CONTINUITY AND ONENESS ARE THE VERY ESSENCE OF RELIGIOSITY. FOR THE PIOUTS AND UNSOPHISTICATED MUSLIM, THE THIRTEEN AND A HALF CENTURIES WHICH HAVE PASSED SINCE THE INCEPTION OF HIS RELIGION ARE BUT A GREAT YESTERDAY WHICH MergES SMOOTHLY WITH HIS OWN LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. FOR HIM THERE IS NO QUESTION OF DEVELOPMENT OR OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF VALIDITY. THE GREAT DRAMA OF ISLAM UNFOLDS BEFORE HIM ON ONE SINGLE STAGE, ON WHICH HE HIMSELF IS A PERFORMER, ALBET A MODEST ONE, WHILE THE PROPHET AND THE OTHER HEROES OF ISLAM ARE SO NEAR TO HIS MIND, AS IF THEY HAD LIVED IN HIS OWN TIME AND HAD BEEN SEEN BY HIM WITH HIS OWN EYES.

their own time. Thus we see that the scholars of Islam viewed their faith in the light of historical development, a mental attitude which found a magnificent expression in the great Islamic historiography.

The modern historian still has to go one step further. While he reverently appreciates the spiritual forces which make for continuity and oneness in the concept of Islam, while he tries to understand the motives and methods of the Muslim scholars of the past, his business is to write history, i.e. to describe and to try to explain changes. In this respect, the present writer believes, the Islamists of our time have not yet done enough. By using loosely, the term Islamic Civilization, comprising in it everything which happened in the countries of Islam from the first revelations of the Prophet down to the constitution of Pakistan or the new Arab socialism, they have done a disservice both to the religion of Islam and to the history of the Islamic peoples. Such generalizations obscure the nature of religion and deprive the term civilization of any real content. No one would dream of characterizing the development of Italy from the arrival in Rome of the apostle Paul down to the activities of the Italian political parties calling themselves Christian as "Christian Civilization". There is no doubt some connection between the apostolate of Paul and the existence of political parties in Italy styled as Christian. But many other important forces have moulded the destinies of Italy, and consequently, its history has been broken up into periods, characterized by those forces and confided to specialists studying them. Similarly, we have to periodicize the long history of Islam in order to arrive at a clear concept of cultural entities, each possessing a social framework of its own and characterized by a coherent set of values, shared only in part with other periods.

In this paper, we are dealing with the Islamic world as it was approximately between 850 and 1250 A.C. For reasons explained on p. 222 we have described it as the Intermediate Civilization. Note Intermediate, not Intermediary, for that civilization created works of the spirit of its own and was not a mere transmitter of ancient heritage. That period is characterized by the predominance of the middle class, which thrived on a free enterprise economy, and by the all-pervading influence of Greek science in both matter and spirit.

This Intermediate Civilization, which for the first time in the
world history made lasting physical contacts with all contemporary cultures, created also a new science: Comparative Religion. There
certainly exists some relationship between that branch of study and the vast Greek literature on ethnology, of which only a
fraction has survived. Also, it may well be that its actual beginnings are to be sought in the Mesopotamian city of Harrān
(now in Turkey), the last refuge of syncretistic paganism. However, it was the spirit of scientific curiosity and objectivity, combined with a deep-seated interest in religion, both so characteristic of the Intermediate Civilization, which made the full development of this new science possible.

A late and geographically remote, but sincere and mighty heir to this tradition was Akbar, the greatest of the Moghul emperors of
India (ruled 1556-1605). Although his study of comparative religion and the subsequent promulgation of a new faith comprising all existing denominations was largely motivated by political aims, namely the amalgamation of the heterogeneous elements of India's population, he was personally fascinated by the subject and, despite his illiteracy, well versed in it. However, he lived in a period of bigotry and fanaticism, and, after his death, his lifework was soon undone. The science of Ḫidariya or comparative religion, as developed by the Intermediate civilization of Islam, is still awaiting a worthy heir.¹

Hellenism was to classical Greece what contemporary world civilization is to Western culture. In both cases, sciences and
techniques, ideas and ways of life, developed by one people or by one group of peoples, were adopted, in varying degrees of intensity by many others. Therefore, the fate of Hellenism, its quality and duration, are of great concern to both those who are the sons of this Western culture and to the citizens of a civilization which more and more is encompassing the whole human race.

