

CHAPTER 1

The Land and Its Peoples

Many Americans first recognized the importance of the Middle East to the United States when Israel was established as an independent nation, May 14, 1948. The political attacks by Arab states on the new nation, the short but bloody Arab-Israeli war, the plight of Arab refugees, the continuing efforts of the United Nations to maintain a truce along the border of Israel, the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt in July, 1956, the frightening moment of war between Israel, France, and England on one side and Egypt on the other at the very moment of the Presidential election of 1956, the increasing Russian influence in Syria and Egypt, and the revolutions which have overthrown the monarchy in Iraq and threaten other Middle Eastern nations—all these events have brought the Middle East to the forefront of popular attention and concern. Yet perhaps the first thing an alert citizen needs to know about the Middle East is that behind these dramatic developments lies a complex history.

Many American citizens have viewed the happenings of October, 1956, and the troubled times that have followed as due somehow to an unfortunately volatile mixture of the Suez Canal and Israel. Some have assumed that there is necessarily a "right side" and a "wrong side" both legally and morally in these events, and have been disappointed in the search for a quick but just solution.

The purpose of this selection of readings is twofold. It is hoped that the geographical, historical, and cultural materials in the introductory essay together with the selection of important documents will provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the problems and tensions in the Middle East and of the importance of this area to world peace. It is further hoped that following developments in the Middle East from local tensions to the actual threat of world conflagration will serve as useful staging for illustrating the development of America's foreign policy.

The Middle East contains the most appalling contrast between wealth and poverty to be found anywhere in the world. It gave birth to and

contains treasured relics of three great religions—Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem. Here are found peoples enjoying the advanced technologies of industrial civilization surrounded by nomads living in mud huts and animal-skin tents, caring for small wandering herds of camels and goats as their ancestors did literally ten thousand years before them. The challenge of the environment is formidable in this land of deserts, swamps, barren rocky wastes, and isolated areas of fertile coastal plain. This variety in environment is matched by variety in the cultures of peoples relatively isolated for generations by almost impassable desert.

From earliest times this area has been the meeting ground of East and West. Overland transport depended upon long and tedious caravans for safe passage through desert and barren hills. Even ocean vessels relied upon Middle Eastern ports for provisions and welcome rest on the journey across oceans and around the tip of Africa. These deserts became the “Middle East”—midpoint between Europe and the exotic spices and wares of India and China—or the “Near East” with reference to Europe.

The building of the Suez Canal brought the Middle East into even sharper focus as a strategic geographical midpoint, and the discovery of incredible amounts of oil beneath the desert sands and coastal plains won for the Middle East the favors and attention of all the industrialized nations of the world. Unfortunately, but logically, the area became a pawn in the power struggles of the richer and more advanced nations. Its peoples know too well the yoke of foreign domination. To them imperialism is a word of hateful meaning. But before we begin a more detailed consideration of the several categories of tensions in the Middle East we might first turn to a brief contemporary political and geographical orientation.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Middle East, with the exception of Persia, came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, where it remained until the termination of World War I. Thus the contemporary political history of the Middle East begins at the war's close in 1918 with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the partitioning of the Middle East into spheres of influence and League of Nations protectorates awarded to Great Britain and to France.

The Middle East is an area about the size of the United States, mainly desert and wasteland, supporting approximately 80,000,000 people.* A majority of the people are illiterate and live in great poverty; a few are

* Population statistics for Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey are taken from *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, Vol XII, No. 10 (Oct. 1958), Statistical Office of the United Nations, United Nations, New York. Population figures for Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Aden, and the Sheikdoms are current *New York Times* estimates.

among the richest men in the world. In some areas technological development is creating a growing middle class, not yet successfully integrated into the economic or political structure. The most modern buildings stand beside those many centuries old. Transportation may be by a camel caravan over desert trails, a "cadillac caravan" on a modern highway, or a public conveyance, often a late model station wagon.

Although some of the desert lands yield to cultivation if irrigated, water is universally scarce. Since water is differentially available, in many areas the full utilization of potential water resources will necessitate international cooperation. Mineral reactions in the soil, for example, "salting up," further complicate irrigation problems.

An estimated two-thirds of the world's known oil resources lie beneath this land but in general the people are not technically advanced enough to develop or use them. Most of the oil is produced by more advanced industrial nations on a fifty-fifty agreement basis.

