid period when Cyrus, the ruler of Parsa, expanded his little kingdom into the first world empire. Cyrus overthrew his overlord, the King of Astyages, and declared his independence in 553 B.C. By 546 B.C. he had conquered Armenia, Asia Minor and the Greek colonies along the Mediterranean shore. In the East he annexed Parthia, Chorasmia and Bactria. Babylon was captured in 539. Cyrus died in 529 B.C.

His son Cambyses conquered Egypt but committed suicide shortly afterwards. Darius, who came of another branch of the Achaemenid family, ascended the throne in 521 B.C. He attacked the Greek mainland twice, in 492 and 490 B.C., but he was defeated by the Greeks in the battle of Marathon. His son Xerxes continued the wars against Greece. He defeated the Greek army and burned Athens in 480 B.C. But his navy suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Greeks in the battle of Salamis and he was forced to withdraw to Asia Minor. The Achaemenid dynasty came to an end in 330 B.C. when Darius III was defeated by Alexander and slain by his own followers when trying to escape. The Greek historian

Herodotus has left vivid accounts of the political and military organisation of the Persian Empire and the cultural life of the people.

Seleucid Period (330 B.C.-248 B.C.)

Alexander's dream of creating a new world state that would unite the Macedonian and Persian elements remained unrealized because of early death at the age of thirty-three in 323 B.C. On his death his vast empire fell into the hands of his generals who divided it among themselves. Of the several monarchies that grew up out of Alexander's Empire, the Seleucid monarchy, with its capital at Antioch in Syria, controlled Persia. The authority of the Seleucids over Persia was short-lived; they were soon thrown out by local rulers.

Parthian Period (248 B.C.-224 A.D.)

The Parthians, natives of the Parthava province of the Achaemenid Empire, had played the leading role in driving out the Seleucid governor. They took over power from the Seleucids and established the Parthian kingdom which soon grew into a vast empire stretching from India to Armenia during the reigns of Mithridates I (171-138 B.C.) and Mithridates II (123-87 B.C.). In 70 B.C. the wars between Parthians and Romans broke out on their common frontiers and continued, intermittently, for nearly three hundred years.

Sasanid Period (224 A.D.-641 A.D.)

Ardshir, the founder of Sasanid dynasty, defeated the last Parthian ruler in 224 A.D. Soon after seizing power Ardshir got involved in wars with Rome. The wars of the Sasanids with the Romans and, later, with the Byzantine Empire, lasted throughout the Sasanid period.

The Arab Period (641 A.D.-1055)

The Arabs, as has been mentioned earlier, seized Iran in 641. The country was divided into several provinces with a military governor of each province. The governors represented the Ummayyad Caliph at Damascus. The Persians continued to owe allegiance to the Abbasids when they took over the Caliphate from the Ummayyad in 750. It was during the Abbasid period that the cultural domination of the Arabs by the Persians began. The Persians enjoyed great respect and were given high positions in the Abbasid court at Baghdad.

From the ninth century the hold of the Arabs over Persia began to weaken and several local dynasties rose into power. From the ninth to the eleventh century real political power remained in the hands of these local rulers though most of them continued to owe nominal allegiance to Baghdad. Of these local dynasties the Samanids, the Ziarids, the Buvayhids and the Ghaznavids were most powerful.

Seljuk Period (1055-1128)

In 1055 the Seljuk leader Tughril Beg moved his

Turkish hordes into Persia, crushed the power of the Ghaznavids, the most powerful ruling dynasty in Persia at that time, and assumed full authority over the country. During the Seljuk period the petty ruling dynasties which had cropped up with the decline of Arab power were swept aside and Persia was once more united into one country. The authority of the Seljuks began to wane after the death of Malik Shah in 1092.

#### Khawarazmshah Period (1128-1219)

Atsiz, the governor of Khiva, took over the Seljuk kingdom after the death of Sultan Sanjar. He founded the Khawarazmshah dynasty which remained in power for almost a century. Atsiz's great-grandson Sultan Mohammad was a capable ruler. He subdued the small dissident states and united Persia once more. He was planning to invade Iraq when Chengiz Khan appeared on his borders.

#### The Mongols and the Tartars (1220-1500)

Chengiz Khan's army numbered 700,000 men. The Mongol hordes swept across the country destroying everything before them. "Towns which offered resistance were besieged, stormed, burned and frequently obliterated from the face of the land. Nishapur fell in 1221, its inhabitants and all living things, including cats and dogs, were slaughtered."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald N. Wilber, Iran: Past and Present (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 51.

Chengiz's grandson Halaku settled permanently in Iran. The most illustrious ruler of the Mongol dynasty was Ghazan Khan, who acceded to the throne in 1295. According to Wilber:

The court at Tabriz, the capital city, was entirely Moslem and Persian in character. Good government and a general prosperity were the serious concerns of the ruler, with equitable taxes regularly collected, laws codified and internal security established. . . . Both Genoa and Venice had commercial envoys and colonies of merchants resident in Tabriz.<sup>1</sup>

The last ruler of the Mongol dynasty, Abu Said, died in 1335 and the powerful Persian dynasties began their usual round of fights for supremacy. Before a victor could emerge out of these bouts Timur, the Tartar chief, moved into Persia at the head of his Tartar hordes. After successive campaigns from 1380 to 1392 Timur reduced the whole of Persia to subjection. On his death the conquered territory was divided among his sons. Timur's successors ruled over Persia till about 1500.

#### Safavid Period (1500-1736)

Shah Ismail, the leader of the group of tribes known as Qizilbash collectively, emerged as the national leader after the downfall of the Timurid dynasty. His coronation in 1500 marked the beginning of the Safavid period. After eight hundred years of subjection to alien rulers a native Persian dynasty had come into power. Within ten years of his

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<sup>1</sup>Donald N. Wilber, Iran: Past and Present, p. 53.

coronation Ismail had taken over Iraq, Fars, Hamadan and Khorasan. Shiaism was proclaimed to be the state religion of Persia. The Turks, who were orthodox Sunnis, grew incensed against the Shi'ite power of Iran. Sectarian jealousy was at the root of the Persian-Turkish wars which followed the inception of Safavid rule in Persia.

Shah Abbas, the fourth ruler of Safavid dynasty, came to the throne in 1587. He recovered the Persian provinces of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia from the Turks. It was during his reign that the famous English traveler, Sir Anthony Sherley, came to the Persian court. He enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Shah Abbas and he remained in Persia for several years. He was mainly responsible for evoking his countrymen's interest in Persia at the close of the sixteenth century.

### INDIA

Muslims had found a foothold in India after the conquest of Sind by Muhammad ibn Qasim in 712. From the twelfth century the Muslims attacked on the north-western borders of India more frequently and they began to settle down, in larger numbers, in the conquered territories. They were powerful enough to establish a sultanate at Delhi in 1206. The whole of northern India and large chunks of southern India came under their control during the thirteenth century.

The fortunes of the Muslim sultanate at Delhi continued to fluctuate until the advent of Baber. Baber was a descendant of Timur on his father's side and of Chengiz Khan on his mother's. He was the ruler of Kabul, a small state just across the north-west frontier of India. He invaded India at the head of a small army of about twelve thousand men and defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the then Sultan of Delhi, in the battle of Panipat in 1526. This year marks the beginning of the great Moghul Empire in India.

Baber died in 1530, before he could consolidate his gains. His son Humayoun (1530-1556) had a troubled reign during which he lost and regained his kingdom. Humayoun's son Akbar ushered in the golden era of the Moghul Empire. He brought the whole Indian subcontinent under his control and introduced sound measures for the administration of his vast empire. He was not only an excellent general and a good administrator but he showed religious tolerance far in advance of his times. He abolished jazia (poll-tax) which the Muslim rulers invariably imposed on their non-Muslim subjects. He won the hearts of the Hindus, who formed an overwhelming majority of the population of India, by his magnanimous attitude to them. He formed matrimonial alliances with the Rajputs, a militant Hindu caste. He appointed Hindus to high civil and military positions.

Akbar was anxious to obliterate the communal differences between the Hindus and Muslims and to fuse them into one people. With this end in view he evolved a new religion, known as Din-e-Ilahi, the religion of God. This creed aimed at creating a code of values based on certain fundamental principles which are common to all religions.

During Akbar's reign the Moghul Empire reached its zenith, not only in territorial expansion but also in cultural achievement. India was passing through her noontide splendour under Akbar the Great at the same time that England was under Queen Elizabeth.

## CHAPTER II

## ISLAM AND THE WEST

The Renaissance inherited from the Middle Ages certain curious notions about Islam and its prophet. These notions are based either on complete ignorance of the teachings of Islam or are a gross distortion of facts. The motives behind the propaganda against Islam, by men of letters and theologians alike, are quite obvious. According to Smith:

The story of Muhammad as it is presented in English Literature has its beginning in the Middle Ages. It is the record of the slow emergence of a historical figure from the thick mist of grotesque and fantastic legends, which continued, unchanged or only slightly modified, into the period of the Renaissance and beyond. The long persistence of the legendary belief about Muhammad was due to the hostile prejudices of the Christians toward an alien religion, reinforced by the memory of the crusades and by the ever-present fears of the growing power<sup>1</sup> of the Turkish empire during the sixteenth century.

The earliest allusions to Muhammad and his religion appear in medieval romances like Chanson de Gestes and Chanson de Roland and in the mystery and morality play

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<sup>1</sup>Byron Porter Smith, Islam in English Literature (Beirut: The American Press, 1939), p. 1.

cycles. In these early allusions Muslims are invariably represented as "pagans" or "idol-worshippers" and Muhammad as an "idol" or a "false god." At times he appears in the company of two other pagan gods, Apollo and Termagant, forming, perhaps, an unholy trinity. At other times he is just one of a pantheon of Saracenic deities which includes, among others, the Alkoran.<sup>1</sup> More often he appears by himself. His followers worship him but he has a rough time at their hands when some of their wishes are not fulfilled and, especially, if they lose in war against the Christians.

Chew has quoted an interesting episode from the medieval romance Guy of Warwick:

In one romance a counsellor says to the Soudan, his master: 'To tell the truth, our gods hate us. Thou seest, neither Mahoun, nor Apolin is worth a pig's bristle.' The Soudan, sulking in his tent, gave orders for his gods to be brought before him 'Sorrow ye do us and no good,' he said reproaching them. 'Fye upon thee, Appolyn. Thou shalt have an evil end. And much sorrow will come to thee also, Termagant. And as for thee, Mahound, Lord of all the rest, thou art not worth a mouse's turd.' He took a stout stick and beat his gods on back and belly so that their arms and legs were broken. 'No more goodness was found in you than in a dog,' he said, and he dragged them by the feet out of his tent.<sup>2</sup>

Dante has doomed Muhammad to hell as a heretic in The Divine Comedy:

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<sup>1</sup>The Holy Book of the Muslims.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose (New York: The Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), p. 392.

How mangled is Mohammad! In advance  
 Of me with weeping goes Alee,  
 Cleft from chin to forelock in the countenance.  
 And all the others whom thou here dost see  
 Were sowers of scandal and schismatic feud  
 While living, and hence are cleft so cruelly.<sup>1</sup>

To John Lydgate, the English poet, he is a fraud and an imposter:

A fals prophete and a magicien  
 As bookis olde weel reherse can  
 Born in Arabia but of lowe kynreede,  
 Al his lyve an idolastre in deede.<sup>2</sup>

In English drama Muhammad appears as an idol only in the mystery play Mary Magdalene. Much later, he appears in Marston's play The Turk as a Machiavellian character leading his followers to dishonesty.

Of the numerous stories depicting Muhammad as an imposter three were very popular during the Middle Ages. One of these relates to a dove or pigeon which Muhammad had trained to peck from his ears. The bird would sit on his shoulders in the presence of his followers and Muhammad would assure them that it was the messenger of God whispering His message into his ears. The story of the bull with the Alkoran stuck between his horns that would jump and fret and gore anyone who dared approach him but would bow down his

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<sup>1</sup>Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, tr. by Melville B. Anderson (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 151, ll. 31-36.

<sup>2</sup>John Lydgate, The Fall of Princes Pt. III, ed. by Dr. Henry Bergen (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 920, ll. 53-56.

head before Muhammad. has been repeated times without number as another feat of animal-training by the prophet. The third story tells of how Muhammad would lead an assorted band of followers and unbelievers to a solitary spot in the desert and would dig out pots of milk and honey (which he had buried there the previous night) in the presence of the crowd. He would then tell the wonder-struck people that milk and honey symbolized the affluence that would be theirs if they followed his faith.

There are numerous versions of the legend of Sergius, a Christian monk who, failing to get preferment in the Church, turned against it. He set up Muhammad as a prophet, wrote the Alkoran for him and, thus, founded a rival religion. Some of the medieval romances represent Muhammad himself as a Cardinal residing at Rome who failed to obtain election to the papacy and avenged himself by seceding from the Church and establishing a rival religion.

Muhammad's death and burial form the subject of another popular myth. Muhammad had told his followers, so runs the story, that after his death the angels would carry his body to heaven and he would be resurrected shortly afterwards. Consequently his followers did not bury him when he died but kept his body in a pit for the angels to carry it away. One day a herd of swine came down to the pit and ate up the prophet's body. This incident is said to account for

the prohibition against eating pork among the Muslims! Lydgate has narrated a slightly different version of the story in his Fall of Princes. According to him, Muhammad

Lik a glotoun, deied in dronk(e)nesse,  
Bi excesse of mykil drinking wyn,  
Fell in a podel, deuoured among swyn.<sup>1</sup>

This story, though it was very popular during the Middle Ages, has not been repeated too often in the Renaissance literature.

The story of Muhammad's suspended coffin at Mecca<sup>2</sup> seems to have had a peculiar fascination for the popular imagination and it remained popular down to the end of the sixteenth century. Muhammad's body, it is said, was placed in an iron chest after his death and the coffin remained suspended midway between the ceiling and floor of the tomb. This unusual phenomenon was attributed to divine power by Muhammad's followers but the Christian writers never tire of explaining it away. Loadstones of the same magnetic force, they say, had been placed in the roof as well as the ceiling of the vault and the iron coffin, caught between the pull of two equally strong attracting forces, remained suspended in the air.

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<sup>1</sup>John Lydgate, The Fall of Princes, p. 923, ll. 152-154.

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad actually died and was buried at Medina but most of the medieval folklorists have assumed that Mecca, the place of his birth, is also the place of his burial.

"Such was the intellectual anti-Muhammadan climate" says Hitti, "that any stories, no matter how fantastic, with little or no basis in fact, could be accepted and transmitted."<sup>1</sup> In order to give an air of authenticity to the fantastic legends most of the writers of the period attributed them to the Alkoran. Thus, Nashe speaks of "Mahomets angels in the Alcheron that are said to have ears stretching from one end of heaven to the other."<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, no such description of angels occurs in the Alkoran. To Robert Burton "their Alkoran itself [is] a gallimaufry of lies, tales, ceremonies, traditions, precepts, stolen from other sects and confusedly heaped up to delude a company of rude and barbarous clowns."<sup>3</sup> According to Sir Thomas Browne, "The Alkoran of the Turks (I speak without prejudice) is an ill-composed piece, containing in it vain and ridiculous errors in philosophy, impossibilities, fictions, and vanities beyond laughter . . ."<sup>4</sup>

It is very doubtful if any of the English writers quoted above had first hand knowledge of the Alkoran. "An

<sup>1</sup>Phillip K. Hitti, Islam and the West (Princeton: D. Von Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Nashe, Have With You to Saffron Walden in The Works of Thomas Nashe, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, III (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Burton, Anatomy of Melancholy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1898), p. 694.

<sup>4</sup>Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, ed. F. L. Huntley (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966), p. 31.

imperfect Latin translation was made about the middle of the twelfth century at the instigation of Peter the Venerable but there was no English version available till 1649, when an English translation of Du Ryer's French version was made."<sup>1</sup>

No wonder that in the mind of the common man the image of the Alkoran as "a stupid, verbose and extravagant book"<sup>2</sup> was created and fixed.

Some historians have attempted to define the Western attitude toward Islam and have offered explanations for that attitude. Quotations from these writers would be of interest here. Hitti says:

Zoroastrianism, Budhism, and other less highly developed religions were never subjected to such a barrage of abuse and condemnation as Muhammadanism was. They posed no threat to the medieval West and offered no competition. It was, therefore, primarily fear, hostility, and prejudice that colored the Western views of Islam and conditioned its attitude. Islamic beliefs were enemy's beliefs and, as such, suspect if not false.<sup>3</sup>

According to Norman Daniel:

Even so, whenever a choice between stories or between interpretations of stories occurred, well-informed and ignorant authors alike often accepted those which were quite untrue in the judgment of modern scholarship, and which, indeed, must have seemed to them highly improbable, had they been

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<sup>1</sup>Byron P. Smith, Islam in English Literature, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 451.

<sup>3</sup>Phillip K. Hitti, Islam and the West, p. 49.

alleged of Christians in the world familiar to themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Southern thinks that it was only after the first crusade that the West developed a hostile attitude toward Islam:

But from about the year 1120 everyone in the West had some picture of what Islam meant and who Mohomet was. The picture was brilliantly clear, but it was not knowledge, and its details were only accidentally true. Its authors luxuriated in the ignorance of triumphant imagination.<sup>2</sup>

Chew has this to say:

If we would account for and place in their proper perspective, the legends and lies which passed current in Shakespeare's England about Mahomet and Mohammedanism, some knowledge of medieval ideas on these subjects is necessary, for the Renaissance inherited a confused and contradictory mass of grotesque notions concerning the Founder of Islam, and so long lived are prejudices, that even when the scholarly and curious had rendered accessible sources of information that at least approximated to the truth, these notions persisted almost unchallenged, were indeed fortified by new prejudices against the Ottoman conquerers of the Levant.<sup>3</sup>

Such was the attitude of the West toward Islam and its founder. Renaissance Europe preferred to cling to the ideas that had come down to it from the medieval times even if, in the light of new information, those ideas proved to be erroneous. But it had to make constant readjustments in its relations with the people of the East as new dynasties rose

<sup>1</sup>Norman Daniel, Islam and the West: the Making of an Image (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1962), p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>R. W. Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 451.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 387.

and fell there. A brief survey of the attitude of the West toward the different peoples of the East during the Renaissance will be relevant at this point.

In the Renaissance English drama there are more references to and more characters from Turkey than from any other country of the East.<sup>1</sup> It is not difficult to see why it was so. The Turks were the only Eastern nation which posed a serious threat to the peace of Europe at this time. The forces of Christendom, torn by internecine strife, divided by national and sectarian rivalries, watched helplessly as province after province of European territory fell into the hands of the Turks. "The terrour of their [the Turks']" says an anonymous historian of sixteenth century, "doth even now make the kings and princes of the West . . . to tremble and quake through fear of their victorious forces."<sup>2</sup> A strong sense of hostility against the Turk and his religion conditioned the outlook of the period and is manifested in its writings. The drama, which is closer to contemporary life than any other form of literature, is full of ire against the Turks and represents them as treacherous, barbarous, lustful and devils incarnate.

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Wann, "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama," Modern Philology (January, 1915), pp. 178-179.

<sup>2</sup>Cited by Samuel C. Chew in The Crescent and the Rose, p. 133, from The Policy of the Turkish Empire, 1597.

The term "Moor" has been invariably applied to negroid Muslims in English literature. In rare cases it has been applied to black non-Muslims too, and at least one such case falls within the scope of this study and will be discussed in detail later. It has been pointed out earlier that the natives of North Africa who were called "Moors" in Europe belonged to the white Hamitic race known as Berbers. In Spain the term "Moro," the English equivalent of which is "Moor," was loosely applied to all the Muslims whether Arab or Berber. In Europe it appears to have narrowed down further in meaning and been confined to black-coloured Muslims only who were not "Moors" or Berbers at all. It is not clear how and why and where this transference of meaning took place. The Moors have been treated in much the same way in Elizabethan drama as the Turks. The only visible difference is that they are slightly more despicable than the Turks: they are more treacherous, more lascivious and less brave.

The bitterness against the Moors was caused by the exploits of Moorish pirates against European merchant ships. These pirates were mostly men who had been driven out of Spain after it was reconquered by the Christians. Piracy provided an excellent occupation for these homeless desperados because, apart from the material profits, which were considerable, it provided them an opportunity of wreaking vengeance on the Christians who had exiled them. These pirates established their strongholds on the harbours of Morocco,

Algiers and Tunis from where they launched lightning attacks on the merchant ships of European origin passing through the Mediterranean. From 1519, when the Turks conquered Algiers, these pirates, under their renowned leader Khair-ud-din, who had been made the Viceroy of Algiers by the Turks, joined hands with the Ottomans in their naval campaigns against Europe. The spectacular victories of the Turks in Danube and Rhodes owed a great deal to the dauntless courage of their Moorish allies. Algiers became the most formidable headquarters of the pirates and its very name inspired terror in the hearts of merchants all over Europe. Samuel Purchas voiced the general feeling when he called Algiers "the Throne of Pyracie," "the Habitation of Sea-Devils," and "hel mouth."<sup>1</sup> There are frequent allusions to Algiers in the Elizabethan drama because the first three quarters of the sixteenth century were, in the words of Chew, "the heroic or golden age of Mediterranean piracy."<sup>2</sup>

The Arabs, who had been the most formidable rivals of the West during the eighth and ninth centuries, had faded into insignificance by the Renaissance. Their long and bloody struggle with the West was now a matter of the past which had been forgotten, if not forgiven. The image of Arabia in Elizabethan drama is, consequently, a romantic one.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel C. Chew, citing Purchas, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 340.

It represents Arabia as a land of perfumes, of scented airs, of evergreen valleys and enchanted islands echoing with music. This image, it is quite obvious, has no relation to the reality: the wide, barren desert expanses of Arabia. But it is not, at the same time, wholly imaginary. It is a product of the Elizabethan imagination aided by the accounts of classical writers, travelers and folklorists.

The allusions to India are also vague and appear to have been drawn from the same sources as those of Arabia. Most frequently the dramatists refer to the "gold" or "pearls" or "jewels" or "mines" or the "vales" of India. In the Elizabethan mind India existed as a far away place, across the sea, a land of luxury and abundance.

Persia had trade relations with Genoa and Venice from the fourteenth century. Persian goods had found their way into all the countries of Europe through these two important trade centers. The Englishman was long familiar with Persian silks, carpets and pearls, though he came into direct contact with the Persians only in the second half of sixteenth century. The exports from Persia were used by the English aristocracy as a symbol of prestige. In the public mind these valuable items became associated with the wealth and Oriental splendour of the country from which they came. The image of Persian affluence and luxury was further strengthened by the glorious past of the Persian Empire, its

heroic wars against the Greeks and Romans, the accounts of which had come down to the British people through history, classical literature and folklore.

But this was not the whole story. Certain new elements began to enter into the popular image of Persia from the beginning of the sixteenth century. With the outbreak of hostilities between the Turks and Persians the West became aware, for the first time, of the cleavage that existed between the Shi'ite and Sunni sects of Muslims. They began to look on Persia as a potential ally who would serve to reduce the pressure of Turkish attacks on the West by diverting some of its forces to the East. Diplomatic and trade missions from European countries began to pour into the Persian capital with the double motive of establishing trade relations and of forming a military alliance with the only anti-Turkish country in the East. The Italians, who knew the East better than any other people of Europe, took the lead in initiating the diplomatic manoeuvres, and other countries of Europe followed. England entered into the race from the second half of the sixteenth century. Smith has summed up the situation in the following words:

The attitude toward the Persians during the Renaissance was more friendly than toward the Turks. The Persians, geographically remote, constituted no danger to the peace of Europe. More than that, the people of Christendom were surprised to learn that the fancied solidarity of the Muslim world did not, in fact, exist. The Persian Muslims, representing the schismatic Shi'ite branch of Islam, were

frequently at war during the sixteenth century with the orthodox Sunni Turks, and the European powers realized that these wars were made for their own peace and safety. The Persians, in consequence, were looked upon as allies, and efforts were made to co-operate with them against the common foe.<sup>1</sup>

The allusions to Arabia, India and, to some extent, to Persia, make it abundantly clear that the Elizabethans did not know these places well. Generally they mention only the names of these countries and do not refer to the people who live there. It has been observed that the Elizabethan dramatists generally refer to the people of a country if they know them well, but, if they are not well acquainted with the people, they mention the name of the country only. There are few characters from Arabia, India or Persia in the whole range of Elizabethan drama, and in Shakespeare there are none. The few characters who appear in some of the plays are rather sketchy and two-dimensional. It appears that the Elizabethan mind conceived of these distant countries as far away fairylands where all the good things of life were abundant, as imaginary paradises to which one could escape from the sordid realities of life.

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<sup>1</sup>Byron P. Smith, Islam in English Literature, p. 16.

## CHAPTER III

CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE EAST  
TO THE WEST

The Arabs when they rose to power did not have a civilization of their own that they could boast of. But they had humility enough to recognize their deficiency and an extraordinary capacity and desire to learn from others. Their conquests brought them into contact with two of the richest civilizations of the world, the Greek and the Persian, and they were quick in acknowledging the cultural superiority of the subject people and submitting themselves to their influence. They assimilated the elements of the Eastern Persian and Western Greek civilizations and fused them into a new whole, adding something of their own in the process. Speaking of the evolution of Arab civilization, Hitti says:

What we now call "Arab civilization" was Arabian neither in its origins and fundamental structure nor in its principal ethnic aspects. . . . The Arab Islamic civilization was at bottom the Hellenized Aramaic and the Iranian civilization as developed under the aegis of the caliphate through the medium of Arabic tongue.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phillip K. Hitti, The Arabs, pp. 57-58.

The Egyptian scholar Aziz S. Atiya contributes to the same point of view. According to her:

In reality, Arab culture became the meeting place of the two great ancient streams of thought which had been developing quite independently throughout ancient times--the Greek, or, if we go deeper into antiquity, the Egyptian and the Greek on the one side; and the Sumerian, Persian and Indian on the other. The integration of these widely separated realms of thought became the primary function of the Arab. The birth of Arab culture took place in the amazing synthesis of the intellectual achievements of the older nations.<sup>1</sup>

The history of Arab civilization begins with the Abbasid period in the eighth century. The Abbasid Caliphs, once settled in their new capital of Baghdad, turned to the arts of peace with the same fervour which they had shown on the field of battle. Soon after coming into power they ordered the translation of all the important Greek, Syriac and Persian works into Arabic. The Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid, the friend of Charlemagne, was a great patron of arts and learning, and the translation work received a new impetus during his reign (786-809). By the middle of the ninth century all the works of Plato, Aristotle, the neo-Platonists, Galen, Hippocrates and a host of other Greek writers, as well as the major scientific treatises of Persia and India, had been rendered into Arabic. Most of the translation work was done by the Syrian Jacobite and Nestorian Christians who were equally proficient in Greek, Hebrew,

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<sup>1</sup>Aziz S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 209.