In order to avoid ambiguity, I would like to start with a definition. We normally apply the term Hellenism to the period between Alexander and Augustus, between the establishment of the Macedonian empire and the final replacement of its heirs by Rome. This is Hellenism as seen from Greece and from the point of view of political history. However, from the standpoint of cultural history and the peoples affected by the Greek heritage, we have to extend this period far longer, well down to the seventh century A.C., when the study of Greek finally had come to an end in
Latin Europe and when the countries of the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean were conquered by a new language and a new civilization, Arabic and Islam. What happened between the seventh century, the end of Hellenic studies in Western Europe, and the twelfth, the beginning of their revival?

As is well known, Hellenism found a refuge precisely in that civilization and that language which had replaced Greek and Greek culture in most countries which they had dominated for centuries. Countless works of Greek authors were translated into Arabic and formed the basis of a new and largely secular civilization inside Islam. The combined results of these efforts, namely the translations of Greek books, and the scientific creations based on them, were made available to Latin Europe, either through direct translations or through the intermediary of Hebrew or Spanish, and both contributed substantially to the so-called renaissance of the twelfth century.

The very first book in the English language to be printed in England was the translation of a collection of sayings by Greek philosophers, compiled by a Muslim gentleman and bibliophile in 1048-9. The book was translated from Arabic into Spanish, from Spanish into Latin, from Latin into French and finally from French into English. It was first printed in 1477. However, we are concerned here not with the late, albeit fascinating, history of the translations from Arabic but with the translations into Arabic from Greek.

The relationship of Hellenism to the Roman and the Islamic civilizations presents a paradox. The Romans were so eager to learn the Greek language that there was no great incentive for translations into Latin. Even in the provincial towns of Gaul (present-day France), and as late as the fourth century A.C., boys learned Greek and memorized its classical authors. In particular there was no need to translate scientific works, for Greek was the language of science. Galen, the great physician of the second century A.C., loved and taught most of his life in Rome, but his books are written in Greek. The same could be said of many other prominent scholars of the Roman Hellenistic period. The ultimate result of all this was, however, that in later, barbarian times, with the loss of the knowledge of the Greek language in the West, the knowledge of the scientific literature was lost as well. The Muslim Arabs, on the other hand, never knew a word of
Greek and never made the slightest effort to learn the language, but Christian and pagan Syrians, as well as some Persians and Jews, did for them the work of translation so completely that the whole corpus of Hellenic sciences, still in existence at the time of the Muslim conquests, became available in Arabic.

Let me illustrate this by one example. The Nestorian Christian Hunayn ibn Ishāq (John the son of Isaac), who died in 873 A.C. wrote a treatise in which he gave detailed information about no less than one hundred and twenty-nine works of Galen alone which he had translated into Arabic, partly also into Syriac. These translations did not remain a dead letter, but became handbooks used by the medical practitioners throughout the Middle Ages. I had the good luck to find in the treasures of the so-called Cairo Geniza an inventory of the library of a Jewish physician in Old Cairo, which was sold by auction in November 1190, i.e. three hundred years after Hunayn ibn Ishāq's death. As Baneth's painstaking edition of the text shows, this library contained at least thirty-seven volumes of Galen's writings, of course in Arabic translation.³ Around 1190, we remember, the most prominent Jewish scholar in Old Cairo was Moses Maimonides, the great philosopher, who was also a renowned physician and medical writer. In medicine, Maimonides was entirely dependent on Galen. He took exception, however, to Galen's philosophical views and found it necessary to refute them in a special treatise, because he rightly assumed that Galen's overwhelming authority as physician would induce the students of his work to accept his philosophy as well.⁴ By that time, i.e. the end of the twelfth century, most of the Arabic translations of Galen had already been done into Latin, along with many of the original works of medical authors writing in Arabic, such as the famous North-African Jewish physician Isaac Israeli.

