THE ISLAMIC GUILDS.

By Bernard Lewis.

The craft-guilds are one of the most interesting and characteristic phenomena of medieval Muslim civilisation. In the Islamic lands, one finds hardly a trace of what might be called a civic spirit, a municipal life. The Muslim cities of the Middle Ages were for the most part ephemeral, enjoying a commercial and intellectual efflorescence for a century or so, and then dwindling or disappearing. There have thus rarely been any clearly defined municipal institutions, or any crystallised and permanent urban entities. All that spirit of local solidarity and organisation, that is so important in medieval Europe, was excluded by the permanently unsettled state of Muslim political conditions from expression in the political field, and was driven to seek an outlet in economic life. Thus, in the craft-guilds and confraternities of Islam, we find the equivalent, not merely of the European guilds, but also of that intense local life that is one of the most significant aspects of medieval European history.

So important was the guild in Muslim life, that in many cases the very topography of the Muslim city, which was built essentially on the idea of a market, was determined by the needs of the guildsmen. From Morocco to Java, with surprising uniformity, the Muslim city rose round three or four central points, always the same. The first fixed point is the exchange—always an important centre in a bimetallist economy such as that of medieval Islam. Around it are the toll-gatherer, the local mint (where there is one), the auction market, and the Muhtasib, or inspector of markets. Here, too, are stationed the porters. The second centre is the Qaisaria, a strong, closed-in building where foreign goods and valuables are stored. The name is probably of Byzantine origin. The third is the thread-market (Suq al Ghazl), where the women come to sell their own handiwork. And here, too, are stationed the dealers in such commodities as women are likely to buy—bakers, market gardeners, etc. The fourth centre is the university, usually attached to a mosque. In it, teachers and students form a genuine guild organisation. Around these four centres are distributed the guildsmen; each guild in its own market. As will readily be seen, granted the fixity of these four

points, the topographic distribution of the guilds in different towns will likewise tend to be fixed.

Let us now consider the problem of the origins and early history of the guilds—one in which the generally undeveloped state of the subject is specially noticeable. A fairly obvious suggestion is that they are a continuation of their Byzantine predecessors. We know that until the seventh century A.D., on the very eve of the Arab conquest, there were numerous guilds in the Byzantine provinces of Syria and Egypt,¹ and it is rather improbable that these guilds were destroyed by the conquerors, whose policy, as we know, was to leave more or less intact the administrative and economic machinery left to them by the Byzantines. Yet it is not until the tenth century, 300 years later, that we find any definite indication of the existence of Muslim guilds, and then they are of a type entirely different from the pre-Islamic ones. For the whole of the intervening period we possess few notices, and those of a brief and fragmentary character. The first is a sentence in the historian Ibn-ul- 'Idhari, who tells us that in the year A.D. 770 the Arab governor of Qairouan, in Tunisia, "regulated the markets and allotted to each craft its place."² Although the text in which this statement is made is itself of the tenth century, there is every reason to believe it genuine. The information is interesting, as it shows that the governor brought the artisans and markets of Qairouan, a new city built by the Arab conquerors, under the same form of public control and supervision as was exercised by the eparch in the Byzantine cities around. To deduce from this, however, as do von Kremer³ and Atger,⁴ the existence of Arab guilds in Qairouan seems to me unjustified by the evidence available.

By the end of the ninth century, we have a fair number of sources indicating the existence of some form of corporative organisation of merchants and craftsmen. These guilds are not yet of the characteristic Islamic type, and are rather a public regulation and control of markets and crafts, of the kind described in contemporary Byzantine sources.⁵ From these indications it would seem permissible to deduce the retention by the Muslim rulers of the forms of public control of the crafts employed in the Byzantine administration, at least in dealing with non-Arab and non-Muslim artisans, and perhaps even its extension to the Muslims themselves. It is not, however, until the following century that we find any

¹ See Stöckle, Spätromische und Byzantinische Zünfte, Leipzig, 1911.
² Ibn-ul-'Idhari, Ed. R. Dozy, Leyden 1851, p. 68.
considerable development of what may be called Islamic guilds, and then they are of a type which cannot be explained by Byzantine influence or heritage.

Beside the Byzantine theory, however, there is another theory, the examination of which will necessitate a brief excursus on a subject with which non-orientalists will probably be unfamiliar.

During recent years, orientalists have begun to realise more and more that Sunni (orthodox) Islam, during the epoch of the Caliphate, was never the true religion of the masses. The more one studies the Islamic literature of the Middle Ages, the more one sees that Sunnism was regarded everywhere as the religion of a dominant caste, the religion of the State, the distinctive mark of the conquering Arab aristocracy. In the earlier stages, this was the attitude even of the conquerors themselves. For many centuries after the Muslim conquest, the vast majority of the Caliph’s subjects were not Sunni, and hated Sunnism as the emblem of an oppressive regime and of a foreign, privileged ruling class.