Syriac and Arabic tongues. By far the greatest among these translators was Hunyan ibn-Ishaq (809-73), a Nestorian Christian who translated the major scientific and medical works of the Greek masters. Hunyan received a salary of \$1200.00 per month from Caliph Al-Ma'mun. All the books he translated were weighed and the weight in gold was given to him as reward by the Caliph. Al-Ma'mun founded his famous academy Bait ul-Hikmat (The House of Wisdom) at Baghdad in 830. The main purpose of the academy was to encourage and systematize the work of translation and interpretation. Special commissions were despatched to Constantinople to prepare copies of important Greek manuscripts. Some of the treaties signed between the Arabs and the Byzantines during this period contain provisions for the cession of certain Greek manuscripts to the Arabs.

A brief survey of the Arabs' contribution to the arts and sciences will indicate how well they profited from the works of the great Greek and Persian masters which had become available to them in their own tongue.

#### Philosophy and Theology

Greek philosophy and science appear to have held the greatest fascination for the budding Arab scholars. Hunyan had translated some of the most important Greek writings in these fields. His son Ishaq and his nephew Hubaysh continued the good work he had begun. Almost all the fruits of

classical Greek learning had been domesticated into Arabic by 850 through the untiring efforts of these three great men.

The Age of Consolidation followed the Age of Translation. The interpretation of Greek writings led to lively discussions among the Arab scholars and created a climate favourable for philosophical speculation. At the very outset the Arab thinkers found themselves faced with a formidable problem: how to reconcile the ideas of Aristotle and Plato with the teachings of Islam which were enumerated in the Alkoran. The concepts of Greek thinkers clashed with Islamic theology at so many points. A choice had, obviously, to be made between the two. The Arab scholars voted for Aristotle. Where the text of the Alkoran came into conflict with the doctrines of the Greeks it was explained off as figurative or symbolical.

The founder of the rationalist school, known as Mu'tazila or liberal theologians in Arabic, was the only great Arab thinker Abu Usuf Yaqub al-Kindi (d. 873). Most of al-Kindi's original writings have been lost but quite a few of them are extant in Latin translations. His famous Commentary on Aristotle's Theology, which is more of an original treatise in neo-Platonic strain than a commentary, aroused wide interest and discussion in the East and West for centuries. The gist of al-Kindi's speculation is this: the soul is immortal; it is a part of the divine intelligence;

it is cut off from its divine source when it assumes a physical form and sensual perception; after dissolution of the body the soul returns to the divine substance. Al-Kindi divides the soul into three parts: plant, animal and rational, ascending in that order. Al-Kindi's handling of the manifold operations of the soul is too complex and elaborate to be summarized here. But a casual acquaintance with his doctrine is essential because it forms the basis of Arab-Aristotelianism which was further developed by his successors, Al-Farabi, ibn-Sina (Avicenna) and ibn-Rushd (Averroes). Al-Kindi's liberal interpretation of Muslim theology led him into conflict with the orthodox theologians who labelled him as a heretic. Fortunately for him his patron, the Caliph Al-Ma'mun, shared his interpretation; his head remained on his shoulders.

The next great Muslim<sup>1</sup> thinker was al-Farabi (870-950). Al-Farabi was of Turkish origin and spent most of his productive years in the court of the Shi'ite ruler of Aleppo, Saif ud-daula. Al-Farabi's commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Plato form the bulk of his writing. His life's mission was to discover and demonstrate an essential identity of views of the two philosophers. His treatises The Soul and

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<sup>1</sup>The terms "Arab" and "Muslim" have been used synonymously in this chapter because non-Arab Muslim scholars have made considerable contributions to the arts and sciences which are attributed to the Arabs.

The Intelligence evoked considerable interest in the West. His vision of an ideal state, inspired no doubt by Plato's Republic, found expression in his famous book Al-Madina al-Fadilah (The Perfect State). The most monumental work of Farabi, Ihsa al-Uloom (The Encyclopaedia of Science), is a survey of the entire body of the philosophical knowledge of his day. The Encyclopaedia was translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona and formed the basis of Dominican Gundisalvi's Latin Encyclopaedia De divisione philosophiae.

Better known to Europe than the above two thinkers was the Persian philosopher Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037). Ibn Sina, or Avicenna, as he is called in Europe, was a disciple of al-Farabi. His greatest work, Ash Shifa (The Recovery), is a long philosophical encyclopaedia dealing with logic, natural sciences and metaphysics. His concepts of the nature of God and creation were eagerly picked up by the Renaissance humanists and fermented a great deal of speculation during that period. His oriental interpretation of Aristotelian philosophy, entitled Kitab ul Insaf (The Book of Equitable Judgment), had been lost during his lifetime; only a few unrelated fragments of the important work are extant now. Ibn Sina's most mature treatise in metaphysics is Isharat wa Tanbihat (Hints and Warnings). Ibn-Sina's general position has been summed up by Guillaume in the following words:

Avicenna's general position is similar to that of his predecessor, but his doctrines are much more

clearly articulated. Pure intelligences emanated from the necessary being, simple substances, not subject to change. These beautiful things turned always toward the necessary being whom they sought to imitate, rapt in the intellectual delight of contemplating the divine throughout eternity.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Sina had the gift of happy expression, an extraordinary ability to communicate the most subtle philosophical ideas in simple and succinct language, which made him tremendously popular during his lifetime. Raymond, the Archbishop of Toledo, had all his works translated into Latin between 1130 and 1150.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1109), known to the West as Algazel, was the first student of comparative theology among the Arab scholars. He studied all the systems of philosophy and theology current in his time and emerged as a "sufi" or mystic from his spiritual pilgrimage. Al-Ghazali wrote on logic, physics and metaphysics. His writings were rendered into Latin by the Toledo scholars in the twelfth century. His book Tahafut al Falasifa (The Incoherence of Philosophers) considerably influenced Raymond Martin, who used it extensively for his attack on Islamic philosophers and theologians in his Pugio Fidei. St. Thomas has also drawn heavily on the same source for his discussion of the relation between reason and revelation in his Summa contra Gentiles.

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Guillaume, "Philosophy and Theology," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 257.

Abul Wahid ibn Rushd (1126-1198), the Averroes of medieval scholasticism, belongs more to the West than to the East. He was born at Cordova but was later banished from his birthplace for his heretical ideas. His interpretation of Aristotle and his doctrine of the relation between reason and faith had a firm hold on Western thought down to the eighteenth century, but he could never gain a position of authority in the Muslim world. All his works were turned into Latin; some of his writings have been lost in Arabic originals but are still extant in Latin translations.

For centuries ibn Rushd was known to the West as champion of human reason against revealed religion, a free-thinker and an unbeliever. This impression about his philosophical position was created by his Western followers, the Averroists. Actually ibn Rushd believed in the essential harmony between reason and revealed faith, and this is the thesis of his two famous treatises, Kitab ul Falsafa (The Book of Philosophy) and Faslul Maqali fi Muwafqati la Hikamati wal Sharia (A Treatise on the Agreement between Philosophy and Revealed Religion).

St. Thomas, who set out to purge Aristotelian theory of the gloss of Arab thought which had accumulated around it, chose ibn Rushd, the most influential of Muslim philosophers, as his main target. But, strangely enough, he falls under the spell of the Muslim thinker and supports some of his main

philosophical positions in the Summa. He is in agreement with ibn Rushd's principal doctrine that reason and revealed faith are not antagonistic to but compatible with each other. The parallelisms between the thought of the two scholars are too numerous to be discussed here. Guillaume had brought out some of the main points of agreement in the following lines:

The Angelic Doctor's famous chapters on the domain of faith and reason, with the emphasis on the impotence of reason to penetrate the divine mysteries which have been made known by revelation, have their counterpart in the Cordoban's Apologia pro vita sua. To them conflict between philosophy and revealed truth as it was enshrined in the Bible and the Quran respectively was unthinkable. Where there is apparent discrepancy between revealed and philosophical truth it must be the reader's interpretation which is at fault. The plain and literal meaning of the text is not always the right one, especially when anthropomorphisms were used of the deity.<sup>1</sup>

A few words about the earliest Muslim universities, which made the diffusion of knowledge on a mass scale possible in the Eastern world, will not be out of place here. The first Muslim university was founded at Baghdad by Nizam ul Mulk, the Persian vizier of the Seljuk ruler Alp Arslan, in 1079. Shortly afterwards new universities were founded at Nishapur, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo, Alexandria and some other important towns of the Muslim world. Philosophy and theology occupied the place of honour in the curricula of

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Guillaume, "Philosophy and Theology," pp. 277-278.

these universities. The Christian universities of Bologna, Paris, Montpellier and Oxford which were established during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were based on the models and, to a large extent, followed the curricula of the older Muslim institutions.

### Medicine

By the end of the ninth century the Arabs had translated most of the medical treatises of Greece, Persia and India in their own language. They organized and systematized the knowledge acquired from different sources and began to make original contributions to medical science with an astonishing rapidity. Hunyan, the greatest translator of the age, was also the author of many original medical treatises, the best known of which are The Treatises on the Eye, the earliest systematic work on ophthalmology, and Questions of Medicine, a book dealing with the causes and cures of diseases in question and answer form.

The greatest writer on medicine produced by the East was the Persian physician Al-Razi (865-925), known to the West as Rhazes. Al-Razi got acquainted with the Greek, Persian and Indian systems of medicine at Baghdad, where he studied under a disciple of Hunyan. The most original and the most celebrated of his medical works is the treatise On Smallpox and Measles. He gives a clear account of the symptoms of the two diseases and points to their infectious

nature. The book was translated into Latin soon after its publication and was later rendered into various languages including English. The most monumental work of Al-Razi was Al-Hawi (A Comprehensive Book), a manual in twenty volumes containing the entire medical knowledge of the Greek, Syriac, Persian, Indian and Arab world. For each disease he cites the views of all the authors known to him and, at the end, gives his opinion. Hawi was translated into Latin by Faraj ibn Salim, a Sicilian Jewish physician, in 1279. Numerous editions of the Latin translation were published in the following centuries and the book remained a standard text in the European medical colleges to the end of the seventeenth century. Al-Razi was a prolific writer; he is the author of two hundred books, half of which deal with medical science.

Isaac Judeaus (855-955), an Egyptian Jew, came to be known in Europe through his medical writings. His books On Fever, On Simple Drugs and Ailments, and, above all, the famous work On Urine were translated into Latin by an African named Constantine in 1080. Robert Burton quotes profusely from Judeaus in his Anatomy of Melancholy.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the celebrated Oriental philosopher, was also one of the greatest physicians of his time. He is next only to Al-Razi as a writer on medical science. His encyclopaedia of medicine known as al-Kanoon fit Tibb (The Canon of Medicine) is based mainly on the Greek

and Arabic contributions in the field of medicine. The book was translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona in the twelfth century. Its popularity in the following centuries can be gauged by the fact that it went into sixteen Latin editions during the last quarter of the fifteenth century and more than twenty editions came out in the following century. The Canon of Medicine deals exhaustively with anatomy, physiology, pathology, hygiene, therapeutics and pharmacology of the day.

The first important surgical treatise in Arabic was written by Abulcassis (d. 1013), a court physician in Cordova. Abulcassis has drawn largely on the sixth book of Paul of Aegina, the bible of surgery in those days, but he has also made numerous original additions.

The first hospitals in the Muslim world were founded early in the ninth century and by the middle of the century their number rose to thirty-four. Medical schools were attached to most of these hospitals. Studies in medical theory in the classrooms were supplemented by clinical observation and surgical experiments in the hospital wards. The students were awarded degrees on successful completion of course, but the Ijaza, the licence to practice independently, was issued to them only after they had worked as apprentices with an established physician for a prescribed period of time. Traveling clinics are also known to have existed in

the eleventh century. The first hospitals of the West which sprang up on the battlefields during the Crusades were based on Muslim models.

Meyerhof has summed up the contribution of Muslims to the medicine and science of the West in the following beautiful words:

Looking back we may say that Islamic medicine and science reflected the light of the Hellenic sun, when its day had fled, and that they shone like a moon, illuminating the darkest night of the European Middle Ages; that some bright stars lent their own light, and that moon and star alike faded at the dawn of a new day--the Renaissance. Since they had their share in the direction and introduction of that great movement, it may reasonably be claimed that they are with us yet.<sup>1</sup>

#### Astronomy and Mathematics

The astronomical and mathematical works of Ptolemy and Euclid were known to the Muslims but their main impetus in these fields came from the East. A learned Hindu named Manka came to the court of Caliph Al-Mansur in 770 A.D. and introduced the Siddhanta, a work embodying the Hindu methods in astrology. Siddhanta was translated into Arabic by Manka's friend, the famous Arab astronomer Al-Fazari. This work deeply influenced the course of research on astronomy and mathematics among the Muslims. A great observatory was erected at Baghdad by Mansur's successor Al-Ma'mun.

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<sup>1</sup>Max Meyerhof, "Science and Medicine," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir T. Arnold and A. Guillaume, p. 354.

Al-Farghani, a native of Farghana in Transoxania, made valuable contribution in the field of astronomy. His famous book Compendium of Astronomy was translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona and Johannus Hispaleusus before 1187.

The most sublime scholar among the muslim mathematicians is Al-Khwarizmi (780-844?), a native of Khwarizm in Central Asia. Al-Khwarizmi was a mathematician, an astronomer, a geographer and a great traveler. His reputation as a mathematician rests on two books: Kitab al jabr wa al Moqabala (Book of Calculation, Restoration and Reduction), a treatise dealing with, as the name suggests, algebra, and a book of elementary mathematics De Numero Indico dealing, mainly, with numerals and cipher. Both these books were translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona. Al-Khwarizmi was well acquainted with both the Greek and Indian systems of mathematics but he seems to lean more toward the Indian. He discarded the old method of counting with the alphabets which was current in those days and substituted the more scientific Arabic numerals and decimal notations. He also introduced the cipher, or zero, which revolutionized the method of mathematical calculation. Al-Khwarizmi's innovations had a tremendous impact on mathematical science in both the East and the West. His work has survived in the West in the name "algebra" derived from his book (al jabr), and his method of counting with numerals

completed with a zero was given his name "algorism" (Al-Khwarizm).

Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet who wrote the famous Rubayyat, was, perhaps, a greater figure as a mathematician than as a poet. His Algebra marks a distinct advance on the Greeks as well as on his great predecessor Al-Khwarizmi. He demonstrates unusual logical power and penetration as a geometer.

### Geography

The geographical knowledge of the Arabs was based more on their own observation than on Eastern or Western sources. Some of the Muslim travelers like Al-Khwarizmi and ibn-Batuta traveled far and wide and made maps and charts of the places they visited. The geographical works of Ptolemy, Eratosthenes and Strabo were known to the Arabs through Arabic translations, but the earliest geographical writings of the Muslims, those of Al-Yaqubi, Al-Faqih and ibn-Rusta, give descriptions of the countries the authors had visited. The sea-captain Suleiman of Siraf was the first Muslim explorer to reach China in the ninth century, four hundred years before the first European traveler Marco Polo.

The most prominent of Muslim geographers was Al-Idirisi who worked in the court of the Christian ruler, Norman Roger II of Sicily. Roger assigned to him the task of making a description of the known world and provided him all

facilities for carrying out the assignment. Men were despatched to all parts of the world to collect essential geographical data for Al-Idirisi's book. The monumental work contains seventy maps and the text is the commentary on the maps. The world has been divided into seven climates and each one of these climates is represented by ten maps. Al-Idirisi is indebted to his Arab predecessors for a great deal of information used by him in the text of his geography. Surprisingly enough no Latin translation of Al-Idirisi's book appears to have been made until 1619, when the first translation was published in Rome.

The only other geographical publication which deserves mention was Yaqub's Geographical Dictionary (1228), which contains geographical names in alphabetical order.

### Science

The first Arab philosopher, Al-Kindi, was also one of the most prominent scientists of his day. Almost two hundred and fifty books on science have been ascribed to him, but most of these books are not extant. His Optics, which was known to the West in the Latinized version, was used and quoted frequently during the Middle Ages.

Al-Beruni (973-1048), the Persian astronomer, physician, mathematician, physicist, geographer and historian was one of the greatest among the universally learned Muslim scholars produced during the golden age of Islamic science.

He translated numerous scientific writings from Sanskrit into Arabic. He determined almost exactly the specific weight of eighteen precious stones and metals. His Chronology of Ancient Nations and History of India remain important historical writings to this day. It is not possible even to refer to the multifarious activities of a versatile genius like Al-Beruni in a brief survey like this.

An all time great in the field of alchemy was the Arab Jabir. He wrote his alchemical treatises during the tenth century. His writings, numbering about one hundred, demonstrate his familiarity with Greek theory and Persian practical knowledge of medicines and poisons. He starts out with the universal assumption of the alchemists that there exists a substance which could transmute the base metals into gold. But his contribution to the subject lies in his emphasis on practical experiment rather than superstitious beliefs about the chemical properties of metals. His experiments in chemistry mark a definite advance on his Greek and Persian masters. He devised improved methods for evaporation, filtration, sublimation, melting, distillation and crystallization.

Jabir's chemical and alchemical writings were translated into Latin during the twelfth century. The Englishman Robert of Chester translated his Composition of Alchemy and the well-known Gerard of Cremona rendered The Book of Seventy

into Latin. These works have considerably influenced the course of chemistry and alchemy in Europe.

The most significant advance in the field of optics was made by Al-Haytham (Alhazen) of Basra who worked in the court of the Fatimid ruler of Egypt during the tenth century. His main work on optics survives only in the Latin translation known as Opticae Thesaurus. This work has been a source of inspiration and information to many Western scholars of the subject during the Medieval Ages. Roger Bacon and the Pole Witelo acknowledge their debt to him. Leonardo da Vinci and Johannes Kepler have also learnt from him.

The impact of Muslim architecture, music, minor arts, painting, law and education on the West is less tangible and less important than that of the arts and sciences mentioned above. Consequently it will be excluded from this survey. The only contribution of the Arabs to the West in the field of minor arts that deserves a mention is paper manufacture. The Muslims had their first acquaintance with the art of paper making in 712, when they captured Samarqand. A crude form of paper, prepared with linen beaten into pulp, was in vogue in Central Asia. The Arabs improved the primitive method of making paper and founded their first paper mill at Baghdad in 794. Egypt started paper manufacture in about 900; Morocco in 1100 and, its satellites, Spain and Sicily, shortly afterwards. The crusaders mastered the technique of

paper manufacture during their campaigns in the East and introduced it in Europe in the later Middle Ages. The contribution of the paper industry to the march of civilization is immense and incalculable. Paper replaced the papyrus and parchment and considerably facilitated the preparation of manuscripts. Diffusion of knowledge over a wider area became possible.

Europe has always shown a reluctance to acknowledge the contribution of Muslim East to its philosophy, science, astronomy and fine arts. The period between 500 and 1300 is labelled as "Dark Ages" by Occidental historians, implying thereby that all dissemination and assimilation of knowledge came to a sudden halt at the end of the fifth century with the break up of the Roman Empire, and it was revived during the Renaissance with the rediscovery of Greek and Roman manuscripts which the Byzantine scholars brought with them to Europe after the fall of Constantinople in 1553. This view of history is a distorted and misleading one. In the words of Glubb:

Even, however, if we assume, for the sake of argument, that Roman and now European civilizations are superior to any produced by the Arabs or the Persians, it certainly does not follow that the centuries of Muslim predominance should be completely censored from our text books. For history is a continuous process and one event, whether it be a happy or a tragic one, leads to another.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Bagot Glubb, The Lost Centuries, p. 8.

Try as the historians may to minimize or altogether eliminate the Muslim influence on the thought and culture of the West during the so called "Dark Ages" the facts of history assert themselves and point in a different direction.

The fall of Toledo to the Christians in 1085 is an important event in the history of culture. Christian scholars from all over Europe began to flow into the Spanish capital to admire the remains of Moorish civilization. One of the first prominent scholars to visit Toledo was the English scientist Adelard of Bath. He stayed in Spain for several years and translated some Arabic treatises on astronomy and mathematics into Latin. A Spanish scholar, Petrus Alphonsi, came to England at about the same time. He introduced Arab scientific writings into England for the first time through Latin translations made by himself.

The work of translation in Toledo became more systematic when Archbishop Raymond founded his school of translation under the general supervision of the great Latin scholar Dominico Gundisalvi. Raymond's school is reminiscent of Al-Mamun's academy at Baghdad three centuries earlier. Interpretation of Arabic texts was done by the Jews who knew Arabic, Hebrew and Spanish. Avendeath, a Jew who had become a Christian, rendered a number of Arab scientific treatises into Latin. By far the greatest among the Latin translators was Gerard of Cremona. He was the counterpart of the Arab

scholar Hunyan ibn Ishaq in Raymond's school. He translated no less than eighty Arabic texts, some of them monumental ones, into Latin during his lifetime.

Sicily under the Norman rulers became a show-window of Muslim culture in Europe. The "half-heathen kings," as their critics called them, had given full religious freedom to their Muslim subjects; most of the recruits to the Norman infantry came from their ranks and some of the highest positions in the state went to them. It is not an exaggeration to say that Muslim culture thrived more under the Normans than it had all during the Muslim rule. Muslim scholars from the East were received with open arms at the Norman court in Palermo. A school of translation, similar to that at Toledo, was founded at Palermo. Latin translations of Arabic translations from Greek as well as original Arabic writings poured out from the Sicilian school. Thus Sicily became an important center for transmitting Muslim learning into the Latin West.

By the thirteenth century a large body of Greek and Arab medical, scientific, astronomical, mathematical and astrological writings had become available to the West in Latin versions. Speaking of the impact of these translations on the West, Meyerhof says:

In this way hundreds of translations from Graeco-Arabic literature descended on the barren

scientific soil of Europe. The effect was that of a fertilizing rain.<sup>1</sup>

The Greek texts, recovered through Arabic, and the original Arabic texts formed the curricula of the newly founded universities of Bologna, Padua, Lontpellier, Paris and Oxford. Medical knowledge was revolutionized with the advances in surgery and hygiene and the establishment of hospitals. In the field of natural science Aristotle and Averroes reigned supreme. Scholars like Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus expounded the texts of the great Muslim scientists in the Western centers of learning.

The Renaissance sounded the death-knell of Muslim cultural influence in Europe. The revolutionary astronomical theories of Copernicus shifted the emphasis from the authority of ancients to direct observation of nature in scientific investigations. With the revival of national consciousness a systematic campaign to obliterate all traces of Muslim influence was inaugurated all over Europe. New translations of Greek writers, direct from Greek, was made. St. Thomas' lead in purifying Greek thought of the adulterating element of Muslim thought was followed up. Though Muslim influence persisted over a longer period in certain places, generally speaking, it was wiped out from Europe by the sixteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup>Max Meyerhof, "Science and Medicine," p. 351.

It is impossible to determine with any amount of accuracy the significance of the Muslim cultural contribution to the West. The Muslim East had received the Promethean flame from the classical West; it kept the flame burning and made it more luminous before passing it back to the Medieval West. In the words of Carba de Vaux:

The Arabs kept alive the higher intellectual life and the study of science in a period when the Christian West was fighting desperately with barbarism. . . . The Arabs thus formed a bond of union, a connecting link between ancient culture and modern civilization. When at the Renaissance the spirit of man was once again filled with the zeal for knowledge and stimulated by the spark of genius, if it was able to set promptly to work, to produce and to invent, it was because the Arabs had preserved and perfected various branches of knowledge, kept the spirit of research alive and eager and maintained it pliant and ready for future discoveries.<sup>1</sup>

#### Literature

Perhaps there is no more perplexing problem for a student of East-West relations than to trace the influence of the Eastern literature on that of the West. In spite of striking similarities between the form and content of the different genres of the two literatures it is difficult to prove conclusively how the literary influences were transmitted from the one to the other. There are too many missing links in the chain. The difficulty arises mainly from the

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<sup>1</sup>Carba de Vaux, "Astronomy and Mathematics," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir T. Arnold and A. Guillaume, p. 377.

fact that in the earliest days of East-West contacts the songs, stories, fables, etc., were handed on orally and there is no written record of the details of intellectual communication carried on between the two peoples.

The Arabs, it has been observed, had founded their philosophy and science on the knowledge they inherited from Greece. But Greek poetry, drama and history did not evoke any response in them. For inspiration in these fields they turned to Persia.

Love had always been the dominant theme of Arab poetry. The love which found expression in the early Arab odes and lyrics was a voluptuous passion of a man for a woman which made him oblivious of his environments and himself. The vision of Laila constantly haunted the greatest of the Arab lovers, Qais. Wherever he turned his eyes he saw her. The overpowering emotion found expression in simple and direct language. Early Arab poetry is the best illustration of Wordsworth's poetic creed. But all this was before the Arabs conquered Persia. Arab poetry underwent a metamorphosis after Arabic contact with the Persians. Persian poetry also sang of love, but it was love of a different kind. It was not a simple emotion but a complex ritual. The lover was a moth who singed his wings or burnt himself in the flame of the candle which was his beloved. Or he was a nightingale dying out of his hopeless passion for the

rose. The moth and the nightingale are the most recurrent symbols for the lover and the candle and the rose for the beloved in Persian poetry. These symbols point to the essential nature of love in Persian poetry: it is an ideal passion that transcends physical love; it is foredoomed to failure because no real communion between the lover and the beloved is possible; it can culminate only in death which the lover desires and yearns for. The poet or the lover (they are generally identical) idealizes his mistress, sings rapturously of her beauty, feels heartbroken because of her indifference and is always ready to lay down his life in her service. The intensity of emotion in Persian poetry is not unlike that in Arabic poetry, but it has several new elements: a soaring idealism, a wealth of imagery and literary artifices and an elaborate, well-defined cult of love. The love in Persian poetry, to put it in more familiar terms, is Platonic and courtly. The sons of the desert were thrilled and fascinated with Persian poetry and they made it all their own.