The broad outlines of this great historical process of the preservation of Greek thought through the medium of Arabic and its ultimate transmission to the Latin West is of course familiar to everyone. Many of its details, however, and particularly its evaluation still need much additional research and have formed the subject of longstanding controversies, not yet terminated. Three parties are involved here: the classical scholar, the Islamist and the medievalist. Classical philology's first interest in the matter is to know which Greek writings whose originals have been
lost, have come down to us in Arabic translations, abridgements and adaptations. Examples are the \textit{Oikonomikos}, or a treatise on the management of the house, by the Neopythagorean Bryson, the \textit{Book of the Plants}, an ancient Greek source, although not by Aristotle to whom it was ascribed, and in particular writings on mathematics, astronomy, mechanics and medicine but also a considerable number of treatises by later philosophical writers. Secondly, the Arabic translations and commentaries may be useful for the emendation and better understanding of classical texts whose originals we possess. A case in point is the discussion by Richard Walzer of Aristotle's \textit{Posterior Analytics} in the light of its Arabic translation.\textsuperscript{5} It stands to reason that quite a number of new developments will take place in this field in the near future. For long lost or altogether unknown Arabic manuscripts are making their appearance in our day all over the Middle East in libraries which had remained untapped or had not been sufficiently examined before.

In addition to these two practical interests of classical philology in the adoption and transmission of the Greek heritage by the Arabs, there is a third and broader, more philosophical concern. How far was this heritage still Greek? How far did Hellas succeed in bequeathing to the world of those days a scientific culture transcending the barriers of languages, nations and religions? These questions pertain to the Latin West in the same degree as to the Arabic-speaking world. However, as a student of Islam I have to leave the Latin West to the medievalist while confining myself to Islam, or, more exactly, to the medieval civilization of the Middle East. We have called this civilization \textit{Intermediate}, because it is intermediate in \textit{time} between Hellenism and Renaissance, intermediate in \textit{character} between the largely secular culture of the later Roman period and the thoroughly clerical world of Medieval Europe, and intermediate in \textit{space} between Europe and Africa on the one hand and India and China on the other thus forming for the first time in history a strong cultural link between all parts of the ancient world.

In order to obtain a balanced view of the scope and quality of this "intermediate" Islamic culture as an heir and trustee of the heritage of Greece, we have to consider four interrelated questions:

1. How did Islam look before its direct contact with the Greek sciences, or, more generally speaking, what is Islam without
the Greek ingredient? We are able to answer this question, because two hundred years and more elapsed between the establishment of the Muslim community by the Prophet Muḥammad at the beginning of the seventh century and the great period of translation around the middle of the ninth.

2. Why was Arabic Islam so much more receptive to the Greek heritage than Germanic Europe? To what extent were the general conditions in the Middle East more propitious than in Western Europe and in what way did the very character of the new Islamic religion and society predispose them for this great cultural acquisition?

3. Which features of Hellenic civilization were adopted by Islam and which remained unknown to it or were refused admittance? Which were taken over directly and intentionally and which came to it indirectly and without being recognized as such?

4. How far and how well was the Hellenic tradition absorbed by Islam and how did it contribute to the latter's substance and permanent character? With this another question is connected, which it is easy to formulate, but hard to answer: why did the Hellenic tradition decline so completely in the countries of Islam? In other words: why did these countries not witness anything comparable to the Renaissance which transformed Europe?

Turning now to the first question: Islam of course is mainly and essentially a religion. It was founded by Muḥammad, the Arabian Prophet, who died in 632, but it took another two hundred years before the nucleus created by Muḥammad developed into a full-fledged religious system. To all intents and purposes this process was completed around 830, that is exactly at the time when Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq and his school and other scholars started their great work of the translation of Greek authors.

From the outset Muḥammad's message bore a remarkably universalistic character, partly, but only partly explicable by his being the son of a caravan city which traded with peoples belonging at least to five different religions and speaking five different languages. He professed to convey to his countrymen in clear Arabic, in the language intelligible and acceptable to them, the same heavenly message which was already contained in the older monotheistic religions. This claim is fully vindicated by the basic religious and moral tenets and many of the institutions of Islam. Muḥammad regarded himself as the last in a long series of messengers of God,
beginning with the patriarchs and prophets of Israel and concluding with preachers of righteousness sent to the peoples of Arabia. Even a reminiscence of the story of Dhu’l-Qarnayn, whom some Muslim commentators identify with Alexander the Great, is not absent from the Qur’ân. In the course of Muḥammad’s own lifetime Islam became a fully autonomous denomination with many institutions peculiar to itself and with rudiments of dogmas dissociating it clearly from Christianity and Judaism. Yet, the Arabian Prophet’s original concept that God had revealed one and the same truth to mankind remained alive in Islam and disposed it for eclecticism and the acceptance of the most diversified influences.

