

# The Arab World

## A Study of Biogenetic Disintegration

BY NATHANIEL WEYL

In the Middle East, stretching from Agadir to Afghanistan, about 80 million Moslems live outside of history. This Arab world is a cultural desert, one that has been suffering from intellectual desiccation for at least five centuries. By the fifteenth century the immense scientific, philosophical and literary achievements of Islam had withered. It is revealing that one of the last of Islam's truly distinguished minds, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), was preoccupied with the problem of the decline and fall of Moslem political power.

This intellectual retrogression was not the consequence of any disastrous political retreat. On the contrary, the period from 1400 to 1700 was, in many respects, one of Islamic military expansion. Constantinople fell in 1453; Java and India were conquered or converted in the following century; Ottoman armies seized most of Hungary and established a ring of tributary states encircling the Black Sea between 1526 and 1543; and a Turkish military host under the vigorous leadership of Mohammed Koprulu laid seige to Vienna for the second time in 1683.

The cultural decline has been attributed by some historians to the schism between Sunni and Shi'a and the triumph of an intolerant religious orthodoxy and fanatical Puritanism, which suppressed science and philosophy, frowned on sensual poetry, reduced literature to ornament devoid of serious substance and thus virtually forced the creative minds of Islam to concentrate on architecture and painting.<sup>1</sup> Without dismissing this view of the matter out of hand, it is worth observing that the religious wars which engulfed Christendom during the same period and which also generated intolerance, fanatical orthodoxy and Puritanism did not prevent the science, philosophy and literature of the West from experiencing vigorous growth. Hence, other and more important factors must have been at work.

Very little need be said about the period stretching from 1700 to the present. Accelerating intellectual decline was reinforced by military defeat and political disintegration. Then, in the twentieth century, nationalist movements throughout the region seemed harbingers of a new intellectual awakening. As Arab states obtained increasing oil royalties, public education was extended and with it improved medical care and other aspects of modern civilization. Despite these stimuli, this vast Moslem world has produced no one,

<sup>1</sup> William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963, pp. 618-633.

or scarcely anyone, who has enriched mankind with any creative achievement of note. No Middle Easterner has ever won a Nobel Prize in any field, in contrast to other impoverished or underdeveloped areas, such as China, India and Latin America, all three of which boast Nobel laureates. Modern Arab achievements in science and literature are markedly inferior to those of the Chinese and Indians. Occupying territory uniquely rich in archaeological sites, the Arabs have played merely a secondary rôle in unearthing and reconstructing its vanished civilizations. The petroleum resources of the Arab world have been developed, not by natives, but by outsiders. Here again, the contemporary Arab has contented himself with a passive rôle.

What are the reasons for this sloth, this cataleptic stance, this enduring inertia, this failure to create anything that is first class? The analogy is not with primitives or barbarians, such as the Australian Black Fellows or the African Pygmies and Bushmen, for the Arabs claim descent from peoples who over millennia displayed prodigious creative energy. Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, Maris, Hittites, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Nabataeans and Syrians all helped to make the land between the Nile and the Euphrates the primary cradle of civilizations. After the subsidence of these culture-civilizations, Greek blood and Greek genius were infused, particularly during the era of the Alexandrian successor states. After Hellenism, the area was exposed to the more practical genius of Rome. In this sense, the contemporary denizens of the Middle East are comparable to the Indo-American peoples of Peru, Guatemala and Mexico, who also claim descent from the architects of great civilizations and who are also intellectually inert.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE SPENGLERIAN VIEW

In *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Oswald Spengler characterized the Afro-Asian peoples north of the Sahara and west of the Indus as *fellaheen*.<sup>3</sup> They were not primitive peoples who had failed to develop to the level of culture-civilization, but rather the human residue or ashes of extinct culture-civilizations.

"The whole pyramid of cultural man vanishes," Spengler wrote concerning such societies.<sup>4</sup>

It crumbles from the summit, first the world-cities, then the provincial forms, and finally the land itself, whose best blood has incontinently poured into the towns, merely to bolster them up

<sup>2</sup> Among others, Mayas, Toltecs, Totonacs, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Aztecs, Chibchas, Quechuas and Incas.

<sup>3</sup> The Arabic word for peasant, applied particularly to Egypt. "The Mahometan inhabitants of Egypt," wrote Pococke in 1743, "are either original natives, in the villages call'd Filaws, or they are of the Arab race."

<sup>4</sup> Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (translated by Charles Francis Atkinson), Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1928, Vol. II, p. 105.

awhile. At the last, only the primitive blood remains, alive, but robbed of its strongest and most promising elements. This residue is the *Fellah type*.

A fundamental unstated assumption in Spengler's analysis of this phase of the disintegration of civilizations is that the *fellaheen* peoples are genetically the descendants of the creators of the great civilizations that once occupied their territories. The same tacit hypothesis is uncritically adopted by Toynbee, who borrowed freely from Spengler's concepts and insights. Spengler believed that he had discovered a mysterious component in the supposedly invariant life cycle of culture-civilizations, and went so far as to suggest that the presence of *fellaheen* societies was evidence that history was shaped not by causality but by the Goethian principle of "morphology." Both the enigma and the plausibility of the appeal to murk and mystical concepts vanish when we examine the hypothesis that the *fellaheen* peoples are not similar to their creative antecedents but, on the contrary, are the result of deterioration in the gene pools of the latter.

#### ETHNOLOGY AND THE ARABS

The racial mixtures of Arabic Islam are complex and highly variable from country to country and from region to region. The principal underlying ethnic components are Mediterranean, Armenoid, Nordic, Negro and Australoid.