The Arabic poetry that flourished in the Muslim court at Cordova was a carefully polished, highly stylized poetry, written by courtiers and court poets. It still retained the Persian spirit of Platonic love and cult of the dame but the stanza forms had become more complex with elaborate internal rhymes and intricate metrical patterns. The new stanza forms

were the legacy of Spanish poetry to the Arabs. Among the common people the Arab-Spanish poetry assumed the form of the bilingual popular ballads known as villancico in Spanish and zajal in Arabic.

It is now generally accepted by Oriental scholars that the zajal singers gave rise to the love poetry of the troubadours in Provence in the eleventh century. The question as to how the Arabic-speaking Moors could communicate with the French-speaking Provençals has been satisfactorily answered. According to Gibb:

It is now proved beyond all question that not only were the "Moors" of Andalusia overwhelmingly Spanish in blood, but that all, from highest to lowest, understood and spoke Romance familiarly and habitually.<sup>1</sup>

There was no precedent for the cult of romantic love, which was the theme of the new poetry, in Greek or Latin literature or in the past or present life or literature of France or in the Christian religion. The new element could have come into Provence only from neighbouring Spain where it had been flourishing for the last two centuries. The close resemblance between the stanza and metrical forms of the zajal and troubadour poetry tells the same story.

In Sicily Arabic poetry made an impact on the Italian folk songs and popular ballads. The sonnet and the

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<sup>1</sup>H. A. R. Gibb, "Literature," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir T. Arnold and A. Guillaume, p. 188.

rhymed lyrical verse are also said to have originated from Eastern sources.<sup>1</sup>

The Medieval romances, too, were based on Arabic models. Professor Mackail in his excellent lecture on Arabic Epic and Romantic Poetry narrates the story of the tenth century Arabic romance The Stealing of the Mare to demonstrate that "Western romance and chivalry derive from Arabian sources much as Western religion derives through Jewish origins."<sup>2</sup> The Stealing of the Mare and the eleventh century Arabic romance Antar are the earliest known examples of Roman chevalersque. The Charlemagne and Arthurian legends have been cast in the Arab moulds.

The debt of Medieval Europe to Arabic prose literature is still more obvious. Arabic analogues, fables and tales were orally transmitted over a wide area in Europe during the early Middle Ages. The Western fabliaux, contes, exempla, etc., which began to appear in the thirteenth century, follow the Arabic precedent. Not only the forms of the stories but also the episodes present close analogies with the earlier Arab tales. Boccaccio's oriental tales in the Decameron and Chaucer's Squieres Tale are Arabian Nights' tales which were brought to Europe by Italian merchants from

<sup>1</sup>H. A. R. Gibb, "Literature," p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>J. W. Mackail, Lectures on Poetry, (New York: Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1967), p. 125.

the East. Translations of Arabic collections of stories began to appear in the fourteenth century and became immediately popular with the reading classes because of their novelty, variety and polished literary style. The animal fables of Sanskrit origin had been translated into Arabic in the eighth century under the title of Kalila wa Dimna. The Arabic version was Latinized by John of Capua in the thirteenth century. The Arabic tales and fables retained their hold on popular imagination during the high tide of classical Renaissance in Europe.

Yet another form of Arabic literature which has influenced Medieval literature is the maqamat or the picaresque tale. The hero of the maqamat is generally a vagabond, witty and unscrupulous in his dealings with others, and the disconnected episodes of the story find unity in his person. Spanish romances like El Cavellero Cifar, Historia del Abencerrage, Guerras Civiles, etc., bear visible traces of the maqamat. The best example of the Moorish-Spanish romance tradition is Cervantes' Don Quixote, which has considerably influenced the growth of picaresque novel in many European languages including English.

In one of the most startling research publications of modern times Miguel Asin Palacios, a Spanish scholar, has traced the cosmology and eschatology of Dante's La Divina Commedia to Islamic sources. The Divine Comedy was

considered to be the most original poem because its theme and descriptions had no precedent in Christian literature. Palacios has traced a parallel for Dante and Beatrice's ascent to Paradise in the Arabic legend of Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven accompanied by the archangel Gabriel. There is only one short verse in the Alkoran describing Muhammad's ascent to heaven:

Praised be He (the Lord) who called upon His servant (Mohammed) to travel by night from the sacred temple (of Mecca) to the far off temple (of Jerusalem) whose precincts We have blessed in order to show him Our wonders. Verse I. Chapter 17.

Arab theologians and mystics elaborated the story into legends over the centuries. Palacios found in the Fatuhât (Conquests) of Ibn Arabi, the great Murcian mystic, an allegory of the ascension of a mystic or philosopher to heaven. Palacios was struck with the close resemblance between the vision of Ibn Arabi and the Divine Comedy. He himself tells the rest of the story:

Such was the starting point of my research, but soon the horizon opened out unexpectedly before me. On closer study of Ibn Arabi's quasi-Dantesque allegory I found that it was itself no more than a mystical adaptation of another ascension, already famous in the theological literature of Islam: the Miraj of Ascension, of Mahomet from Jerusalem to the Throne of God. As the Miraj was preceded by an Isra, or Nocturnal Journey, during which Mahomet visited some of the infernal regions, the Muslim tradition at once struck me as a prototype of Dante's conception.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Miguel Asin Palacios, Islam and the Divine Comedy, tr. and abr. Harold Sunderland (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1926), p. xiii.

In another book of Ibn Arabi, Kitab al Isra ila maqqm il Asra (The Book of Nocturnal Journey toward the Majesty of the Most Magnanimous), written about a hundred years before the Divine Comedy, Palacios found a detailed account of Muhammad's ascension. The parallelism between the episodes of Ibn Arabi and Dante is too close to be attributed to mere chance or accident. The following resume of some of the identical features of the two books, prepared by Atiya from Palacios' thesis, will give an idea of the relationship between Dante's poem and Farabi's mystical treatise:

Throughout the two texts, both Muhammad and Dante are made to narrate their eschatological experiences in the world beyond. Both begin the journey at night. In the Muslim version, a lion and a wolf bar the road to hell; and in Dante's poem, a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf impede his progress. Khaytūr, the patriarch of the genii addressing the Prophet, is replaced by Virgil, the patriarch of the classicists, who accompanied Dante. The warning of the approach to hell is the same in both writers--confused noises and bursts of flames. The architecture of the Inferno is the same in the two accounts--an inverted cone or funnel consisting of a series of levels for the various classes of sinners.

After passing the Mount of Purgatory, we find the Muslim and Christian heavens identical. Beatrice leaves Dante, and Gabriel leaves Muhammad, as they approach the Divine Presence. The Muslim gigantic angel, in the form of a cock suggests Dante's heavenly eagle. Dante beholds Saturn with a golden ladder leading to the last sphere, and Muhammad ascends a ladder rising from Jerusalem to the highest heaven. The apotheosis in both ascensions is the same. Both describe the Beatific Vision as focus of intense light surrounded by nine concentric circles of myriads of angelic spirits shedding wondrous radiance, with the cherubim in the center. The reactions of the two pilgrims to the great vision are alike. Both, dazzled by indescribable brilliance, believe

that they have gone blind. Gradually they gather strength and are able to gaze steadfastly upon the miraculous spectacle, and then they fall into ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

The eminent Orientalist R. A. Nicholson lends his authority to Asin's thesis when he says:

. . . as Professor Asin Palacios has recently pointed out, many peculiar features in his descriptions of Hell, Paradise, and the Beatific Vision are reproduced by Dante with a closeness that can scarcely be fortuitous. . . . In short, the parallelism, both general and particular, reaches so far that only one conclusion is possible. Muslim religious legends, e.g. the mi'rāj or Ascension of the Prophet, together with popular and philosophical conceptions of the after-life--derived from Muslim traditionists and such writers as Fārābī, Avicenna, Ghazālī, and Ibnu'l-'Arabi--must have passed into the common stock of literary culture that was accessible to the best minds in Europe in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

As the present writer feels it would be presumptuous on his part to deliver any judgment on such delicate matters as the literary influence of the East on the West, it would be appropriate to close this chapter with a quotation from a scholar who is competent to give an opinion. Speaking of earlier Eastern influences on the poetry of the West, Mackail says:

But they are all inconsiderable in comparison with the effect produced by the full impact of the brilliant Arab civilization which spread behind the great Arab conquests. As Europe owes its religion to Judaea, so it owes its romance to Arabia: and

<sup>1</sup>Aziz S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, pp. 258-259.

<sup>2</sup>R. A. Nicholson, "Mysticism," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir T. Arnold and A. Guillaume, pp. 227-228.

not only that, but the awakening of imaginative and creative force that issued in the romantic poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Mackail, Lectures on Poetry, p. 97.

## CHAPTER IV

## POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Pilgrimage

The Christian pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land were the first Europeans to come in contact with the Muslim East. Pilgrim traffic into Jerusalem continued unimpeded after the conquest of Syria by the Arabs in 638. Because of the hazards on the way the number of pilgrims remained restricted, and of those who came very few have left written records of their travels. The first pilgrims whose accounts of travels have come down to us were the Frank Arculf (680), the Saxon Willibald (725) and a man named Bernard who started on a pilgrimage from Rome in 870. As time passed the number of pilgrims continued to increase until, by the sixteenth century, the port of Venice was thronged with pilgrims waiting for ships to Jaffa. Speaking of the vogue of travel to holy places in England during this period, Howard says:

Of the many social impulses that were influenced by the Renaissance, . . . the love of travel received a notable modification. The very old instinct to go far, far away had in the Middle Ages found sanction, dignity and justification in the performance of the pilgrimages . . .

Toward the sixteenth century, when curiosity about things human was an ever stronger undercurrent in England, the pilgrimages were particularly popular. . . . The numbers were so large that the control of their transportation became a coveted enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

One of the earliest books printed in England was Wynkin de Wordes' Information for Pilgrymys unto the Holy Londe. Numerous similar Pilgrims' Manuals and Travel Guides poured out from the British presses in the sixteenth century.

The information these pilgrims brought back home must have been a rich source of illumination about the East to the listeners of their stories. The natural human desire to impress the auditors may have, in some cases, made the accounts more colourful than they actually were; but there is reason to believe that in most cases they were authentic. The few extant written accounts give fairly accurate information about the places visited by the pilgrims: Constantinople, Cairo, Alexandria, Aleppo, Tripoli and Jerusalem; and of the people they had to deal with on the way: the Greeks, the Turks, the Moors, the Mamluks and the Franciscans who were the custodians of the Holy Land.

### Travelers

The accounts of European travelers to the East deserve more attention than the stories of pilgrims because their sole motive was to see the world and to report their

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<sup>1</sup>Clare Howard, English Travellers of the Renaissance (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1914), p. 3.

experiences to their countrymen. The first and the greatest of these travelers was the Venetian Marco Polo (1254-1324). He traveled to China through a land route passing through Syria, Iraq, Persia and Central Asia. He remained in the court of the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan at Peking for several years during which he served the Emperor in different capacities--as ambassador, as administrator and as geographer. On the way back to Venice Marco Polo came by sea through the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, touching the ports of Ceylon, India and Persia.

Marco Polo's accounts of his travels have been preserved in The Book of Marco Polo. His descriptions of the cities, customs of people, climates and crops of the places he visited have been found to be factual but the element of the marvellous has crept into his narrative in many places. In the account of his journey through the Desert of Lop, for example, Polo mentions the evil spirits which haunt the desert and lure the traveler out of the direct road by calling him in a familiar voice. At times these spirits, he adds, fill the air with sounds of all kinds of musical instruments. His own generation regarded Marco Polo's book mainly as a collection of marvels.

Friar Oderic of Pardenone went to Cathay as a Catholic missionary in the year 1316. Oderic made his way to the court of Khan Baliq at Peking through Iran, India and the

islands of Indonesia and, after staying in China for almost a decade, he returned to Avignon in 1329 by way of Central Asia. Oderic's accounts of the countries and people he saw are illuminating, though he does not have the same sharp eye for details that Marco Polo has. Of special interest are his descriptions of India, which he visited in 1322, as he was the first European traveler who penetrated into the Indian mainland. But too many wonderful things happened to him in the course of his travel in the East. His account of the Valley of Death, which was later incorporated in the description of Vale Perilous in Mandeville's Travels, will give an idea of his unusual experiences. On entering the Valley of Death he saw dead bodies scattered all over the place and heard diverse sweet sounds and harmonies of music. Proceeding farther, he saw a man with a horrible face who looked at him threateningly. But as Oderic had been praying to the Saviour and making signs of the Cross with his fingers, he found the courage to fly away from the place. When he reached the town where he had been staying, people marvelled at him and told him that no one before him had escaped alive from the Valley of Death.

The greatest fraud and the greatest genius among the writers of travel accounts was "Sir John Mandeville" (1312-1356), the man who wrote the fabulous guide book The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Mandeville, Knight popularly known

as Mandeville's Travels. Sir John Mandeville is obviously the pen-name of the author who has recently been identified as Jean de Bourgogne.<sup>1</sup> Mandeville, who perhaps never stirred out of his house, has given most fascinating accounts of travels to Constantinople, Palestine, Egypt, Turkey, Persia, Syria, Ethiopia, Arabia, India and Cathay. He collected his material from the encyclopedias and travel-books, geographical writings, etc., available to him. His genius lies in selecting the most exciting episodes from the accounts of genuine travelers, in organizing the vast material into a compact, racy narrative and adding fascinating details from his wide readings in romance and legends. His literary style lends a unique charm to his writing and his creative imagination is at work throughout the book, transforming and vivifying the material. Mandeville's Travels is the first romance of travel in modern times. Its popularity with the reading public was tremendous. The first English edition of 1496 was followed by numerous reprints. More than any other writer of his day Mandeville was responsible for creating the image of the East as a land of marvels and fantastic occurrences.

To the credulous Elizabethans nothing was too wonderful to be found in the East. They had read of the sciapods, men with only one foot which was larger than their body, of

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 9.

headless men with eyes in the shoulders, of dog-headed folk, of men with heads beneath the shoulders and of the cannibalistic race of pigmies known as anthropophagi. All these abnormal human species, the medieval tale-bearers had assured them, were to be found in the lands between Africa and India. The birds and beasts of the East were as unusual as its men. The basilisk, the phoenix, the unicorn, the crocodile, the camel and the elephant were some of the zoological species from the East.

The writers of travel accounts became more conscientious in reporting their facts toward the end of the sixteenth century. Richard Hakulyt (1552-1616) was the first such writer. His Principall Navigations, Voiyages and Discoveries of the English Nation was published in 1589. As the name suggests, the book was inspired mainly by patriotic considerations. But Hakulyt had taken care to verify all the details he put into his book from the English sea-captains, merchants and mariners, many of whom were his personal friends. Hakulyt's Voiyages had the most authentic account of Eastern countries that became available to the Elizabethan readers. A revised and enlarged second edition of Hakulyt's work appeared in 1598.

After Hakulyt's death Samuel Purchas procured some of his manuscripts and used them in Purchas His Pilgrimage, published in 1625. Several excellent accounts of gentlemen

travelers like Fynes Moryson, George Sandys and Sir Henry Blount and adventurers like William Lithglow and Thomas Coryat appeared early in the seventeenth century. To these may be added accounts of merchants like John Sanderson and preachers like William Biddulph, John Cartwright, etc. Most of these accounts are reliable and give an accurate picture of the East. But it is not necessary to discuss these accounts in detail because they were published too late to have any influence on the dramatists that this paper deals with.

#### The Crusades

The Crusades were the most important medium of mass contact between the peoples of the East and West and, as such, deserve some attention. It has been mentioned earlier that the Seljuk monarch Alp Arslan's victory over the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071 opened the way for a mass-exodus of the nomadic Turkish tribes into Asia Minor. The Turkish hordes began to settle down in the area and became a potent threat to the peace of Europe. European countries had been too busy fighting each other to notice what was happening around them but, when the Turks began to knock at the very gates of Europe, they became suddenly aware of the new danger. The only person who was influential enough to unite the ever-squabbling Western kingdoms against the common enemy was the ecclesiastical head of the Roman Church, the Pope. And Pope Urban II (1088-1099) was not slow in realizing and

fulfilling his moral obligation to Christendom. He convened a meeting of the Church Council at Auvergne in Southern France on November 27, 1095, and unfolded his plan for the Crusade to the Church hierarchy and French nobles assembled there. The objective of the plan was twofold: to organize the defence of Europe against the Saracen invaders and to secure free access to the Holy Land for Christian pilgrims by wresting it from Muslim hands.

The conditions in the East were highly propitious for such an adventure. The Sunni rulers of Baghdad and the Shia Fatimids of Egypt had been fighting sectarian wars for the last three decades. After the death of the last strong Seljuk ruler Malik Shah the Turkish generals were asserting their independence in the provinces they had been ruling for the Seljuk Empire. In short, there was chaos all around.

The first official crusade was inaugurated in 1097. Godfrey of Bouillon and his brother Baldwin; Hugh Vermandois, brother of Philip I of France; Robert Curt Hose, the Duke of Normandy; Bohemond, the son and Tancred, the nephew of Robert Guiscard, the Norman ruler of South Italy, were the main leaders of the campaign. Their armies, numbering well over 200,000, were assembled in Constantinople by May 1097. Arrangements for the transportation of the large force to Anatolia in Asia Minor were made by the Byzantine Emperor. After swearing the oath of allegiance to the Emperor, the

Crusaders got on the way. Their first success came in June with the capture of Nicaea; the main Turkish force in Asia Minor was defeated at Dorylaeum in July and the road to Palestine lay open before the soldiers of the Cross.

With the two initial successes of the campaign and the prospects of more conquests in the near future the religious fervour of the leaders began to give way to personal ambitions, and friction among them became evident. Baldwin outwitted his rival Tancred when, through his marriage with an Armenian princess, he managed to succeed to the throne of Edessa, after the murder of King Thoros in a local uprising.

Next, the Crusaders advanced to the city of Antioch in Northern Syria and besieged the town. The siege lasted for eight months and the city fell into their hands on June 3, 1098. Only four days after the fall of Antioch Turkish reinforcements under Kerbogha, the Governor of Mosul, arrived to relieve the besieged town. But the morale of the Christians was high after their recent victories and they defeated Kerbogha's mighty army after a short engagement. Bohemond stayed behind with a small force to consolidate the gain and the bulk of the army pressed on to Jerusalem.

The Holy City was reached in June 1099. The town had been changing hands between the Abbasids and the Fatimids for the past several decades. At this particular moment it happened to be in the hands of the Fatimid Caliph of Egypt.

The Egyptian force fought bravely to defend the town but was far outnumbered and outmanoeuvred by the Crusaders and had to surrender on July 15. The massacre which followed the capture of Palestine was unprecedented in the annals of war. The streets were littered with dead bodies and torn limbs; the blood of victims flowed in streams. The men were all put to the sword and all the property was seized by the Crusaders.

The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was proclaimed immediately after the victory and Godfrey of Bouillon assumed the title of "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre." An Egyptian army sent from Cairo to aid the Muslims was defeated by Godfrey at Ascalon in August. The hold of the Crusaders on Jerusalem was stabilized after their second victory over Egypt and the Muslim amirs of the unconquered Syrian towns acknowledged the suzerainty of the new ruler by sending him tributes in gift or money.

After the death of Godfrey on July 18, 1100, Baldwin of Boulogne was elected the King of Jerusalem. The monarchy remained elective during the twelfth century but became hereditary in the thirteenth. The real power of the state, however, remained in the hands of the Papal representative, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, as long as the theocratic state lasted. The set-up of the kingdom was of a federal character, the federating units being the four principalities of

Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa and Tripoli. The administration of the coastal towns captured by the Crusaders was turned over to the mercantile powers of Venice, Genoa and Pisa and these towns acquired an almost autonomous status. The Latin Church was established on a sound footing with two Patriarchs, one at Jerusalem and the other at Antioch, sixteen bishoprics and numerous monastic establishments.

In spite of all the efforts to give it stability and strength the new kingdom remained exposed to dangers from within and without. The Turks soon reestablished their hold on Asia Minor, cutting off the communications of the Crusaders with Europe. The hinterland of Greater Syria remained totally in Muslim hands and sporadic fighting between the Muslims and Christians continued during the following centuries. Emperor Alexius of Byzantine became hostile to the Crusaders when, in contravention of the agreement at Constantinople, they refused to acknowledge his authority over the principalities of Antioch and Edessa. Personal rivalries and jealousies among the rulers of the principalities posed a constant threat to the survival of the state.

The main task before the rulers of the Latin Kingdom was to bolster their defences and strengthen the structure of the new state through their own resources. Baldwin I, who came to the throne in 1110, proved up to the task. He initiated a policy of friendship toward Eastern Christians and

a more conciliatory attitude toward local Muslims. Mixed marriages between the Latins and native Christians were encouraged. Trade relations with neighbouring Muslim states were established. Mighty castles and forts, which could be used for offensive as well as defensive purposes, were built on strategic sites.

The new militant orders of monks which began to spring up early in the twelfth century became a further source of strength to the kingdom. The first such organization, known as Knights Templar, was founded by a French Knight named Hugh de Payens in 1119. The Order of St. John, better known as Knights Hospitaller, was formed shortly afterwards for the care of the sick and wounded in the battlefields. Several similar Orders grew up in the following years.

All these measures helped in consolidating the position of the Latin Kingdom and enabled it to survive for two hundred years in a hostile world.

Imad al Din Zangi, a Mamluk chief, was made the Lord of Mosul in 1127. He began to expand his dominions at the cost of other Muslim states of Syria. In 1144 he seized the city of Edessa, reducing the county to a small area in the West of Euphrate. The news of the fall of Edessa came as a shock to Europe. Preparations for a second Crusade were set afoot at once. Louis VII, the King of France, and Conrad II,

the Emperor of Germany, pooled their military resources and their combined army of 150,000 men began the march to the East from Constantinople in October 1147. Because of mutual suspicion the Germans and the French could not keep together and soon the two forces began to march separately. The Germans, who were the first to advance, discovered that the Turks had destroyed the crops and desiccated the water springs. Their own food supplies ran out after eight days and they found themselves faced with starvation. Just then the Turks appeared, surrounded the German army and showered them with arrows. When the Germans charged they galloped away but returned as soon as the charge petered out. The battle of Dorylaeum ended in a rout of the German army in October 1147, and Conrad barely managed to escape with his life. The French army met the same fate in January 1148.

The failure of the second Crusade had significant repercussions in the East. The Muslim states around the Latin Kingdom began to launch frequent attacks on the Christian principalities. The situation in the Muslim world was also changing rapidly. Imad al Din, the ruler of Mosul, had died in 1146 and his son Nur al Din succeeded him. The kingdom of Mosul was further strengthened when the Muslim principality of Damascus capitulated to Nur al Din in 1154. The Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt had been on the decline for some time and a tug-of-war soon began between Nur al Din and

Amalric I of Jerusalem to seize the crumbling Empire. Before the issue could be settled in favour of either of them events took an unexpected turn. Salahuddin, the nephew of Nur al Din's general Shirkuh, seized Egypt after the death of the last Fatimid Caliph al-Adid on September 13, 1171. When Nur al Din died in May 1174, Salahuddin seized his kingdom also. Thus within three years Salahuddin became the master of all the territories that had belonged to the Egyptian Empire and the Kingdom of Mosul. Aleppo submitted to him in 1183 and the smaller Mesopotamian principalities joined his realm in 1186.

The task of subduing all the Muslim powers in the area being over in 1187, Salahuddin turned his attention to the Christians. He inflicted a crushing defeat on the Templars at Nazareth on May 1, 1187, and then besieged the strategic town of Tiberias. The Latin rulers hurriedly patched up their differences in the face of the common danger and mustered their forces to relieve Tiberias. Their joint army, numbering about 30,000, was passing through the desert plain of Hittin when Salahuddin launched a surprise attack. The Christian army surrendered after a weak resistance on the same day--July 4, 1187. Tiberias opened its gates to the conquerors the next day. Acre fell on July 9. The ports of Beirut, Ascalon, Sidon and Jubail were all taken by September. After cutting off all its sources of aid, Salahuddin

advanced to Jerusalem. The city capitulated on October 2, after a siege which lasted for only twelve days.

The news of the fall of Jerusalem fell like a thunderbolt on Western Europe. Richard, the Duke of Aquitaine who succeeded to the English throne after the death of Henry II in September 1189, and Philip Augustus, the King of France, at once took the Cross and set out to the Holy Land. Philip landed outside the port of Acre on April 20, 1190. Richard's ships were carried off by a storm to Cyprus, which he seized after defeating the Byzantine ruler of the island, Isaac Comnenus. He sold Cyprus to the Templars and sailed to Acre, where he landed on June 8. Acre fell to the Crusaders on July 12. Philip abruptly left for France on August 1, though he left most of his army in Acre. Richard began to march to Jerusalem at the head of the two armies on August 25. Salahuddin's forces followed the Crusaders at a distance. After short intervals the Turkish horse-archers would come close to the marching column, pour arrows on them and gallop away. Contrary to all hopes of the Muslims, Richard's soldiers launched a lightning attack on their main force. In the pitched battle which followed near Arsoof Salahuddin's forces were defeated. The march to Jerusalem continued. Salahuddin, next, resorted to the scorched earth policy and destroyed all the towns and crops on the way to Jerusalem. Richard, realizing the grave consequences that would follow

if he persisted in his attempt to conquer Jerusalem, concluded peace with Salahuddin on September 3, 1192. The friendship which ensued between Richard the Lion-Heart and Sallahuddin is one of the few glorious events in the sordid history of the Wars of Fanaticism. Richard sailed back to England in October 1192.

The Holy War was resumed after the accession of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). A large army, composed mainly of the French, the Venetians and the Flemings was assembled in Venice, and Boniface of Monteferrat was elected the commander of the expedition. The first objective of the Crusaders was the conquest of Egypt. They captured the port of Zara on the Adriatic in September 1202 and made it over to Venice in lieu of the hire of Venetian ships. The greed and personal ambition of the leaders of the expedition soon diverted it from its course and it made a surprise landing in Constantinople in June 1203. The Byzantine Emperor Alexius III fled in terror and the Crusaders installed Isaac Angelus, a puppet Emperor of their own, in his place. But Isaac was soon assassinated in a local uprising. Baldwin of Flanders was then placed on the throne and the city of Constantinople was given to pillage. Palaces, churches and libraries were denuded of their treasures. Priceless works of art and rarest manuscripts were destroyed. The women of the town, including the nuns, were raped on the streets. Thus ended the most

ignominious of all Crusades and the soldiers of the Cross sailed back to their homes in May 1204.