Nevertheless, the religious sentiment was present and powerful among the masses. It found its expression in a whole series of mystical, heretical sects, running from the eighth century A.D. until the Mongol conquest. These sects were almost all characterised by a syncretistic philosophy, containing elements borrowed from pre-Islamic systems, especially Neoplatonism, Manicheism and Mazdakism, by a revolutionary and equalitarian social philosophy, and by a secret, quasi-masonic organisation, usually interconfessional, with graduated ranks of initiation. An interesting modern parallel to the success of these movements and the failure of Sunnism is to be found in the situation in Dutch Indonesia and French West Africa, where, despite vastly superior resources, the Christian missions make far less progress among the native population than does the propaganda of Islam. Here, again, it is because Christianity is associated in the mind of the Malay or the Negro with the

1 See van Vloten, Recherches sur la domination arabe, etc., Amsterdam, 1894. Also Becker, Islamstudien, Leipzig, 1924, vol. 1, and Barthold, Mussulman culture, Calcutta, 1934, pp. 72-7 and 100-2. It is interesting to note, however, that the division between Sunnis and heretics does not correspond exactly with that between Arabs and non-Arabs. The Persian ruling classes of the old Sassanid Empire were soon incorporated into the social structure of the Caliphate and also into the Sunni faith. The poorer Arab populations of Syria and Iraq, on the other hand, came under the influence of Manichean and other heresies.


foreign rule, and he chooses to be a first-rank Muslim rather than a second-rank Christian.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries these movements were at their height. It was a period of industrial development and urban agglomeration. The rise of an elaborate system of banking, with headquarters at Baghdad and branches all over the empire, served to keep the state well supplied with coined money and to maintain generally a monetary economy. Reacting on the growing industrialisation, it resulted in a concentration of both capital and labour.1 As was to be expected, the rapid growth of large-scale capitalism provoked grave social crises. In Baghdad, we read, there were a series of dangerous outbreaks,2 in Mesopotamia, already in the ninth century, a revolt of Negro slaves,3 and everywhere continual risings of the sects. During this period the Muslim world was shaken to its foundations by a movement of revolt, at once intellectual, political and economic, which threw off as a by-product the Fatimid anti-Caliphate of Cairo, and which, in its final failure, dragged down the whole of medieval Islamic civilisation with it. The Qarmati ("Carmathian") movement, as we may call it, after the name of its most active and most important section,4 was characterised by an extraordinary liberalism. It appealed to all the innumerable religions and sects of the Muslim world—Sunnis, Shiis, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians alike, in the name of intellectual liberty and social justice. Its exact philosophy is difficult to determine, our sources being mainly either Sunni, and thus violently antagonistic and prone to misrepresent, or Isma‘ili, belonging to a later epoch, when the doctrines had suffered considerable modification. It seems clear, however, that it was a form of rational idealism, recognising the relativity of all religions, rejecting the formal law of Islam, and basing itself on a system of justice, toleration and complete equality.5 By an ingenious system

3 See Nöäldeke, Sketches from Eastern history, Edinburgh, 1892.
4 Other names are Batiniyya, Ta’limiya, Isma‘iliyya.
5 Even to-day the Ahl-i-Hakka, a fossilised remnant of one of these sects, inhabiting a few villages in N.W. Persia, retain something of this character. One of their eschatological poems, for example, contains the promise that "the Sultans will be punished." See Minorski, "Notes sur les Ahl-i-Hakka," Revue du Monde Musulman, vol. xi, 1920, pp. 20-97 and Encyclopædia of Islam supp. Ahl-i-
of interpretation, known as Ta‘wil, these doctrines were read into the text of the Quran and Muslim holy writings. Jewish and Christian scriptures, too, were treated in the same way. The Qarmati’Ubaidullah is unmerciful in his exposure of the social basis of orthodox Islam: “The true aspect of this is simply that their master (Muhammad) forbade to them the enjoyment of the good and inspired their hearts with fear of a hidden Being who cannot be apprehended. This is the God in whose existence they believe. He related traditions to them about the existence of what they will never witness, such as resurrection from the graves, retribution, paradise and hell. Thus he soon subjugated them and reduced them to slavery to himself during his lifetime and to his offspring after his death. In this way he arrogated to himself the right to enjoy their wealth, for he says: “I ask you no reward for it except friendliness to my relatives” (Quran, lxii, 23). His dealings with them were on a cash basis, but their dealings with him were on credit. He required of them an immediate exchange of their lives and property for a future promise which would never be realised. “Is paradise aught save this world and its enjoyment? Or are hell and its torture anything but the state to which the observers of the Law are reduced, namely, weariness and exertion. . . .” This extract is cited by a Sunni author who died in A.D. 1057, as an example of the iniquities of the Qarmatis, and its authenticity is doubted by some scholars. Yet, though it is somewhat crude in form, there is nothing in it apart from the personal depreciation of Muhammad that cannot be corroborated by quotations from the few Qarmati or neo-Qarmati sources that we possess.

