RELIGION AND WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

How Faith Shaped Societies from Antiquity to the Present

VOLUME 2

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN WORLDS

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Establishment of Ottoman Caliphate

The Ottoman caliphate existed from the reign of Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520) until its abolishment in 1924. Associated with the powerful Ottoman Empire throughout the early modern and modern eras, it represented the highest institutional religious authority in the Sunni Muslim world during this period, and at times exercised powerful diplomatic authority even in non-Ottoman lands.

The Ottoman caliphate, as the last broadly recognized caliphate in the Islamic world, emerged in the wake of the evolution of the institution in centuries prior. The caliphate traces its roots to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 where, under the Constitution of Medina, he established and administered a multireligious city-state composed of mostly Muslims and Jews. After his demise in 632, his successors were named Rashidūn caliphs (Hulefâ-yi Râşidîn), who represented a new political institution known as the caliphate, which was formed to rule over the newly established Muslim society. This institution was initially defined primarily as a political authority, but later it turned into a political-religious authority for Sunni Muslims.

Several important caliphates emerged in the centuries that followed, witnessing the evolution of the institution. Although the first four caliphs were determined by choosing of the leading companions of the Prophet and paying allegiance to them, the caliphate took the form of a dynasty under the Umayyads. They took the caliphate by force after revolting against the fourth caliph, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, and established their own dynasty in Damascus in 661. This political change would further exacerbate political divisions over who should rule Muslims, which emerged soon after the Prophet's death, and would make a political and subsequently a religious group, then called the Shiites, more visible, who advocate that 'Ali and his descendants should rule Muslims.

In 750, the Umayyads collapsed and the Abbasid caliphate was founded in Baghdad. In 1055, the Seljuk ruler Tugrul Bey took over guardianship of the Abbasid caliphate, bringing the political authority of the caliphate to an end. Thereupon, caliphs now began to act only as spiritual authorities that gave legitimacy to Muslim rulers in a similar way to how papal approval could bestow legitimacy on medieval Christian kings. In 1258, the Mongol ruler Hülegü (Hulagu) conquered Baghdad and ended the Abbasids. One of the members of the Abbasid family, Ahmad al-Mustansir-Billah fled to Cairo and became the first caliph of the Abbasid caliphate under the patronage of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1261. Thus, the Abbasid caliphate was reestablished without significant political and military authority, and it survived until the Ottomans annexed Egypt in 1517.

The Ottoman Empire, embracing the tradition of Ghaza (holy war, *jihad*), expanded militarily during the fourteenth century into Byzantine and eastern European territories. At the beginning of the 1360s, with Sultan Murad I, the Ottoman rulers began to symbolically use the title of caliph based on the Islamic law stating that "rulers who mind justice and apply Islamic rules can use the title of caliph in their own countries." Also, as a result of the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman sultans gained credibility with other Muslim rulers.

The Ottoman Empire also spread in the Middle East and North Africa in the sixteenth century. Indeed, Selim I defeated the Mamluks twice and put an end their existence in 1517. The Ottomans also controlled the Holy Cities—Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina—during this period, so Selim I began to use the title "The Servant of the Two Holy Cities (Mecca and Medina)," instead of "The Ruler of the Two Holy Cities," signifying his authority. He also had the Sacred Relics consisting of the Blessed Mantle, the Holy Banner and the Seal of Prophet Muhammad, and others, sent from Cairo to Istanbul. This was followed by the actions of the last Abbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil III, who further conferred religious legitimacy on Selim I when he formally gave his title as caliph to Selim I. Thus, the caliphate passed to the Ottoman dynasty, and starting with Selim I, the Ottoman rulers became the official caliphs of Sunni Islam.

By taking over the Caliphate, the Ottomans further increased their prestige and thus were considered to be the protectors of Muslims and the flag-bearers of Islam. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this authority was demonstrated when some weak Muslim sultanates in Asia and Africa asked the Ottoman caliphs for help in their fight against Western empires (e.g., Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian). The Ottoman caliphs usually responded to these requests for aid by conducting land and naval military expeditions and sending military experts and firearms, but they were not able to provide such support as they grew weaker in the following centuries.

The first official document through which a powerful foreign power recognized the Ottoman sultans as caliphs was the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed with the Russian Empire in 1774. According to this treaty, the Muslim Crimean khanate was granted political independence from Ottoman authority, but the authority of the Ottoman caliphs was still recognized in religious affairs until the early twentieth century. Thus, the Ottomans also noticed that the caliphate could be used for international issues.

Moreover, the Ottomans exercised authority over Muslims outside of the Ottoman borders through the caliphate. For example, the British also accepted the universality of Ottoman caliphs and asked Selim III (r. 1789–1807) and Abdul Majid (r. 1839–1861) to advise them on how to prevent Muslims in India from revolting. America made a similar request as well from Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) in the late nineteenth century concerning the Moro Muslims of the Philippines. All of the caliphs aided in these requests and intervened with local Muslim populations, who responded agreeably to the Muslims caliphs' instructions to them. The power of the caliphate in these kinds of matters, as an institution, was recognized by the British, French, Italians, and Russians, whose colonies were often in Muslim lands. Although the Ottoman Empire weakened politically and militarily as of the eighteenth century, the caliphate contrarily became an effective instrument of diplomacy in international affairs until the early twentieth century when it was abolished by the Turkish Parliament in 1924.

ERCAN KARAKOC

See also: Volume 1: Byzantium: Fall of Constantinople (1453); *Volume 2: Medieval Arab Civilization:* Abbasid Caliphate; Fall of Baghdad and the End of the Caliphate; Mecca-Medina War; Muhammad and the Foundations of the Islamic State; Rashidūn Caliphate; Umayyad Caliphate; *Seljuk and Ottoman Civilizations:* Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate; Collapse of the Ottoman Empire; *Jihad,* World War I, and the Ottoman Empire; Ottoman Empire; *Volume 3: Early Modern and Modern Africa:* Establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa

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Establishment of Secular Republic of Turkey

The origins of the establishment of the secular Republic of Turkey are found in the failures of the Ottoman administration during World War I and its aftermath. It was then that victorious Allied forces occupied much of the Ottoman Empire, prompting a Turkish nationalist response under the leadership of the statesman and soldier Mustafa Kemal (d. 1938), whom some have argued resembles U.S. president George Washington in his importance to the founding of the republic. Once revolutionary Turkish forces succeeded in expelling occupied forces, they abolished the Ottoman administration and established a new Turkish republic, eventually enshrining the principle of secularism in their new constitution during a period that saw radical social and cultural change.

The Ottoman Empire lost the World War I against the Allies. It had to sign the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918. As of the beginning of November, the Allies occupied many places in Anatolia, northern Iraq, and Syria. Istanbul, the capital, was occupied on November 13 as well. The strategic positions of the Turkish Straits were taken under the control of the Allies and the Ottoman army was completely demobilized. Yet Articles 7 and 24 of the Armistice stipulated even more disastrous conditions from the Turkish viewpoint. Article 7 gave the Allies the right to occupy any strategic places in the empire in response to any threats to the security of the Allied forces. Likewise, Article 24 stated that in case of a disorder in the six provinces, referred to as Armenian Vilayets in the English text, the Allies reserved the right to occupy any part of