

Sheikhs considerable influence, and they inspire respect and fear. I would stress the question of fear, for it is important. The buried saint, and, to a certain degree, his supposed descendants are credited with the power of doing bodily and personal harm, such as depriving of sanity, striking with blindness, destruction of crops and the like. They are, in effect, witch-doctors, and are feared more than are the Seyyids, since they are considered to be dangerous men."<sup>22</sup>

Are such pedigreed-saints in Sumatra and Arabia and everywhere, who are so holy that they inspire fear, and so powerful that they exact tithes (Melchisedek), not "priests" in every ordinary sense of the word? (Cf. Gen. 14: 18; Heb. 7: 1).

And Harold Ingrams remarks (*Arabia and the Isles*, London, 1943, p. 177): "Before the Seiyids came in to Hadhramaut the Sheikhs were the principal *ecclesiastical* influence, and they probably took the place of an earlier hierarchy formed by the *priesthood* of the old religion. Nowadays they take precedence after the Seiyids, but they have much the same privileges." The italics are ours and call attention to the use of such terms by one who knows Arabia and Islam thoroughly and practically.

In every Moslem land there are these saints, *walis* and *sayyids*, with shrines and tombs. "In Persia a visitor to a shrine will kiss the lock of the door and put his forehead to other parts of the building", wrote Miss Holliday. "He gives salaams to the saint and speaks of him *as if he were alive*. Tablets containing prayers to the saint are hung on the walls; if the pilgrim can read, he reads these audibly; if not, someone else will read them to him. They burn votive lights. They ask permission to enter or leave the shrine of the saint. In common life they are always calling on the saints for help and blessing. Akin to this are the superstitions connected with their *holy living men and their families of which I have seen most among the 'Ali Illahis who consider their sheikhs as mediators between them and God, and of a race set apart.'*"

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<sup>22</sup> *The Social Organization of the Tribes of the Aden Protectorate* in the Royal Asiatic Society Journal, May, 1943.

We omit the detailed mention of the strange periodic appearance in the history of Islam of religious leaders who arrogated *still greater* powers and authority in things spiritual than all the classes mentioned. The *Mahdis* of both Shiah and Sunni Islam are striking examples. So also is the Agha Khan, spiritual head of the Khojas of India, who poses as an *avatar* or incarnation and receives enormous tribute (THE MOSLEM WORLD xx: 407). The Babi-Behai movement, whatever else it be, was undoubtedly the exaltation of the Bab and his successors above the laity. The Ahmadiya Movement, with its new Messiahs both at Qadian and Lahore, is based, not upon the parity of all believers before Allah, but upon *soi-disant* high-priests and prophets of a new Islamic dispensation. All of these spiritual leaders came from Islam and claim to be Moslems.

Thus in life and in death these *mahdis*, *seyyids*, *'auliyā*, *imāms*, *faqîrs*, *pîrs*, *ahungs*, *mullahs*, etc., exercise a ministry of intercession and authority in religion, constitute a special class and have spiritual prestige above the laity.

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In conclusion, this is not a strife about words, but correction of a too common misunderstanding, sometimes due to an attempt at idealizing Islam. Islam was from the outset a military, totalitarian church-state. "In the main, then", says Margoliouth, "the original Moslem system was to make its adherents soldier-priests, i.e., to combine the sacerdotal with the warrior caste."<sup>23</sup> An Indian missionary writes: "While it is true that Islam's priests and clergy have not been consecrated or ordained in the spiritual succession of the founder, none the less they are authorized, appointed or set apart to perform the same or similar functions in a way or manner peculiar to Islam. Since, therefore, these recognized religious functionaries perform the same duties as the priests and clergy of the Church . . . we may well hold that the old formula that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, holds here as well as in mathematics!"

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<sup>23</sup> *Mohammedanism*, pp. 76-79.

Although Islam never developed any institution *entirely* similar to the clergy of Christianity, it had from early days and has now three religious classes quite comparable to "priests" and "clergy". The one class, as we saw, are appointed for public worship and preaching. The second are theologians and masters of canon-law. The third class are hereditary saints and Holy-men. All have prestige, receive honors, and their emoluments are from the religious treasury. No priest or clergyman in Christendom is more duly "authorized to be a minister of sacred things or perform on behalf of the community certain public religious acts", or has more power over the laity.

Of course the Caliphate, as Hurgronje has shown, is in no way to be compared to the Papacy. Islam never regarded the Caliph as its *spiritual* head. So the disappearance of the Caliphate after the Turkish revolution was a blow to Islam's temporal power, not to its spiritual heritage. "The spiritual authority in Catholic Islam reposes in the legists, who in this respect are called in a tradition, 'the heirs of the prophets'. Since they could no longer regard the Caliphs as their leaders, because they walked in worldly ways, *they have constituted themselves independently beside, and even above them.*"<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, the political decay of Islam, the increasing number of Moslems under foreign rule, the rise of a secular Nationalism and Modernism only serve to emphasize the fact that "the clergy and priesthood" are the custodians of whatever remains of the spiritual essence of Islam.<sup>25</sup> It is, therefore, the clergy and the priesthood of Islam that demand the respect and loving approach of all those who would preach good tidings in the Moslem world. It is from this very class that some of the strongest and most distinguished Christian converts have come, both in the Near East and India, since the days of Henry Martyn.