In addition to this general readiness of ancient Islam to admit foreign ideas and thought-currents there were a number of specific factors which made the Muslim Arabs, in contrast to the Germanic peoples of Europe, so susceptible to the impact of Hellenism.

Firstly, unlike Western Europe, the countries conquered by the Arabs were the seats of Hellenism, where the study of the Greek sciences had never been entirely discontinued. We should not forget that Alexandria had been the metropolis of Greek learning during its heyday. We need only mention the names of Euclid and Heron, the mathematicians, of Eratosthenes and Ptolemy, the astronomers and geographers, and of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist. To be sure, by the time of the Arab conquest the school of Alexandria was no longer active. However, its tradition of learning and courses of study had remained alive in Syria, Mesopotamia and Southern Persia, precisely those countries, which formed the center of the new Muslim empire. Syriac Christians and pagans, as well as some Persians and Jews, studied and practised the ancient sciences either with the help of the Greek originals or through translations into Syriac. Thus the Muslim rulers and governors had at their doors physicians who could look after their health, mathematicians who could help them with land measurement in newly conquered countries, and astronomers who would serve them as astrologers. At the beginning, it was out of practical considerations that the Arab conquerors employed the services of men trained in Greek science. However, according to the course of studies developed originally in Alexandria, medicine was closely connected with philosophy. Therefore, when
one consulted a doctor, one got at the same time a philosophical adviser.

There were other and more essential reasons which induced the Muslims to make themselves acquainted with Greek philosophy. Islam, at that time, was still in a crude state and made a comparatively poor show, if compared with the refined systems of thought prevailing in the conquered countries. The extremely developed and ramified Christian theology, as well as philosophical rationalism which denied heavenly revelation altogether, and also Iranian dualism, which was often intertwined with gnosticism—all these constituted challenges which Islam could not afford to ignore. Moreover, inside Islam itself, whether independently or set into motion by the spiritual forces just referred to, controversies with regard to essential beliefs became widespread: what was man's relationship to God? Did man possess free will, or were all his deeds predestined by the Almighty? And what was the nature of revelation? Was the Qur'an, the Muslim scripture, eternal and uncreated like the eternal truth it represented, or did it come into being by a special act of creation? These and other controversies were soon fought out with the means of Greek logic and dialectic, which marked the beginnings of Muslim scholasticism. The borrowings from the arsenal of Greek philosophy, however, were not confined to the technical means for disputations. Many centuries had passed since Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, had tried to reconcile revelation with reason, the Hebrew scriptures with Greek rationalism. Fortified by the arguments and proofs developed in Christian theology, Islam could safely undertake to formulate its creed in terms of Greek philosophy. Above and beyond this, some Muslim thinkers, especially of Persian descent, undertook the study of Greek metaphysics and ethics for their own sake and made valuable contributions to their elaboration and systematization.

Greek thought penetrated Islam in another, less direct and more subtle way with effects, however, which were perhaps even greater. I am referring to the very core of developed Islam, Islamic mysticism. Muḥammad's religious message originally possessed a strong ascetic trend: "Renounce this world, which anyhow will come to an end very soon." However, in the course of the sweeping victories of Islam, when fabulous treasures and other comforts of life came to them as an easy prey, many Muslims
became attracted by worldly riches and pleasures. This was in stark contrast to the aim of a holy war waged in the name of a religion which also preached otherworldliness. It is natural that pious and thinking men abhorred this development. A genuinely Muslim movement of ascetism and pietism came into being, partly perhaps inspired by the example of the Christian monks and hermits who were found all over the Middle East. In Iraq, there were also contacts with Jewish pietists. By the end of the second century of Islam a new incentive was given to this pietistic movement which diverted it into the direction of mysticism. Islam is a religion of commandments. It soon assumed a legalistic and highly formalistic character, similar to its prototype, rabbinical Judaism. Pietism, which had first revolted against exaggerated worldliness, revolted again, this time against religious pedantry which, instead of sanctifying life, threatened to act as a barrier between man and his Creator. The outcome was mysticism, the strife for union or even identification with God in the rapture of ecstasy. The theory of Muslim mysticism was largely nourished by Greek thought, in particular Neo-Platonism. In the last resort, mysticism goes back to Plato's theory of knowledge. Plato taught that, in order to know a certain object, the observer himself must possess something of the nature of the object studied. This logically leads to the assumption that man cannot know God fully except by sharing God's nature, by being God. Or, as Plotinus, the great expounder of Neo-Platonism, has put it: "Our endeavour is not only to be without sin, but to be God."