As Gayre cogently observes, there is a general correlation between blondism and Caucasoid features, on the one hand, and social status and leadership, on the other.<sup>5</sup> This is by no means a recent development nor is it a reflection of the superior prestige and power which Nordics and other blond peoples have come to enjoy in the modern world. Thus, writing about the medieval Caliphate of Cordoba, Enrique Sordo observed:<sup>6</sup>

Most of the caliphs were fair or ginger-haired with blue eyes, which seems to show a preponderance of Berber or German blood. As they were extremely proud of their origin, some of them dyed their hair black, as if to affirm their Arab descent.

As for the present leadership of the Arab world, Henric von Schwerin has pointed out the extent to which it tends towards blondness and the Nordic type.<sup>7</sup>

The Christian minorities throughout the area are, as Dr Gayre has observed, almost invariably superior in status, intelligence and ability to the Moslems, and are at the same time markedly blonder

<sup>5</sup> R. Gayre of Gayre, *Ethnological Elements of Africa*, The Armorial, Edinburgh, 1966, pp. 9-22.

<sup>6</sup> Enrique Sordo, *Moorish Spain*, Crown Publishers, New York, 1962, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Henric von Schwerin, "European Elements in Afro-Asia," *THE MANKIND QUARTERLY*, Vol. IV, No. 3, January-March 1964, pp. 127-133.

and more definitely Caucasoid in features.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the most vigorous, resourceful and progressive nations in the region—Lebanon and Jordan in particular—are also those with the largest Christian minorities and the greatest visible admixture of Nordic genes.<sup>9</sup>

What evidence is there of the kinship or lack of kinship between the modern *fellaheen* peoples of the region and the builders of the ancient civilizations of the Middle East? The first point to consider is brain size. As I have pointed out elsewhere, there is a significant correlation between average brain size and intelligence.<sup>10</sup> This correlation is related, in evolutionary terms, to the fact that brain capacity increases with intelligence (after allowance for body size) as we proceed from one mammalian species to another. It is also related to the hypothesis that human evolution may have occurred through successive mutational doublings of the brain-surface area.<sup>11</sup>

It is not without significance, therefore, that the average cranial capacity of Egyptian Fourth Dynasty skulls was 1532 cc, that of Tenth Dynasty skulls 1400 cc and that of modern Egyptian skulls only 1348 cc, all measured by the grain and water method.<sup>12</sup> To the extent that these differences are not accounted for by class differences in the subjects, they suggest a decline in brain capacity and hence probably in intelligence as well. Since Negro brains are normally about 10 per cent smaller than White, the decrease in Egyptian cranial capacity may be an indicator of the extent of Negro admixture.

The Egyptians are ethnically dissimilar to the main body of Arabic-speaking Moslems primarily because they have a much larger proportion of Melanoid genes. As Dr Gayre points out, the dark pigmentation encountered among Egyptians, Nubians and Sudanese is not evidence of Negro origin in all cases, but may result from a mutation for nigrescence in an essentially Causasoid popula-

<sup>8</sup> A significant exception is the "Hamitic" element in the Coptic population, consisting of Ethiopian immigrants into Egypt and their descendants, who share the Christian faith of the true Copts, but not their Egyptian origin. See R. Gayre of Gayre, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Obviously, the Israelis are more Nordic in appearance than any Moslem people of the Middle East. However, they do not form part of the Arab world. The latter is defined for purposes of this article in both religious and linguistic terms. It therefore excludes Iran and Turkey, stops short at the borders of Pakistan, and does not embrace the sub-Saharan, Albanian and Soviet enclaves of Islam.

<sup>10</sup> Nathaniel Weyl, *The Negro in American Civilization*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1960, pp. 165-168; and Nathaniel Weyl and Stefan T. Possony, *The Geography of Intellect*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1963, pp. 53-59.

<sup>11</sup> Carleton S. Coon, *The Story of Man*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1962, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie*, originally by Rudolf Martin, but completely revised and expanded by Karl Saller, Gustav Fischer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1952, Vol. II, p. 1216.

tion.<sup>13</sup> As in the case of the Hadhramaut Arabs, it may also be associated with an Australoid admixture.

The extent of Negroid, as opposed to Australoid, genes in the Egyptian population and the relative prevalence of the Negro element in Egyptians and Arabs can be estimated from the percentages of cDe and cD<sup>ue</sup> chromosome groups in the Rh factors of their blood. It is generally accepted that the cDe complex<sup>14</sup> originates in Africa south of the Sahara.<sup>15</sup> However, there is one qualification to the reliability of cDe as a barometer of nigrescence. That is the possibility that cDe will be discovered to have some survival or lethal characteristic or to be linked with another gene which has such a characteristic, and that the efficacy of that characteristic will vary with habitat.<sup>16</sup>

In general, the frequency of cDe among African Negroes is in the 55 to 87 per cent range, whereas it occurs only in from 3 to 11 per cent of Australoid samples. Egyptians and Yemenite Arabs are in the 17 to 25 per cent bracket. Most Arabs score in the neighborhood of 10 per cent; Jews, Italians and Spaniards are approximately in the 4 to 10 per cent range; and North European populations normally have cDe frequencies from 0 up to about 4 per cent.

The following Table compiled from Mourant's authoritative study shows cDe frequencies among various populations.<sup>17</sup>

TABLE OF CDE AND CD<sup>UE</sup> CHROMOSOME COMPLEX FREQUENCIES

Group and its Provenance	Year	Number	cDe and cD <sup>ue</sup> Percentage
AFRICAN TRIBES			
Luo (East Africa)	1952	128	86.5
Amba Pygmoids (Uganda)	1952	113	76.5
Bantu (South Africa)	1953	644	74.0
Kikuyu (East Africa)	1952	124	71.0
Hutu (Ruandi-Urundi)	1953	269	67.5

<sup>13</sup> R. Gayre of Gayre, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>14</sup> Hereafter, the term cDe will also include cD<sup>ue</sup> in this article.