Another of the Middle East's major advantages involves its strategic geographic location linking the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Problems of commercial and agricultural development, intense nationalism, conflict in religious beliefs, resentment against former colonial powers, internal intrigues and rivalries between ruling families, as well as boundary disputes with frontiers periodically in motion, all encourage weak, unstable governments and increasing internal and external tensions.

EGYPT

On February 21, 1958, Egyptians and Syrians voted nearly unanimously to establish the United Arab Republic, a union of Egypt and Syria with Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser as its first president (see Doc. 44). On March 8, Yemen joined with the UAR in a federation to be known as the United Arab States. This agreement permitted Iman Ahmed of Yemen to remain as absolute monarch of Yemen, but provided for unified armed forces and foreign policies. A Federal Council of the UAR and Yemen representatives was granted veto power.

Let us look first of all at these three countries who have linked their political futures for better or for worse.

At the outbreak of World War I, Egypt, once a powerful civilization became a British protectorate. In the tide of rising nationalism before World War II Egypt was the first Middle Eastern country to achieve political independence, though British troops maintained a strong base

in the Suez area. After a period of continual tension, the last British troops finally left Egyptian soil in June, 1956.

Egypt has no coal or iron and only a little oil, not enough for her own needs. A population of 24,000,000 lives in an area about half again as large as Texas, 386,198 square miles. Ninety-six per cent of the country is desert, however, and most of the people are concentrated in a narrow strip of cultivated land along the Nile Valley. Although general living conditions are very poor and mortality rates high, the population is increasing, unemployment is rising, sales of cotton—the major export—are falling off, and the flow of imported goods is dwindling. Thus it is understandable that now, more than ever before, the Egyptians have come to look upon the Suez Canal as their greatest potential asset.

The government, prior to union with Syria, was a dictatorship under Gamal Abdul Nasser who rose to power in 1952 through an army coup that dethroned King Farouk. The government seeks to improve the economy, raise standards of living, increase industry, and generally strengthen the power and position of Egypt.

SYRIA

Syria, like Iraq, is underpopulated with a little over 4,000,000 people inhabiting an area of 66,039 square miles, a country about the size of New England. Some authorities estimate that up to 3,000,000 additional settlers are necessary to provide the manpower to develop Syria's resources.

Very little land is now under irrigation, although water is available in some quantity and the use of irrigation is increasing. Most Syrians are farmers and herders, and enough wheat and meat are produced to meet the country's needs. Other than building stone, raw materials are at a bare minimum. Syria is paid considerable rent, however, for oil pipelines running through its land from Iraq.

Syria was granted independence by the French in 1941, but French and British troops did not leave until 1946, and then only under strong United Nations pressure led by the United States. The government, prior to union with Egypt, was run by an unstable army clique closely allied with Nasser in Egypt and increasingly pro-Soviet.

YEMEN

This country, least known and most backward in the Middle East, is about as big as Nebraska, 75,000 square miles, and supports a population of

about 4,500,000. Yemen is not the typical Middle Eastern country recently released from colonial rule. Although controlled by Turks during the sixteenth century, Yemen, a completely independent oligarchy, has for centuries been closed to outside influences.

This country has no roads, no transportation facilities, and no industry of importance. It is rich in water and minerals, however, and has fertile plateaus where grain and coffee are grown, though at least 90 per cent of the population is both illiterate and poor.

JORDAN

On March 19, 1958, Iraq and Jordan formally proclaimed the constitution of a union between these two countries to be known as the Arab Federation (see Doc. 45). Although Jordan and Iraq under this union were to retain sovereignty over their own territories, the constitution of the Federation provided for equal representation in legislative, executive, and judicial bodies empowered to act for the Federation as a whole.

On July 28, 1958, the government of Iraq was overthrown and a republic sympathetic to the United Arab Republic established in its place. King Hussein of Jordan proclaimed himself head of the Arab Federation under the constitutional clause that delegated authority to him in the event of King Faisal's "absence," but without armed force he was powerless to support his claim and Iraq again operated as an independent government. Let us look for a moment at these two countries united as a Federation for such a brief period.

For a few years immediately after World War I, the area now known as Jordan was part of the Arab kingdom of Syria. With the collapse of the Syrian authority in 1920 it came directly under British supervision. Thus it was that Winston Churchill, acting as Colonial Secretary in 1922, was able to set up Jordan as an independent national unit under Abdullah, the second son of the Arab king, Hussein. His purpose in so doing was to divert this ambitious prince from leading a Bedouin army to war against French-held Syria. At this time the area, then known as Transjordan, was primarily a desert home for bands of wandering tribesmen, though some important towns remained from the centuries when the major caravan routes crossed these lands. The population there in 1922 was approximately 300,000. Today it nears 1,500,000. Since Jordan annexed some of the Palestine lands set aside by the United Nations for an Arab state, it now extends across some 37,500 square miles, making it a territory a little larger than the state of Indiana.