Thus we have seen that the legacy of Greece has affected Islam in many of the most essential spheres of life: in the practical and secular sciences, in dogma and theology and also in mysticism, which in Islam, more than in any other religion, became a widespread movement encompassing almost all classes of society. We have attributed this great historical process to three causes: (a) the fact that the Greek heritage was still alive and available in the countries and the times of the Muslim conquest; (b) the general receptivity of Islam which was due to its originally universalistic and eclectic character; (c) specific spiritual situations during the first three centuries of Islam, which made the influx of Greek ideas and systems of thought both inevitable and fruitful.

To these three basic causes, two accessory, but most vital, factors must be added. Unlike the Germanic peoples, who had
been real barbarians, the Arabs possessed a secular culture of their own, before they experienced the impact of Judaism and Christianity. I am referring to the miracle of pre-Islamic poetry and the highly developed and extremely refined Arabic classical language which had been developed through it. The Arabs had a passion for rhetoric and eloquence, they were infatuated by their beautiful language and conveyed their enthusiasm for it to the peoples conquered by them. This had the effect that the best minds in all the countries occupied by the Arabs soon tried to express in Arabic the choicest spiritual values they themselves possessed. Thus Arabic became immensely rich and pliable, and through the work of the translators from Greek also very well fit for the expression of abstract thoughts. It was the Arabs' own cultural heritage, the devotion to their language and their inherited literature which made them so receptive to the refinements of another culture.

Secondly, Hellenic studies could flourish in Islam so profusely, because in the third, fourth and fifth centuries of Islam there developed a broad and affluent middle class, which had the means, the leisure and the ambition to acquire knowledge and with it, social status. The extraordinary role of this middle class was the outcome of a many-sided historical process which cannot be described here.\(^6\) The courts of the caliphs and princes gave a shelter to the Greek sciences in Islam, when they were still in their infancy. Their broad diffusion, however, was due to the new middle class.

After having discussed in detail why Arabic Islam was so receptive to the Greek heritage, there is almost no need to specify which features of the latter were absorbed by it and which remained outside its pale. Homer and Sophocles, Sappho and Thucydides—Greek epic, tragedy, lyrical poetry and classical history writing left no trace in Arabic language. (Sporadic quotations from Homer or the tragedians came to the Arabs through later sources). The Muslims had no use for the world of the pagan gods nor of the Greek polity. It is also doubtful how much of this literature was still alive and easily accessible at the time of the advent of Islam. On the other hand, the sciences of the Greeks were taken over by the Muslims in full and the latter recognized the former frankly and gratefully as their masters. There was medicine and pharmaceutics (an enormous field, later
expanded largely by the Muslims and in particular by Arabic-speaking Jews), botany and zoology, mineralogy and meteorology, mathematics, mechanics and astronomy, the theories of sound and light, music and optics (very extensively treated by the Muslims), and above all, of course, philosophy in all its branches: logic and dialectic, ethics and metaphysics. The Greek theories of rhetoric and poetics also became known to the Arabs, but did not have much influence over them, for they had their own great traditions in these fields. Of late G. E. von Grunebaum has drawn our attention to the fact that Arabic literature has taken over not only many motives and themes from late Greek popular sources but also much of their "patterns of presentation and conventional shades of emotion". 7

Hellenistic influence prevailed strongly in many other aspects of civilization. It is sufficient to mention architecture and the techniques of building, arts and crafts, including the treatment of metals and alchemy, law, administration, and coinage. In all these domains the Greek heritage had undergone fusions with local traditions and with foreign influences, especially from Iran and other Eastern countries. Thus the Greek share was less conspicuous in them. It was in the spiritual field, in philosophy and the sciences in which the Muslims regarded themselves as the disciples of the Greeks.