<sup>15</sup> Elisabeth Goldschmidt (editor), *The Genetics of Migrant and Isolate Populations*, Williams and Wilkins, New York, 1963, p. 260.

<sup>16</sup> An example is the fact that gastric and duodenal ulcers are most frequent among those with blood group O. Therefore, in an environment with a high ulcer rate, the survival rate of O's would be significantly lower than elsewhere, and in time they would presumably be winnowed out of the population. While some such discovery about cDe may be made in the future, I have no evidence that this will be the case.

<sup>17</sup> All data are from A. E. Mourant, *The Distribution of the Human Blood Groups*, Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford, 1954, pp. 383-399.

Group and its Provenance	Year	Number	cDe and cD <sup>4</sup> e Percentage
<b>AFRICAN TRIBES (cont.)</b>			
Bantu (South Africa)	1951	300	65.5
Northern Nigerians	1953	165	65.1
Tswa Pygmies	1949	94	63.0
Tutsi (Ruandi-Urundi)	1953	127	62.9
Shona (Rhodesia)	1953	101	62.8
Ashanti (Gold Coast)	1963	113	62.4
Southwestern Nigerians	1953	145	60.2
Bantu (South Africa)	1951	600	59.6
Bantu (South Africa)	1947	300	59.6
Luo (61) and Kikuyu (111)	1952	172	59.5
Iraqw (Kenya)	1954	93	59.3
Southeastern Nigerians	1953	106	56.8
Hima (Uganda)	1954	117	54.8
Ewe (Gold Coast)	1953	116	54.8
<b>AMERICAN NEGROES AND MULATTOS</b>			
Seven Studies of American Negroes	1943- 1953	1870	26.4- 48.5
São Paulo Mulattos	1951	125	32.3
Dominican Mulattos	1951	100	29.7
Dominicans	1951	320	21.8
Puerto Ricans	1952	2528	17.0
<b>MIDDLE EASTERNERS</b>			
Northern Sudanese	1952	133	48.9
Amharas (Abyssinia)	1953	104	44.6
Tuaregs (North Africa)	1953	71	44.4
Tuaregs (North Africa)	1953	93	39.2
Zabidi (Yemen)	1953	114	33.6
Yemenite Arabs	1953	111	24.9
Egyptians	1949	600	23.9
Egyptians	1950	184	17.3
Mixed Arabs (Baghdad)	1949	300	9.8
Arabs (Algeria)	1951	98	8.9
<b>JEWS</b>			
Sephardim	1951	252	8.9
Oriental	1951	137	5.8
Ashkenazim	1951	946	4.6
Manitoba (Canada)	1949	140	5.4

Group and its Provenance			cDe and cD <sup>u</sup> e Percentage
AUSTRALOIDS			
Bruneis (Borneo)	1952	50	10.9
Fijians	1947	110	9.8
Australian aboriginees	1948	234	8.5
New Caledonians (Northern)	1949	147	7.0
Gilbertese (Micronesia)	1953	159	7.0
Melanaus (Borneo)	1952	172	4.5
Trukese (Micronesia)	1953	116	4.1
Palauans (Micronesia)	1953	181	3.6
New Caledonians (Central)	1949	62	3.3
Admiralty Islanders	1947	112	3.1
Land Dyaks (Borneo)	1952	97	3.0
Kedayans (Borneo)	1952	178	3.0
Sea Dyaks (Borneo)	1952	83	2.8
Papuans	1946	100	2.0

As measured by these frequencies, the Negroid component in the Egyptian gene pool is about twice as great as that of the Arabs of Algeria and Baghdad, and it is higher than that of the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. To be sure, some Arab groups have higher cDe percentages than the Egyptians, but in each instance these are Arabs who have been heavily exposed to the Negro genetic imprint. Among them are the Sudanese, who occupy part of the shatter belt between Egypt and Black Africa, and the Zabidi of Yemen, who have been in close contact for centuries with Africans from across the Straits of Aden and who have for centuries miscegenated with Negro and Negroid slaves. As for the cDe frequency of about 40 per cent encountered among the Tuaregs, one must assume that the sample tested consisted preponderantly of serfs (*Imghad*), Negro slaves (*Ikelan*) or some equally low caste, since the nobles, or veiled people, are of the purest Berber stock to be found in Africa.<sup>18</sup> In his summaries of blood group studies, Mourant unfortunately neglected to specify the caste, class or occupation of his subjects. This is particularly regrettable in the case of backward countries where caste, class and trade are often strictly determined along ethnic lines. In Egypt, for instance, one would expect high cDe's among waiters and house servants, who are generally Nubian, and low cDe's among professionals and officials, who are usually White. Identification of tribe and provenance is also frequently inadequate. The fact that four studies of South African Bantu show a range of cDe from 59.6 to 74.0 per cent does not indicate inaccuracy in the measurements but the fact that Bantu is a linguistic category, covering dozens of tribes which differ from each other in ethnic composition.

<sup>18</sup> The original study by Barnicot *et al.* is not available to me here in Florida.

The fact that Negroid genes are more frequent among the Egyptians than among the Arabs of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and coastal North Africa is primarily due to the circumstance that the Nile has served for thousands of years as an artery of both trade and migration between Negro and White Africa. Race consciousness among the ancient Egyptians reduced the genetic effect of this flow of peoples. Avoidance of miscegenation was also enjoined in Ptolemaic and Roman times. The triumph of Islam, however, changed this situation. The lack of any consciousness of race or any prohibition against intermarriage between the races in the Koran, in contrast to the numerous tabus against the latter in the Bible and in Hindu religious literature, encouraged an indiscriminate breeding pattern. This was accentuated by the institutions of household slavery and slave concubinage which have persisted from the earliest days of Islam to the present.