Severe desert conditions and scant material resources, except for an abundance of phosphate rock, constitute Jordan's grave economic handicap.

The political future is equally uncertain. Under Arab nationalist influences Jordan had ousted British officers from its territory in March, 1956. The July, 1958, revolution in Iraq, however, posed such a serious threat to the monarchy in Jordan that Great Britain at once returned troops to its support. Jordan's political uncertainty is based on a combination of unstable government and threats of revolution together with border struggles, high feelings of revenge against Israel and the problem posed by the return of British forces.

IRAQ

Long before biblical times, an ancient civilization flourished on the rich alluvial plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This territory which we now know as Iraq was even then made fertile by an ingenious system of canals on which the life of the countryside depended. At one time or another over the centuries invading Persians, desert tribesmen, Asians, Greeks, Romans, and Turks destroyed the irrigation systems and so destroyed a succession of empires. The desert knew a hundred years of return to fertility in the eighth and ninth centuries only to fall back into wasteland again under the Ottoman Empire.

In World War I, British forces drove the Turks out of this land which was then known as Mesopotamia. Iraq was created under British protectorate as a constitutional monarchy and in 1932 was recognized as an independent nation. In 1956 under pressures of Arab nationalism the last British forces left Iraq and in July, 1958, a revolution overthrew the monarchy in favor of a republic sympathetic to the cause of an extreme nationalist group.

Approximately 6,500,000 people live in this country which is about half the size of Texas.

Oil was discovered in great quantities in Iraq and the present government has been directing oil profits into programs designed to raise the standard of living of the Iraqi who were, until just recently, as poor as any of the peoples of the Middle East. Long-term programs for roads, irrigation, dams, schools, and industrial development are in progress.

Iraq's oil moves to Europe through pipelines across Syria. These pipelines were damaged by Syria when Egypt was attacked in October, 1956. Oil income fell to a minimum and tension developed with Syria over repair of the pipelines.

Apart from oil the only major export is dates. When properly irrigated the soil is unusually fertile and the country could support and would need several million more people to develop its resources.

SUDAN

Though located on the southern Egyptian border and primarily a central African country, the Sudan has been included in this discussion of the Middle East because of its strategic and economic importance to Egypt. Long-range control of the Nile waters hinges on cooperation between Egypt and Sudan.

This area, about one-third the size of the United States, supports a population of about 10,200,000 people who live in tropical forests, wide plains, and fertile lands along the Nile. The population represents a variety of religious and racial groupings including Arabs, Negroes, Nubians, and Mulattoes.

Britain and Egypt ruled the Sudan from 1899 to 1953. The present government is a parliamentary republic. On January 1, 1956, under an agreement among these countries, Sudan proclaimed her independence. Serious disputes over the border between Egypt and Sudan remain unsettled.

The standard of living in the Sudan generally is still quite low, roads are few, and transportation minimal. There is an abundance of farm land with cotton as the major crop. Another natural resource is gum arabic and most of the world's supply comes from this area.

Though a member of the Arab League and in receipt of arms from Egypt, Sudan has not yet formally discussed military pacts with any country.

ISRAEL

In 1948 when Israel officially came into being through the United Nations as a parliamentary democracy, its Jewish population was 650,000. As a result of intensive immigration, inhabitants now total nearly 2,000,000 in an area about the size of New Jersey—8,048 square miles.

Although much of the land is sandy waste and stony hill country, intensive irrigation development is continually opening new land for cultivation, with the result that citrus fruit is now being exported in even greater quantity than before. Here, as throughout most of the Middle East, the struggle for water is intense.

The seaports of Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, and Elath are increasingly important in the Israeli economy, as are both fresh and salt water fishing.

Some mineral resources have been found in Israel, and recently several high grade oil strikes have improved and advanced an already ambitious industrial development program.

This industrial program together with transportation, health, and educational developments combine to bring Israel closer to "modern" states than any other nation in the Middle East today.

SAUDI ARABIA

Though Saudi Arabia includes some 870,000 square miles, a country three and one half times the size of Texas, most of it is a desert wasteland. Its 6,000,000 Arabs are forced to live mainly on the watered fringe of the Arabian peninsula and in its scattered desert oases.