The fifth Crusade was inaugurated by the Pope in 1217. The combined forces of King Andrew of Hungary and King John de Brienne of Jerusalem set out for the conquest of Egypt and landed on the Egyptian port of Damietta in May 1218. The city was besieged and it eventually surrendered on November 5, 1219. The weak ruler of Egypt, Sultan al-Kamel Muhammad, a nephew of Salahuddin, offered to cede Jerusalem to the Crusaders if they vacated the possession of Damietta. But his offer was spurned by the conquerors who were determined to annex the whole of Egypt before proceeding to Palestine. So the march on the mainland of Egypt began in July 1221. It was the rainy season and the Nile was in full flood. The Egyptians broke the dams in all canals and the Crusaders found themselves swimming in a vast pool of water, with the Egyptian forces ready to attack them from dry land. They saved their lives by surrendering Damietta.

The sixth one-man Crusade of Frederick II, the "Infidel Emperor" of Rome, is a unique phenomenon in the annals of Crusades. Frederick was a scholar, well-conversant with Greek, Hebrew and Arabic and he was a very enigmatic and unpredictable man. He had planned to lead an army to the Holy Land when he acceded to the throne in 1215 but, for no obvious reason, abandoned the idea after some time. His

failure to launch the Holy War earned him the displeasure of the Pope, who excommunicated him. In 1228 Frederick sailed to the East on his own in a small flotilla manned by Arab sailors. He reached Acre in September and immediately entered into negotiations with Sultan al-Kamel for the liberation of Jerusalem. His knowledge of Arabic, his intriguing personality and his unbounded courage in undertaking the dangerous expedition appear to have disposed the Sultan favourably towards him. On February 18, 1229, al-Kamel signed a treaty with Frederick by which the holy cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth were restored to the Christians and some other lands forming a corridor from the Phoenician coast to the Holy Place were also assigned to them. Thus Frederick achieved through peaceful means what his predecessors had failed to obtain through bloody wars. He placed the crown of Jerusalem on his own head because no priest would perform this office for an excommunicate. Unexpected as Frederick's success had been, even more unexpected was its reaction on the Church. The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem imposed an interdict on Jerusalem, banning the entry of Crusaders and pilgrims into the Holy Place, and a Papal army invaded Frederick's kingdom in Italy! He had to rush back to Italy to save his own dominions.

Jerusalem was again seized by the Muslims in 1244 and most of the other Latin territories came into their hands by

1245. This was cause enough for a new Crusade. Louis IX, the King of France, became the champion of the Holy Cause on this occasion. His forces landed in the Egyptian port of Damietta, which was captured on June 6, 1249. The land march beyond Damietta, however, ended in a disaster. The French army was defeated at Mansura on April 6, 1250. Louis and most of his nobles were taken prisoners and released only after the payment of heavy ransoms. The soldiers of the French army were mercilessly butchered. After his release in May 1250 Louis proceeded to Jerusalem where he spent four years in penitence before returning to France in 1254.

In 1250 the Mamluk captain Kutuz seized power in Egypt and inaugurated the Mamluk dynasty. His successor Baybars annexed the principality of Antioch in 1268. Kalaun, the next Mamluk king, conquered Tripoli in 1289. Finally the Mamluk ruler al-Ashraf Khalil seized Acre in 1291 and drove out the Christians from their remaining possessions, the coastal towns of Tyre, Sidon and Beirut by 1292. Thus the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was completely liquidated two centuries after its inception.

But the end of the Latin Kingdom was not the end of the Crusades. There was a lull of about half a century, during which Europe took stock of the situation: the causes of Muslim success and Christian failure were carefully analysed,

efforts to patch up the differences between the Christian powers were made, and a vigorous campaign to mobilize public opinion in favour of more Crusades was launched. After the ground had thus been prepared a new wave of Crusades began in the second half of the fourteenth century.

The first Crusade of this period, known as the Aegean Crusade, was organized by Venice, Cyprus and the Hospitallers. The crusaders stormed and seized the Turkish port of Smyrna, which remained in their hands until 1402, when Timur wrested it from the Hospitallers.

The second Crusade is the name given to the surprise raid on the Egyptian town of Alexandria by King Peter I of Cyprus. Alexandria was occupied on October 10, 1365. It was given to pillage for seven days after the conquest. On the eighth day a large Egyptian force arrived on the outskirts of the town. The Cypriots fled with their booty without offering any resistance to the Egyptians.

Almedo VI, the Count of Savoy, led a crusading army against the Turkish peninsula of Gallipoli and captured it in August 1366. Later the same year he sold it to John of Constantinople.

France and Genoa organized a joint campaign against the North African kingdom of Tunis in 1390. The Moorish pirates had a stronghold in the Tunisian port town of Al-Mahdiya. The Moors had been a constant menace to European

shipping and the campaign was undertaken to teach a lesson to them as well as to their Tunisian protectors. But all the efforts of the Crusaders to batter the town walls proved futile while the guerrilla attacks of the Tunisians inflicted heavy losses on their men and ships. Seeing little hope of success against the Muslims, the Genoese concluded a unilateral treaty with Tunis stipulating the suspension of piratical activities by the Moors for ten years and the payment of an annual tribute by the Muslim state.

The most disastrous Crusade of the fourteenth century came in 1396. Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgandy (1363-1404), initiated the Crusade which was joined by large numbers of volunteers from Germany, England, Spain and Italy. Venice, Genoa and the Hospitallers provided a large fleet for the transportation of the Crusaders. The total strength of the army which met at Buda has been estimated at over 100,000. The Crusaders marched along the Danube and captured the two Turkish towns of Widdin and Rahova. Next they advanced to the fortified town of Nicopolis on the bank of the Danube and set siege to it. When the news of the siege reached Beyazid I, who had been besieging Constantinople for several months, he lifted the siege at once and rushed to Nicopolis. The battle of Nicopolis which followed demonstrated the Ottoman military strategy at its best. Bayazid arranged his forces on the outlying hills in the south of Nicopolis. In the

front line was the Turkish light cavalry. Pointed stakes were fixed over a wide area behind the front line. At the back of the field of stakes stood the foot-archers forming the second line of defence. Half of the Ottoman army was arrayed in battle order on the other side of the hill, concealed from the sight of the Crusaders. The French, who formed the front line of the Christian army, led the attack. They had no difficulty in cutting down the first line of Turkish horsemen. As they descended from their horses to remove the stakes, a hail of arrows poured on them. The Crusaders stood their ground. The stakes were removed and a bloody battle followed which was soon decided in favour of the Crusaders. Jubilant with their quick success the Christians pursued the fleeing Turks to the top of the hill. On reaching the top, in a state of complete exhaustion, they came face to face with Bayazid's 40,000 strong force of cavalry and infantry ready to launch a fresh attack. The Christians retreated in disorder and few of them managed to escape. The riderless horses stampeded back to the base line of the Christian army to tell the story of the rout. The soldiers panicked and fled for safety. Sigismond of Hungary, the leader of the campaign, barely managed to escape in a Venetian galley.

The preceding account of the crusades, with the single exception of Frederick's Crusade, deals with only the

official Crusades, i.e., Crusades inaugurated by the Pope or launched with his approval. There were numerous unofficial crusades, organized by individuals or groups, between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries. From the fifteenth century onward the Holy Alliances were formed against the Turks only, and have been mentioned in an earlier chapter.

The mass military confrontation between the Christian West and the Muslim East over a period of five centuries inevitably suggests a question to the mind: were the Crusades a manifestation of the religious fanaticism which erupted suddenly, on both sides, in the eleventh century or were they a continuation of the age-old conflict between West and East, based on racial and cultural differences, which began, in recorded history, with the wars between Greece and Persia? Important and interesting as the question is, it has no direct bearing on the topic of this dissertation and consequently an answer to it will not be attempted here. What is more significant for the purpose of this study is the fact that never before had so many men from the West crossed into the East. It can very well be imagined what wonderful stories about the East these Crusaders must have carried home with them and related to attentive listeners by the fireside. It can be safely assumed that the stories were not all true. The tendency to exaggerate one's own virtues and the enemy's vices is common among men and must have been at work in the tellers of the Eastern tales.

Another aspect of the Crusades which deserves attention is the frigidity of the two peoples to each other throughout the Holy Wars. The contacts of the men from East and West through the Crusades were singularly unproductive in social and cultural fields. Even the physical fusion of the Latins and Easterners which took place in the Kingdom of Jerusalem failed to produce a cultural fusion of the two peoples. The new mixed generation was too conscious of its Latin origin to feel at home in the Orient. Throughout the period of Latin occupation of Jerusalem both the peoples, it appears, continued to feel that they had been thrown into the inevitable situation of living together and a real change of heart never occurred. Barker's analysis of the situation carries conviction:

The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was a rude military settlement, without the impulse, or at any rate without the time, for the creation of any achievements of civilization. It was a foreign legion encamped in castles and barracks: it came into no close contact either with the tillers of the soil in the Syrian villages or with the artisans who were busy, then as now, in making carpets and pottery and gold-work in the towns.<sup>1</sup>

### Commerce

The first trade centers of the Islamic world were the ancient ports of Siraf and Basra in the Persian Gulf, from which a brisk trade was carried on with other Eastern

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<sup>1</sup>Ernest Barker, "The Crusades," in The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, p. 54.

countries, mainly India, Ceylon and China. In the course of time Baghdad, Cairo and Cordova developed into rich commercial towns. Goods from Asian and African countries were then carried to these commercial centers from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea ports and a lively traffic of overland trade with these countries was maintained through caravans which used camels as the means of transport.

Trade relations between the Muslims and Western Christians were slow to develop. The apathy of the feudal West to trade and the antagonism of the two peoples to each other discouraged a direct exchange of merchandise between them. The Jews and the Syrian Christian merchants carried on whatever little trade there was between the two blocks for almost a century after the establishment of the Arab Empire.

From the eighth century Muslim merchants began to establish trade with Constantinople, which had become the most important trade center in the Western world after the downfall of Rome in the fifth century. Traders from all parts of the world converged in the Byzantine capital and goods of all descriptions were abundant in its markets. Muslim merchants established a colony in Constantinople and soon monopolized the trade from all the countries within the Arab Empire.

Direct commercial intercourse between the East and the Western countries began with the Crusades. The ships

which sailed from the ports of Constantinople and Venice with the crusading armies also carried some merchants who were interested in opening up fresh markets. Regular trade between the East and the West was established in the twelfth century. Some of the hitherto unimportant trade centers in Europe, like Venice, Genoa and Pisa suddenly leaped into prominence and grew fabulously rich. Venice dealt mainly in imports from Syria, Egypt and Persia while Genoa monopolized the trade with North Africa and Black Sea. Both Venice and Genoa had merchant colonies in the countries with which they had business relations. From these two nerve centers of trade the imported goods were distributed to the numerous rapidly growing commercial towns all over Europe.

One of the most lucrative items of trade was slaves. They came from all parts of the world--Southern Russia, Eastern Europe, North Africa and Egypt. The European and Mongol slaves were sold in Eastern countries while Muslim slaves from Africa and Asia found ready buyers in Europe. The Indian exports of spices, sugar and jewels found their way into Europe through the Syrian ports of Aleppo and Damascus. Other main items of import from Eastern markets were silk and porcelain from China, rugs and tapestries from Persia, pearls from the Persian Gulf, ivory and ebony from Africa, textiles and grains from Egypt, glass and steel from Syria, furs and amber from Russia and leather work from

Morocco. The exports from Europe consisted mainly of manufactured goods, woolens, arms and slaves. It is worth noting that the East-West trade remained unaffected by the hostilities of the two blocks and grew steadily in volume as time passed. The tales of Oriental splendour which the Western merchants brought back with them and the luxurious goods which flowed into the Western markets from the East contributed in no mean degree to the formation of the romantic image of the East in the Western mind.

#### Accounts of Captives and Slaves

The European captives and slaves who managed to escape from Muslim countries formed yet another link between the East and the West. The tales of horror and cruelty of the Muslims which these escapees told must have contributed to the development of an antagonistic attitude of the West toward the Eastern people. Not many of these captives have left written accounts of their experiences in the East. Of the few accounts which are extant Edward Webbe's The Rare and Wonderful Thinges which Edward Webbe . . . hath seene and in his Troublesome Travailes, published in 1590, is the earliest. He fell into the hands of the Turks in 1574 and had to work as a galley-slave for twelve years before his freedom was procured through the influence of the English Ambassador to Turkey, Sir William Harborne. Webbe speaks of the cruelty of his captors who lashed and flogged him on

every pretext. James Wadsworth was captured by the Moors in Sallee, early in the seventeenth century, and was sold as a slave. His account The English Spanish Pilgrims, published in 1630, tells of the miserable living conditions of the slaves in Muslim lands. The True Relation of the Travailes and Most Miserable Captivitie of William Davies, which appeared in 1614, records the sufferings and humiliations of another Christian prisoner, William Davies, who fell into the hands of Tunisian pirates.

#### Contacts with Persia

The Venetians had trade relations with Persia since the fourteenth century. The English came into direct contact with the Persians only in the second half of the sixteenth century. In 1557 Anthony Jenkinson was appointed the Captain-General of a new fleet equipped by the Muscovy Company, which had been given a charter to seek out new markets in Further East by Queen Mary in 1555. Jenkinson reached Moscow in December 1557 and set out for Persia from there in the following spring. He arrived in the Persian town of Bokhara in December 1558. But things did not go too well with him at Bokhara. He could not work out a satisfactory trade agreement with the Persian merchants and he was cheated out of payments of some goods which he sold in the local market. Disappointed, Jenkinson made his way back to England in 1560.

Jenkinson was the first Englishman to set his foot on the Persian soil. Several English expeditions to Persia followed Jenkinson's lead and eventually a trade agreement between the English and Persian merchants was concluded by which spices, rice and silk from Persia were to be exported to England, and British arms and woollens were to be imported into Persia.

An unusual visitor from England who came to the court of Shah Abbas in 1598 was Sir Anthony Sherley. Sherley, who was just an adventurer, presented himself to the Shah as the official Ambassador of England, became his personal friend, re-organized the Persian army on British pattern and acted as the Shah's envoy to Europe. Sherley's adventures provide excellent material for a picaresque novel and they certainly evoked a great deal of interest in Persia among his countrymen. There are several references to Thomas and his brother Robert in English plays of the early seventeenth century.

#### Contacts with India

The earliest authentic account of India by a Westerner is that of the Greek historian Megasthenes, who came to the court of the Indian ruler Chandragupta in 302 B.C. as ambassador of Selucas Nicator, the Selucid emperor of Syria. He remained in India up to 291 B.C. and wrote his four volume work describing Indian customs, religion, topography, flora and fauna. The next European accounts of India belong

to the Medieval Age. Mention has already been made of Friar Oderic's Itineraries. The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and reached the port of Cochin in India in 1498. He made two more trips to India-- in 1502 and 1524--and died there in 1525. Vasco da Gama has left vivid descriptions of the social and political conditions in India in the early sixteenth century.

The first Englishman who is known to have come to India was a Jesuit clergyman named Thomas Stevens. Stevens reached India in October 1579.<sup>1</sup> The first expedition to India, led by John Newbury and, later, Ralph Fitch, started from London in February 1583, in the famous ship The Tiger. Newbury died on the way and Fitch, who returned to England in April 1391, wrote a vivid account of his travels to India which was published in Richard Hakulyt's Principall Navigations in 1598. Fitch was the first Englishman to give reliable descriptions of India through personal experience.

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<sup>1</sup>William Foster, ed., Early Travels in India: 1583-1619 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 3.

## CHAPTER V

## MARLOWE AND THE EAST

Tamburlaine Part One

If one is to believe Marlowe's critics, the only reason why he chose Tamburlaine as the subject of his most ambitious play was that the Eastern conqueror fitted exquisitely into the concept of Renaissance man which Marlowe wanted to present. Tamburlaine had an unbounded ambition to conquer the world and an ability to translate his wildest dreams into realities. But, obviously, he is not the only one of the great world conquerors who has these attributes. Julius Caesar, Alexander and Attila had had similar dreams of conquest and were able to realize those dreams. Why then did not Marlowe choose one of these figures, more familiar to the West, as the protagonist for his play? According to Boas the indomitable will and the stupendous vitality of the Scythian "made him the fitting mouthpiece of the dramatist's own tumultuous energies and aspirations."<sup>1</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor thinks that he chose a figure from Eastern history because

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Boas, Christopher Marlowe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 76.

the exotic East held a greater fascination for the audience.

To put it in her own beautiful words:

Barbaric and primitive war, barbaric and primitive love, bright oriental colour and clamorous oriental music are the stuff of which Tamburlaine is made. The intoxication of wide spaces and swift movement, of the uncivilised splendour of the Scythian horses inspires its poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Both these statements seem to ignore the patent fact that Marlowe wrote his plays for his contemporaries. As for the concept of Renaissance man with his never-ending quest for the infinite, the Elizabethans knew little and cared less about it. About the "bright oriental colour and clamorous oriental music" and the wonderful things that happen in the East, the cosmographers, the merchants, the crusaders and the great "Sir John Mandeville" had told them enough. So the success of the play, in its own day, was due neither wholly to Marlowe's unique personal vision nor to the spell of the East but to a new element which Marlowe had introduced in the play.

Marlowe, like his heroes, was an ambitious man.

Tamburlaine was the first play he wrote for the London stage. He aspired to make his mark as a dramatist with his initial attempt. Something more than a Herculean hero,<sup>2</sup> something

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<sup>1</sup>U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Eugene M. Waith, "Tamburlaine," in Marlowe edited by Clifford Leech (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 69.

more than an unfamiliar atmosphere was needed to produce a play that would take London by storm. Marlowe decided to play up the popular sentiment of hatred against the Turk. The military victories of the Ottomans in Europe had made them "the present Terror of the World." Bayazid was one of the strongest of Turkish monarchs. He had established a firm hold on his European conquests and was on the point of capturing Constantinople when Tamburlaine, the Scourge of God, appeared and humbled his pride. Marlowe's instinct told him that the spectacle of the fall and humiliation of the greatest enemy of Christendom would please and gratify his audience more than anything else. And he decided to make Tamburlaine, the vanquisher of the great Turk, the hero of his play.

In the following pages an attempt will be made to establish, through the analysis of Marlowe's source material and his play, that the dominant theme of Tamburlaine I is the defeat and disgrace of Bajazeth at the hands of the invincible Tamburlaine. There is unmistakable evidence in the play that Marlowe has manipulated his material to intensify this impression. The information he gathered about Tamburlaine from the accounts available to him was not too authentic: it was a curious mixture of fact and fable. Marlowe further modified the "facts" of his sources and added to them in order to obtain the desired effect. He succeeded in what he

was trying to do, and the play was a roaring success. But the picture of the East "in the greatest of Elizabethan dramas on oriental themes"<sup>1</sup> was distorted beyond recognition in the process. More will be said about this later. At this point, it is well to look at the original Timur before discussing the sources of Marlowe's Tamburlaine.

#### The Historical Timur

Timur<sup>2</sup> was born in the village of Sabzar, forty miles south of Samarqand, on April 9, 1336. He came of the noble tribe of Barlas, of which his forefathers had been hereditary chieftains. His father Targhai was a devout Muslim of the Shi'ite sect. In his later years he retired to a life of seclusion and meditation. To his son he said:

But, O my son, I would not have thee depart from the law of God, whose messenger is Muhammad (upon whom and his posterity be the peace), Respect the learned Sayyids,<sup>3</sup> ask blessing of the Dervishes. Be strengthened by the four pillars of the law, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and alms.<sup>4</sup>

Timur always remembered the words of his father; but his ambition lay in a different direction.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 539.

<sup>2</sup>The word "Timur" means "iron" in Turkish and the suffix "lang" meaning "lame" was added by Timur's enemies. "Timur lang" was corrupted into "Tamburlaine" by Western writers.

<sup>3</sup>Lineal descendants of the Prophet of Islam.

<sup>4</sup>Harold Lamb, Tamerlaine: The Earth-Shaker (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1928), pp. 27-28.

The Il-Khanate of the Zagtais, the overlords of the Barlas tribe, had broken up a year before Timur's birth. In 1339 the Khans of Kashgar occupied the kingdom of Transoxania. The harsh treatment of the new rulers alienated the people and a secret movement of liberation soon got under way. Timur, when he was still a boy, assumed the leadership of the rebel faction and soon became a popular hero. His intentions were soon known to the Kashgar Khans and he had to fly for his life into the desert with only sixty horsemen. In a surprise encounter with an enemy force of one thousand horsemen which had been sent to capture him, Timur managed to repulse the strong force but lost fifty-three of his own followers. He led the life of an outlaw in the desert for several years, bearing untold hardships, including imprisonment for sixty-two days. But the faction of his supporters had been growing stronger in his absence and the moment came when they were ready to make a final bid for freedom. Parties were despatched to the desert to seek him out. Timur describes his encounter with the members of one of these parties in the following words:

When their eyes fell upon me they were overwhelmed with joy, and they alighted from their horses, and they came and kneeled, and they kissed my stirrup. I also came down from my horse, and took each of them in my arms. And I put my turban on the head of the first chief; and my girdle, rich in jewels and wrought with gold, I bound on the loins of the second; and the third I clothed in my own coat. And they wept, and I wept also; and the hour of prayer was arrived, and we prayed. And we mounted our horses, and came to

my dwelling; and I collected my people and made a feast.<sup>1</sup>

With the help of a powerful local chief Amir Husain, Timur managed to rid his country of the Kashgars. But the war was hardly over when he fell out with his ally. Amir Husain was also the brother of Timur's first wife. And Timur never loved any other woman as he loved his first wife. She has been described thus:

The Chronicle tells us of Timur's bride that her beauty was like the young moon, and her body graceful as the young cypress. She must have been about fifteen years of age, because she had been allowed to ride the hunts with her father. Her name was, hereafter, Aljai Khatun Agha--the Lord's Lady Aljai.<sup>2</sup>

Timur was in a fix. He could not displease Aljai by killing her brother; and the two ambitious men could never get along together. One of Timur's devoted friends, however, put an end to the controversy by slaying Amir Husain without Timur's knowledge.

Timur was formally proclaimed the ruler of Transoxania in a general diet in 1370, when he was thirty-four. His career as a world conqueror begins at this point. First of all he turned his eyes to the neighbouring Persia. Abu Said, the last Il-Khan ruler of Persia, had died in 1335. The vacuum of power was filled by rival dynasties torn by

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. VI (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1957), pp. 311-312.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Lamb, Tamerlaine: The Earth-Shaker, p. 36.

internal dissensions. These warring principalities could put up no joint or effective resistance to Timur and perished one by one. He captured Herat in 1381. Ali al Muaiyid, the ruler of Sabzewar, surrendered without a fight. Sijistan was overrun in 1383. In the campaign against Ahmad Ibn Awais, the Jalair ruler whose kingdom extended from Baghdad to Azerbaijan, Timur met with little resistance. He took Tabriz in 1385 and Mansur quietly slipped to Baghdad. Timur's campaigns in Persia came to a temporary halt after the conquest of Tabriz. He had other enemies to deal with, other territories to conquer.

In 1387 Timur led his armies against the Turkomans of the Black Sheep. Their capital Van was burned to ashes. The same year Timur marched against the Muzaffarid rulers of Shiraz. The Muzaffarids surrendered without a fight. Hafiz, one of the greatest Persian poets of all times, was residing in Shiraz at the time of Timur's conquest of the town. In one of his poems he had written:

اگر آن ترک شیرازی به دست آرد دل ما را  
بخال بندوش چشم سمرقند و بخارا را

If that fair maid of Shiraz would give me love  
I would give Samarkand and Bokhara for the mole upon  
her cheek.

Hafiz was summoned to appear before Timur and the conqueror said to him harshly "I conquered the world and brought the spoils to Samarkand and Bokhara. How dare you give away both

the cities for the mole on the cheek of a girl?" "It is this prodigality," answered the poet promptly, "which has reduced me to the poverty in which you see me now." Timur was delighted and loaded the poet with gifts.

While Timur was in Shiraz, Toqtamish, a descendant of Cenghiz Khan and ruler of the Golden and White Hordes in the steppes of Volga, marched on Transoxania and ravaged Timur's home town. Timur rushed to Samarqand in February 1388. Toqtamish withdrew but he launched another attack on Samarqand in 1389. Timur realized that he had to settle the issue with Toqtamish before he could embark on conquests in the West. On January 19, 1391, Timur left Tashkent at the head of an army for Kipzak, or Western Tartary, to fight a war of elimination with Toqtamish. But as he advanced Toqtamish retired before him. The pursuit continued for four months. At last, on June 19, 1391, the two forces fought a decisive battle at Kunduzcha. Toqtamish was defeated and Timur was free, once more, to lead his armies into fresh military adventures.

Toqtamish escaped to the Christian dukedom of Lithuania. His pursuit carried Timur into the territory of Russia. He captured the Russian town of Yeletz. An attack on Moscow was imminent when the conqueror suddenly changed his plans and turned southward. The merchants of Tana, a rich commercial city on the Sea of Azov, where many Genoese and Venetians did business, offered him rich tributes. But

the Tartar divisions ransacked the town and razed it to the ground. The lives of the Muslim inhabitants were spared but the Christians were all put to the sword. The cities of Sarai and Astrakhan were also looted, burned and destroyed.

Timur resumed his Persian campaigns in 1392, when he led his army against Shah Mansur, the ruler of Fars. Shah Mansur proved a dangerous enemy. With a small band of soldiers he broke through the Mongol defences and reached the place where the emperor fought in person. He struck Timur twice on the helmet with his sword before he himself was cut off by Shah Rukh, Timur's son. Timur paid a tribute to the valour of Mansur by extirpating all the male members of his family.

From Fars Timur went to Baghdad. Ahmad ibn Awais fled once more, this time to the protection of Sultan Barqooq of Egypt. In 1394 Timur led the first of his three expeditions against the Christians of Georgia, which earned him the title of Ghazi, the defender of the faith.