#### THE ISLAMIC CONQUEST AS A SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Probably the fundamental cause of the intellectual decay of the Middle East from the splendor of its ancient civilizations is the dysgenic impact of the triumph of Islam. Preponderantly Christian populations were forced to choose between conversion to the new faith and perseverance in the old at the cost of suffering persecution and being compelled to pay exorbitant taxes. Those who adhered to Christianity must have been people of strong intelligence, firm convictions and considerable will-power. Indeed this is evident from the fact that after one disastrous battle the whole Christian army preferred execution to abjuring their faith. In addition, the Christians must have been rich enough to be able to shoulder the discriminatory fiscal burdens imposed upon them. In short they were the strongest and most intelligent element in the upper and middle classes. This element, which previously had ruled, was now excluded from political power on religious grounds.

This process could be illustrated in detail for most of the Arab world. In the interests of brevity I shall discuss specific developments in the case of Egypt only.

When Arab armies conquered Egypt in A.D. 640 the land and its people were Christian. Mohammed had ordered that the "peoples of the Book"—that is to say, Christians and Jews—be treated with tolerance and not subjected to forced conversion. Nevertheless, from the outset, the Copts were compelled to pay such onerous taxes that they rose in a revolt which was put down with much bloodshed. Upon payment of taxes Coptic monks were branded on the hand. After a suitable interval those who lacked the brand were beheaded or beaten to death. At about the same time (A.D. 712-713) Coptic churches, icons and religious relics were demolished throughout Egypt.



From the ninth century onward the Copts were compelled to wear degrading garments and to have five-pound wooden crosses suspended from their necks. To detail all the persecutions that they suffered would be tiresome and pointless. Toward the end of the tenth century they narrowly escaped deportation *en masse* to Greece. In the fourteenth century, Moslem mobs were aroused by *fakirs* to burn the Christian churches, which by then had been rebuilt. When the Copts retaliated, many were burned alive. To appease fanatical city mobs the authorities ordered about 1354 that any Christians found wearing white robes or riding on horseback could be robbed and killed on the spot. Copts were commanded to ride on asses only and with their faces to the animals' tails. They were to wear bells on their necks when entering public baths. Emirs were forbidden to employ Christians, and all Copts were dismissed from the government service. In consequence an immense number of Copts who had remained steadfast up to that time became converts to Islam.<sup>19</sup>

That the Copts are the true descendants of the peoples of ancient Egypt is a cliché endlessly repeated by historians. It would be somewhat more accurate to characterize them as the descendants of the upper classes which ruled Egypt during its centuries of greatness—from the dawn of the Dynasties to the collapse of Roman power. Islam overthrew this creative minority and substituted a pseudo-élite composed of the descendants of *sheiks*, Bedouins and *fellaheen*, together with elements of the former upper class which had become converts. Thus it is not remarkable that, during most of the thirteen centuries of Moslem rule, Egypt has been noted for the poverty and lethargy of her people, for the incompetence and cowardice of her soldiers, and for the vices and crimes of her rulers.

Except for a brief intellectual golden age, in which her main creative achievements were the work of Persians, Indians, Greeks and Jews, Islam presided over the spiritual decline of the Middle East. It was as if, to use an American example, the Puritan élite had been disfranchised and barred from public office early in the history of the nation, and the government of the United States had been entrusted instead to the descendants of indentured laborers. (The fact that some of these indentured servants were people of high ability does not affect the statistical conclusion that any such transfer of power would have been disastrous).<sup>20</sup>

As for the Copts, their superiority in virtually every respect to the Egyptian Moslems is attested by most observers. Except where political persecution prevented it, they and the Jews always managed to rise to occupy the higher and intellectually most exacting occupations. Lane, who seems to have been prejudiced against them,

<sup>19</sup> Edward William Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1954, pp. 557-558.

<sup>20</sup> See Thomas Jefferson Wertebaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia*, T. J. Wertebaker, Charlottesville, 1910.

reported that in the villages they kept tax rolls and in Cairo they served as government employees, merchants, goldsmiths, silver-smiths, jewellers, architects, builders and carpenters, in all of which they were "esteemed more skillful than the Moslems."<sup>21</sup> In the rural areas, however, most were peasants. Writing over a century later, the Lacoutures found that "discrimination" against them was increasing, but remarked that in Cairo "they are ministers (in one case), writers, teachers (thought less than before), doctors, lawyers and small tradesmen. . . . Christianity gives them a certain cosmopolitanism, an international outlook and open-mindedness which are rarely found in the Moslems."<sup>22</sup>

With some important qualifications, these generalizations concerning the Copts would apply to the relationship between the Christian minorities of the other Middle Eastern countries and the Moslem masses. The long centuries of misrule and decadence, and the contemporary Arab condition of lethargy, incompetence and lack of creativity, can all be traced back to the dysgenic social revolution of Islam.

Other demographic factors have influenced the biogenetic development of Islam, not all of them unfavorably. The Moslem population of the Middle East received various infusions of Caucasoid and even Nordic genes from such peoples as the Albanians, Circassians, Kurds and Turks.<sup>23</sup> The genetic influence of the Janissaries and Mamelukes must also have been favorable. These armed brotherhoods were comprised of men who had been bought, captured or enrolled as tribute slaves when in their teens, then subjected to a rigorous training program and finally used as slave-soldiers or slave-officials. The Janissaries and Mamelukes were drawn from Christian populations, usually from subjugated European domains such as Thrace, and were converted to Islam before being allowed to join the corps. They brought genes for blondism into the racial *melanges* of Asia Minor and Egypt and increased their Nordic component.