Today the land and peoples of Saudi Arabia literally belong to one man—Saud Ibn Abdul-Aziz al-Saud. He inherited the property from his father who originally united it by conquest of local tribal chieftains. On March 23, 1958, Saud conferred unlimited power over "internal, external and financial policies" on his prime minister and half-brother, Crown Prince Faisal. But Saud nonetheless remains king.

Oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia in 1928. A group of United States oil companies holds the concession to develop and market King Saud's oil. As a result the United States holds also a major air base in Saudi Arabia and trains and arms the Saudi army. Other than oil, Saudi Arabia exports only dates, camels and a few horses.

Since King Saud owns the land, all income from oil and export is his personal wealth. Although there is indication of an expanding middle class, the general population maintains a very low standard of living in a desert subsistence economy.

LEBANON

In this ancient land 1,500,000 people live in an area about half the size of New Jersey. At one time or another Persians, Egyptians, Romans, Crusaders, Turks, and numerous other groups have ruled the territory. At the close of World War I, Lebanon became a French protectorate under a League of Nations mandate, and in 1926 was organized as a republic. Although the French mandate remained in juridical effect until 1946, when the last French troops quit Lebanese soil, the French Com-

mittee of National Liberation and Great Britain recognized Lebanon as an independent republic as early as 1941. Even today the people of Lebanon are so diverse culturally that the seats in parliament are divided on the basis of religious affiliations. A slim majority are Christians.

Although Lebanon is the smallest country in the Arab League, it is considered by many as the most advanced. It has an infant industrial economy and natural resources to aid in its development. Water is available, though as yet only part of the land is under irrigation or even cultivation. Lebanon exports fruits, tobacco, and olive oil. It also collects rent for oil pipelines running through its territory from Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Most Lebanese are farmers, while city folk are devoted and skilled traders.

Since most of the Christians in Lebanon are Arabs, there is still no real peace commitment with Israel. Pro-Western sympathizers combined with increasing numbers of Moslem citizens and Arab refugees produce in Lebanon an increasingly difficult dilemma. National policy has often reflected this uneasy truce between Western and Arab affiliations. In 1958, when armed rebellion in Lebanon and the successful revolution in Iraq threatened the government in Lebanon, United States armed troops were sent to Lebanon at the request of President Chamoun. It is unlikely that there will be much lessening of tension in Lebanon for some time to come.

IRAN

The Persis of antiquity and the Persia of modern times, Iran is a kingdom of 628,060 square miles, an area about two and one-half times the size of Texas, containing 19,700,000 people.

Not an Arab nation, Iran's history has been in some real measure distinct from the development of other Middle Eastern nations since it successfully resisted attack from the Ottoman Empire and remained independent of Turkish control.

In 1907 a revolution, intended to overthrow the absolute Shah in favor of a constitutional monarchy, led in effect to a power vacuum. Russia and Britain moved in and divided Persia into "spheres of influence" with Russia looking after the northern and central area and Britain overseeing in the south. During the 1920's and 1930's the Riza Shah consolidated the nation, strengthened the constitutional government, brought an end to the Anglo-Russian agreements and thus established Iran's independence as a sovereign nation. During World War II, however, the USSR and Great Britain again sent troops into Iran. Though this was not technically an oc-

cupation, the presence of foreign troops renewed old fears among the people that Russia and Great Britain intended to occupy permanently. At the conclusion of the war British troops withdrew from the south and the Iranian government sent its own troops to the north to reclaim the last areas of Soviet control.

Up to this point the oil that had been discovered in the southern section was developed under agreement by a British company. The nationalist movement at the end of World War II, internal struggles, and government instability resulted, however, in abrogation of this agreement in 1951. The oil fields were nationalized under the leadership of the extreme nationalist, Mohammed Mossadegh, but nationalization proved no solution. Internal power struggles, often violent, continued. The signing in 1954 of a new oil agreement, discussed on pages 29 and 30 moderated the situation only slightly.

Iran formulated a policy of increasing economic and political cooperation outside the Soviet bloc, including membership in the Baghdad Pact and, at the same time, encouraged the development of cordial relations with the USSR. In April, 1957, Manouchehr Eghbal, with army support, took over as Shah, ended the martial law which had been in force for sixteen years, and entered upon the development of a freer two-party system in Iran.

Oil revenue is the greatest source of income to the country, and oil profits are going into a development plan that should slowly improve the general standard of living.