The movement was also a great educative force, distinguishing itself by the foundation of schools and universities of which the most famous, that of Al-Azhar in Cairo, converted to orthodoxy, still exists, and by the compilation of a great encyclopædia which reminds us of the French Encyclopædist movement of the eighteenth century. In this encyclopædia, the Rasa’il Ikhwan us-Safa (Epistles of the Pure Brethren), we find almost all the progressive ideas of the epoch, and a few valuable hints on forms of organisation. From it we learn of the existence of societies of “pure brethren” all over the empire, working for the dissemination Hakk. Mr. Minorski notes particularly the popular character of the religion which is, he says, “professed particularly by the lower classes, nomads, villagers, inhabitants of the poorer quarters, dervishes, etc.”

1 See Kraus, Hebräische und Syrische Zitate, Der Islam, vol. 19.
2 The same sentiment and metaphor will be found in the quatrains of ’Umar Khayyam.
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of their ideas among all classes of the population and especially among the artisans.\(^1\)

It is the theory of Prof. Massignon that it was the Qarmati movement which created the Islamic guilds and gave them their distinctive character, which they have retained till to-day. The Islamic guild, he says, was essentially a weapon forged by the Qarmati propagandists in the struggle to weld the labouring classes of the Islamic world into a force capable of overthrowing the Caliphate and all that it represented. It was to reach the artisanate that they created and dominated the guilds, which thus came to have a double character, being at once professional guilds and Qarmati fraternities.\(^2\)

Let us examine the evidence in favour of this hypothesis. In the first place, we must note the great interest in the artisan classes displayed by the Qarmatis. A whole epistle of the Rasa’il Ikhwan us-Safa is devoted to a consideration of the manual crafts, their classification, and their essential nobility.\(^3\) A second factor is the difference in the situation of the guilds under the Fatimids and under Sunni states. Under Sunni rule, the guilds were persecuted, submitted to a thousand restrictions, deprived of any legal rights. There was a legal functionary, the Muhtasib, whose main duty was to supervise the guilds and to nip in the bud any attempt at independent action. We possess an interesting anti-guild literature, demonstrating the distrust felt by the Sunni state for the guilds.\(^4\)

Quite different was the position of the guilds under the Fatimids, where they enjoyed great prosperity. Recognised by the State, they seem to have possessed considerable privileges, and to have played an important part in the commercial revival that took place under Fatimid rule. It was under the Fatimids that was founded the guild of teachers and students which formed the great university of Al-Azhar, of which we have already spoken. In 1171 the Fatimid anti-Caliphate was destroyed by Saladin, and Egypt

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2 Unfortunately M. Massignon has not yet fully worked out his theory. As he himself says, “les matériaux sont encore à réunir.” In the following, general suggestions will be found in support of this hypothesis. “Le corps de Métier,” op. cit. Enc. of Isl., articles Sinf and Shadd. Enc. of Soc. Sci., article Guilds (Islamic). La Passion d’al-Hallaj, Paris, 1922, vol. i, pp. 83, 399, 410.
3 Rasa’il, vol. i, pp. 210 ff. As late as the seventeenth century, a Persian Ismaili religious poet devotes a whole passage to a discussion of craft guilds (Divan i Khaki Khorasani, Bombay, 1933, ii. 771 ff.).
recovered for orthodoxy. Immediately the guilds were deprived of most of their rights and privileges, and submitted to a very strict control.

A third factor in favour of this hypothesis is the strong trace of Qarmati influence left in the guilds long after the disappearance of Qarmatism. In the thirteenth century Anatolia, M. Köprülû tells us, the guilds still had a graded system of initiation closely resembling that of the Qarmatis, and studies of different guilds in different parts of the Islamic world have revealed similar traces. An Egyptian guild-tract of the sixteenth century, studied by Thorning and Goldziher, reveals a fierce hatred of the Ottoman rule and a social messianism closely resembling that of the Qarmatis. Most significant of all is the interconfessionalism of the guilds, which distinguishes them sharply from their European counterparts. Muslim, Christian and Jew are admitted on equal terms, some guilds being even predominantly non-Muslim (as those of doctors, dealers in precious metals, etc.). This connects the guilds very closely with Qarmati doctrine.

From all this it is clear that Qarmatism has played a great rôle in the development of the Islamic guilds, and has left a deep and lasting imprint in their inner life—though, it seems to me, there is not yet sufficient evidence to show that it actually created them. What seems more likely is that the Qarmatis gave a new élan and a new meaning to forms of organisation already existing. Whether these forms were of Byzantine origin, or were imitations of contemporary Byzantine institutions beyond the frontier it is impossible to say. Such an interpretation is supported by the traces of craft organisation in the pre-Qarmati period, and by the considerable Hellenistic element in Qarmati thought. The Islamic guilds would thus be a synthesis of a material framework of organisation inherited or imitated from the Greco-Roman world, and a system of ideas coming essentially from Syro-Persian civilisation, giving as result a movement at once Islamic, Hellenistic, interconfessional, philosophic and corporatist.