Were they good disciples? Did they grasp the spirit of Hellas? In this respect, opinions are divided. For C. H. Becker, one of the most competent students of our problem, Islam is Hellenism, to be sure an Islamized Hellenism. Following him, Werner Jaeger speaks about the internationality of Greek science, accomplished through the efforts of the Islamic scholars and their colleagues in Latin Europe. There is however another school of thought, led by such eminent German scholars as Ernst Troeltsch and H. H. Schaeder, according to whom Islam and the Orient in general, absorbed only the externals, but never the essentials of Greek culture. 8

I believe that we are able to arrive at a just, that is to say historically correct solution of the problem, if we stop talking in such general terms as East and West, Orient and Occident and even Islam and Christianity. Instead, we have to consider each historical period in its own right. As far as Islam is concerned, three periods can clearly be distinguished. The first two hundred years of Islam were given to conquest and colonization and the
development of its religion. Then comes the great cultured period, which was characterized by the preponderance of Hellenism in the cultural field and by the middle class, as far as social organization is concerned. This period lasted approximately from the middle of the ninth century to the middle of the thirteenth. From around 1250, Islamic history was dominated by foreign soldier castes and clerical obscurantism, until the contact with the modern scientific and technological civilization brought about the profound changes which we are witnessing in our century.

With regard to the middle, the Hellenistic period, which we have called the Intermediate Civilization, it is fair to say that the disciple was worthy of his master. The question as to how far the individual sciences and techniques were furthered during this period must be left to the specialists in the various fields. Information about this subject is found in such books as The Legacy of Islam, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, 1931, or in George Sarton's Introduction to the History of Science, or A History of Technology, edited by Charles Singer and others, Oxford, 1956. We are concerned here with the problem of culture in general. How far did the Greek heritage affect the spirit of the epoch, how much did it mould the personality of the individuals.

A man of Hellenic culture is characterized by his inquisitive mind, his gift of observation, his striving for a well-balanced total view of the world and by his refined, urbane behaviour. We are in a position to form a well-founded opinion about the personality and attainments of a good many excellent representatives of the Intermediate Civilization, because they have left us a large body of writings. Naturally, there were great individual differences between the various authors, and some of them, including some well-known philosophers, can hardly be regarded as having lived up to the ideal type just described. Others, however, have realized it, combining an amazing range of knowledge with a well-integrated world view and a harmonious, ethical and humane personality.

In some respects, I should say, the Intermediate Civilization has surpassed its masters, the ancient Greeks and Romans. I have in mind the Islamic science of Comparative Religion, the like of which to my knowledge is not found before. We possess in Arabic comprehensive books about the tenets and beliefs of all then known denominations, sects, philosophical schools and systems of thought, Muslim and non-Muslim, ancient and contemporary. The most
famous example of this type of literature is the *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-Nihal*, completed in 1127 A.C. by al-Shāhristānī, a scholar from Khurāsān in North-Eastern Iran. When we compare his detailed, well-informed and remarkably unbiased accounts with the Greek and Latin texts related to Judaism, we have to confess that between Tacitus and Shāhristānī, humanity has made a great step forward. All that the illustrious Roman historian knew about monotheism was that the Jews worshipped in the Temple of Jerusalem the image of a donkey. About the Sabbath, this most precious gift of Judaism to mankind, he remarked only that the Jews were the laziest of all peoples, since they took off a full day every week. In order to obtain authoritative information about Judaism, Tacitus had just to walk up one or two blocks, where he would have found educated Jews of Hellenic upbringing who could have taught him better. But he and his Greek masters, whom he copied, lacked the spirit of research and scientific responsibility needed for the task. How different was Shāhristānī, who took pains to study in detail and to describe objectively such sects as the Persian dualists, the Manichaeans and the followers of Mazdak, all of whom were of course anathema to him from the point of view of religion.

Another illustrious example of the spirit of research alive in the Intermediate Civilization was al-Bīrūnī, also an Iranian (died around 1050). He was equally great in mathematics, astronomy and the natural sciences and as an observer of foreign peoples and creeds. In India, he taught the Greek sciences to the local scholars and learned from them Sanskrit and the contents of their religion. His *Kitāb al-Tahqīq mā li’l-Hind* is an invaluable source of our knowledge of the culture of that country during the eleventh century and a notable document of scientific curiosity and careful observation.