Iran has considerable mineral resources but, since these are as yet undeveloped, the people are still chiefly farmers and migrant tribesmen.

THE SHEIKDOMS

Around the rim of Arabia lie an assortment of Arab sheikdoms which have been under British protection since the last century. In the Yemen area alone Britain protects eight sultanates, two emirates, and seven confederations of small sheikdoms and tribes.

Much of this land is fertile and abounds in fresh-water springs. The people are tribesmen, herders, and farmers.

The discovery of oil in Kuwait has transformed the ruler of the 200,000 tribesmen in this area into one of the world's wealthiest men. In smaller quantities oil is produced in Bahrain and in Qatar, both under British protection. More oil is thought to lie under the Oman, Muscat, and Hadhramaut lands. Traces have been found in several of the smaller desert

sheikdoms near Yemen. This oil wealth, both realized and potential, provides real incentive for controversy over control of these lands. Internal rebellions and increasing pressures from neighboring nations continually threaten British hegemony.

ADEN

Aden is a British colony won from Yemen in 1839. Aden proper is only about 80 square miles in size with a population of 140,000. The city of Aden is among the busiest seaports in the British Commonwealth. This port is on the direct line of commerce between Africa and India and services a vast shipping trade. Aden proper has a large British air base and a petroleum refinery of considerable size.

Aden Protectorate, an area of Arab chiefdoms also under British control, is far larger. This territory covers 112,000 square miles and contains 650,000 people. Oil was discovered in 1955 in the eastern Aden Protectorate.

TURKEY

Although Turkey is not included in some Middle Eastern geopolitical groupings, its role as ruler of the Middle East during the centuries of the Ottoman Empire, together with the fact that 98 per cent of its people are Moslems, suggests a place for it in our survey.

Even though the later years of Ottoman rule placed France, Great Britain, and Russia in influential positions with regard to the Middle East (see page 4), the Ottoman Empire remained in control until Turkey's defeat in World War I. The abrupt swing at the close of the war relegated Turkey to a position of relative mediocrity as the newly mandated areas, freed from Ottoman control, attempted to win back from Turkey "stolen" trade and cultural centers. In the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, Turkey was established as fully independent. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, or Ataturk, in reality a benevolent dictator, a parliamentary republican system was developed.

With the termination of World War II and the onset of the Cold War, Turkey's pro-Western sentiment brought it back into a position of some importance. As a relatively stable republic, a founding member of the United Nations, and a strategic member of the NATO alliance and the Baghdad Pact, Turkey has become a committed Western ally.

Turkey's population numbers around 25,500,000 in 296,185 square

miles, an area a little larger than Texas. The growing economy includes sizable exports of tobacco, cotton, hazelnuts, chrome, and copper—exports sent mainly to the United States, Great Britain, and West Germany.

The government is planning programs for a stabilized economy, including industrial development and extension of facilities for transportation, education, health, and housing.

DIVERSITY AND UNITY

The Middle East is a land of sand and mountains, sparse in wood and water. The natural resources that do exist—metal ore, workable stone, tillable land, even flint—are often widely scattered, separated by burning deserts or malarial swamps. Such a land would seem a formidable challenge to peoples devoid of all power but that of human muscle. Yet such people living in this difficult environment produced in ancient biblical times many of those crucial inventions upon which modern civilization depends. From these early dwellers in the Middle East we have received most of the plants and animals we use daily. We owe to them likewise the inventions of metallurgy and glass making, the principles of the rotating shaft, the alphabet, and a religious way of life deeply affecting our contemporary culture.

In a land where resources are so widely scattered and transportation so minimal we might logically expect to find the development of specializations confined to an area where necessary materials are immediately available. In the Middle East, however, the specializations have been developed to a point where an entire village or area concentrates on one vocation, be it metalwork, pottery, silken textiles, woolen rugs, or the breeding of camels and horses. From fathers to sons for generations have passed secrets of working with metal or wool. In geographic isolation communities have practiced their skill to its perfection. Such specialization is an efficient way to exist in a poor environment, but it depends upon the development of an adequate means of transportation. A village devoted to silk spinning or metalworking relies for its very life upon transport of its goods out to trade centers and a flow of necessities in from other centers. A complex of transportation specialists must develop along with traders and merchants.

Many areas, because of this relative isolation and economic specialization, developed unique customs among their people—special mannerisms, modes of dress, colloquial speech, and later even variations upon the basic faith of Islam. If their journeys took them from home these special

customs identified them, for example, as well-diggers of the north or rug-weavers of the south.