The infusion of genes from these Mameluke and Janissary

<sup>21</sup> Edward William Lane, *op. cit.*, p. 553.

<sup>22</sup> Jean and Simone Lacouture, *Egypt in Transition*, Criterion Books, New York, 1958, pp. 404 and 500. When I was in Egypt in 1964, Coptic industrialists informed me that they were subordinated to Moslem political watchdogs and that no prominent Copt was allowed to leave the country unless he left a hostage behind him—generally his wife. This policy they attributed to the régime's belief that they were more intelligent and capable than the Moslems, and hence both indispensable and an element to be distrusted.

<sup>23</sup> The popular belief that the modern Turks are preponderantly Mongoloid is erroneous. They are the heirs to the Finno-Ugrian group of languages, and some of their elements are derived from peoples related to the Huns, but it is unlikely that the majority of the population is of this derivation. In any case it is doubtful whether the Huns were Mongoloids, and although they may have had some Mongoloid strains it is probable that they were basically Caucasoid.

elements was continuous over centuries. The ranks of the corps were depleted by battle losses and by dismissals and executions, the power of the Islamic rulers over their slaves being absolute. Mamelukes and Janissaries could not raise their children for membership in these military orders, since these children were born into the Moslem faith, and the Koran categorically prohibits the enslavement of Moslems by birth.

The prevalence of slavery and the absence of inhibitions against miscegenation also changed the genetic character of the region, but not in the same direction. Of the large numbers of Negro and Hamitic slaves introduced into the Middle East, the great majority of males were not castrated because of the high mortality from this operation. Consequently they left their genetic imprint throughout the Arab world, but primarily in Egypt, southern Arabia and other border lands between the Caucasoid and Negroid habitats.

The institution of polygamy multiplied the fertility of the ruling class many-fold and, to that extent, must have served as a powerful force for genetic improvement. This effect was limited, however, by special factors.

The first of these was the degraded position of women in Islam. In medieval Europe the aristocracy chose wives not merely for sexual attractiveness and fecundity but for their moral qualities, and as companions who could share their duties and responsibilities. During the many and protracted periods of crusades, wars and rebellions, the lord of the manor would be in the field and his lady would have to manage his estates, protect his lands against the encroachments of the greedy and unscrupulous, and perhaps plead his interests at court. The Moslem woman by contrast had nothing to do with the world of men. She was kept secluded in a harem in the exclusive company of her husband, eunuchs, children and other women. She was viewed as an instrument of pleasure and procreation, and was chosen, as a rule, for these qualities only. Hence, while Moslem polygamy increased the productive power of the male élite many-fold, it did not serve as a selective agent for intelligence or virtue among females. Moreover, consorts and concubines of the Moslem great were generally slaves, derived from all the classes and races of Islam.

In addition, it is questionable whether those individuals who rose to power and wealth in the Moslem world represented a true natural aristocracy comparable, say, to the European nobility or the Chinese class of officials and gentry. Violence untempered by law or moral scruple characterized Islamic society. Under the conditions of Moslem polygamy, family loyalty was the exception, and power was often seized and maintained by murder and treachery. Thus, Crane Brinton observes concerning the Ottoman Empire:<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher and Robert Lee Wolff, *A History of Civilization*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1955, Vol. I, p. 396.

The sultan picked his favorite, not necessarily his eldest, son to succeed him, and there was a law that the heir to the throne must kill all his brothers and half-brothers upon his accession. Every son of a sultan knew all the time he was growing up that he must either obtain the throne himself or be killed by whichever of his brothers or half-brothers did obtain it. In 1595, for instance, Mohammed III killed no fewer than nineteen brothers and half-brothers when he came to the throne.

However, some of the more humane caliphs and sultans merely blinded their brothers, relying on the fact that the Koran excludes deformed and maimed persons from wielding political power.

While the victors in these ruthless power struggles were no doubt generally shrewder, stronger and braver than the losers, it is questionable whether this sort of contest served to promote the genetically most desirable elements of the population—and it need scarcely be stressed that the genetically favorable aspect of polygamy was largely negated when one son regularly put to death all of his brothers and half-brothers.

Throughout the centuries, the Christian Church has provided a refuge and a calling for scholars. It has enabled them to work with their minds, has given them a haven even in lawless times, and has protected them from both military service and prosecution under secular law. Islam had no institutionalized church and little in the way of religious doctrine. The unifying force she provided for the Arab world consisted of prescribed rites and religious acts together with an attitude toward life of passive fatalism.<sup>25</sup> The *ulema* (or “knowers”) who interpreted Islamic law were not part of a church, but depended for their power on the favor of the mighty or the applause of the mob. The *ulema* were not protected from the surrounding violence of their society and many were killed as heretics or simply for expounding unpopular ideas. Nor did Islam possess a secular institution which—like the Chinese civil service—chose, promoted and protected officials on the basis of their merit and scholarship.