In 1398 Timur led an army of 100,000 to the long-cherished invasion of India. The pretext for the attack was that Nasir uddin Mahmood, the Sultan of Delhi, had been too tolerant to the native Hindus. An advance force despatched under his grandson Pir Mohammad captured Multan in May, 1391. Timur arrayed his forces outside the Indian capital in December 1398. Confident of the might of his elephants

Nasir uddin brought his army of 10,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry into the plains. The decisive battle was fought on December 17. The Sultan's army was completely routed. Delhi was given to pillage and massacre for five days. Speaking of the wholesale butchery by Timur's forces, Glubb says:

". . . to justify his claim to be engaged in holy war, Tamerlane ordered that all Hindus be flayed or burned alive. As true believers, Muslims enjoyed the preferential treatment of having their throats cut."<sup>1</sup> Timur made his way back to Samarqand after staying in Delhi for only fifteen days.

His stay at Samarqand was short. He gathered a large army and set out to punish the Christians of Georgia who had rebelled against his authority while he was engaged in the Indian campaign. The rebels were soon forced to submit.

The Ottoman Sultan Bayazid I had offended Timur by giving protection to Qara Usuf, the Turkoman Black Sheep chief who had been driven out by Timur, and by forcing Taherteen, the ruler of Erzungan and a vassal of Timur, to do homage to him. A bitter correspondence between the two rivals ensued and it made matters worse. The last letter from Bayazid put an end to all hopes of a peaceful settlement of issues between the two emperors and war became almost inevitable. "Bayazid inscribed his own name at the top in gilt illumination and wrote Timur-i-lang--Timur the Lame--

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<sup>1</sup>John Bagot Glubb, The Lost Centuries, p. 439.

beneath in small black letters. He promised among other things to violate Timur's favourite wife: A letter that goaded the old Tartar into fury."<sup>1</sup>

Timur dealt the first blow by capturing the Turkish town of Sivas in August 1400. The lives of the Muslims of Sivas were spared, but the four thousand Armenian Christians of the Ottoman army were buried alive. After the victory of Sivas Timur left the Turks alone for the next two years. According to Gibbon, Timur did not press his advantage over Bayazid because:

As a Musulman he seemed to respect the pious occupation of Bajazet, who was still engaged in the blockade of Constantinople; and after this salutary lesson the Mogul conqueror checked his pursuit, and turned aside to the invasion of Syria and Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

Barqooq, the Mamluk sultan of Egypt, had died in 1399 and his ten year old son Nasir Faraj had succeeded him. The rivalries and intrigues of the Egyptian nobles had reduced the country to a state of anarchy. In October, 1400, Timur marched to Aleppo. The Mamluk army suffered a crushing defeat on October 30. The city was sacked; almost a hundred thousand Syrians were slaughtered and the customary towers of severed heads were erected. In the meantime Timur's son Miran Shah had captured and ravaged the town of Hama. The

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Lamb, Tamerlaine: The Earth-Shaker, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. VI, p. 320.

news of these tragic events reached Cairo. A large Egyptian force, led by Faraj himself, was rushed to Damascus. The two armies faced each other for some time but none took the initiative. The news of a revolt in Cairo forced Faraj to leave for his capital and his absence considerably demoralized his army. Timur had no difficulty in taking Damascus. The town suffered the same fate as Syria. Faraj saw the futility of fighting against the invincible Mongol; he capitulated and agreed to pay an annual tribute to the emperor.

Baghdad had been conquered by Timur in 1393. But the ruler of Baghdad, Ahmad ibn Awais, reoccupied it shortly after Timur left. Timur led his second attack on Baghdad after his victory at Damascus. Awais fled again, this time to Asia Minor, to seek protection of the Turk. The people of Baghdad resisted but were soon overcome. The city was razed to the ground. Ninety thousand heads were severed and one hundred and twenty towers were built with these heads.

All possible rivals of Timur and all possible allies of Bayazid had now been subdued. Timur began to prepare himself to fight against his most formidable rival. Bayazid had been getting ready for this great occasion during the past two years and he had assembled a force as large as that of the Mongol chief. The two armies, said to be the largest in the history of medieval warfare, met in the plains of Ankara, then called Angora, on July 28, 1402. Timur's

brilliant strategy and Bayazid's repeated errors of judgment clinched the issue in favour of the Mongol on the same day. Bayazid was taken prisoner and died in Timur's captivity eight months later. On his way back to Samarqand Timur laid siege to the fortress of Smyrna, a stronghold of the Hospitallers. The gallant defence put up by the Knights could not save the town. The fortress was stormed and all that breathed was put to the sword. Two European merchant ships which had been at anchor in the port were loaded with the unusual cargo of human heads. The next blow was struck on the unfortunate Christians of Georgia. The town was devastated for the third time by the Mongol armies who, leaving it in shambles, quietly moved away.

Timur spent the summer and autumn of 1404 in his capital, in feasting and pleasure. But preparations for the next campaign were already underway. He set out for Peking with an army of 200,000 men in the bitterly cold December of 1404. But his strength sapped on the way; he fell ill and died on February 18, 1405, on the steppes east of Otrar, only three hundred miles away from his beloved Samarqand.

From an early age Timur had displayed unusual qualities of leadership. His favourite sport as a boy was mock warfare in the hills and valleys of Sabzar at the head of a group of young boys who acknowledged him as their leader. He was a tall, handsome man with a will of his own; "Once he

had decided to do something, Timur was not to be dissuaded. When he gave an order he never changed it."<sup>1</sup> He spoke little and could never appreciate a joke. In matters of religion he was, like his father, a devout Shi'ite Muslim. "He prayed at the appointed hours, and he took his place in the ranks of the mosque readings, gravely attentive."<sup>2</sup> The little time he spent in Samarqand was generally devoted to the supervision of the construction of mosques and mausoleums. Religion and war appear to have been the two irreconcilable passions of his life. According to Harold Lamb:

All his life he had been troubled by an inward conflict. The faith of his devout father, the catechising of his preceptor Zain-ad-Din, the law of Koran--these influences were in conflict with the heritage of his nomad ancestors, the lust for battle and the reek for destruction under his hand.<sup>3</sup>

Timur fought thirty-five campaigns in his life and lost none; he placed twenty-seven crowns on his head; out of nothing he carved out one of the greatest empires of the world for himself; he had the will and the courage, at the age of seventy, to embark on a campaign to Peking, thirty-five hundred miles away from Samarqand. Yet his critics would have us believe that:

. . . Tamburlaine is no earthly or human growth,  
he is built out of no experience that life offers;

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Lamb, Tamerlaine: the Earth Shaker, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

rather he is built in proud defiance of all that the accumulated wisdom of the ages has declared to be the lot of man. He is the embodiment of a vision, framed of aspirations and of that glory of which

" . . . Youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream."<sup>1</sup>

Those critics who speak in these terms, and there are many who do that, betray an ignorance of the historical Tamburlaine. Marlowe's Tamburlaine is not a purely imaginative creature but a historical figure. It was by a stroke of genius that Marlowe divined how the Eastern conqueror thought and felt, but his Tamburlaine has certainly not been drawn on a larger scale than the real Timur. If a computer could be devised to determine the qualities of men, the Timur of history might turn out to be a greater man than Marlowe's hero.

#### Sources of the Play

Professors C. H. Herford and A. Wagner were the first to announce the sources of Marlowe's Tamburlaine as Pedro Mexia's Silva de Varia Lection (Seville, 1543), translated into English by Fortesque under the title of The Foreste (London, 1571 and 1576), and Petrus Perondinus' Vita Magni Tamerlinus (Florence, 1551).<sup>2</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor dealt exhaustively with the sources of Tamburlaine in the introduction to the Arden edition of the plays (London, 1930). She has added some minor sources to the principal ones,

<sup>1</sup>U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>C. H. Herford and A. Wagner, "Marlowe's Sources of His Tamburlaine," Academy, October 1883.

pointed out by Herford and Wagner. The chief minor sources, according to her, are: Haytoun, Les fleurs des hystoires de la terre Dorient (1501?), Fregoso's Baptiste Fulgosi de dictis factisque memorabilis . . . (1518), Cambinus' Libro d'Andrea Cambini Fiorentino della origine de Turchi (1529) and Chalcondylas' chronicle in Greek which had been translated into Latin by Clauserus (Basle, 1556). Two other possible sources have been added by modern scholars. Thomas Izzard had pointed out that George Whetstone's The English Myrror was published in 1586 just before Marlowe wrote Tamburlaine I and that "every item of information that Marlowe has been supposed to gain from Fortescue is to be found in Whetstone, plus details which Fortescue omitted."<sup>1</sup> Hugh C. Dick has recently put forward the theory that Richard Knolles' General Historie of the Turks, which was published in 1603, had been written several years before its publication and was available to Marlowe in manuscript at the house of a common friend in whose custody Knolles had left the manuscript.<sup>2</sup>

For the second part of Tamburlaine Marlowe has used additional material from diverse sources. Miss Ethel Seaton

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Izzard, "The Principal Sources for Marlowe's Tamburlaine," Modern Language Notes, LVIII (June, 1943), 413.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh G. Dick, "Tamburlaine Sources Once More," Studies in Philology, XLVI (January, 1949).

points out that the history of the German Philippus Lonicerus, Turcicorum Chronicorum Tomi, Duo, 1578, was Marlowe's main source for the episode of the pact between Sigismond and the Turks which was broken by Sigismond. The episode has been derived from the German's account of the battle of Varna which took place in 1544.<sup>1</sup> The Olympia episode has been drawn from Belleforest's Cosmographie Universelles, 1583.<sup>2</sup> F. C. Danchin pointed out in 1912 that Tamburlaine's speech on fortification to his sons in Act III Scene ii is almost a verbal reproduction from Paul Ive's Practise of Fortification, 1589.<sup>3</sup> Miss Ethel Seaton made the important discovery that most of the place names in Part II of Tamburlaine, particularly those supplying details of the campaigns by the three generals, have been drawn from Abraham Ortelius' Map of Africa in Theatrum Orbis Terrarum.<sup>4</sup> Some of the errors of the geographer, like the location of Zanzibar in West Africa, have been reproduced by Marlowe. Some of the episodes, such as the character of Calyphas, the death of Zenocrate, the slaying of Calyphas by Tamburlaine, are all Marlowe's own.

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<sup>1</sup>U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Introduction to Tamburlaine the Great (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

Image of the East in the Play

The Spanish historian Pedro Mexia provided Marlowe with most of the raw material for his play. He deals at length with the events of Tamburlaine's life, putting together episodes that he found in Italian historians of his time. Indiscriminate borrowings from several sources, sometimes contradictory to each other, make his version of Tamburlaine's life a patchwork. He never succeeds in giving Tamburlaine a character. It was Perondinus who offered Marlowe a clear and consistent picture of the central figure. Perondinus was the first European historian who tried to probe into the character of the great conqueror and imposed a unity on his apparently conflicting traits and impulses. For the episodes of his play, then, Marlowe relies mainly on Mexia; for the character of his hero on Perondinus.

It is now time to examine the text of the play to see if the image of the East presented by Marlowe is based on facts, at least those facts which were available to the dramatist, or if he modified some of the facts which he found in his sources in order to create a picture of the East which would be more acceptable to his audience.

The play opens in the court of the King of Persia and the first set of characters introduced in the play are "Mycetes, Cosroe, Meander, Theridamas, Ortygius, Ceneus, Menaphon." Except for Cosroe, which could be a perverted

form of the Persian name "Khusrow," none of these names are Persian. With the es, us and er endings they give an impression of Greek names. It may be observed that none of Marlowe's sources had provided him with the names of the minor characters. The only two names generally mentioned by earlier historians are those of Tamburlaine and Bajazeth. Marlowe's chief source, Mexia, for example, mentions "the Kyng of Persia and his brother." The names have been supplied by Marlowe himself. The impression that these characters are all Greek is further confirmed when they begin to speak. Cosroe scoffs at his brother, the King, in these words:

At whose birthday Cynthia with Saturn joined,  
And Jove, the sun, and mercury denied  
To shed their influence in his fickle brain!  
(I.i.13-15)<sup>1</sup>

The King himself is as much at home in Greek legends as his brother. He charges Theridamas to lead a punitive expedition against the "Scythian thief," in these words:

Go frowning forth, but come thou smiling home,  
As did Sir Paris with the Grecian dame.  
(I.i.65-66)

A little later it appears that the Persians are not using Greek mythology for decorative purposes only but they are pagan Greeks by faith. Cosroe says to Ortygius, who has come to offer him the crown:

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1963). All quotations from Marlowe's plays are from this edition.

And Jove may never let me longer live  
 Than I may seek to gratify your love.  
 (I.i.170-171)

Mycetes, when he encounters Tamburlaine in the field of battle, exclaims: "O gods, is this Tamburlaine the thief?"

It may be argued that Marlowe was not familiar enough with Persia to know Persian names and religious beliefs. But for a scholar like Marlowe it was not difficult to obtain more authentic information about Persia. The Travels of Marco Polo and the Itineraries of Friar Oderic had been published and were available in Latin long before Marlowe wrote his plays. Moreover, the wars between Persia and Turkey, which began early in the sixteenth century, aroused considerable interest in Persia among the European nations, and attempts to establish contacts with the only Muslim power which fought against the Turks were made by most of the Western countries including England. In the face of these facts it is difficult to believe that Marlowe did not know or could not know more about the Persians if he had wanted to depict them as they were.

In the second scene of Act I Tamburlaine appears with Zenocrate followed by Techelles, Usumcasane, Magnetes, Agydas and others. Of these names the only one which has an oriental ring is that of Usumcasane. Tamburlaine himself turns out to be the greatest pagan in the play. His love Zenocrate is "lovelier than the love of Jove"; the steeds of his Tartars are "swifter than Pegasus." He is a favourite of the gods who protect him:

And Jove himself will stretch his hand from heaven  
 To ward the blow and shield me safe from harm.  
 (I.ii.179-180)

He offers his hand of friendship to Theridamas with the words:

Which is as much as if I swore by heaven  
 And called the gods to witness my vow.  
 (I.ii.232-233)

He expresses his confidence in his own destiny in these words:

For fates and oracles [of] heaven have sworn  
 To royalize the deeds of Tamburlaine, . . .  
 (II.iii.7-8)

It would be tedious to list the numerous allusions to Greek mythology made by the Scythian conqueror. The lines quoted above are sufficient to indicate that Marlowe's Tamburlaine is a pagan Greek by origin and faith. So are his companions. Usumcasane tells Tamburlaine: "To be a king is half to be a god." (II.v.56). The use of an indefinite article with the name of the deity and the transcription of the word "god" with a small "g" implies a belief in the plurality of the godhead. The Muslims believe only in one God and He is "the God." In Act IV, scene iv, Tamburlaine scoffs at the starving Bajazeth and offers him a dagger to kill his wife and eat her flesh. Theridamas, who is present, taunts Bajazeth: "Dost thou think that Mahomet will suffer this?" Techelles is the one who answers the query: "'tis like he will, when he cannot let it." Marlowe is aware of the historical fact that Tamburlaine had three sons; but their historical names, Umar Shaikh, Miran Shah and Shah Rukh, have undergone a curious

transformation in the play: they are Caliphas, Amyrus and Celebinus.

Most of the European historians, including Perondinus and Chalcondylas, have described Tamburlaine as a devout Muslim and have mentioned his reverence for Muslim shrines and esteem for Muslim sages and priests. Marlowe certainly knew that Tamburlaine was a Muslim but, throughout the play, he conveys the impression that his hero was a pagan Greek. Not only that, Tamburlaine is sympathetic to Christians and deadly hostile to Muslims. In a curious passage in Act III Tamburlaine expresses his sentiments for the Christians captured by Muslim pirates. The passage deserves to be quoted in full:

I that am termed the scourge and wrath of God,  
 The only fear and terror of the world,  
 Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge  
 Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves,  
 Burdening their bodies with your heavy chains,  
 And feeding them with thin and slender fare,  
 That naked row about the Terrene sea,  
 And, when they chance to breathe and rest a space,  
 Are punished with bastones so grievously  
 That they lie panting on the galley's side,  
 And strive for life at every stroke they give.  
 These are the cruel pirates of Argier,  
 That damned train, the scum of Africa,  
 Inhabited with straggling runagates,  
 That make quick havoc of the Christian blood.  
 But, as I live, that town shall curse the time  
 That Tamburlaine set foot in Africa.

(III.iii.43-60)

Marlowe has gone a little too far in trying to represent Tamburlaine as anti-Muslim and pro-Christian in this passage. Historians, European as well as Asian, are unanimous that

Tamburlaine was more partial to Muslims than to Christians. In the campaign of Tana he had spared the lives of Muslims but slaughtered all Christians. His three expeditions to Georgia, which he called the Jihad or the holy war and which earned him the title of Ghazi or defender of the faith, and his punitive expedition against the Hospitallers of Smyrna leave no one in doubt as to which way his sympathies lay. But it suited Marlowe's purpose to represent him as a champion of the Christian cause and a mortal enemy of the Turks. He was shaping things nearer to the desires of his audience's heart, no matter how far he deviated from reality in doing so. This passage is also inconsistent with the character of Tamburlaine. The man whose favourite hobby was to raise pillars of severed heads was not likely to lament over the hardships of the Christian captives. And, finally, in the words of Chew:

In repeated allusions to Mediterranean pirates and galley-slaves his thoughts are upon conditions of his own day rather than upon those of the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Zenocrate, the daughter of the Soldan of Egypt,<sup>2</sup> is also a polytheistic pagan. She tells Tamburlaine:

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose, p. 472.

<sup>2</sup>Historically, the Mamluk sultan Barqooq was in power in Egypt up to 1399. His ten year old son Faraj succeeded him after his death in 1399. None of Barqooq's daughters was married to Timur.

The gods, defenders of the innocent,  
Will never prosper your intended drifts, . . .  
(I.ii.68-69)

In Act III, scene iii, while Zabina, the wife of Bajazeth, prays to Mahomet for her husband's victory, Zenocrate appeals to "Ye gods and powers that govern Persia," (III.iii.189). A little later, in the same scene, she comes out with the statement:

If Mahomet should come from heaven and swear  
My royal lord is slain or conquerèd,  
Yet should he not persuade me otherwise  
But that he lives and will be conqueror.  
(III.iii.208-211)

Has she suddenly become a Muslim, with more faith in her husband's invincibility than in the words of Mahomet, or is she simply telling Zabina that her prophet is a liar?

Zenocrate's father, the Soldan of Egypt, appears in the fourth Act. He speaks of his determination to fight against Tamburlaine even if he were "As monstrous as Gorgon, prince of hell," and promises to send him down to "Erebus." He refers to Greek myths like an expert:

Methinks we march as Meleager did,  
Environèd with brave Argolian knights,  
To chase the savage Calydonian boar,  
Or Cephalus, with lusty Theban youths,  
Against the wolf that angry Themis sent  
To waste and spoil the sweet Aonian fields.  
(IV.iii.1-6)

The impression he makes so far is that of being a Greek pagan. But in the same scene he swears:

A sacred vow to heaven and him I make,  
Confirming it with Ibis' holy name, . . .  
(IV.iii.36-37)

"Ibis' holy name" is a reference to the old animistic Egyptian religion of nature-worship. According to primitive Egyptian beliefs, each district or village in the Nile valley had its tutelary spirit indwelling in some bird or animal or tree. Ibis was such a bird, sacred to the Egyptians. The Soldan's invocation to Ibis reveals that he is not a Greek but an Egyptian pagan. But he has yet another shock in store for us. Speaking to Tamburlaine, he says:

Mighty hath God and Mahomet made thy hand, . . .  
(V.ii.416)

One is left guessing as to the true nature of his religious beliefs.

The King of Arabia<sup>1</sup> appears only twice in the play and gives no clue to his faith. The other characters of the play present little information about him except that he is betrothed to Zenocrate. Agydas names him as Alcidamus (I.ii.78). If the name be a clue to his nationality and religion he is yet another pagan Greek ruling over the land of birth of the Prophet of Islam!

Thus, while Tamburlaine is a pagan Greek, the Soldan a pagan Greek or a pagan Egyptian or a Muslim, and the King of Arabia, perhaps, a pagan Greek, Bajazeth and his

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<sup>1</sup>Historically Ibn Ismail, the eighth ruler of the Rasulid dynasty, was in power in Arabia from 1400 to 1424. The Rasulids recognized the Mamluk sultans of Egypt as their overlords.

associates are unmistakably Muslims. He swears "By Mahomet my kinsman's sepulcher, / And by the holy Alkoran. . . ." (III.iii.75-76). At the crucial moment when the battle between Bajazeth and Tamburlaine is about to begin Zabina, the wife of the Turk, prays to "Mahomet" (III.iii.195) for the victory of her husband:

That offered jewels to thy sacred shrine  
When first he warr'd against the Christians.  
(III.iii.199-200)

It is only when Bajazeth is defeated at the hands of Tamburlaine that he and his wife begin to curse the prophet like the "pagans" of the medieval romances:

Bajazeth: O Mahomet! O sleepy Mahomet!  
Zabina: O cursèd Mahomet, that mak'st us thus  
The slaves to Scythians rude and barbarous!  
(III.iii.269-271)

Marlowe writes little about the social life, customs and religious beliefs of the Scythians, the Egyptians or the Arabs. And the few references to the way of life of these peoples that occur in the play have been introduced to create the impression that they are all, at least predominantly, pagans. Enough has been said about his treatment of Tamburlaine and his followers from this point of view. Something has been said about the beliefs of the Soldan of Egypt and his daughter--they presumably believe in primitive Egyptian paganism. The episode of the four virgins in Act V, scene i, contributes to the impression that the Egyptians are nature-worshippers. The second virgin prays to ". . . the majesty

of heaven / And holy patrons of Egyptia, . . ." (V.i.48-49). The occasional references to "Mahomet" or "God" by the Soldan and Zenocrate, which have been quoted earlier, confuse the issue further. But these references do not, necessarily, point to a change in their pagan beliefs. It will be seen later that Marlowe's Bajazeth and Tamburlaine also, occasionally, utter things contrary to the creed to which they are shown to belong in the play.

In dealing with the Turks, however, Marlowe shows a sound knowledge of their religion and Turkish court life. Bajazeth speaks of his "bassoos," of the "circumcisèd Turk," the "Christians renied," and the "Jannissaries" who form the bulk of his army. He reveals the fate of Tamburlaine after the defeat in these words:

He shall be made a chaste and lustless eunuch,  
And in my sarell tend my concubines; . . .  
(III.iii.77-78)

The focal point of the play is the defeat and disgrace of the Turk at the hands of Tamburlaine: a spectacle that was sure to delight Marlowe's audience and ensure success of the play. All the details of the play have been made subservient to this central motif. The Elizabethans hated the Turk and "the religion of the Turk." Both have been presented in an unfavourable light. If the Turk is vanquished by one who follows "the religion of the Turk" the interest in the conflict and the delight of the audience in

the fall of the Turk would be considerably diminished. So Tamburlaine must be transformed into something other than a co-religionist of the Turk. If the whole of the East were represented as belonging to the Turk's creed, the prestige of the Turk and his faith would be considerably enhanced. This would be contrary to the impression Marlowe wanted to produce. So those Eastern countries which were not in direct alliance with the Turk should be represented as the followers of some other faith. The organization of the material and, what is more important, Marlowe's deviations from the historical facts available to him betray the intention of the dramatist.

Marlowe's distortion of the picture of the East in the two Tamburlaine plays cannot be attributed to the paucity of material on the subject in his time. It has been observed that the information which he found about Tamburlaine in his sources was modified to suit his purpose. A number of historical treatises on the Turks and other peoples of the East were available in Latin, French and English during the sixteenth century. Some of these books contained detailed and fairly authentic accounts of other Muslim countries of the East. One of the earliest accounts of the Turkish government in English was Richard Grafton's translation of Antoine Geoffroy's French history of the Turks. Grafton's translation, entitled The order of the great Turckes courte, of hys

menne of warre, and of hys conquestes, with the summe of Mahumetes doctryne, was published in 1544. It contained, among other things, a history of the military conquests of the Turks down to the reign of Suleiman. Peter Ashton's Shorte Treatise upon the Turkes Chronicles, a translation of Paulus Giovius' Turcicarum Rerum Commentarius, was published in 1546. Ashton's treatise represents the typical Elizabethan attitude of fear and hatred towards the Turks. It tells with gloating satisfaction of Tamburlaine's triumph over Bajazeth, of his using the Turk as a block when he took his horse and of his feeding him on crumbs from his table. Hugh Gough's Offspring of the house of Ottomano, published after 1553, is a compilation from several continental sources. Thomas Newton's history entitled A Notable Historie of the Saracens. Briefly and faithfully describing the originall beginning, continuance and successe as well of the Saracens, as also of Turks, Souldans, Mamalukes, Assassines, Tartarians and Sophians. . . . was published in 1575 and, as the title indicates, dealt with some of the most important Muslim powers of the day. If Dick's theory that Marlowe had read Richard Knolle's The Generall Historie of the Turkes (1603) can be relied upon, then Marlowe knew the most monumental work on Muslim history produced during the Elizabethan age. Knolles' attitude is openly biased against the Muslims, especially the Turks. He had resolved at an early age to

"achieve some major work of benefit to the Christian commonweale," and "the great theme of his history--the impact of Islam armed upon all Christendom--is stamped on every page of his book."<sup>1</sup> Most of the Turkish histories contained detailed accounts of Egypt, which had been conquered by the Turks in 1517, and of the Tartars, who had dealt the most severe blow to the ever-expanding Ottoman Empire. General Muslim histories like Newton's Historie of the Saracens were wider in scope and dealt with other Muslim countries as well.

On the customs and character of the Oriental people, too, abundant material was available. Louis Wann has pointed out that in Von Hammer's Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches (1827) a list of 3,176 items on Oriental subjects has been given. "If we take only those likely to have been known to the Elizabethans--those printed between 1500 and 1640--we have over 1,600 items. These are mostly histories, but include also ballads, poems, tracts, pamphlets, and stories. The majority are in Latin, but a great number are in German, French, Italian and Spanish, and some in English. The dramatist, then, had certainly no dearth of material which he could draw upon for the history, customs, and character of the Orientals."<sup>2</sup> The Hellenization of the East in Marlowe's

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh G. Dick, "Tamburlaine Sources Once More," pp. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup>Louis Wann, "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama," p. 170.

plays was not due to paucity of material on the Orient.