1 Köprülu, Origines de l'Empire Ottoman, Paris 1935, p. 111.
3 The MS. is in Gotha. See Goldziher, Abhandlungen zur Arabischen Philologie II, Leyden, 1899, pp. lxxvi ff. and Thorning, Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Islamischen Vereinswesens, Berlin, 1913, pp. 41 ff.
4 To this extent, the theory of Massignon is accepted by Gordlevsky, Köprülu and other authorities. Teschner, however, reserves judgment, “Diese Frage ist noch im einzelnen genauer zu untersuchen.” (Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1935, p. 31.)
In the middle of the thirteenth century took place the great disaster of the Mongol conquest. This conquest, which destroyed the Caliphate and submitted Sunni and heretic alike to the domination of a foreign and infidel race, tended to obliterate the distinctions between the two, and facilitated the more or less general conversion of the masses to Sunni Islam. With the almost complete disappearance of Qarmatism, the guilds, too, began to acquire a certain precarious status in Sunni society. Nevertheless, difficulties remained. The guildsmen, still suspicious of the religion of the ruling classes and of the State, linked themselves with a religious tendency which, though not actually heretical, was not always above suspicion, namely Sufism. Into relatively recent times periodic denunciations have been hurled against the guilds by Sunni jurists. Note for example the edicts issued against the guilds by the great Syrian jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1327), or by the Ottoman Sheikh Münirî Belğrâdi, in the seventeenth century.

In spite of this hostility, however, the position of the guilds in the post-Mongol period was fairly stable; and remained so until the Turkish reform movement of the nineteenth century began a process which has resulted in their general decline. It is from the post-Mongol period that most of our documents come, and all the information that we possess regarding the interior organisation of the guilds.

Before passing on to consider this organisation, however, it is worth while to examine a problem of considerable interest in Islamic guild history. At about the same time as the guilds begin to merge with the Sufi or Dervish brotherhoods, we find them coming into ever-closer association with yet another form of organisation—the Futuwwa. The origins of the Futuwwa movement are extremely obscure, and this is not the place to consider them. Suffice it to say that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Futuwwa associations spring up all over the Islamic lands. The Futuwwa is a group of young men, bound together by an ethical and religious code of duties and an elaborate ceremonial. They are under obligation to practise certain virtues and usually to render military service to the cause of Islam. The Futuwwa, as will thus be seen, constitutes in a certain sense a Muslim parallel to the European conception of chivalry, and von Hammer indeed has gone so far as to ascribe a Muslim origin to the latter.¹

In the period immediately following the Mongol conquest, the Futuwwa tends to identify itself more and more with the Sufi brotherhood and, through the bonds of a common membership,

with the craft-guilds. The process, starting in Anatolia, spread rapidly all over the Muslim world, and before long Futuwwa and guild became synonymous terms. How exactly this fusion took place, and what was the precise relationship between the different organisations, is an obscure question which has not yet been sufficiently elucidated. Täschner distinguishes three stages in the history of the Futuwwa—three stages of progressive social decline. Starting as an aristocratic, chivalrous order, they suffered, he says, a "Verbürgerlichung," a transformation into a bourgeois movement, in the thirteenth century, and finally, in the fifteenth century, sunk still lower by becoming proletarianised and thus identifying themselves with the craft-guilds. Thorning, on the other hand, maintains that the guilds and Sufis did not absorb but imitated the Futuwwa orders, adopting their ceremonial, their ideals and finally their name. Most convincing, however, is the explanation of Gordlevsky, who, with Köprülű, places the fusion of guild and Futuwwa in thirteenth-century Anatolia, and connects it with the highly important organisation of the "Akhiyan-i-Rum" (Akhis of Anatolia). The Akhis first appear in Anatolia in the years immediately following the Mongol conquest. The period was one of general anarchy and disorder. The Mongols, who had destroyed the Saljuk State, failed to provide any effective alternative, and the administration crumbled away. During this period of crisis, the Akhis appeared as a strong widespread organisation, willing and able to control. With "solidarity and hospitality" as its code, the artisan class as its social basis and "the slaying of tyrants and their satellites" as its task, the Akhi movement spread rapidly in town and countryside. It was a movement at once social, political, religious and military. At an early stage a visitor noticed that all the

1 An interesting study on the relations of guild and fraternity in Europe will be found in Billioud. De la Confrérie à la Corporation; les classes industrielles en Provence aux XIVme, XVme, et XVIme siècles. Mémoires de l'Institut Historique de Provence t. IV, Marseille, 1929.

2 Täschner, Die Islamische Futuwwabünd. Z.D.M.G., 1933, pp. 6 ff.

3 Thorning, Beiträge, op. cit.


5 Köprülű, Les Origines, op. cit., pp. 76-8 and 100-12.

6 The etymology and meaning of the word Akhi are uncertain. Gordlevsky derives it from the Arabic "Akh," a brother, and connects the Akhis with the Pure Brethren (Ikhwan as-Safa). Deny on the hand derives the word from an east-Turkish root "aqî," meaning chivalrous, generous (Journal Asiatique, 1920, part ii, p. 183). In a recent lecture, unfortunately not printed, of which he has been kind enough to lend me the MS., M. Deny has developed his theory further and, I think, proved it beyond question.
members of a given lodge were of the same craft. The complete identification of the Akhi orders with the craft-guilds must have taken place at a very early date—perhaps even at the very inception of the movement. But the Akhis were not merely a professional organisation. They adopted as their duties the maintenance of justice, the prevention and punishment of tyranny, the observance of a moral and religious code, and the fulfilment of military obligations if necessary in defence of their rights. Membership was not reserved to Muslims, and at a later stage Christians appeared to have been very numerous.