The relationship established between man and land has traditionally been successful in supporting a stable population. Introduction of modern means of power, sudden population increases, a transportation system adequate for transporting finished goods and also for transporting raw materials from one area to another have demanded the establishment of new man-land relationships in parts of the Middle East. In some areas the ancient village specializations have broken down and a more diversified way of life has developed. In other areas, and even in the large modern cities, the ethnic division of labor has simply been adapted to supply men for the new jobs created by industrialization. Until recently, for example, most of the clerks in Egypt were from an ethnic division known as the Copts.

Although the introduction of modern power has required readjustments in the original pattern of living, leaving the cities and the few main highways even today brings us back relatively swiftly to the old pattern where we find peoples living as they did in the times of Abraham and Isaiah. A crucial development over the past ten years that has disrupted more seriously the stable organization of life in the Middle East, involves the phenomenon of mass migrations numbering into the hundreds of thousands. Thousands of Jews, economically specialized in this Middle-Eastern mode of living, moved into Israel from areas that had been their homes for generations. Arabs moved out of Israel, away from their ancestral homes. In Yemen, for example, the Jews had almost a monopoly on the export-import trade, ironworking, stone masonry, money exchange, and marketing of textiles. Who can be found to adopt these vocations for centuries exclusively Jewish? Such losses in human ability have disrupted and strained the system throughout the Middle East.

Even as ethnic specialization has formed the pattern of living in the Middle East, religion has been the bonding agent holding these diverse human beings together in an exchange of mutual confidence.

About A.D. 570, Mohammed, Prophet of Islam, was born in Mecca. Before Mohammed's time the peoples of the Middle East worshiped in many forms, ranging from local tribal superstitions to universal religions like Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Mohammed and his followers succeeded where all others had failed and united the Arab world under a common god and a single code of ethics.

Mohammed's code was built upon the religious outlines of Judaism and Christianity. Moslems see these three faiths as identical in their early

development. They feel, however, that Judaism corrupts the true faith in its refusal to accept Mohammed as the last and complete prophet whose words were the fulfillment of God's communications to mankind. Christianity corrupted the true faith by turning Jesus (to the Moslems only a prior prophet) into a god. Thus the Middle East, holy land for the three faiths, contains objects and places enshrined and revered alike by Jews, Christians, and Moslems. The kinship was in part responsible for the relatively peaceful cooperation among the faiths characteristic of the early development of Islam. This same kinship, complicated by political differences between Christian nations and the Arab world, and with the emphasis shifted from likeness to difference, bred hostility and suspicion in later years.

The faith of Islam cultivates the virtues of devotion, humility, and acceptance—virtues achieved through obedience to the Law. The Law itself is a carefully detailed code of behavior derived from the Koran (the will of God spoken through the mouth of Mohammed) and from the Traditions, noninspirational sayings and records of the action of the prophet.

Deviations from the original code are common throughout the Arab world. Some sects, perhaps more seriously influenced by Christianity, attribute varying measures of divinity to Mohammed. Other variations stem from differing opinions on the meaning of some passages in the Koran. More limited deviations result from the natural addition of local superstitions to the body of basic Islamic beliefs.

In spite of these deviations, however, the incredible success achieved by Mohammed and his followers deserves special notice. Carleton Coon in *Caravan*, his definitive book on Middle Eastern culture (see Bibliography), has this to say of the religious unity of Islamic peoples:

If ever a religion were built to fit a cultural situation, Islam was it. Its principal differences from Christianity (and here I expose myself to criticism from both sides) are that it was suited to a particular environment and culture, while Christianity is applicable to all time and space, and that by so limiting itself Islam became correspondingly more practical in the immediate situation, and surer of success within its smaller field. Conceptually a less ambitious and more certain venture, it produced its golden age earlier than that of Christianity, which, though older, required a wider canvas, greater resources, and a more elaborate technology for its fruition.

The peoples of the Middle East are united, then, in diversity—a diversity born of specialization and a unity born of necessity and bonded by religion.

Nationalism is a strange phenomenon to place against this mosaic of diversity. Peoples whose loyalty has rested for generations within an isolated community, peoples who have looked upon all others outside of their local specialization as strangers, do not easily learn to shift their loyalty from the real and immediate to the larger and, to them, entirely unreal and arbitrary "national" identity. The two seem to be incompatible. The fact of their union is again due in no small part to the uniting of human beings in a common emotion—this time an emotion of hatred.