The changes which Marlowe made in the historical portraits of Tamburlaine and Bajazeth provide an important clue to his intention. Professor Battenhouse has pointed out that "Marlowe's Tamburlaine is the Scourge of God. This important concept gives unity to the portrait. . . . The dramatist selects and arranges his historical episodes to minister to this controlling idea."<sup>1</sup> This basic concept of the protagonist transforms him, from a merciless tyrant who is plundering, ravaging, killing to satisfy his insatiable lust for dominion into a divine agent appointed to mete out punishment to those who deserve it. The harsh features of the portrait have been toned down. The story of Tamburlaine's treachery in deposing the Persian King's brother, which he found in Mexia and others, has been turned into an example of his courage and fair play in Marlowe:

We will not steal upon him cowardly,  
But give him warning and more warriors.  
(II.v.103-104)

The Zenocrate episode, for which there is no precedent in history, has been introduced by Marlowe to show that Tamburlaine is susceptible to softer human sentiments like love. The finest passages of poetry in the play have been put into his mouth. Reversing the historical fact, he has been

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<sup>1</sup>Roy F. Battenhouse, Marlowe's Tamburlaine (Nashville: Vanderbilt, 1966), p. 129.

represented as sympathetic to Christian captives in the hands of Muslims. The legend of the white, red and black colours of his tent on the first, second and third day of the siege has been repeated to shift the responsibility for his ruthless massacre of the conquered peoples to those peoples themselves or to their rulers. They can save themselves if they surrender on the first day; but if they choose to die they must die. In his battle against Bajazeth his army is reported to be much smaller than that of the Turk; according to all the historians the two forces were equally matched.

A reverse process is at work in the portrait of Bajazeth. His character has been so debased that none of his historical virtues remain. Mexia, after recounting some of Bajazeth's conquests, refers to his confrontation with Tamburlaine:

This Baiaceth now like a good, and like an expert Capitaine, seeing that he no waie els might resiste, this puissante Emperour, determined to meete him, and to geue hym present battaile, . . .<sup>1</sup>

Whetstone places the two adversaries on the same plane:

. . . these two puissante captaines in whom wanted neither vallour, pollicye nor anye advantage of war, with equall courages, mutuallye consented to abide the fortune of battaile.<sup>2</sup>

But in Marlowe's play Bajazeth is a braggart before

<sup>1</sup>U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Tamburlaine the Great, p. 291.

<sup>2</sup>George Whetstone, The English Myrror (London: G. Seton, 1586), p. 80.

the battle, and curses like an old dame after it. In the words of Leslie Spens:

Not content with changing the historically courageous Bajazeth into a coward, Marlowe developed in him traits which make him ridiculous. His overconfidence and his easy acceptance of flattery are ample portent of disaster.<sup>1</sup>

Mexia has mentioned the story of Bajazeth's confinement in an iron cage and of his being fed on crumbs from Tamburlaine's table. Perondinus supplies the additional information that he was used as a footstool by Tamburlaine. But the account of Bajazeth's captivity, in both the historians, is confined to a few lines. Marlowe has expanded it beyond all proportion to his sources. It runs into 247 lines in the play. The dramatist gloats over the insults and indignities heaped on the vanquished Emperor's head. Tamburlaine addresses him as "Base villain, vassal, slave to Tamburlaine," shouts at him, "Stoop, villain, stoop!" forces him to eat food which he has crushed under his feet, and offers him a dagger to kill his wife and eat her flesh. What immense delight and satisfaction this prolonged spectacle of the fall and disgrace of the mighty Turk must have provided to the groundlings who came to watch the play!

It is worth pointing out that Marlowe, unlike most of his sources, does not use the episode of Bajazeth's defeat

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie Spens, "Tamburlaine and Marlowe," PMLA XLII, March, 1927, p. 613.

and captivity to moralize on the fickleness of fortune. Almost every historian stops at this point to shed a tear over Bajazeth's fortune. Mexia, Marlowe's most important source, is more eloquent than others on the theme of the great Turk's sudden fall from prosperity to adversity:

. . . whence assuredly we may learne not so much to affie in riches, or in the pompe of the world: for as muche as he that yesterdaie was Prince and Lorde, of all the worlde almost, is this daie fallen into suche extreame miserie, that he liueth worse then a dogge. . . . This tragidie might suffice, to withdrawe men, from this transitorie pompe, and honour, acquaintyng thei selues with Heauen and with heauenly thinges onely.<sup>1</sup>

Of this feeling of pity and sympathy for the fallen Prince there is not a trace in Marlowe. In spite of the inordinate length of the scenes of his imprisonment, torture and humiliation Bajazeth does not evoke a sympathetic response in us. He has been presented like a buffoon at whose expense Tamburlaine and his generals have every right to laugh. Ribner makes a profound observation when he says:

The idea of history implicit in Tamburlaine thus becomes immediately apparent. Throughout both parts there is a strong and direct denial of the role of providence in the affairs of man. History, for Marlowe, is created by two things: fortune and human will. Fortune is not conceived of in the Medieval Christian manner as the instrument which executes God's providence; Marlowe's is a classical fortune, the capricious, lawless element in the universe which can be controlled and directed only by human wisdom and power.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cited in U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Tamburlaine the Great, pp. 292-293.

<sup>2</sup>Irving Ribner, "The Idea of History in Marlowe's Tamburlaine," ELH XX, 1953, p. 258.



of the truce, however, are soon agreed upon by both the parties. Sigismund, the leader of the Christians, swears by Christ and Orcanes by Mahomet to abide by these terms. Marlowe has put the popular medieval legend of the suspended coffin of Muhammad in Orcanes' mouth on this occasion:

By sacred Mahomet, the friend of God,  
Whose holy Alcoran remains with us,  
Whose glorious body, when he left the world,  
Closed in a coffin mounted up the air  
And hung on stately Mecca's temple roof, . . .  
(I.ii.60-64)

Shortly afterwards the Christians break their oath and launch a surprise attack on Orcanes' forces. Orcanes appeals to Christ to "Behold and venge this traitor's perjury!" His prayer is heard and victory falls to the Muslims.

This episode is significant because it gives a clue to Marlowe's attitude toward religion. To him all orthodox creeds and standards of conduct are suspect. The Christians as well as the Muslims practice deceit, treachery and hypocrisy in the name of religion. Marlowe believes in a God, but it is not the God of conventional religion. Marlowe speaks of his God in glowing terms twice in the play. Orcanes pictures him as:

That He that sits on high and never sleeps,  
Nor in one place is circumscribable,  
But everywhere fills every continent  
With strange infusion of His sacred vigor, . . .  
(II.ii.49-52)

And, again, Tamburlaine refers to Marlowe's God when he says:

Seek out another godhead to adore--  
 The God that sits in heaven, if any god,  
 For He is God alone, and none but He.  
 (V.i.198-200)

To return to the main theme after this brief digression, Callapine, like Orcanes, is another devout Muslim. Marlowe shows his familiarity with the Turkish way of life when he makes Callapine promise gifts to Almeda, if the latter helps him in escaping from the captivity. Callapine offers: "A thousand galleys, manned with Christian slaves," beautiful "Grecian virgins," "naked negroes" to draw his coach, "Turkey carpets" to cover the pavements and "cloth of Arras" to be hung on the walls. "A hundred bassoes, clothed in crimson silk," will ride before him. He swears by "the hand of Mahomet" to make good his promise of making Almeda a king if he regains his freedom.

In the opposite camp Tamburlaine continues to speak of "Jove" and "Apollo" and "Cynthia" and the "Fatal sisters" and "gods from heaven" with the same fluency as in the First Part of the play. But twice in this play he swears by "Mahomet." Before the battle with Callapine he says:

For I have sworn by sacred Mahomet  
 To make it parcel of my empery.  
 (I.iv.109-110)

And, again, just before the unhistorical episode of slaying his own son, he says: "By Mahomet, thy mighty friend, I swear, . . ." (IV.ii.46). These two slender references to the Prophet of Islam have led the critics to jump to the

conclusion that Marlowe has represented Tamburlaine as a Muslim. The numerous allusions to Greek gods and goddesses which Marlowe has put in the mouth of his hero should leave one in no doubt as to his faith. Why then does Marlowe make Tamburlaine swear by "Mahomet" twice in the play? Lapses into this kind of inconsistency are common enough in Marlowe to occasion a surprise. The allusions by the Soldan of Egypt and Zenocrate to religious beliefs of different kinds have already been pointed out. Bajazeth, whom Marlowe certainly meant to be a Muslim, appeals to pagan deities four times in Part I of Tamburlaine:

. . . and thou, dread god of hell,  
With ebon scepter strike this hateful earth,  
And make it swallow both of us at once!  
(IV.ii.27-29)

Ye Furies, that can mask invisible,  
Dive to the bottom of Avernus' pool,  
And in your hands bring hellish poison up,  
And squeeze it in the cup of Tamburlaine!  
(IV.iv.17-20)

But such a star hath influence in his sword  
As rules the skies and countermands the gods  
More than Cimmerian Styx or Destiny.  
(V.ii.169-171)

O highest lamp of ever-living Jove,  
Accursèd day, infected with my griefs,  
Hide now thy stained face in endless night, . . .  
(V.ii.227-229)

Just as these invocations to Greek deities do not make Bajazeth a pagan, the two oaths of Tamburlaine do not make him a Muslim. For further confirmation of this point of view it would be worth while to examine Tamburlaine's bitterest

invective against Islam in Act V, scene i, of Tamburlaine II:

Now, Casane, where's the Turkish Alcoran  
And all the heaps of superstitious books  
Found in the temples of that Mahomet  
Whom I have thought a god?

· · · · ·  
In vain, I see, men worship Mahomet.  
My sword hath sent millions of Turks to hell,  
Slew all his priests, his kinsmen, and his friends,  
And yet I live untouched by Mahomet.

(V.i.171-174, 177-180)

Referring to this passage in the notes to the Arden edition of Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Miss Ellis-Fermor says:

There is no precedent that I know for this conversion and attack on Mahomet in the biographies.<sup>1</sup>

And it is generally assumed by Marlowe's critics that Tamburlaine forsakes Islam at this point. But the truth of the matter is that Tamburlaine never was a Muslim. The lines just quoted from the play bear an eloquent testimony of his ignorance of the basic tenets of Islam. He speaks of "the Turkish Alcoran." A Muslim would never associate the Alcoran with the Turks because it was written in Arabia seven hundred years before the Turkish Empire was founded. The reference to "the temples of that Mahomet / Whom I have thought a god?" is another very startling statement to the ears of a Muslim. The mosques of Muslims are called "the house of God" and are meant for offering prayers to the Almighty. They contain no idols and are not known as

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<sup>1</sup>U. M. Ellis-Fermor, Tamburlaine the Great, p. 266.

"temples of Mohamet." Again, the Muslims regard Muhammad as the Prophet of God and not as "a god." The expression "a god" implies a belief in the multiplicity of gods, which is alien to the Muslim faith. Apart from these errors pertaining to the Muslim faith the statements of Tamburlaine do not indicate that he ever was a Muslim. The words "Whom I have thought a god" are crucial to the interpretation of the passage. Tamburlaine, a pagan, came in contact with the Turks and found that they believed in Mahomet. His pagan cast of mind led him to think that Mahomet was the god of the Turks and he thought him to be as powerful as Jove or Apollo. But when he carried out a massacre of Mahomet's friends and followers and the god could do nothing against him he lost all respect for him. To mark his open contempt for the weak and impotent god of the Turks he orders the public burning of the Alcoran.

Marlowe has taken more liberties with history in Tamburlaine II than in the First Part of the play. It will not be too much of an exaggeration to say that nothing except the name of Tamburlaine is historical in the play. He felt free to do what he wished with history because, in the words of Boas:

History could be similarly manipulated. Who among the London theatre-goers knew or cared anything about the details of Oriental annals?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick S. Boas, Christopher Marlowe, p. 88.

Marlowe was conscious that the picture of the East he had presented in the First Part of the play had remained unchanged in the Second Part, thus creating an effect of monotony. Some new element must be introduced to make the East more vivid and real. And Marlowe found a solution quickly enough. He picked up Ortelius' map of Africa and stuffed the play with striking place-names. The imaginary military campaigns of Tamburlaine's generals in Act I, scene vi, of the play have been introduced for the sole purpose of creating exotic Eastern atmosphere with abundant use of novel place-names. These campaigns are irrelevant to the action of the play and do not contribute to its development. The particular use of which Marlowe put Ortelius' map naturally suggests a question. Why did not Marlowe pick up one of the many books of Muslim history which were available to him and use it to supply unfamiliar Muslim names to his characters to create the same kind of effect? The answer, obviously, is that he did not want to do so. It was contrary to his purpose to represent the Mongols and the rest of the Eastern peoples as Muslims. Such a picture of the East would not gratify his audience on whose approval the success of the play depended.

Tamburlaine the Great is immortal by reason of its superb poetry and Marlowe's intuitive insight into the conqueror character. As a play about the East it is

deficient because the picture of the East it conveys bears little resemblance to the real East. The critics' remarks about Tamburlaine's character could be more appropriately applied to Marlowe's image of the East: it is a product of Marlowe's imagination.

#### The Jew of Malta

The only other play of Marlowe which has a character from the Orient is The Jew of Malta. Marlowe's main sources for The Jew are the same as those for Tamburlaine II, i.e., Chronicorum Turcicorum of Lonicerus and Belleforest's Cosmographie Universelle. The feuds between the Scythians, the Turks and the Christians in the Orient had been the theme of the two Tamburlaine plays: the feuds between the Turks and Christians in the small Mediterranean island loom large in the background of The Jew of Malta.

The facts of history have been changed to suit the exigencies of the plot. Historically, the Knights Hospitallers, who had been driven away from Rhodes by the Turks in 1522, were granted tenure of Malta by Emperor Charles V of Spain in 1530, subject to a nominal annual tribute in acknowledgement of the suzerainty of Spain. An attack from the Turks, who were determined to oust the Knights from their new stronghold, was expected any time. It came in 1565, when Suleiman the Magnificent laid a siege to Malta. Because of some tactical errors by the Turk commanders the attack proved

abortive and the siege had to be lifted in September, 1565. Suleiman's son and successor Selim II is not recorded to have been present in the siege of Malta. The Spanish Vice-Admiral refers to some of these historical events when he tells the Knights:

My lord, remember that, to Europe's shame,  
The Christian Isle of Rhodes, from whence you came,  
Was lately lost, and you were stated here  
To be at deadly enmity with Turks.  
(II.ii.30-33)

or, again, "My Lord and King hath title to this isle, . . ."  
(II.ii.37)

The portrayal of the East in this play is much more factual than in the preceding plays. In his opening soliloquy Barbaras speaks of some of the Eastern trading nations with whom he has dealings--the Persians, the Arabs, the Moors and the Egyptians. The allusion to "the merchants of the Indian mines" is vague and could mean either the Portuguese or the Persians through whom the Indian goods passed into Europe. Some illuminating details about the Eastern trade have been revealed in this brief speech. The payments made by the Arabians in "wedge of gold" is probably a reference to the early use of gold coins by the Arab merchants. The references to the diamond trade of Africa and to Alexandria, the port used by the Egyptians for trade with the West, are factual.

There is a lively picture of slave-trade in Act II, scene ii. The prisoners of war, Muslim or Christian, who

were not beheaded or ransomed, were generally sold as slaves. The prices, which were marked on the backs of the slaves, were fixed in consideration of the nationality, age, intelligence and physical features of the men and women who were up for sale. The Turkish slaves were in great demand and fetched a higher price than slaves of other nationalities. Marlowe knows all his facts of the slave-trade:

1st Off. Fear not their sale, for they'll be quickly  
bought.

2nd Off. Every one's price is written on his back, . . .  
(II.iii.2-3)

Barbaras is surprised at the high price of the Turk slave: "Two hundred crowns? Do the Turks weigh so much?" (II.iii.97). The Moor is going cheap, "Rat'st thou this Moor but at two hundred plates?" (II.iii.106). What is more important than these factual details, the atmosphere of the slave-market comes alive in the scene.

The terror and the sense of crisis which the Turks inspired in the small Christian states have been vividly infused in the play. The officers of the Turkish galleys are entertained by the Maltese on their arrival in the port. Selim's demand for ten years' arrears of tribute is an unreasonable one but they agree to pay it. They dare not allow the sale of the Turkish slaves in their markets for fear of offending the Turk. It is only after Bosco offers them military protection that they rescind their pledge to pay the tribute.

The Turks have been portrayed with sympathy. When Ferneze asks Calymath to give him some time to collect the money for payment of tribute, the first Bashaw interjects, "That's more than is in our commission." The Prince promptly allows them the respite they need and rebukes the Bashaw in these words:

What, Callapine, a little courtesy!  
 Let's know their time; perhaps it is not long;  
 And 'tis more kingly to obtain by peace  
 Than to enforce conditions by constraint.  
 (I.ii.23-26)

Ferneze, the Governor of Malta, speaks of the Turkish Emperor and his son with respect:

From the Emperor of Turkey is arrived  
 Great Selim Calymath, his highness' son, . . .  
 (I.ii.38-39)

Selim is true to his word and makes Barbaras the Governor of Malta after his victory over the Maltese. When Barbaras invites him to the banquet in his citadel he is fully conscious of the risk involved in accepting the invitation:

To banquet with him in his citadel?  
 I fear me, messenger, to feast my train  
 Within a town of war so lately pillaged  
 Will be too costly and too troublesome; . . .  
 (V.iii.20-23)

Yet he will not disappoint his faithful ally.

Ithamore, the Turkish slave, has been cast in the same mould as his master. When Barbaras tells him of his intense hatred for the Christians and of the vicious things he has been doing to destroy them, Ithamore opens up and

recounts some of his own exploits against the common enemy.

He has spent his time, he tells Barbaras:

In setting Christian villages on fire,  
Chaining of eunuchs, binding galley slaves.  
(II.iii.200-201)

He tells how he would steal into the travelers' room at night and cut their throats. And he brags:

Once at Jerusalem where the pilgrims kneeled,  
I strewèd powder on the marble stones,  
And therewithal their knees would rankle so  
That I have laughed a-good to see the cripples  
Go limping home to Christendom on stilts.  
(II.iii.205-209)

Barbaras jumps up at the prospect of having such a proficient ally and offers him the hand of friendship:

Why this is something. Make account of me  
As of thy fellow; we are villains both.  
Both circumcisèd, we hate Christians both.  
(II.iii.210-212)

"we are villains both." Those are the key words.

Barbaras is the master mind; he does the planning. Ithamore is responsible for the execution of the plans. He is full of admiration for Barbaras' ingenuity:

O, mistress, I have the bravest, gravest, secret,  
subtle, bottle-nosed knave to my master, that ever  
gentleman had.  
(III.iii.9-10)

And, again, "O, my master has the bravest policy." (III.iii.12) The passion that fills both Barbaras and Ithamore is love of evil. But there is an important difference between the two: While Barbaras' deeds smack of cold-blooded villainy, Ithamore's look more like a cruel sport. He is full

of enthusiasm in carrying out his master's assignments.

After killing Father Barnardine, he says to Barbaras:

Nay, master, be ruled by me a little. So, let  
him lean upon his staff. Excellent! He stands as  
if he were begging of bacon.

(IV.ii.25-26)

It is this sense of merriment, an almost childish delight in his vicious exploits, which makes him a more likeable character than Barbaras. He is also loyal to his master till Bellamira makes him drunk and he blurts out all his secrets.

To sum up, the picture of the East which emerges from The Jew of Malta is close to the facts of life in those hectic days of constant warfare between the Turks and Christians. The atmosphere of tension and fear of war in the island of Malta has been conveyed with extraordinary fidelity. The dramatist has a firm hold on his material and writes of the East with a new confidence. As Marlowe was dealing with the events of recent past in this play, it is not unlikely that he had had some oral accounts of the affairs of Malta from men who had seen and known them.

#### Allusions to the East

The allusions to the East in plays other than those discussed above are few. And most of these relate to India--the India of Greek fiction and poetry and of Medieval folklore. Like most of his contemporaries Marlowe is fascinated with the mythical glory of the land far away in the East. His India is full of gold and pearls and diamonds. In all

his plays there are thirteen allusions to India, ten of these to its fabulous wealth. Dido would lock more wealth in Aeneas' bosom "Than twenty thousand Indias can afford."

(Dido, Queen of Carthage, III.i.92). Aeneas will make Carthage his capital and to beautify it; he says:

From golden India, Ganges will I fetch,  
Whose wealthy streams may wait upon her towers . . .  
(V.i.8-9)

There is a deceptive vagueness in Marlowe's use of the term "wealthy streams." The river Ganges is famous because the Hindus consider its waters sacred and purifying. In Marlowe's mind, however, there is a queer association between "golden India" and "wealthy Ganges."

In Tamburlaine I Cosroe refers to the consequences of the weak rule of his brother in these words:

Men from the farthest equinoctial line  
Have swarmed in troops into the Eastern India,  
Lading their ships with gold and precious stones,  
And made their spoils from all our provinces.  
(I.i.119-121)

Incidentally, "Eastern India," which would comprise the modern provinces of West Bengal, East Pakistan and Assam, lies at a distance of about fifteen hundred miles from Persia and was never a part of the Persian Empire. It is needless to comment on the vagueness or inaccuracies in Marlowe's allusions to India. What is worth noticing is the fact that Marlowe is never content with the conventional references to the gold or pearls of India that he found in other writers;

he tries to add a gloss to them with his own imagination and falls into errors in doing so. In the above quotations "wealthy" and "Eastern" are Marlowe's adjectives. Other references to India in Marlowe are listed below without any comments:

Not all the gold in India's wealthy arms  
Shall buy the meanest soldier of my train.  
Tamburlaine I (I.ii.85-86)

Then will we march to all those Indian mines  
By witless brother to the Christians lost, . . .  
Tamburlaine I (II.v.41-42)

I'll make the kings of India, ere I die,  
Offer their mines to sue for peace to me, . . .  
Tamburlaine I (III.iii.263-264)

And from the bounds of Afric to the banks  
Of Ganges shall his mighty arm extend.  
Tamburlaine I (V.ii.457-458)

And fairest pearl of wealthy India, . . .  
Tamburlaine II (III.ii.121)

I meant to cut a channel to them both,  
That men might quickly sail to India.  
Tamburlaine II (V.iii.134-135)

Give me the merchants of the Indian mines  
That trade in metal of the purest mold, . . .  
The Jew of Malta (I.i.19-20)

Sends Indian gold to coin me French ecues.  
The Massacre at Paris (I.ii.61)

I'll have them fly to India for gold, . . .  
Dr. Faustus (I.i.83)

Please it, your grace, the year is divided into  
two circles over the whole world, so that when it is  
winter with us, in the contrary circle it is like-  
wise summer with them, as in India, Saba, . . .  
Dr. Faustus (IV.vii.23-25)

Some of the wonders of the East, mentioned so frequently in Medieval travel-books, have found their way into Marlowe. In Dido, Queen of Carthage Aeneas says: "The sun from Egypt shall rich odors bring, . . ." (V.i.11). This comes from stories about the scented air in the deserts of Arabia and wilds of Africa repeated by several Medieval writers. The fantastic creatures of the East have also been mentioned by Marlowe,

As crocodiles that unaffrighted rest  
While thundering cannons rattle on their skins.  
Tamburlaine I (IV.i.9-10)

Basilisk has been described by the Medieval writers as a fabulous monster from the East whose glance is fatal. This term, later, came to be used for canons of a certain type. Marlowe has used the word in this sense twice in the play-- in Tamburlaine I (IV.i.2) and in The Jew of Malta (III.vi.30).

Outside the Tamburlaine plays and The Jew of Malta there are only two references to the Turks in Marlowe:

I mean our wars against the Muscovites,  
And, on the other side, against the Turk,  
Rich princes both, and mighty emperors.  
The Massacre at Paris (ix.11-13)

I'll wing myself and forthwith fly amain  
Unto my Faustus, to the great Turk's court.  
Dr. Faustus (III.iii.50-51)

The last allusion to the East that deserves attention is the word "hoors" used by Marlowe in Dido, Queen of Carthage. Dido says:

Aeneas may command as many Moors  
As in the sea are little water drops.  
(IV.iv.62-63)

The term "Moor" actually came to be used only in the eighth century, in Spain, for the North African Muslims. But the word is supposed to have its root in the Latin word "Mauri." The use of the term "Moor" in a story of Roman period is justifiable not only because "Moor" stems from "Mauri" but because the word "Moor" had rich associations for the Elizabethans. Shakespeare has followed Marlowe in depicting a "Moor" in the play Titus Andronicus.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE EAST IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Titus Andronicus

There are only three Oriental characters in Shakespeare's plays, all of them Moors. The first Moor, Aaron, appears in Titus Andronicus, a play of the Roman period, the action of which could be roughly placed in the first century.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, like Marlowe before him, uses the term "Moor" for a character who lived before the period when this term was coined. Moreover, the Spaniards originally applied the term to the Berbers and Arabs from North Africa who were not dark, whereas Shakespeare's Moor is definitely a Negro. The changes in the connotation of the term, the narrowing down of meaning to "dark, negroid, West African Muslim," occurred during the Renaissance and was a direct result of the growing prejudice against the Moorish pirates. Ethnologically, Aaron comes from the same stock as the later Moors, so well-known to the Elizabethans, and his

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<sup>1</sup>Bassianus refers to himself as "Caesar's son." (I.i.10) The rule of the Caesars in Rome came to the end with the suicide of Nero, the last Caesar, in 68 A.D.

creator has endowed him with some of the characteristics for which they were famous: lasciviousness, treachery and cruelty.

For some reason unknown to the present writer, the few scholars who have dealt with the Oriental element in the Elizabethan drama do not include Titus Andronicus among the Oriental plays. It has not been listed as an Oriental play in Louis Wann's The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama and Chew omits it in his discussion of plays on Oriental themes in Chapter XI, entitled "Moslems on the London Stage," of his famous book The Crescent and the Rose. But, for reasons given above, it would be legitimate to consider Titus Andronicus as an Oriental play--that is, a play with at least one character from the East.