In the Akhi movement is thus realised for the first time the union of guild, Futuwva and religious brotherhood. Interesting corroborative evidence of Qarmati influence in the guilds is provided by Gordlevsky,1 who discerns strong heretical influences in the Akhis and connects their origin with the Ikhwan as-Safa, already cited. Köprülü2 goes even further, and asserts that the Akhis were actually extremist heretics, of the same type as the Qarmatis themselves.

An interesting description of the Akhis of Anatolia has come down to us in the record of the travels of Ibn Battuta, a native of Tangier who visited Anatolia in the middle of the fifteenth century.3

With the rise and consolidation of the Ottoman Sultanate, the Akhis inevitably lost much of their power and influence, and after a tenacious but unsuccessful resistance, were compelled to renounce their political and military activities. Never, however, did they sink to the rank of a purely professional organisation. The spirit of the earlier period survived, and right on into the twentieth century4 the guilds have retained an inner, spiritual life and a moral code.

1 Gordlevsky, Iz Žizni Tsekhov, op. cit., p. 247-8.

It should be noted however that Taeschner denies any Isma'ili or Qarmati traces in the Akhi movement, and regards them as basically Sunni (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Akhis in Anatolien, Islamica IV, 1931, p. 17 ff.)

3 Ibn Battuta. Paris 1854, vol. II, p. 260 ff. For an examination of other sources on the Akhis, see Taeschner (Beiträge op cit.), who examines a very interesting Akhi manuscript of the 14th cent., attributed to Yahya ibn Halil. In this tract, three grades are distinguished—Yiğit (= fata in Turkish), Akhi and Sheikh—the last being rather theoretical than real. The Akhi had the duty of summoning and presiding at the weekly meetings, and instructing and initiating novices (terbiyyet). The Yiğitler (plural of Yiğit) were divided into two classes, Qavlı and Saifi, the latter being those from whom new Akhis were appointed when vacancies occurred. As permanent functionary, there was the Naqib, or Master of Ceremonies.

4 Gordlevsky, Iz Žizni Tsekhov, op. cit.
From Anatolia, the interpenetration of guild, Futuwwa and fraternity spread rapidly, and by the fifteenth century the process was complete in all the central lands of Islam.

It is from these Futuwwa guilds that most of our documents on interior organisation have come. Every guild had a code of rules, customs and ceremonial, usually orally transmitted. This code was known as the Dustur (a Persian word meaning "permission," later "constitution"). In some cases, the codes have been committed to writing, and a large number of such tracts, dating from the fourteenth century onwards, have come down to us. Kitab-al-Futuwwa, or Fütüvvet-Name, as these guild-tracts are termed, constitute, together with a number of touristic and geographical works, our principal sources of information.¹

From them it is possible to some extent to reconstruct the hierarchy of the guild. In doing so, however, it is wise to bear in mind that our documents come from a field extending in time from the fourteenth to the twentieth century, and in space over the whole of Islam. Although there has been very little change through the centuries, there is considerable local diversity. We shall attempt, therefore, to present a composite picture, while noting the chief divergences according to place and period.

At the head of the guild is the Sheikh.² He is elected by the master craftsmen, and, once elected, is unchallenged ruler of the guild, combining the functions of head, treasurer and scribe. After him come the Ikhtiyariyya, or elders among the master craftsmen, who co-operate generally with him in the administration of the guild. Next come the master craftsmen (Usta, sometimes Mu'allim), the main body of the guild. The journeyman (Sani`) does not play a great part in the Islamic guild, and is usually missing altogether, the transition being direct from apprentice to master. In some there is an intermediary stage, during which the artisan is called Khalifa, or Khalfa (companion, adjunct). This stage, however, is merely temporary.

The apprentice (Mubtadi)³ completes the series. In the majority of cases no time of apprenticeship is fixed, nor is any masterpiece in the European sense required. The time of study and of acceptance are fixed by the master with whom the apprentice works.

¹ With two or three exceptions, these tracts are all still in manuscript, and are scattered all over Europe and Asia in public libraries and private collections. For a survey and classification see Thorning, Beiträge, p. 15-54 and Täschner, Futuwwa-Studien, Islamica V, 1932.

² The Sheikh is also known as Amin, 'Arif, and sometimes as Naqib, the Naqib as separate rank disappearing. In Turkey the Sheikh is called Sheikh-Usta or Esnaf Başı, and in Central Asia Anışaqal.

³ Also Muta'allim, and in Turkish 'çırak'.
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Discipline is exercised either by the Sheikh alone, or by the Sheikh and İkhtiyariyya together, according to different texts.