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<sup>24</sup> Hurgronje's *Mohammedanism*, p. 113.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, p. 116. Cf. Lammens' *Islam: Beliefs and Institutions* on the present crisis in Islam (pp. 205-225) and the "Ulema of the future."

## THE SAMANIDS: A LITTLE-KNOWN DYNASTY

This dynasty, which ruled Transoxania for a period of one hundred ten years, 279-389 (892-999), according to the historian Qazwini, claimed descent from a noble family of the Sassanian court.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to trace the genealogy of the Samanids before Saman-i Khudat, the grandfather of Isma'il, for the genealogical trees given by later Muslim historians conflict in many instances. Ibn al-Athir claims Baḥram Jashnash, or Gushnasp, the marzban of Azarbaijan under Chosroes Anushirvan, as the ancestor.<sup>2</sup> Most authors consider Saman the founder and ruler of the village of the same name in Balkh province, although others place the village of Saman in the vicinity of Samarqand.<sup>3</sup> The story of Saman is told by various Muslim authors in much the same guise. It seems he fled to the Arab governor of Khurasan, Asad ibn 'Abdallah al-Qushairi (or Qasrī), who, recognizing his noble rank and ability, appointed him governor of Balkh. Saman, from gratitude towards his protector, adopted Islam and named his son Asad.<sup>4</sup>

It is only through his four sons that we know anything of Asad, although Qazwini says he served under Ṭāhir Dhū'l Yamīnain.<sup>5</sup> It is probable that Asad gained the attention of the caliph al-Ma'mūn, when the latter was sojourning at Merv.<sup>6</sup> When the caliph returned to Baghdad he appointed a new governor of Khurasan, Ghassān ibn Abbād, in 204/819-20, about the same time Asad died. Ma'mūn then directed his governor to give the four sons offices in the government. They may have been active in the service of the caliph prior to this time in the army of Harthama, when he suppressed the revolt of Rāfi' ibn Layth in 810.<sup>7</sup> Nuḥ, the eldest, received the governorship of Samarqand; Aḥmad

<sup>1</sup> Gantin, J., *Tarikhe Gozide* par Qazwini, Paris, 1903, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil fī'l-Ṭārīkh*, ed. Tornberg, C. J., Leyden, 1865, v. 7, 192.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Narshakhi, *Description de Boukhara*, ed. Schefer, C. Paris, 1892, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Gantin, *op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Defrémery, C. M., *Histoire des Samanides* par Mirkhond, Paris, 1845, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Narshakhi, *op. cit.*, 74; Tabari III, 775.

ruled Farghana; Yahya had Shash, while the youngest, Ilyas, went to Herat.<sup>8</sup>

In 822 Ṭalha ibn Ṭāhir succeeded his father as governor of Khurasan, and confirmed the Samanid brothers in their posts. The governorship of Khurasan passed from hand to hand, but the subordinate posts were more stable. When Nuḥ ibn Asad died, Ṭalha gave the government of Samarqand to both Yahya and Aḥmad, although the latter was the more aggressive of the two.<sup>9</sup> Almost nothing is known of Ilyas, although Ibn al-Athir claims that his son, Muḥammad succeeded him in 242/856.<sup>10</sup> Yaḥya died in 855, and the administration of Shash was assumed by Aḥmad, who placed his eldest son, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb in power.<sup>11</sup> His second son Naṣr ibn Aḥmad was placed over Samarqand, and was confirmed by the Ṭāhirid governor of Khurasan. In 261/874 the caliph Mu'tamid conferred the governorship of all of Transoxania on Naṣr ibn Aḥmad, setting a precedent in removing Transoxania from the direct jurisdiction of the governor of Khurasan.<sup>12</sup> In the same year Naṣr appointed his brother Isma'il governor of the territory of Bukhara.

Friction soon developed between the two brothers. We are uncertain whether it was Isma'il's attempt to incite the aristocracy against Naṣr,<sup>13</sup> or the friendship between Isma'il and Rafi' ibn Harthama, the representative of the Ṭāhirids in Transoxania, which initiated the rift.<sup>14</sup> Rafi' was able to reconcile the brothers, however in 275/888 Naṣr again marched on Isma'il, but was defeated and captured.<sup>15</sup> The conduct of Isma'il towards his brother was a rare example of kindness, for he gave high honors to Naṣr who returned to Samarqand, while Isma'il remained governor of Bukhara under the jurisdiction of his brother. Naṣr died in 279/892, leaving sole dominion to Isma'il, and it is with the latter that Muslim historians date the real beginning of the Samanid dynasty.

<sup>8</sup> Defrémery, *op. cit.*, 213.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *op. cit.*, v. 7, 193.

<sup>11</sup> Narshakhi, *op. cit.*, 80-1.

<sup>12</sup> Gantin, *op. cit.*, 23; Tabari III, 1889, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Narshakhi, *op. cit.*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Defrémery, *op. cit.*, 115.

<sup>15</sup> Narshakhi, *op. cit.*, 81.