

Tribute to Marshall Hodgson

In chapter three, "Marshall Hodgson and the Venture of Islam," Hourani pays tribute to the intellectual achievements of the late American historian and Orientalist, Marshall Hodgson (d. 1968). Hodgson wrote, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, in three volumes (Chicago, 1974). As an historian, his vocation derived from the experience he gained from Western and Muslim historians alike.

That is why Hourani compares the first volume of Hodgson's *Venture* to Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*. According to Hourani, Hodgson believed in the ability of creative individuals in changing collective realities and conditions. The idea of a "creative minority," in Hodgson's view, is not bound to a particular class, but is of an independent social and intellectual formation, and it is the only group that leaves behind the most lasting and distinctive cultural influence. From this vantage point, Hodgson analyzes the impact the high culture of Islam—the culture of the `ulama'—left on world history as well as the masses who were at the core of Islamic civilization.

In chapter six, "In Search of a New Andalusia: Jacques Berque and the Arabs," Hourani discusses, albeit briefly, the life and thought of the Frenchman who is the most sympathetic Orientalist toward Arabs and Muslims. Berque's example is that of a scholar who always attempted to comprehend Muslim culture and people from within.

To Hourani, Berque's books present a serious treatment of Arab society and "contain not a series of abstract ideas strung along a thin, straight line of exposition, but a continuous movement from the surface of society into the depth of ideas which move and explain it, and back again." (p. 131)

Just like Gibb, "Berque spoke of [the] need to integrate in his work insights gained from the social sciences, observations of the movements of a violent reality, and the memories and imperatives of his personal life." (p. 133)

As pointed out above, the modern interaction between the West and Islam is undoubtedly a very complex process. Hourani turns to discussing in a sensitive style a major manifestation of this interaction, which is often discussed but rarely understood, namely, how traditional and high Muslim

culture responded to the challenge of the West. The tradition of high culture was "created around a core of religious doctrines and laws." (p. 99)

And following Hamilton Gibb's analysis, Hourani argues that the literati class in Islam was keen at recording and transmitting a body of truth and knowledge, which was seen as a true representation of the inner spirit of Islam. This culture, protected by an unbroken chain of authority, had a major influence on the development of religion, culture, and ideas in Muslim societies. In other words, the *silsilah* of high culture lived on more or less uninterrupted by events until the end of the 18th century. In the words of Hourani,

By the eighteenth century, there seems to have been achieved a certain stability in the ideal human type here described: that of the man learned in tradition and law, initiated into a Sufi order within the bounds of the *Shari'a[h]*, respectful of authority, willing to serve it but keeping his distance from it, giving leadership to the urban population, linked by interest with the preservation of a fabric of ordered and prosperous city life, and having a certain fear and disdain of the forces of the countryside. (p. 107)

This image of an ideal `alim started to change with the advent of European colonialism in Muslim lands, and the fast pace of political, social, and cultural changes borne by Muslim societies in this period left a lasting impact, especially on the indigenous intelligentsia. Hourani says that, "We can notice in this period a deep disturbance in the lives of educated men, not only those trained in the new schools but also those formed in the traditional ways of thought; not only do their careers take different paths, but the ways in which they see their own lives begin to change." (p. 109) The new forces at play exerted a major influence on the traditional milieu, and, in many ways, the 'ulama' were the first ones to pave the way for a more progressive way of considering things.

This is best represented, according to Hourani, in the lives of two great men coming from this background, Muhammad Ba[y]ram, who came from a well-established traditional family in Tunisia, and Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1936) of Lebanon (who later immigrated to Egypt and established the famous al-Manar periodical after becoming one of the chief disciples of the Egyptian reformist `slim Muhammad `Abduh [d. 1905]). Both decided to choose new careers; both became journalists. Hourani comments on this situation by remarking that in both the cases, "there takes place a kind of mutation in the ideal type of the `alim" (p. 113). The deliberate choice of a new path and vocation is "a sign of a disturbance in [themselves] as well as in [their] world." (p. 112)

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