A somewhat different form of organisation is found in the later Anatolian guilds described by Gordlevsky. Here an apprenticeship of one thousand and one days is demanded. During this period the apprentice receives no salary, but is entitled to tips and to a banquet on initiation. He receives at the same time his craft training from the master and moral instruction at the Zawiya. At the end of his apprenticeship he is required to present a masterpiece, and is formally initiated at a public ceremony by the Esnaf Başi and the Yiğit Başları (elders). He then becomes Khalfa, adjunct. He must remain a Khalfa for at least six months, after which he may establish himself as a master craftsman. In this he is usually aided financially by his teacher and the other masters.

The guild is headed by a committee (lonca heyeti) composed of the elders. The final decision remains with the chief, who is usually chosen for his piety. The council meets fortnightly. The orders and punishments resolved upon are executed by the Çaus, or the İş-başı. The council jealously guarded the quality of production, the penalty for bad craftsmanship being temporary exclusion from the guild. Raw materials were purchased under the supervision of the Sheikh, the poorer craftsmen taking precedence of the rich. A general meeting was held once yearly.

We may note in passing the important part played in guild life by ceremonial garb. The outer characteristic of the early Futuwwa was the Sirwal, or ceremonial trousers, and Arab writers often speak of putting on the Sirwal as a way of saying “joining the Futuwwa.” This custom passed into guild usage, and until quite recently the ceremony of initiation took the form of putting on certain garments—the Sirwal, or trousers, the Shadd, or girdle, and the Pishtimal or apron being the chief.

We possess two detailed descriptions of the Islamic guilds, which it is worth while to examine individually. The first of these is contained in the Book of Travels of a Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, who in the early seventeenth century, at the request of the Sultan, compiled a detailed list of the guilds and corporations of Constantinople. In this work we find for the first time a full description of the guild organisation of a Muslim city.

2 Gordlevsky says that owing to lack of capital the period during which the artisan was Khalfa often extended beyond the minimum.
3 Sometimes of the Sheikh, the Kiaya (vice-head) and two masters.
4 See further Enc. of Is. Article “Shadd.”
5 Evliya Çelebi Siyahat-Name, Istanbul 1314 vol. I pp. 473 ff. An English C.
Evliya Çelebi prefixes to his description of the guilds a Fütüvvet-Name, which is apparently reproduced textually, and which contains the usual legends and catechisms, and also a description of the ceremony of initiation. The hierarchy here described consists of the Sheik (head), the Naqib (vice-head), the Çauş (usher), the Usta (master) and the Şagird (= çirak, apprentice). The journey-man, it will be noticed, is not mentioned at all.

He then proceeds to an enumeration "of all the guilds and professions existing in the jurisdiction of the four Mallas of Constantinople, with the number of their shops, their men, their Sheiks, and their Pirs." They are divided into fifty-seven sections, containing in all one thousand and one guilds.¹

Space does not permit us to follow Evliya in his description of all the fifty-seven sections. Let us just note as general principle that each section is under the headship of a single person, usually the head of the principal guild within the section, who holds the higher office ex officio as it were. The few sections that are headed by official personages like the Su-Başı are exceptions, the reason being the official or semi-official character of the professions themselves.

Once a year the guilds held a public procession, and great importance was apparently attached to the order of precedence. Evliya gives an amusing description of a dispute of this kind between the butchers and the Egyptian merchants, in which the final decision is given by the Sultan in favour of the merchants.

Our second source comes from the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1884, Elia Qoudsi, a Syrian Christian, presented to the International Congress of Orientalists the results of an enquête on the guilds of Damascus conducted by him in the previous year.² Although relatively recent, this study may be regarded as a historical source, for most of what it describes has since disappeared, without having been studied again.

At the head of all the guilds of the town, he tells us, was the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh, the Sheikh of Sheiks. This post was hereditary in a certain family. He could not be elected, deposed, or replaced, and was removable only by his own death or resignation (occasionally, however, by the Sultan). In earlier times he was supreme judge in all guild affairs. Tradition said that in days translation, unfortunately inaccurate and incomplete, will be found in Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa by Evliya Efendi, translated by J. von Hammer, London 1846, vol. I part II pp. 90 ff.

¹ Note that the number is the same as that fixed for the days of apprenticeship in Anatolia.
gone by his powers had been very wide, extending even to the right to inflict death penalties. He had long retained, however, the right to imprison, chain and whip the guildsmen. He lived on his hereditary Waqfs (i.e. lands in mort-main, the revenues of which always belonged to the incumbent Sheikh ul-Mashaikh). After the Tanzimat (nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms) his powers were considerably diminished, and the post became almost purely honorific. The incumbent at the time of Qoudsi’s enquête was a great scholar, but entirely ignorant of all crafts. His sole function was to ratify the investiture of guild heads by the masters.

The post of Sheikh ul-Mashaikh, it may be noted in passing, would appear to be purely Damascene, as no trace of it can be found in any other city.