#### THE MONGOL DYSGENIC CATASTROPHE

These unfavorable institutional factors were enormously accentuated in their destructive effect by two Mongol invasions—that of Genghiz Khan in the thirteenth century, and that of Timurlenk at the close of the fourteenth century. As I have suggested elsewhere,

<sup>25</sup> This passive fatalism is very different in its effects on character from the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. It perpetuates the characteristic Moslem attitudes of passivity and lack of initiative. Since all knowledge has been revealed in the Koran, nothing remains to be discovered. Innovation is discouraged and submission is preferred to self-reliance. This is illustrated by the popularity of the given name *Abd*, meaning “slave.”

these inflicted a genetic catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions upon all of Islam east of the Nile.<sup>26</sup>

The Mongols extinguished the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad in 1258, but Egypt was spared when the Mameluke general, Baibars, defeated the Golden Horde in 1260. Far more important than the political blow to Moslem power was the Mongol practice of laying waste those cities which refused to surrender. Timurlenk in particular transformed some of the greatest urban and cultural centers of Middle Asia into towers and pyramids of human skulls.<sup>27</sup>

Since the upper classes and the intellectuals were concentrated in the cities, this genocide was selective and served to decimate, if not virtually exterminate, the natural élite of Asian Islam. After the lethal storm had passed, the Islamic aristocracy of breeding and intelligence was shattered, and new elements rose from the rural areas to fill the power vacua. Following this calamity, Arab intellectual creativity in the Middle East collapsed and has not yet recuperated. After the Mongols, the Arab élite largely abandoned such mentally demanding fields as mathematics, science and philosophy in favor of architecture and painting—disciplines more within the reach of a genetically decapitated society.

The hypothesis is that the Mongols served as a major agency of aristocide and that they were the scythe which destroyed Islamic civilization in Asia by exterminating the Moslem creative minority. In support of this view is the fact that social and intellectual stultification also occurred in other regions exposed to the Mongol scourge.

The Mongols struck with great fury in Russia and Eastern Europe under Genghiz Khan, penetrating as far west as Silesia,

<sup>26</sup> Nathaniel Weyl and Stefan T. Possony, *The Geography of Intellect*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67. See also Nathaniel Weyl, *The Creative Elite in America*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1966, pp. 69-70.

<sup>27</sup> With both eloquence and indignation, Toynbee characterized Timurlenk as a man imbued with "the crack-brained megalomania of the homicidal madman whose one idea it to impress the imagination of Mankind with a sense of his military power by a hideous abuse of it," adding: "We think of the monster who razed Isfara'in to the ground in 1381; built two thousand prisoners into a living mound, and then bricked them over at Sabzara in 1383; piled 5000 human heads into minarets at Zirih in the same year; cast his Luri prisoners alive over precipices in 1386; massacred the garrison of Takrit, and piled their heads into minarets, in 1393; massacred 100,000 prisoners at Delhi in 1398; buried alive the 4000 Christian soldiers of the garrison of Sivas after their capitulation in 1400; built twenty towers of skulls in Syria in 1400 and 1401; and dealt with Baghdad in 1401 as he had dealt fourteen years earlier with Isfahan." Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford University Press, London, 1939, Vol. IV, p. 500.

The completeness and permanence of the devastation are suggested by the fact that most of these cities—Isfara'in, Sivas, Sabzara, Takrit and Zirih—vanished from the surface of the earth and are today known only to scholars. It is also evident that Toynbee never took to heart Lucian's observation: "Historical characters are not prisoners on trial."

Hungary and the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Since Russia and the Balko-Danubian region were less urbanized and at a more primitive level of civilization than the Islamic Middle East, Mongol genocide was less selective for intelligence in the former area. While the Mongols built no pyramids of skulls in Russia, they destroyed cities and massacred their inhabitants, desolated the country and caused a genetic catastrophe of unknown dimensions. Writing in the *Cambridge Medieval History*, Peisker attributed Russian backwardness to the Mongol explosion and expressed his belief that there would have been no European civilization if the Mongol advance had not stopped on the plains of Hungary.<sup>28</sup> Historians have attributed Russia's failure to experience either a Renaissance or a Reformation to the trauma of Mongol genocide and the dark centuries of Mongol rule.

China is an exception to the theory that the Mongols invariably brought devastation and genetic retrogression, but it is one which "proves the rule." Chinese civilization flourished under the Mongols and continued its development after their departure simply because the conquerors refrained from their usual practices of mass extermination and destruction of cities. They occupied China without *Schrecklichkeit* or genocide, and became rapidly assimilated into Sinitic civilization, as readers of Marco Polo will remember.

But what of Islam in Africa, which the Mongol invasion did not reach? Was it, both during and after the Mongol invasions of the Asian Middle East, an area of developing creativity?

In Moslem Spain, power and leadership passed from the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba to the Abbadid dynasty of Seville and thence to the Nasri rulers of Granada. The period of Granadan supremacy in Spain (1300 to 1491) spans the Mongol invasions. In the opinion of the great Moslem traveller and historian, Ibn Batuta, Granada was "unequaled by any city in the world." Immensely wealthy, religiously tolerant in an age of intolerance, Granada was outstanding for her artists, writers, scholars and philosophers, and boasted a university which had as its motto: "The world is supported by four things: the learning of the wise, the justice of the great, the prayers of the good, and the valor of the brave."

The other center of Islamic civilization outside of Asia was Egypt, which was united politically with Syria at the time of the Mongol threat. While Egypt successfully withstood military invasion by the Golden Horde, Syria was overrun. In Egypt itself, the Black Death, onerous taxation, internal revolts and famine caused depopulation and possible aristocide on a massive scale in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thus, under Faraj (1399-1412), one of the Burji Mamelukes and a contemporary of Timurlenk, the population of Egypt is believed to have decreased by two-thirds. A census taken

<sup>28</sup> T. Peisker, "The Asiatic Background," in *The Cambridge Medieval History* Macmillan, New York, 1924, Vol. I, pp. 323-360.

during the reign of Barsbai (1422-1438), another Mameluke, showed only 2170 towns and villages in the entire land. During the eleventh century there had been ten thousand.<sup>29</sup>

Determination to prevent a natural aristocracy from arising was generally speaking another factor which caused the collapse of Islamic civilization. The rulers of the Islamic states were always in danger of revolts because, being despots, their government did not rest on the rule of law, and they could not risk allowing aristocracies to develop. Therefore the tribal patriarchs or aristocrats could take no part in government and were kept at arm's length as nomads.