There are unmistakable allusions in the play to Aaron's negroid features. He himself refers to "my fleece of woolly hair . . ." (II.iii.34);<sup>1</sup> Lavinia calls him the Queen's "raven-colored love" (II.iii.83); Marcus speaks of "a black ill-favored fly, / Like to the Empress' Moor." (III.ii.66-67). To Titus he is a "coal-black Moor." (III.ii.78). To set at rest any doubts that may still remain about his origin Aaron calls his son, who bears close resemblance to him, "you thick-lipped slave," (IV.ii.175).

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<sup>1</sup>G. B. Harrison, ed., Shakespeare, Complete Works (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1952). All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from this edition.

Aaron has no religion. When he asks Lucius to swear that his son will be saved, Lucius answers him: "Who should I swear by? Thou believest no god." (V.i.71) Aaron admits the truth of this statement: "What if I do not? As, indeed, I do not." (V.i.73) and takes the opportunity to air his own views on religion:

An idiot holds his bauble for a god,  
And keeps the oath which by that god he swears,  
To that I'll urge him. Therefore thou shalt vow  
By that same god, what god soe'er it be,  
That thou adorest and hast in reverence, . . .  
(V.i.79-83)

There are frequent allusions to Aaron's lust in the early part of the play. In his very first appearance he reveals the nature of his relations with the Queen:

. . . whom thou in triumph long  
Hast prisoner held, fettered in amorous chains,  
And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes  
Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.  
(II.i.14-17)

Tamora, in the hunt scene, tells him that while others hunt:

We may, each wreathèd in the other's arms,  
Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber, . . .  
(II.iii.25-26)

Lavinia says to her husband:

. . . I pray you, let us hence,  
And let her joy her raven-colored love.  
(II.iii.82-83)

But Aaron is no weakling or coward. When Demetrius tries to take the baby from the nurse to kill it, Aaron steps forward and tells him: "Sooner this sword shall plow thy

bowels up." (IV.ii.87) The way he imposes his authority on the Empress' two sons, great rogues themselves, shows that he is a man of no mean calibre. He remains undaunted after he is captured by the Goths. He is indifferent to his own fate but is concerned about his child. He never pleads for his own life but offers to reveal "wondrous things" to Lucius if his son's life is spared. His fearlessness and courage in the closing Act of the play and his love for his little "black slave" are the only redeeming features of his character.

Aaron is the most wicked character in the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Barbaras in The Jew of Malta and Iago are his only close rivals. But while both Barbaras and Iago have some justification for indulging in their evil deeds, Aaron has none. They destroy their victims out of vengeance; he does so for the sheer joy of destruction. His is a more fiery spirit, a more daemonic passion than theirs:

Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand;  
Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.  
(II.iii.38-39)

Shakespeare certainly had Marlowe's Jew in mind when he created his wicked Moor. The parallelisms between these two characters are, at times, too close to be accidental. Barbaras narrates his exploits to Ithamore in these words:

As for myself, I walk abroad 'a nights  
And kill sick people groaning under walls.  
Sometimes I go about and poison wells,  
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,

I am content to lose some of my crowns  
 That I may, walking in my gallery,  
 See 'em go pinioned along by my door.  
 Being young, I studied physic and began  
 To practice first upon the Italian.  
 There I enriched the priests with burials  
 And always kept the sexton's arm in ure  
 With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells.  
 And after that I was an engineer,  
 And in the wars 'twixt France and Germany,  
 Under pretence of helping Charles the Fifth,  
 Slew friend and enemy with my stratagems.  
 Then after that I was an usurer,  
 And with extorting, cozening, forfeiting,  
 And tricks belonging unto brokery,  
 I filled the jails with bankrouths in a year,  
 And with young orphans planted hospitals,  
 And every moon made some or other mad,  
 And now and then one hang himself for grief,  
 Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll,  
 How I with interest tormented him.  
 (II.iii.169-195)

And Aaron reveals to Lucius some of his favourite pastimes:

Even now I curse the day--and yet, I think,  
 Few come within the compass of my curse--  
 Wherein I did not some notorious ill:  
 As kill a man, or else devise his death;  
 Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it;  
 Accuse some innocent, and forswear myself;  
 Set deadly enmity between two friends;  
 Make poor men's cattle break their necks;  
 Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,  
 And bid the owners quench them with their tears.  
 Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves  
 And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,  
 Even when their sorrows almost were forgot;  
 And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,  
 Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,  
 "Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead."  
 Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things  
 As willingly as one would kill a fly,  
 And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,  
 But that I cannot do ten thousand more.  
 (V.i.125-144)

Aaron, like Barbaras, is a Machiavellian character--  
 that is, Machiavellian as the Elizabethans conceived of one.

He is the engineer of all the evil deeds in the play and proudly boasts his authorship of them. He suggests to Chiron and Demetrius that they should not fight for Lavinia but they should both enjoy her; he chalks out the plan for her rape and maiming, during the hunt; he devises the murder of Bassianus and gets Quintus and Marius arrested for the crime. He cheats Titus into chopping off his hand. The horror of his deeds, which are not reported but performed on the stage, surpasses that of Barbaras' or Iago's. He has a ghastly sense of humour which the other two lack. He refers to the cutting of Lavinia's hands and tongue as "trimming." He almost breaks his heart with "extreme laughter" when Titus' severed hand is brought to him. He watches through a crevice when the heads of Quintus and Marius are brought to their old father and this is how he reacts to the scene:

Beheld his tears, and laughed so heartily  
That both mine eyes were rainy like to his.  
(V.i.116-117)

Aaron is unique among the villains of Shakespeare and Marlowe for the fiendish joy he feels at the suffering of his victims.

Like the other Machiavellians he is unashamed and unrepentant of his deeds to the very end. Just before his death he brags:

I am no baby, I, that with base prayers  
I should repent the evils I have done.  
Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did  
Would I perform if I yet might have my will.

If one good deed in all my life I did,  
 I do repent it from my very soul.  
 (V.iii.185-190)

Aaron is almost an embodiment of evil. The reason why he has been painted so dark is, obviously, that he combines in himself the traits of two of the worst character-types of the Renaissance--the Moor and the "Machiavel." He has the physical features, the lust, the barbarism and the courage of the Moor; he also has the irreligion, the love of evil, the cruelty and the shamelessness of the Machiavel. No wonder, then, that, unlike any other character of Shakespeare, he is a devil incarnate and his human features are hardly discernible.

### Othello

Of the three Moors in Shakespeare two have subsidiary roles while one, Othello, has the leading role in the play. As the protagonist in the play he has to be a likeable person so that the audience may sympathize with him in his distress. The problem before Shakespeare in this play was to create a Moor who, despite the hostile public attitude toward the Moors, may be liked.

The term Moor, it has been observed before, was used very loosely by the Elizabethans. It was applied to the real Moors as well as to the African Negroes. The initial question worth examining is to which class of Moors Othello belongs. There are some fifteen references in the play to

Othello as "black," "sooty" or the like. But the only evidence for a negroid Othello is Roderigo's allusion to him as "thick-lips." Iago's warning to Brabantio, "You'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse," (I.i.111) points in a different direction. Barbary, the land on the Eastern coast of North Africa, draws its name from the Berbers or Moors, who had inhabited the region from times immemorial. The Berbers or Moors were not Negroes. The dilemma can be resolved if Roderigo's name-calling is dismissed as a malicious jibe. Iago's remark and other allusions to Othello in the play point clearly to his being a Moor.<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare's hero, then, is a Moor, dark in colour but not negroid in features. But something more than this was needed to tilt the sympathy of the audience in his favour. Shakespeare turned to an extraordinary device: he made his Moor a Christian. A careful analysis of the play would substantiate this statement. While all the characters of the play speak of his colour in deprecatative terms none of them refer to his being a heathen or Saracen or Turk. The hatred against the Muslims was so strong in those days that, had Othello been a Muslim, the fact of his religion would have been capitalized and thrown in his face. Then, his

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<sup>1</sup>It appears that by the time he wrote Othello, Shakespeare knew the difference between a Moor and a Negro or balckamoor. In Triolus and Cressida, written about the same time as Othello, he refers to the negress as "blackamoor." (I.i.80).

marriage to Desdemona is performed hurriedly within a few hours. A marriage between a Christian and a Muslim would be a more complicated affair and few clergymen would risk performing such a marriage in view of Brabantio's influence and authority in the state. Again, Othello admonishes the squabbling soldiers in these words:

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that  
Which Heaven hath forbid the Ottomites?  
For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.  
(II.iii.170-172)

Othello identifies himself with the others as a Christian and refers to their disgraceful behaviour as "turned Turks," an expression which meant "to become a Muslim." Speaking of Desdemona's influence on Othello, Iago says to Cassio:

. . . And then for her  
To win the Moor, were't to renounce his baptism, . . .  
(II.iii.348-349)

When Othello asks Desdemona "Are you not a strumpet?" (IV.ii.83) she answers "No, as I am a Christian." (IV.ii.83). These words imply that the other party shares the same faith.

Before killing Desdemona he repeatedly urges her to confess herself to heaven:

If you bethink yourself of any crime  
Unreconciled as yet to Heaven and grace,  
Solicit for it straight.  
(V.ii.27-29)

Just before stabbing himself he relates the story of the Turk:

. . . in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by the throat the circumcisèd dog  
And smote him, thus.

(V.ii.352-356)

"The circumcisèd dog" are words that should not leave one in any doubt as to Othello's faith. A Muslim would never use such an expression for another Muslim. Professor Myrick has observed that such words as damned, devil, hell and soul occur more often in Othello than in any other Shakespearean play.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare's Othello is beyond doubt a Christian.

A Christian Moor is a unique phenomenon. The present writer has not come across any other Christian Moor in the Renaissance drama and the editors of the Oxford New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (1908) cite no such instance. The definition of the term "Moor" in the Dictionary, on the other hand, terms the Moors, after the Roman period, as Muslims. Following is the definition:

In ancient history a native of Mauretania, a region of Northern Africa corresponding to parts of Morocco and Algeria. In later times, one belonging to the people of mixed Berber and Arab race, Mohammedan in religion, who constitute bulk of the population of North-Western Africa, and who in the 8th c. conquered Spain. In the Middle Ages, and as late as the 17th c., the Moors were commonly supposed to be mostly black or very swarthy (though the existence of white Moors was recognised), and hence the the word was often used for negro or blackamoor.

(Vol. VI, p. 645)

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<sup>1</sup>K. O. Myrick, "The Theme of Damnation in Shakespearean Tragedy," Studies in Philology XXXVIII, January, 1941.

None of the Shakespearean critics known to the present writer has made out a case for a Christian Othello.

The next question that naturally pops up in the mind is: was Othello a Christian by birth or was he converted to Christianity later in life? The allusions to Othello's early life in the play are so few and so obscure that it is difficult to answer this question with any amount of certainty.

The Berbers were predominantly Christian before the advent of Islam on the African continent. Some of the most prominent early Christian fathers, like Tertullian, St. Cyprian and St. Augustine, stemmed from there. After the Muslim conquest of North Africa the Christians were not forcibly converted to Islam. The only discrimination against them was that they had to pay the Jazia, or poll-tax, and they were graded lower in the social scale. To avoid the tax and to improve their social status most of the Christians accepted the Muslim faith. But those few who chose to adhere to their own faith remained Christians. A Christian Moor was, therefore, a possibility. But Othello's allusion to his royal origin, "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege," (I.ii.21-22), complicates matters still further. There were Christians in North Africa at the time when the action of the play is supposed to take place, but there were no Christian monarchies. Othello's father could be the ruler of one of the Muslim states, who were constantly warring against one



early age under the force of circumstances and was converted to the Christian faith later on.

Othello's baptism at least neutralises the antipathy of the spectators toward the Moor: the positive qualities of his character win their sympathy and admiration for him. He is brave and fearless. He has risen to the highest position in the Venetian army through sheer merit. His worst enemy, Iago, testifies to his worth as a soldier when he says:

For I do know the state,  
However this may gall him with some check,  
Cannot with safety cast him. For he's embarked  
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,  
Which even now stand in act, that, for their souls,  
Another of his fathom they have none  
To lead their business.

(I.i.148-154)

The only occasion when he is seen facing a danger in the play is when Brabantio, with his armed followers, arrives to apprehend him. Brabantio's men draw their swords and are ready to attack him. But Othello remains cool and unmoved and tells them: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them." (I.ii.59). This one line speaks volumes of Othello's dauntless metal. Then, he has been engaged in fighting against the Turk--a very laudable occupation in the eyes of Christians in those days--for the past several years. He has earned a place in the hearts of his masters through his selfless services to the state. As he himself puts it:

My services which I have done the signiory  
Shall outtongue his complaints.

(I.ii.18-19)

The Duke and the senators trust none but him to lead the army against the Turk:

The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you, and though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on you.  
(I.iii.221-227)

To the virtues of courage and anti-Muslim zeal may be added his noble and unsuspecting nature, his generosity, his sincerity to his friends and his unassuming behaviour. Shakespeare has taken care to absolve him of the vices generally associated with the Moors: lasciviousness, treachery and cruelty. It is only Iago who calls him "lascivious" and suspects that "the lusty Moor / Hath leaped into my seat." (II.i.304-305). But Iago's comments on the Moor cannot be taken too seriously. For the characteristic treachery of the Moor has been substituted an unusual steadfastness and devotion to the cause in Othello. And of the traditional cruelty of the Moors there is not a trace in him. The only Moorish trait in him, to which critics have referred again and again, is jealousy. Dowden was the first to attribute Othello's jealous nature to his Moorish origin and a number of later critics have accepted this view.

Thus, with the magic touch of the master the hated Moor has been transformed into a popular hero.

The question as to how a Moor came to be the commander of the Venetian army can be more easily answered.

During the later Medieval Ages most of the Italian city states fell into the hands of military generals who established themselves as absolute dictators and ruled the people with an iron hand. Such was the fate of Milan when it fell under the Visconti and the Sforza. Venice was the richest of the Italian city states as it held the monopoly of the trade between East and West. The Venetians jealously guarded their freedom and, in order to eliminate the possibility of a local general seizing supreme power in the state, began to appoint only foreigners as captain-generals of the army. A Moor was a more likely choice because the North Africans, like the Venetians, were fighting against the Turk. The Duke's remark to Othello:

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you  
Against the general enemy Ottoman.

(I.iii.48-49)

implies that the Venetians and the Moors had a common cause against the Turk. The fact that the Moor was the commander of the Cyprian garrison has also been mentioned by Giraldi Cynthio in his Hecatombithi, Shakespeare's main source for Othello.

Most of the historical facts in the play are authentic. The island state of Cyprus had been under the control of Venice since 1473. The strategic position of the island necessitated its reduction by the Ottomans and, consequently, it was constantly threatened by a Turkish attack. The island

of Rhodes had been held by the Knights Hospitallers since 1309 and, much to the surprise of the Cypriots, the Turks attacked and captured it first, in 1522. The allusions to an imminent Turkish attack on Cyprus or Rhodes indicate that the date of the play's action is shortly before 1522. But it is not unlikely that Shakespeare had in mind the more recent events of the capture of Cyprus by the Turks in 1570. The atmosphere of nervousness and fear of the impending attack has been portrayed with a fidelity which could result from an intimate knowledge of the events, possibly through oral sources. Contrary to Shakespeare's normal practice, there are no disparaging remarks about the Turks in Acts I and II of the play, but they have been mentioned with awe and respect. The sailor reports to the Duke: "The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes." (I.iii.14) What a sense of relief at the danger averted these simple words convey! The First Senator argues:

We must not think the Turk is so unskillful  
To leave that latest which concerns him first,  
Neglecting an attempt of ease and gain  
To wake and wage a danger profitless.  
(I.iii.27-30)

The Turks are too intelligent to do such a thing as to invade Rhodes and spare Cyprus. The Duke's words, "The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus," betray his fear of the approaching disaster. And, finally, the tremendous relief and joy with which the news of the destruction of the Turkish fleet is greeted in Cyprus points to the seriousness

of the threat that the Turks had posed. The Third Gentleman conveys the report in these words:

News, lads! Our wars are done.  
The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks  
That their designment halts.  
(II.i.20-22)

Othello, soon after landing in Cyprus, makes the announcement:

"News, friends. Our wars are done, the Turks are drowned."  
(II.i.204). A general festivity in the state is ordered by Othello. The Herald proclaims:

It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant General, that upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph--some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sports and revels his addiction leads him.  
(II.ii.1-6)

### The Merchant of Venice

The Prince of Morocco in The Merchant of Venice has a minor role. He appears as a suitor to Portia in two short scenes, chooses the wrong casket and quits hurriedly. The very first words he speaks relate to his dark complexion:

Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,  
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.  
(II.i.1-3)

This and other allusions to his colour, generally by himself, indicate that he is dark and sunburnt. But there is no hint of negroid features, like curly hair or thick lips. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that he is a "tawny" Moor and not a Negro.

The Prince is conscious of his dark colour and refers to it again and again but, at the same time, he is also conscious of his high birth and position:

I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,  
In graces and in qualities of breeding.  
(II.vii.32-33)

He is proud of his courage and fighting calibre and recounts his exploits in war in glowing terms:

By this scimitar  
That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince  
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman, . . .  
(II.i.24-26)

One who could do all that should be a very brave man indeed! But the only snag is that the things which he claims to have done never really happened. The reference to Sultan Solyman gives an approximate date of the events he mentions. Sultan Solyman was the Ottoman Emperor from 1520 to 1566. His counterpart in Persia was Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576). Tahmasp began war against the Turks in 1533, when Solyman was heavily engaged in Hungary. Solyman concluded a hasty truce with the Hungarians and turned to the East to defend his rear. He recovered the lost provinces and advanced as far as Baghdad. Intermittent fighting between the Turks and the Persians continued for the next two decades. Eventually, a treaty of peace was concluded in 1555. Reverting to the statement of the Prince of Morocco: although Shah Tahmasp had initial success in the campaign, he or any of the Persian princes did not win three, or even one battle against Sultan Solyman

himself. And no Sophy was ever killed in the Turco-Persian wars. Morocco's version of the events is manifestly untrue. There can be only two explanations of the Prince's misstatements: either Shakespeare intended to portray him as a braggart or he did not have his history right. The action of the play can be assumed to have taken place, on the evidence of these lines, shortly after 1536, when the major campaign, in which the Prince had taken part, ended.

The greatest blunder that Shakespeare makes in the play is when he puts the words "Some god direct my judgment!" (II.vii.13) in the mouth of the Prince of Morocco. These words betray the dramatist's ignorance of the basic tenets of Islam, which propound faith in one God and not many gods.

The only other significant allusion to the East occurs in scene iii of Act I, when Shylock says to Bassanio:

But ships are but boards, sailors but men. There  
be land rats and water rats, water thieves and land  
thieves--I mean pirates. . . .

(I.iii.22-24)

Shylock is certainly referring to the Moorish pirates who were a menace to the Christian shipping in those days.

#### Marlowe's and Shakespeare's use of Oriental Material

There is a striking difference between Marlowe's and Shakespeare's handling of the Oriental material. The East inspires Marlowe, and the popular notions about the East are constantly modified, changed and transformed in his plays. Nothing remains as he found it but undergoes a "sea change"

in his creative imagination. The dead names of places in Ortelius' Map, for example, have been infused with a new life in his imaginative description of them, in Tamburlaine, Part Two. Techelles tells Tamburlaine that he marched

To Machda, where the mighty Christian priest,  
Called John the Great, sits in a milk-white robe, . . .  
(I.vi.60-61)

Theridamus reached:

. . . Nigra Silva, where the devils dance  
Which, in despite of them, I set on fire.  
(I.vi.85-86)

The same process is at work in his allusion to the Ganges and to "Eastern India," a reference to which has been made in the previous chapter. He might, at times, fall into historical or geographical errors for want of accurate information, but even in such cases, the gloss of his imagination lends a new glow to the commonplace allusions. The East, like the beauty of "divine Zenocrate" or Helen's face, is the source of some of Marlowe's finest poetry. He introduced some new material about the East in the two Tamburlaine plays and in The Jew of Malta.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, deals with the East in an unusually calm and detached manner. He picks up only those concepts of the East which were the common property of his age and uses them, more often, as similies and metaphors to illustrate certain situations in his plays. He makes no attempt to probe into and unravel the mysteries of the East,

as his predecessor had done. He is content to use only those ideas which had come down to the Renaissance from the Medieval Ages and were current in his time. In most of the allusions to the East the audience's knowledge of them has been assumed by the dramatist. Shakespeare's East is the East of fable and folklore. The tales of cruelty and barbarism of the Eastern people, the beauty and splendour of some of the distant Eastern regions, the fantastic forms of human, animal and plant life which were supposed to exist between "Afric and Ind" have all found their way into Shakespeare's pages. His image of the East, in short, is a projection of the popular image.

#### Islam in Shakespeare's Plays

There are few allusions to Islam in Shakespeare. Some key words of local colour, like Koran or mosque or prayers, appear nowhere in his plays. There is only one allusion to Mahomet in the First Part of Henry the Sixth:

Was Mahomet inspirèd with a dove?  
Thou with an eagle art inspirèd then.  
(I.ii.140-141)

This will be recognized as the popular medieval legend about the Prophet of Islam, which has been recounted earlier.

Hamlet's warning to the players:

I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing  
Termagant--it out--Herods Herod. Pray you, avoid it.  
(Hamlet III. ii.14-16)

would recall the fellow gods of Mahomet. And Edgar's description of the "Prince of Darkness":

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo  
he's called, and Mahu.

King Lear (III.iv.148-149)

leaves little doubt that he is Mahound or Mahomet, the third  
figure of the unholy Saracen Trinity.

Shakespeare never mentions the Muslims as Muham-  
medans. He groups them, along with other non-Christians, as  
pagans, heathens or Saracens. Thus, in Richard the Second:

Many a time hath banished Norfolk fought  
For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,  
Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross  
Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens; . . .  
(IV.i.92-95)

Or, again, in Henry the Fourth, Part One:

To chase these pagans in those holy fields  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet . . .  
(I.i.24-27)

Henry the Fourth speaks of his intention to fight against the  
pagans several times in the two plays named after him. In  
King John, Lewis speaks of Richard in these words:

Richard, that robbed the lion of his heart  
And fought the holy wars in Palestine, . . .  
(II.i.3-4)

### Allusions to the Peoples and Countries of the East

#### The Scythians and the Tartars

Of the Eastern peoples the Scythians and the Tartars  
have a slight edge over the Turks in cruelty and barbarism.  
In Titus Andronicus, when Titus tells Tamora that her son  
must be sacrificed to appease the spirits of his sons who had  
been killed in the wars, she exclaims: "Oh, cruel

irreligious piety!" and Chiron adds: "Was ever Scythia half so barbarous?" (I.i.130,131).

In Henry VI, Part I, the Countess says:

The plot is laid. If all things fall out right,  
I shall as famous be by this exploit  
As Scythian Tomyris by Cyrus' death.  
(II.iii.4-6)

Tomyris was the queen of the Scythian tribe known as Massagetae. Cyrus, the king of Persia, invaded the country of the Massagetae but was defeated and killed in the battle. Tomyris had her head enclosed in a sack full of blood, so that he might have his fill.

King Lear, shocked by Cordelia's ingratitude, exclaims:

The barbarous Scythian,  
Or he that makes his generation messes  
To gorge his appetite shall to my bosom  
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved  
As thou my sometime daughter.  
King Lear (I.i.118-122)

The Duke, in The Merchant of Venice, tells Shylock that Antonio has had troubles.

Enow to press a royal merchant down  
And pluck commiseration of his state  
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,  
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never trained  
To offices of tender courtesy.  
(IV.i.29-33)

In All's Well That Ends Well Helena tells the widow that she had once saved the life of the King of France:

. . . which gratitude  
Through flinty Tartar's bosom would peep forth

And answer thanks.

(IV.iii.6-8)

"The Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips," (IV.i.29) are among the ingredients of the "Hell broth" which the Witches prepare in Macbeth.

### The Turks

The Turks figure more prominently in Shakespeare's plays than any other people from the East. The allusions to the Turks are, generally, of a hostile nature. The word "Turk" has been used as a term of reproach twice in his plays:

Tester I'll have in pouch when thou shalt lack,  
Base Phrygian Turk!  
The Merry Wives of Windsor (I.iii.97-98)

Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk.  
Othello (II.i.115)

He mocks at the Turk's tedious style of writing in Henry VI, Part One:

Here is a silly stately style indeed!  
The Turk, that two and fifty kingdoms hath,  
Writes not so tedious a style as this.  
(IV.vii.72-74)

There are several allusions to the barbarism of the Turks, especially in contrast with the civilized Christians:

. . . stubborn Turks and Tartars, never trained  
To offices of tender courtesy, . . .  
The Merchant of Venice (IV.i.32-33)

Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels, . . .  
Richard II (IV.i.139)

What, think you are we Turks or infidels?  
Or that we would, against the form of law,

Proceed thus rashly to the villain's death  
King Richard III (III.v.41-43)

This is the English, not the Turkish Court.  
 Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds<sup>1</sup>  
 But Harry Harry.  
Henry IV, Part II (V.ii.47-49)

The wars of the Turks against the Christians have been al-  
 luded to in the following lines:

Why, she defies me,  
 Like Turk to Christian.  
As You Like It (IV.iii.32-33)

Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross  
 Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens; . . .  
Richard II (IV.i.94-95)

Turk Gregory<sup>[2]</sup> never did such deeds in arms as  
 I have done this day.  
Henry IV, Part I (V.iii.46-47)

The Turk's lustfulness has been commented upon in  
King Lear. Edgar speaks of himself thus:

Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman  
 outparamoured the Turk.  
 (III.iv.93-94)

The eunuchs or mutes of Turkish harems are known to  
 Shakespeare and he mentions them twice in the plays:

. . . I would send them to the Turk to make  
 eunuchs of.  
All's Well That Ends Well (II.iii.93-94)

. . . or else our grave,  
 Like Turkish mute, shall have a tongueless mouth.  
Henry V (I.ii.231-232)

<sup>1</sup>An allusion to Murad III, who had all his three  
 brothers killed when he succeeded to the Turkish throne in  
 1574.

<sup>2</sup>The martial Pope Gregory VII.

"Turning Turk," in the sense of "becoming a heathen or Muslim," has been used in the following lines:

Well, an you be not turned Turk, there's no  
more sailing by the star.  
Much Ado About Nothing (III.iv.57)

Hamlet uses the term "turn Turk" metaphorically when he says:

. . . if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk  
with me, . . .  
Hamlet (III.ii.287)

That is, if his fortunes betray him.