Since the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh could not personally attend all guild-meetings, whenever a meeting was held for the initiation of journeymen or masters, or any other matter of general interest, the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh sent a functionary called the Naqib. When the office of Sheikh ul-Mashaikh was an important and influential one, they used to be many Naqibs. At the time of his enquête, however, Qoudsi found only one, who possessed the knowledge of craft and guild affairs which the Sheikh lacked.

Next was the Sheikh ul-Hirfa (Sheikh of the guild), elected by the eldest workers from among the best craftsmen and guildsmen. No rule of priority, whether of age or length of membership, was observed. The Sheikh might be and often was a very young man. He was required to be of good character, a skilful craftsman, respected by the guildsmen and capable of representing them before the authorities. In some guilds the Sheikhship was hereditary, but always subject to the ratification of the electorate. The Sheikh was appointed for life, but could be replaced if found remiss. His duties were as follows—to summon and preside at meetings, to watch over the maintenance of the standard of the craft, to punish those who violated the rules of the craft, to regulate the conditions of labour (this was delegated to the masters); to initiate new journeymen and masters, to be the responsible head of the guild in all dealings with the government. As regards the election of the Sheikh, Qoudsi notes that he was not elected by a majority vote. On the vacation of the post, the senior masters assembled and discussed eligible candidates. If in discussion they failed to reach an agreement, a Sheikh was appointed by the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh, who in any case confirmed the new Sheikh in his office at a special ceremony.

As assistant to the Sheikh, there was the Shawish (an Arabicised form of Çauş), who stood in the same relation to him as the Naqib
to the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh, with the important difference that whereas the Naqib was nominated by the Sheikh ul-Mashaikh, the Shawish could only be appointed with the approval of the electors. The Shawish had no powers of his own—he was merely the representative and executive officer of the Sheikh ul-Hirfa. The office, Qoudsi tells us, "is very ancient, but the name is recent."

The apprentice (Mubtadi) worked without pay for a number of years until he reached manhood and the mastery of the craft (sometimes, however, he received a small weekly wage according to merit). He then became a journeyman (Sani'). If he did not achieve mastery, his wages remained low, and he was not allowed to open on his own account.

The journeymen, in Qoudsi's time, formed the backbone of every guild, and were in a large majority. Through them, he tells us, the compactness of the craft was preserved and the secrets of craftsmanship were transmitted.

Qoudsi then goes on to describe in detail the ceremonies of initiation, the oaths of secrecy and good craftsmanship involved, the elaborate set of rules (Rusum) regulating every aspect of the guildsmen's lives and the signs and gestures of recognition. In conclusion, he points to the resemblance between their movement and European freemasonry, and asks whether there may not be some relation between the two.¹

Some notes on the Egyptian guilds at about the same time show some divergence. The Sheikh ul-Mashaikh is here unknown, the guilds being under the general control of the chief of police. The guild head (here called Sheikh ut-Taifa) had the power to supervise the workers, to adjudge professional conflicts, to punish faults. In case of necessity he convoked a council of Mukhtars (vice guild-heads), which formed a sort of corporative court of justice. The grade of journeyman did not exist, the apprentice, on initiation, becoming at once Usta, or master. A masterpiece was required.² Of particular interest is the information that the Cairo

¹ With reference to this, it may not be out of place to mention a curious connection between freemasonry and the Islamic guilds. At the beginning of the nineteenth century some French travellers in Syria claim to have discovered a close resemblance between the secret signs of the freemasons and those of the Druzes, a heretical sect inhabiting the Lebanon. As the Druzes are more or less identical with the Qarmatis, whose great influence on the Islamic guilds we have already mentioned, the connection is interesting. Von Hammer regards the whole European guild system as being derived from that of Islam. (Constantinopolis und der Bosporos, Pesth, 1822, p. 395.)

guilds possessed a form of unemployment and sickness insurance, in which all members participated.¹

All these organisations, which have survived almost without change into the nineteenth and sometimes even the twentieth century, have not been able to resist the shock of the European invasion. Everywhere in the Muslim lands the old forms of production are giving way to new ones, and inevitably the old guilds are falling to pieces. Often they are transformed into trade unions (Naqabat) of the European type. Those of Tunisia, Syria and Dutch Indonesia have affiliated themselves to the Communist Trade Union International. Others are still in a state of transition.

There remains² to be mentioned one very curious phenomenon in Muslim guild life—that of what are known as the immoral guilds. From the earliest times³ we find, in Muslim lands, organised guilds, complete with ceremonial, code and rites, of such “professions” as thief, brigand and bandit. The Banu Sasan, or organised bandits of Cairo, long exercised considerable power, and during the period of disorders under the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtafi (1136-60), the thieves’ guilds of Baghdad seem to have dominated the town.⁴ These organisations, which, needless to say, had no real contact with the true artisans’ guilds, nevertheless served to bring the latter into disrepute, and were often used by anti-guild polemists as a means of attack.⁵

What are the general conclusions to be drawn from this survey of the Islamic guilds? It seems to me that we can point to four distinctive qualities, marking off the guild organisations of Islam from those that have grown up in Europe, as follows.