In order to prevent aristocracies arising in the urban centers, the Sultans ruled through eunuchs and other slaves, who were often drawn from the lowest ranks rather than from aristocrats captured in war. Although these slave-officials were men of ability they had to be sycophants rather than resourceful and courageous natural leaders. In fact, a vizir was more likely to remain in power through low cunning than by showing aristocratic qualities.

This political pattern is not specifically Arab or Moslem, but has been adopted by other societies to achieve similar purposes. For example, the successful crushing of the Roman aristocracy by the Julian and Claudian houses involved rule by bureaucrats chosen from foreign freedmen. As in the Islamic case, the loyalty of these people to the state could be depended upon since they had no independent support among the people and—being both ex-slaves and aliens—were hated and despised by those they ruled.

#### EGYPT AND MILITARY PROWESS

Intelligence is not the only psychic quality that is inherited; it is merely the one that is most easy to measure. The emphasis of modern science on precise quantitative findings has discouraged social scientists from considering such other vitally important traits as courage and military prowess. Yet wars determine the survival of nations, and the moral and mental fiber of a people is the most important single ingredient in its war-making capacity.

The Egyptians have seldom been noted for their martial qualities. Under the Pharaohs, Egypt was a less successful aggressive military power than some of her Mesopotamian and Persian rivals. She was overrun by the Hyksos from northern Syria, was easily conquered by both Macedonians and Romans, and fell victim to a ridiculously small Arab army in the seventh century. The Egyptian people were mastered by a slave dynasty of Mamelukes and were subjected for centuries to Turkish domination. It may be objected that Egypt's martial prowess was demonstrated by Saladin (Salah-ad-Din), but—like so many of the men of note who ruled Egypt—Saladin was not

<sup>29</sup> David Samuel Margoliouth, "Egypt: History: Medieval Period," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1961 edition, Vol. VIII, p. 72.

an Egyptian but a light-eyed Mesopotamian by birth and a Kurd by nationality.

Under Islam, such Egyptian military abilities as there were deteriorated even further, a development that could have been predicted given the displacement of a natural aristocracy by the mass. The Egyptians put up feeble resistance to Napoleon and were easily ruled by the British. In three military conflicts with Israel, the Egyptians suffered defeats which even they considered disgraceful. Egyptian military performance in the 1948 conflict was so bad that it enabled Colonel Nasser and other military leaders to launch a successful revolution and topple the monarchy. Twenty years later Arab forces outnumbered those of Israel by an estimated three to one in armor and two to one in aircraft, and yet they were shattered in 60 hours. Israeli military leaders reported that the Jordanians fought well, the Syrians fought moderately well, and the Egyptians took flight. An earlier Egyptian military commitment, in which poison gas was used against Yemeni tribesmen, was almost equally inglorious.

Lack of valor and the other qualities essential to the successful conduct of war has not prevented the Egyptians from habitually resorting to violence against weaker or defenseless adversaries. Thus, Dr Calvin Wells, in a valuable and fascinating study of morbidity, deformity and trauma in early times, noted that the frequency distribution of Egyptian fractures was most unusual. Examination of almost six thousand skeletons, dating from prehistoric to Byzantine times, showed that about 30 per cent of all fractures were in the arms, and only some 10 per cent were in the legs. Dr Wells wrote:<sup>30</sup>

The majority of the Nubian fractures are quite unlike the "accidental" Colles' type. They are lower or mid-shaft fractures of the ulna, or ulna and radius, of a kind which is typically the result of guarding the head against a blow. They point to short tempers and aggressive conduct being a common feature of the society and as many of them occur in females wife-beating or a generally low status of women may be implied. The mummy of a teenage girl has been found in which both forearms had been shattered in this way. When her efforts to protect her head proved unavailing her skull was crushed with a powerful blow. The fact that she was four or five months pregnant might have been the motive for this assault upon her. Despite these products of aggression, the over-all incidence of fractures amongst these people was low, only about 3 per cent, whereas in the Anglo-Saxons almost 20 per cent of individuals had some bone broken though few of them could be attributed to personal violence and bickering.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin Wells, *Bones, Bodies and Disease*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1964, pp. 53-54.



While the Arab world contains people whose violence and brutality are well known, the region in general is characterized by a lack of martial virtues. There are, however, exceptions. The Jordanian army, consisting as it does of tribal warriors habituated to the discipline of a patriarchal society, is known for its courage, morale and fighting qualities. The same generalization applies to the Riffians, who fought the French successfully in the 1920s. These Riffians are mountain people of Berber stock, who belong to an aristocratic and caste society in which military leadership is the prerogative of a Caucasian hereditary élite. When one passes from these vanishing tribal societies to states which recruit their armies from the rootless denizens of the Middle Eastern cities and the long since detribalized peasantries, military prowess and the military virtues decline.<sup>31</sup>

#### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE FUTURE

In modern times the demographic pattern of the Arab world is very different and, genetically speaking, much more unfavorable than that which prevailed during the Moslem middle ages. Then, the principal limiting factors on population growth were famine and disease, affecting the death-rate, and the degree of polygamy, affecting the birth-rate. All of these favored reproduction of the upper class and discouraged reproduction by the masses.

Particularly in the decades following World War II, the Middle East has found itself in the throes of a population explosion. The quantitative effect of this explosion is to prevent any significant rise in per capita real income, except in the oil-rich regions, and to keep the masses at a near-subsistence level. In Egypt, population increased by 70 per cent between 1935 and 1960, but per capita real income remained stationary at \$90 per year.<sup>32</sup>

The qualitative effects of rampant population growth are equally sombre. Rapid advances in public health and the control of epidemic disease have substantially reduced the class differentials in mortality and lengthened the average life-span. Better storage, transportation and distribution of foodstuffs have reduced mortality from famine. At the same time, huge families continue to be raised throughout the Arab world by the urban and rural poor, particularly the latter.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The great military expansion of Islam from the eleventh century onward was primarily the work of Turks, not Arabs. Furthermore, these victorious armies were generally composed of Janissaries, recruited from Christian populations which were, as has already been observed, part of the Middle Eastern élite.