The allusions to the Turks which present them in a more favourable light occur in Othello and have been dealt with. The only other allusion, outside Othello, which could be placed in the same category is:

Duer<sup>[1]</sup> paid to the hearer than the Turk's tribute.  
Henry IV, Part II (III.ii.331)

The small Christian states which were tributaries to the Ottomans paid the tribute money promptly to avoid punitive action by their overlords.

#### The Moors and Africa

Outside the three plays in which the Moorish characters appear, there is only one allusion to the Moors in Shakespeare:

I shall answer the better to the commonwealth  
than you can the getting-up of the Negro's belly.  
The Moor is with child by you, Launcelot.  
The Merchant of Venice (III.v.40-42)

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<sup>1</sup>Promptly.

It may be observed that the Negro and the Moor have been mixed up in this allusion too, as in so many other places. The dramatist does not seem to be aware of the distinction between them. In the plays written from 1602 onward, Shakespeare appears to be more conscious of the difference between the two African races but, even in those plays, he is faltering at times. The allusion to Othello's "thick lips" in Othello throws into confusion an otherwise admirable picture of a Moor.

Of the three plays with the Moors, the first, Titus Andronicus, has a supremely evil character, darker than the popular image of a Moor; a noble Moor, an altogether new species, has been created by Shakespeare in Othello; and the Prince of Morocco in The Merchant of Venice has been slightly, but not uncharitably, sketched. Some of the characteristic vices of the Moors have not been attributed to him and the only weakness he manifests on the stage is bragging about himself.

Sycorax, the witch-mother of Caliban, was born in Argier, the den of Moorish pirates, but was later banished from there (Tempest, I.ii.261-266). Claribel, the daughter of Alonso, the king of Naples, has been married to the king of Tunis. His brother Sebastian rates him for marrying his daughter to the African:

Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss,  
That would not bless Europe with your daughter,

But rather lose her to an African,  
 Where she, at least, is banished from your eye.  
Tempest (II.i.123-126)

But Sebastian's objection to the marriage is, obviously, based on the long distance of Tunis from Naples rather than on the colour of the Tunisian king. Antonio elaborates the same point a little later:

She that is Queen of Tunis, she that dwells  
 Ten leagues beyond man's life, she that from Naples  
 Can have no note, unless the sun were post--  
 The man i' the moon's too slow--till newborn chins  
 Be rough and razorable.  
 (II.i.246-250)

Antonio is, of course, exaggerating. But Shakespeare does try to create the impression that Tunis is a long way from Naples. Shakespeare as well as his audience knew that Tunis was not quite that far. Not only the merchants from Naples but also the English merchants had trade with the Barbary states. Elsewhere Shakespeare shows familiarity with this fact.<sup>1</sup> But in this play Tunis appears to be located at the end of the world. Why is Shakespeare trying to convert a real and known place into an unreal and romantic land? The only reason appears to be that Tempest is a fairy-tale and its "facts" are different from the rational facts of everyday life. Tunis, though it bears the name of a real place, is no more real than the island of Prospero.

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<sup>1</sup>Iago's allusion to the "Barbary horse" in Othello (I.i.111) and Bassanio's query about Antonio's ships, which are due from "Lisbon, Barbary and India?" in The Merchant of Venice (III.iii.272) would bear out this statement.

Some other facts known to Shakespeare about Africa are its excessive heat,

And we were better parch in Afric sun  
Than in the pride and salt scorn of his eyes, . . .  
Troilus and Cressida (I.iii.370-371)

its venomous serpents,

Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor,  
Coriolanus (I.viii.3)

and its vast plains and deserts,

I would they were in Afric both together,  
Myself by with a needle, that I might prick  
The goer-back.  
Cymbeline (I.i.167-169)

That is, they would have to fight a decisive duel as escape from those wide African plains is impossible.

#### The Ethiopians and the Egyptians

The only fact about the Ethiopians known to Shakespeare is that they are dark in colour. All the allusions to the Ethiopians relate to their complexion. Proteus in The Two Gentlemen of Verona compares his new flame Silvia to his old love Julia:

And Silvia--witness Heaven, that made her fair!--  
Shows Julia but a swarthy Ethiope.  
(II.vi.25-26)

In Much Ado About Nothing Claudio expresses his determination to marry Hero, in these words:

I'll hold my mind, were she an Ethiope.  
(V.iv.38)

Dumain, in Love's Labor's Lost, extols the beauty of his mistress thus:

Thou for whom Jove would swear  
Juno but an Ethiope were.

(IV.iii.117-118)

In the same play the King facetiously remarks that Rosaline's complexion shames the Ethiopians:

And Ethiopes of their sweet complexion crack.  
(IV.iii.268)

Rosalind uses the term "Ethiope" metaphorically when she says, in As You Like It:

Such Ethiope words, blacker in their effect  
Than in their countenance.  
(IV.iii.35-36)

The Ethiope figures thus in Romeo's beautiful simile in Romeo and Juliet:

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.  
(I.v.47-48)

And the device on shield of the Knight of Sparta, in Pericles:

Is a black Ethiope reaching at the sun.  
(II.ii.20)

The numerous allusions to Egypt in Antony and Cleopatra give surprisingly little information about the country or its people. The geographical information about Egypt that can be gleaned from the play is that the serpents, mud and the Nile are there. About the people, the play tells us that they are good cooks. Pompey says to Antony:

But, first or last, your fine Egyptian cookery  
Shall have the fame. I have heard that Julius Caesar  
Grew fat with feasting there.  
(II.vi.64-66)

Referring to Antony's infatuation for Cleopatra, Enobarbus says, "He will to his Egyptian dish again." (II.vi.134)

The Egyptian sibyl has been referred to once.

Othello says to Desdemona:

That handkerchief  
Did an Egyptian to my mother give.  
She was a charmer, and could almost read  
The thoughts of people.  
Othello (III.iv.55-58)

Shakespeare thought of the Egyptians as dusky in colour, as the two allusions to their complexion in his plays indicate. Philo says that Antony's heart has become the bellows and fan "To cool a gypsy's lust." (I.i.9). And Hippolyta, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, speaks of the lover's passion in these terms:

The lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helena's beauty in a brow of Egypt.  
(V.i.10-11)

### Persia

There are very few allusions to Persia in Shakespeare's plays. The words of the Second Merchant, in The Comedy of Errors, show Shakespeare's familiarity with the fact that there were trade relations between the Western countries and Persia. The Merchant says:

. . . I am bound  
To Persia and want guilders for my voyage.  
(IV.i.3-4)

Fabian's allusion to the Sophy, in The Twelfth Night:

I will not give my part of this sport for a  
pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy.  
(II.v.196-197)

may be a topical one. The play was written in 1600 or 1601 and by that time stories about the Shirley brothers' visit to Persia and their favourable reception by the Shah had begun to reach England. The "pension of thousands" may refer to the liberal maintenance allowance given by Shah Abbas to Sir Thomas Shirley. Again, in the same play, Sir Toby intimidates Sir Andrew by telling him of the courage and skill in arms of his rival in the combat. Among other things, he tells Sir Andrew, "They say he has been fencer to the Sophy." (III.iv.306-307) Thomas' younger brother Robert acted as military advisor to the Shah for several years, and this may well be a reference to the younger Sherley's occupation in the Persian court. The last allusion to Persia occurs in a queer place. The sight of Edgar, all in rags, pains Lear and he tells him:

. . . I do not like the fashion of your garments.  
You will say they are Persian attire, but let them  
be changed.

King Lear (III.vi.84-86)

"Persian attire" has been used by Lear in the popular sense of "gorgeous dress."

It may be observed that the allusions to Persia are all calculated to enhance the prestige of the Shah and his country. The reasons for the favourable disposition of

the Elizabethans toward Persia have been explained in an earlier chapter.

### Arabia

In Antony and Cleopatra Caesar lists the allies of Antony and among them he mentions "King Malchus of Arabia," (III.vi.72). This fictitious king is the only living person from Arabia who has been referred to in Shakespeare's plays. But quite a few of the wonders of Arabia, which he found in the pages of Medieval and Renaissance cosmographers, travelers and historians, have crept into his plays. Most of all he appears to be fascinated with that strange bird, the phoenix. He refers to it several times in the plays:

. . . in Arabia  
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix  
At this hour reigning there.

The Tempest (III.iii.21-23)

O Antony! O Thou Arabian bird!  
Antony and Cleopatra (III.ii.12)

She is alone the Arabian bird, . . .  
Cymbeline (I.vi.17)

. . . from their ashes shall be reared  
a phoenix . . .  
Henry VI, Part I (IV.vii.92-93)

My ashes, as the phoenix, may bring forth  
A bird that will revenge upon you all; . . .  
Henry VI, Part III (I.iv.35-36)

The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,  
Her ashes new create another heir  
As great in admiration as herself,  
So shall she leave her blessedness to one--  
Henry VIII (V.v.41-44)

The wild desert expanses of Arabia appeal to Shakespeare's

imagination and he has referred to them twice in his plays.

The Prince of Morocco, in The Merchant of Venice, speaks of

The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds  
Of wide Arabia . . .

(II.vii.41-42)

And Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus, tells Sicinius, the  
Tribune:

I would my son  
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,  
His good sword in his hand.

Coriolanus (IV.ii.23-25)

meaning thereby, that it would be impossible for them to fly  
away from him in that wide desert, and they would all be  
put to the sword. Of the flora of Arabia only two trees have  
been mentioned--one in The Tempest, which is the "phoenix'  
throne," and the other in Othello. Othello speaks of his  
eyes, which

Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum.

(V.ii.350-351)

And, lastly, there is that beautiful allusion to the  
perfumes of Arabia by Lady Macbeth:

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this  
little hand.

Macbeth (V.i.55-56)

### India

To Shakespeare, as to his contemporaries, India is  
a land which lies somewhere on the outskirts of the known  
world. Twice in his plays he refers to its distance. In  
A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titania, the Queen of fairies,

asks Oberon, the King of fairies:

Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steppe of India . . .  
(II.i.68-69)

And Pandarus, in Troilus and Cressida, says:

Condition, I had gone barefoot to India.  
(I.ii.80)

There are quite a few of those traditional references to the gold and diamonds and pearls of India. King Henry, in Henry the Sixth, Part Three, says:

My crown is in my heart, not on my head,  
Not decked with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Nor to be seen.  
(III.i.62-64)

In Henry the Fourth, Part One, Mortimer, speaking of his father says he is

. . . as bountiful  
As mines of India.  
(III.i.168-169)

Orlando compares Rosalind to an Indian jewel in As You Like It:

"From the east to western Ind,  
No jewel is like Rosalind."  
(III.ii.93-94)

Sir Toby calls Maria "my metal of India," in Twelfth Night (II.v.17). To Troilus Cressida's "bed is India, there she lies, a pearl." (I.ii.103). Othello speaks of "the base Indian," who

. . . threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe.  
Othello (V.ii.347-348)

In King Henry the Eighth, Norfolk speaks of the French Knights who, dressed all in gold, had "Made Britain India." (I.i.21).

Although India remains the land of gold and pearl in Shakespeare, the Indians have generally been reduced to a very low position indeed. They are considered savages, barbarians, primitive nature-worshippers. The allusion to the "Base Indian" in Othello has just been noted. Bassanio, in The Merchant of Venice, commenting on the golden casket, says that outside ornament is not the indication of the real worth of an object and appearances are often deceptive, like

. . . the beauteous scarf  
Veiling an Indian beauty . . .  
(III.ii.98-99)

Berowne, in Love's Labor's Lost, speaks of "a rude and savage man of Ind." (IV.iii.222). Stephano, in The Tempest, brackets the Indians with savages:

What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put  
tricks upon 's with salvages and men of Ind, ha?  
(II.ii.59-61)

In the same play, Trinculo speaks of the curiosity of the English people for novelties from the East. He says:

When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame  
beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian.  
(II.ii.32-34)

Another allusion to the curiosity of Englishmen to see an Indian occurs in Henry the Eighth. The Porter says:

Or have we some strange Indian with the great tool  
come to Court, the women so besiege us.  
(V.iv.33-35)

Shakespeare is familiar with the Hindu religious practice of worshipping the sun and refers to it, contemptuously, twice in the plays. In All's Well That Ends Well, Helena says:

Thus, Indian-like,  
Religious in mine error, I adore  
The sun, that looks upon his worshiper  
But knows of him no more.

(I.iii.210-213)

And, in Love's Labor's Lost, Berowne extols the beauty of Rosaline in these terms:

Who sees the heavenly Rosaline  
That, like a rude and savage man of Ind,  
At the first opening of the gorgeous east  
Bows not his vassal head and stricken blind  
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?

(IV.iii.221-225)

It is an enigma as to how Shakespeare came to have such a low opinion of the natives of India. The Indians were the inheritors of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world and have been mentioned with respect in classical histories and literature. A precedent for deprecatory treatment of the Indians in Medieval or Renaissance writings is not known to the present writer. Apparently, Shakespeare conceived of the whole of East as a "dark continent," and its people as primitive cave-dwellers, living on raw animal or human flesh or wild fruits and leaves of trees.

There is a curious tale of an Indian boy, who becomes the bone of contention between the King and Queen of fairies, in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Titania, the Queen of fairies, describes how she came by the boy:

His mother was a votaress of my order.  
 And in the spicèd Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossiped by my side;  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking the embarkèd traders on the flood,  
 When we have laughed to see the sails conceive  
 And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind,  
 Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait  
 Following--her womb then rich with my young squire--  
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,  
 To fetch me trifles, and return again  
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.  
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,  
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,  
 And for her sake I will not part with him.  
 (II.i.123-137)

Oberon, the King of Fairies, is determined to have the boy as a Knight of his train and Titania, the Queen, is unwilling to part with him at any price. The quarrel is resolved at the end of the play in fairy-tale fashion. (IV.i.1-106)

The story of the Indian boy, unlike most other allusions to India in his plays, is Shakespeare's own invention. It has been pointed out, in the course of discussion of geographical location of Tunis in The Tempest, that real places, when mentioned in a fairy tale do not remain real any more but acquire a mythical character. The India of A Midsummer Night's Dream is just a part of the fairyland in which it is located.

Shakespeare knew about The Tiger, the first ship to leave London on a voyage to India, with Aleppo as its immediate destination. He has referred to The Tiger twice in his plays: in Twelfth Night the First Officer tells the Duke of Antonio:

And this is he that did the Tiger board,  
When your young nephew Titus lost his leg.  
(V.i.65-66)

And the First Witch in Macbeth, speaking of the sailor's wife, says:

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger.  
(I.iii.7)

The Tiger's voyage of exploration to India must have generated the same kind of excitement in Elizabethan England as the flight of Apollo XI did the world over in our times.

#### The Wonders of the East

Many of the wonders of the East have crept, intact, from Mandeville and others into the pages of Shakespeare. Othello, describing his travels to Desdemona, had told her of

. . . . . the cannibals that each other eat,  
The anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.  
Othello (I.iii.143-145)

Gonzalo, in The Tempest, talks of some of these wonders:

Who would believe that there were mountaineers  
Dewlapped like bulls, whose throats had hanging at  
'em  
Wallets of flesh? Or that there were such men  
Whose heads stood in their breasts?  
(III.iii.44-47)

The Tempest, though it is not an Oriental play, owes much of its setting to the East. The enchanted island, the strange creature Caliban, the music in the air, all come from that land of wonders which stretches from Afric to Ind.

Birds and Animals

The birds and animals of the East are no less wonderful than its men. And Shakespeare mentions them quite frequently in his plays. Reference has already been made to the fabulous bird of Arabia, the phoenix. The basilisk has been mentioned eight times in the plays--two of the references are to the cannon with that name and six to the animal:

Make me not sighted like the basilisk.  
The Winter's Tale (I.ii.388)

Come, basilisk,  
And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight.  
Henry VI, Part II (III.ii.52-53)

Their chiefest prospect murdering basilisks!  
Henry VI, Part II (III.ii.324)

I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk; . . .  
Henry VI, Part III (III.ii.187)

Would they were basilisks, to strike thee dead!  
Richard III (I.ii.151)

It is a basilisk unto mine eye,  
Kills me to look on 't.  
Cymbeline (II.iv.107-108)

The two allusions to the cannon are:

And thou hast talked  
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin, . . .  
Henry IV, Part I (II.iii.53-56)

The fatal balls of murdering basilisks.  
Henry V (V.ii.17)

The camel has been mentioned five times:

"It is as hard to come as for a camel  
To thread the postern of a small needle's eye."  
Richard II (V.v.16-17)

Achilles! A drayman, a porter, a very camel.  
Troilus and Cressida (I.ii.270)

Mars his idiot! Do, rudeness, do, camel, do, do.  
Troilus and Cressida (II.i.58)

Of no more soul nor fitness for the world  
 Than camels in the war, who have their provand  
 Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows  
 For sinking under them.  
Coriolanus (II.i.266-269)

Hamlet: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost  
 in shape of a camel?

Polonius: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.  
Hamlet (III.ii.393-395)

These allusions to the camel indicate that only two facts about the animal are known to him: that it is a beast of burden and it has a queer, ungainly shape. There are certain other facts about the camel which, had he known them, could be put to good dramatic use. The camel is generally used for transportation in deserts and is known as "the ship of the desert"; it has a large pouch in the belly, which can store sufficient quantity of water to last for several days; if the travelers in the desert run short of water they kill the camel and use the water in its pouch to quench their thirst; the camel never forgets or forgives an insult.

There are five references to the crocodile in the plays:

. . . as the mournful crocodile  
 With sorrow snares relenting passengers, . . .  
Henry VI, Part II (III.i.226-227)

Woo 't drink up eisel? Eat a crocodile?  
Hamlet (V.i.299)

If that the earth could teem with a woman's tears,  
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.  
Othello (IV.i.256-257)

Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the  
operation of your sun. So is your crocodile.  
Antony and Cleopatra (II.vii.29-31)

Lepidus: What manner o' thing is your crocodile?  
Antony: It is shaped, sir, like itself, and it is  
as broad as it hath breadth.  
Antony and Cleopatra (II.vii.46-48)

Shakespeare has drawn most of his information about the crocodile from the proverbial expression "crocodile tears," which, it can be safely assumed, was current in his time. The curious shape of the beast, its saw-like teeth, its steely back, its dexterity in catching the prey which is, generally, stunned with a lightning swash from its sharply-dented tail: Shakespeare would have certainly put these details to good account in his plays if he had known them.

The mythical beast unicorn has been referred to only three times in Shakespeare's plays:

Now I will believe  
That there are unicorns, . . .  
The Tempest (III.iii.21-22)

Wert thou the unicorn, pride and wrath would  
confound thee. . . .  
Timon of Athens (IV.iii.337-338)

For he loves to hear  
That unicorns may be betrayed with trees . . .  
Julius Caesar (II.i.203-204)

The elephant has been mentioned seven times. Three of these allusions are to an inn of that name and need not be repeated here, and the four allusions to the animal are:

He is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear,  
slow as the elephant.

Troilus and Cressida (I.ii.20-21)

Shall the elephant Ajax carry it thus?

Troilus and Cressida (II.iii.2-3)

The elephant hath joints, but none for courtesy.  
His legs are legs for necessity, not for flexure.

Troilus and Cressida (II.iii.113-115)

That unicorns may be betrayed with trees  
And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,  
Lions with toils and men with flatterers--

Julius Caesar (II.i.204-206)

The allusions to the elephant, once again, show how vague is Shakespeare's knowledge of the animal. He says nothing about the size of the largest mammal or its other salient features: the ivory tusks or the long, flexible trunk. The statement that the elephant's legs do not bend, is incorrect. But the information that elephants are betrayed "with holes" is accurate. The elephants are caught in large pits dug in the ground and covered with tree twigs and leaves. Obviously, Shakespeare learned about the elephant in one of the popular Medieval bestiaries which contained some facts and much fiction about beasts.

The popular legends and literature about the East, the mythical-cum-factual accounts of travelers, cosmographers and historians, the bestiaries: these were the main sources of Shakespeare's information about the East. The dramatist accepts all the information with equanimity and incorporates it in his plays, generally as illustrative material. He

manifests no particular interest in the East, no curiosity to know more about it. Of the "matter of the Orient" he gave to his age what it already knew. In most of his allusions the audience's knowledge of them is assumed by the dramatist. The men of the East have been placed on a slightly lower footing than its beasts. The greatest dramatist of England has been uncharitable to the Orient!

## CONCLUSION

The image of the East in the Elizabethan drama is a biased and distorted one. Perhaps it could not be otherwise, because direct contact between the Christian West and Muslim East began with those unfortunate wars known as the Crusades. Differences of race and culture further widened the chasm between the two peoples and the possibilities of a compromise or understanding of some sort were never seriously thought of. The wars of swords and the wars of words continued for almost one thousand years--from the seventh to the seventeenth century. A tolerant outlook toward other people in spite of the differences in manners and opinions was a concept beyond the comprehension of Medieval or Renaissance Europe. A cosmopolitan point of view was the product of a later age and it remains, to our day, more of a cherished ideal than a reality.

The earliest references to Islam in the Medieval treatises were based on ignorance of the new faith. After the establishment of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, the Christians came in close contact with the Muslims and the tenets of Islam were no longer a mystery to them. But the malicious propaganda against Islam, its founder and the Koran

went on the same old way. Fantastic stories about Islam and Muslims were coined in the mints of Europe with an untiring zeal, circulated all over the continent and accepted by the common people on their face value. The idea was to keep the flame of hatred burning and alive. If one were to believe all that these propagandists said, Islam was the Devil's own creed and Muslims, the Devil's disciples. Of the traditional hospitality of the Muslims, of their courage in war, of their cultural advancement, of their original contribution to different fields of knowledge, of the dazzling splendour of the courts of Muslim rulers, there is not a word in Medieval writings, religious or secular. The contents of Chapter Three of this dissertation aim at pointing out an aspect of Muslim life and culture which has been completely left out in Medieval and Renaissance writings.

The Turks and the Moors had appeared in plays and Masques and festivities long before Marlowe and Shakespeare began to write their plays. King Henry VIII himself appeared dressed as a Turk at a banquet held on Shrove Sunday 1510, in the Parliament Chamber of Westminster. "A Masque of Turkish Magistrates" was designed by Nicholas Udall in 1555. A "Masque of Moors" was performed before Queen Elizabeth in 1560. But these masques and revels aimed simply at creating picturesque and exotic effects on the stage through Oriental dresses and settings. An interest in the life and customs of

the Oriental peoples began only in the latter part of the sixteenth century; George Peele's Battle of Alcazar (1588) and Marlowe's Tamburlaine were the earliest Elizabethan plays dealing with Oriental themes. Marlowe visualized a new East, closer to the reality. He had all the qualifications necessary to turn his vision into a reality: a genuine interest in the subject, a scholarship which would make accessible to him material which was beyond the reach of less educated writers, a speculative daring far in advance of his age and a fertile imagination which could fill all the gaps in the knowledge of the East. Marlowe was exquisitely fitted for the task. The very choice of an Oriental historical figure as the protagonist of his plays testifies to Marlowe's intention of presenting to his audience some aspects of Eastern life and culture which they had never known before. But, before he could create a living and breathing East, something happened. The personal ambition of Marlowe the man began to war against the creative ambition of Marlowe the artist. To create the East, the East as it was, how wonderful would that be! But would his audience appreciate a play which portrayed the whole of the East populated with their worst enemies, the Muslims? The spectacle of Bajazeth's fall would certainly delight his audience. But if Bajazeth's vanquisher belonged to the same faith as the Turk, how would the spectators take it? Not too well, perhaps. The desire of the man Marlowe for fame and popularity triumphed over

the urge of Marlowe, the artist, to create a strikingly original picture of the East. The East that Marlowe eventually created is a blurred and vague one. His illustrious hero and some of the peoples of the East have been presented as pagans, to neutralize the feelings of the audience toward them. Allusions to the life and culture of the Eastern Muslim people have been carefully eliminated from the plays, for these would give a clue to their faith. The integrity of the artist was sacrificed to the ambition of the man.

Shakespeare's plays project the popular image of the East. He has gone a step farther in vilifying the East by presenting all its peoples as primitive barbarians.

No less than forty-seven plays on Eastern themes or with Eastern characters were written during the Renaissance. Most of these plays deal with the Turks or Moors. Characters from other nationalities, like the Arabs, Persians, and Egyptians have appeared on the stage from time to time but, generally, these characters have only two dimensions. Some of the Eastern characters have been drawn with sympathy but the general attitude is one of prejudice against the Muslim East and its peoples. The image of the East in the Elizabethan drama is a biased and distorted one.

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## ABSTRACT

The Renaissance inherited from the Medieval Ages certain ideas about the Muslim East--ideas that were either entirely fictitious or were based on half-truths. The references to Islam, Mohammad and the Mohammedans in Medieval religious and secular writings reveal an attitude of strong antipathy toward the new religion and its followers. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the mass-contacts between the Christian West and the Muslim East began with the fanatic religious wars, known as the Crusades, in the twelfth century. The uncomplimentary references to the people of the East and to their religion, repeated over centuries in Medieval religious treatises and literary writings, created an unfavourable image of Islam and Mohammedans in the mind of the common man. This image, in its entirety, was passed on to the Renaissance and it has found eloquent expression in the prose, poetry and, most of all, in the drama of the period.

This dissertation attempts to reconstruct an authentic picture of the East during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, by giving a historical perspective of the East from the inception of Islam in the seventh century, to the

end of the sixteenth century and by pointing out the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Eastern Muslims in the hey-day of their civilization. The points of contact between the West and the East, which made the transmission of ideas and information possible, and some of the popular notions about the East in Medieval and Renaissance Europe have also been mentioned.

The characters from the East and the allusions to the East in the plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare have been examined in the light of the background material. The inquiry reveals that Marlowe made an attempt to go beyond the popular sources and to portray a new East, closer to reality, in his plays. But his attempt at originality was marred when, because of considerations of fame and popularity, he made concessions to the public taste and created an East which would be favourably received by his audience. Consequently the East which emerges from Marlowe's plays is as different from the real East as it is from its popular image. Shakespeare, on the other hand, made no attempt at innovation and his plays reflect the popular concepts of the East.

This thesis, submitted in 1969 to the Department of English Literature in the Faculty of Arts, of the University of Ottawa, Canada, in view of obtaining the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, contains two hundred and three pages.