Unlike the European guild, which was basically a public service, recognised, privileged and administered by public authorities, seigneurial, municipal or royal, the Islamic guild was a spontaneous

² Our survey of the Islamic guilds has of necessity been mainly confined to those of the Central lands of Islam, viz. Egypt and S.W. Asia. There remain, however, the very interesting guilds of the peripheral lands, especially of Indonesia, Asiatic Russia and Morocco, which possess special characteristics of their own and which it is impossible to consider here. For further details see Gavrilov, R.E., I, 1928 op. cit.; Schuyler, Turkestan, London, 1876, vol. i, and Enquête sur les Corps du Maroc, op. cit., and Atger, Les Corporations Tuniennes, Paris, 1909.
³ E.g. Mas’udi (d. a.d. 956) notes the existence of a thieves-guild in Baghdad (Les Prairies d’Or, Paris, 1861, viii, p. 189).
⁵ Prof. Coornaert tells me that such organisations are not special to Islam, as similar guilds are to be found in the later Middle Ages in France.
development from below, created, not in response to a State need, but to the social requirements of the labouring masses themselves. Save for one brief period, the Islamic guilds have maintained either an open hostility to the State, or an attitude of sullen mistrust, which the public authorities, political and ecclesiastical, have always returned. How deep is this anti-authoritarian feeling is shown by its sudden revival in the twentieth century, exemplified in the important part played by the guilds in the Persian revolution, by the startling development of the Islamic guilds into a mass revolutionary organisation in Indonesia, by the close connection established by some of the guilds with European Socialism and Communism.\(^1\) The fact that occasionally Sunni sovereigns accorded some limited status to the Islamic guilds, in the hope of winning their support, does not invalidate this conclusion, any more than do the occasional disagreements between European sovereigns and guilds disprove the essentially public nature of the latter.

It is partly from this, and partly from the unchanging character of the forms of production in the Islamic lands from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, that springs the second distinctive characteristic of Muslim guild life. There is nothing in the history of the Islamic guilds to parallel the great efflorescence of the European guilds in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating as it did in the crystallisation of masters and journeymen into two distinct and hostile classes; in a great commercial and political rise of the masters, and in the constitution of separate journeymen’s guilds as a weapon in the acute struggle of classes that developed.\(^2\) In Islam, master, journeyman and apprentice remain essentially of the same class, in close personal contact.

\(^1\) See *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vols. li, lli, lvii. Even in twentieth-century Fez, M. Massignon notes that the guilds preserve “un esprit de frondeur très particulier contre le Souverain” (*Le Corps de métier*, op. cit.).

\(^2\) An apparent exception to this statement is to be found in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anatolia. Here a section of the master craftsmen of the Akhi associations, as Tæschner (Beiträge) and Köprülü (Origines) have observed, seem to have evolved into a sort of urban bourgeoisie—a “Bürgerliches Patriziat” in Tæschner’s phrase, enjoying considerable economic as well as social power. This tendency thus provides some parallel to the communal and municipal movement in Europe. It is however strictly limited in scope, and never developed far enough for any conflict of interests between masters and journeymen to arise. It is exclusive to Anatolia, where the strength of Byzantine influences and the recent immigration of the Turks created special circumstances, and even there it was suppressed as soon as the Ottoman dynasty succeeded in establishing itself. This temporary and local divergence does not therefore invalidate our general principle. Tæschner, it may be mentioned, regards these Akhis as an essentially bourgeois movement rather than a bourgeois outgrowth of the guilds, and places the actual identification of Futuwwa and guild a couple of centuries later.
The rank of journeyman, always of an occasional and transitory character, often entirely missing, never developed into a permanent social group without hope of ever attaining mastership. Free from the inner social differentiation that split the European guild, the Islamic guild thus retained the popular and equalitarian character imprinted upon it in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when it came into existence in its typical form as an artisan revolt against the rising commercial and financial capitalism of the day.

The third distinctive mark of the Islamic guilds is their interconfessionalism. Whereas the European guilds excluded even heretical Christians, the Islamic guilds were open to Jew, Christian and Muslim alike, some guilds, as we have already mentioned, being even predominantly non-Muslim.

Finally, we must notice the significance of the inner spiritual life of the Islamic guilds. Unlike the European, the Islamic guild was never a purely professional organisation. From the days when the guilds formed a part of the masonic system of the Qarmatis, until the present day, they have always had a deep-rooted ideology, a moral and ethical code, which was taught to all novices at the same time as the craft itself.

1 Although Qoudsi says that the journeymen form the main part of the guild, it should be remembered that Qoudsi is a late testimony, given when much had already changed. Evliya and Sedky on the other hand do not mention the rank.

2 See Billioud (op. cit., pp. 22 and 23), on the monopolistic and feudal character of the French “Corporations.” The masters, he notes, form a “caste féodale héréditaire,” and are “par avance hostiles à de futurs concurrents, c’est-à-dire à tous les éléments nouveaux, étrangers à leur caste.” Compare with this the attitude of Masters towards candidates for mastership in the Islamic guilds.