<sup>32</sup> Hanna Rizk, "Population Growth and its Effects on Economic and Social Goals in the United Arab Republic," in *The Population Crisis and the Use of World Resources* (edited by Stuart Mudd), a study by the World Academy of Art and Science, W. Junk, The Hague, 1964, pp. 172-173.

<sup>33</sup> R. Gayre of Gayre, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

Population control is ineffectual among the destitute Arab masses, whereas birth control and postponement of marriages are causing substantial reductions in natality among the upper classes and the educated—that is to say, in the one sector of the population where a slackening of population growth is undesirable. Thus, a study of the fertility patterns of 6067 Egyptian women in the mid-1950s by the Permanent Council for Public Service of the United Arab Republic showed that “in the urban areas there was a pronounced decline in fertility rate among wives of university educated husbands, a definite but lesser decline among wives of secondary educated husbands, and no difference in fertility between wives of the primary or elementary educated and illiterate husbands.”<sup>34</sup> Of those women whose families were uncompleted, 51 per cent of the secondary schooling and university group, but only 23 per cent of the primary-elementary group and only 9 per cent of the illiterates, practiced contraception. Thus, the educated class in Egypt was reproducing at a much slower rate than the undereducated and the illiterates.

If this trend continues unabated, the prospect is that the intellectual élite of Egypt will become a constantly dwindling proportion of the population, that the average level of innate intelligence will decline, and that the frequency of occurrence of gifted individuals will decline drastically.<sup>35</sup> In ethnic terms these dysgenic reproduction trends, which characterize not merely Egypt but the Arab world as a whole, will mean a displacement of Nordic by Mediterranean and Armenoid genes, and of Mediterranean and Armenoid by Hamitic and Negroid genes. This prognosis can be made with confidence simply because in the Arab world education and class status are closely correlated with ethnic origin.

Thus, the indications are that the genetic history of the Middle East under Islam has been unfavorable and that the genetic present and future of the region are unpromising. Among the fundamental factors at work in the past and present are: the Islamic displacement of a natural élite by elements emerging from the masses, the Mongol holocaust, the absence of a Moslem aristocracy, slavery, miscegenation, and the continuing dysgenic pattern of class fertility and mortality.

The short-term prospect would seem to be for further intellectual, political, social and economic disintegration unless the problem is recognized and a reversal of biogenetic direction is achieved.

<sup>34</sup> Hanna Rizk, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>35</sup> For the comparative impact, see Sir Julian Huxley, “Eugenics in Evolutionary Perspective,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1963, pp. 165-166.

# Professor Gaetano Martino

It is with the deepest regret that we have to announce the unexpected death on the 21st of July 1967 of His Excellency Professor Gaetano Martino, Rector Magnificus of the University of Rome, one of the most distinguished scientists and citizens of Italy.

Professor Gaetano Martino and I first became acquainted when one day in 1943 he appeared, in his smart naval uniform as a colonel of the medical corps of the Italian Navy, in our office at the Palazzo Constantini in the Via Maqueda, Palermo, where I was Consigliere della Educazione in the Allied Military Government, and from which the universities, scientific institutions and the whole educational system of Italy were administered. Professor Martino, at that time Professor of Physiology at the University of Messina, came to make representations on behalf of his university, and in particular to ask my help in getting the British troops removed from the university buildings they were using as offices and billets, in which considerable damage was consequently being done to scientific material and data.

I was so impressed by Professor Martino, both as a man and as a scholar, that this first meeting led to close association between us, and I came to the conclusion that no better man could be appointed as Rector Magnificus of the University of Messina.

From this beginning Professor Martino went on to achieve fame in many fields. He became his country's Minister of Education, later he was Foreign Minister, and subsequently he represented Italy at the United Nations. He was also appointed Professor of Physiology at the University of Rome, and was later elected its Rector Magnificus.

I met Professor Martino on several occasions after the war. When, as Foreign Minister, he went to India to return the visit of Mr Nehru to Rome, he invited me to be his guest at the Italian Embassy in New Delhi, as I was at that time Professor of Anthropology and head of the Anthro-geography Department of the University of Saugor, in Madhya Pradesh. Again we met in Rome, as well as at Messina where he had his home, to which he was greatly attached, for Professor Martino was a Sicilian and was very strongly bound to his country.

In the political field he was the President of the Liberal Party of Italy (which is in fact a conservative party) at the time of his death.

As a scientist he was a man of comprehensive knowledge, wide vision and comparative judgement. When he was invited to join the Honorary Advisory Board of THE MANKIND QUARTERLY, our policy of scientific objectivity presented no difficulties for him, since he was broadly in agreement with the biological approach to man and fully accepted the implications of Mendelian thought, as opposed to the theoretical conceptions of a Lamarckian nature which—without being demonstrated at all—are so tacitly accepted by some people as a basis for assessing the nature of man.

By his death the biological sciences, Italy and THE MANKIND QUARTERLY have lost a very great man, and I have lost one who was a personal friend for so many years.

R. GAYRE OF GAYRE.

Our friend His Excellency Professor Gaetano Martino died in Rome on the 21st of July 1967, at the age of 67. He was a remarkable figure, alike in the variety of his scientific interests, in the vicissitudes of his life and in his contributions to science and politics. It was well said of him at his funeral that he was a man who influenced the thinking and the politics of his time.