We are also able to confirm Warner Jaeger’s assumption that a truly international fellowship of science existed in the days of the Intermediate Civilization. Both literary sources such as Ibn Abī Usaybi‘ah’s *al-Tabaqāt al-Atibbā* and documentary evidence, such as the records of the Cairo Geniza, prove that in general a spirit of tolerance and mutual esteem prevailed between the students of the Greek sciences of different races and religions.

From the thirteenth century on, both the spirit of research and that of tolerance dwindled rapidly and became next to extinct by the end of the fifteenth, exactly when Europe started to make its great
strides forward. There were many symptoms which accompanied this decline and perhaps were partly its causes: the rule of foreign soldier castes, already referred to, the eclipse of the middle class and the replacement of a free, mercantile economy by feudalism, to be sure: feudalism of the Oriental type, and, finally, the increasing institutionalization and organization by the state of the Muslim clergy, which, in the preceding centuries, had formed a loose brotherhood of independent religious scholars.

It is, however, fair to say that the Greek heritage never became entirely lost in the countries of Islam. Logic was taught in the Muslim religious schools of higher learning, as long as their traditional syllabus was in force, and the systematic arrangement of books, which the Muslims had learned from Greek science, remained the rule, although the ancient sources of Islamic religion, which were mainly studied in the schools, were very poorly organized.

Secondly, the Arabic language which had become an efficient tool for the expression of abstract ideas in the wake of the translations from Greek, preserved its pliability and richness. Because of this profound influence of Greek on Arabic, and through it on Hebrew, Persian and Turkish, all these Middle Eastern languages were able to express modern thought, once it was conveyed to them, with comparative ease.

In our own day, a galaxy of Middle Eastern savants and litterateurs have taken up again the task of translation and appreciation of Greek writings, this time not of scientific books, but of belles lettres, precisely that branch of literature which had not been touched upon by the scholars of the Intermediate Civilization. Homer, the tragedians, the lyrics and the historians are now available in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. I have in mind translations made for the benefit of the educated general reader, not those destined for University studies, which include also the works of the philosophers. Today, a high-school boy in Cairo, Istanbul or Teheran would know about classical Greece approximately as much as his peer in New York or Los Angeles. However, this interest of Islamic peoples in classical Greece does not constitute a continuation of what had happened in the times of the Intermediate Civilization. In this, as in many other respects, the contemporary Muslims act as members of the world civilization to which we all belong.10

The introductory words of this paper emphasized that the fate of the Greek heritage in Islam, its quality and duration, were not
without concern and significance in our own day. What conclusions are we to draw from our review of the character and development of the Hellenistic period of Islam? As to its quality, I believe, nothing need be added to what has been already said. The example of the Intermediate Civilization proves that real values created by one culture can successfully be transferred to another. As to the duration of the Hellenistic period of Islam, which we have described as having lasted for about four hundred years, it may be compared to the Humanistic period in Europe, that is to say the prevalence of classical studies, which was in force approximately between 1500 and 1900. Of course, I am fully aware of the difference. While the Greek heritage has become an integral, albeit not always, evident part of contemporary Western culture, the same cannot be said of later Islam. The reason for this difference is that modern culture grew out of the humanism of the Renaissance, while the medieval civilization of the Middle East was not, as has been defined by C. H. Becker, Asiaticized Hellenism, but Hellenized Islam, since Islam was already a fully developed religious system, when it experienced the impact of Hellenism. When this impact became weaker and weaker, finally only Islam remained, and religion alone obviously was not strong enough to counteract the many destructive forces which were at work in the Islamic world during the last six hundred years.

In our own time, the cultural process is reversed. It is not Islam which absorbs modern civilization, but modern civilization which puts itself in the place of Islam, forcing it to participate in a world culture from which there is no escape. What is happening today cannot be compared in every respect to what happened eleven hundred years ago. We may learn from history, but history never repeats itself.

NOTES

1. Most of the literature relevant to the subject of this paper is listed in J. Kraemer, Das Problem der islamischen Kulturgeschichte, Tübingen, 1959. I am much indebted to this short but meaty study, although in some points I had to disagree with it. I had also an opportunity to discuss some aspects of the problem with the late-lamented author only a few days before he met an untimely death on October 2, 1961.


5. R. Walzer, op. cit., p. 103ff.


