ISLAM SEEN BY EVOLA

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In these days when there is a lot of shouting about the Third World War, given the recent war events between Iran and the United States, it is back in fashion to talk about "Islam". Obviously it was an opportunity, for mass media and hired opinion leaders, to come up with a long series of nonsense, all functional to reinforce the so-called "Clash of Civilizations". But what is Islam really? We thought that the best way was to leave the word to Julius Evola, in this speech by Claudio Mutti. \*

Since the sixtieth anniversary of the Suez War falls in these days, allow me to begin by recalling the considerations that at the time were made by Julius Evola in relation to that episode.

When in 1956, following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Egypt had to face Anglo-Franco-Zionist aggression, many of those who in the Second World War had fought with the conscience of political soldiers against the "democratic plutocracies of" West ”saw in Egypt a new front line against their own enemies and expressed their solidarity with the Egyptian people and their Rais, Gamal Abd el-Nasser (1).

nasser-egypt-islamIn fact, in the Italian fascist circles of the 1950s, the memory of the pro-Islamic position taken by Italy during the twenty years and of the solidarity that had been established between the Axis forces and the independence movements of the Muslim world during the years of the world conflict was still alive. . The Verona Manifesto, to which a large part of the militants of post-war fascism continued to refer, had indicated among the essential points of the foreign policy of CSR the "absolute respect for those peoples, especially Muslims who, like Egypt, are already civilly and rationally organized ".

And precisely in Egypt, in the 1950s, the revolution of the Free Officers, after having driven out the king enslaved to Great Britain, proclaimed the republic (18 June 1953), abolished the party power, launched a vast program of reforms, nationalized foreign capital, expelled the British from the Suez Canal, refused military alliances functional to imperialist domination, granted asylum and aid to the exiles of defeated Germany, he undertook to build a national socialism which, according to the Nasserian project of unity of the Arab Nation, should have become a genuine pan-Arab socialism, based on the spiritual assumptions provided by Islam.

Julius Evola, who at the time actively collaborated with the press organs of the so-called "national alignment", on March 3, 1957 published an article in the "Meridiano d'Italia" that bore this title: The emancipation of Islam is a road to communism . The same article, with a few more comma and a few less semicolons, was re-proposed the following year, on June 25, 1958, to the readers of the newspaper “Roma”, which was published in Naples.

First of all, writes Evola, the neofascists, who look with sympathy " the irredentist movements of the Arab peoples and the Egyptian initiatives themselves" , commit the error of indiscriminately attacking colonialism, "forgetting how it was linked up to yesterday to the very principle of hegemony of the white race " . Secondly, she writes, "the danger that the said independence movements will naturally end up in the waters of communism is quite evident" ; and Nasserian Egypt, according to Evola, would be the most advanced Arab country on this dangerous road. To the positions represented by Nasserism and the other liberation movements of the Islamic world, Evola contrasts what he believes would be "orthodox Islam", which, in his opinion, "is still defended by Saudi Arabia and the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. ”, Even if the latter, he adds, have included in their program “ very strong reformist and radical social ideas ” .

usa-saudia-obamaIt is difficult to find in the author of these statements the same Evola who twenty years earlier had dealt with the problematic nature of the "supremacy of the white race" in a much more critical way (2). It is even more difficult to understand how Evola could attribute a character of Islamic orthodoxy to a country such as Saudi Arabia , ruled by a faction that throughout the Muslim world, both Sunni and Shiite, has always been mostly regarded as sectarian and heterodox. . Furthermore, it is really strange that just a scholar like him, inclined to explore the background of historical facts and to denounce the plots of the "occult war", overlooked the fact that Saudi Arabia was born from the more or less occult operations of Great Britain, interested in hurling the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire and guaranteeing control of the Arabian peninsula; and that he overlooked the fact that the Saudi monarchy had now become an important pawn of US imperialism. This is largely explained by the fact that Evola had established that the West, to use his words, certainly not "in the context of an idea", but in a tactical reconnaissance of contingent circumstances, represented the "lesser evil" (3 ). In fact, the main enemy, as is well known, was communism for him, which many, even in good faith, considered a real risk, despite the evidence of the situation of objective complicity established in Yalta between the Americans and the Soviets.

Thus the obsession with communism led him, like so many others, to see the Bolshevik danger even where it did not exist : as, precisely, in Nasser's Egypt, where the communist party had been banned and its leaders , who were mostly Jews and therefore suspected of intelligence with the Zionist enemy, had been placed in a position not to harm.

In Evola's article, on the other hand, a point that the author himself considers "essential" seems more realistic and founded by him in the following terms, highlighted by italics: " the Islamic peoples themselves are not making themselves independent from the West that inasmuch as they become westernized, that is, inasmuch as they are spiritually and culturally subjected to the Western invasion ”. In other words, Evola continues, “they do not materially emancipate themselves except by largely abandoning their own traditions and constituting themselves more or less imperfect facsimiles of Western states ” . In short, if Evola was not completely wrong when he noticed that the political emancipation of colonized Muslim countries was often accompanied by the adoption of cultural elements extraneous to Islamic culture, he was wrong when he argued that Westernization would bring Muslim countries into his arms. of communism.

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conference-mutti-brescia-evola\_12112016-21What Evola wrote in 1956 constitutes a further confirmation of the need to distinguish the Evola as a political observer from the Evola scholar of the traditional world, since, in the face of the positions that emerge from the article on which I have dwelled, the Evolian work contains pages far from trivial in relation to the doctrine and civilization of Islam. We must therefore ask ourselves what knowledge Evola had of Islam, what elements he had somehow assimilated from it and what was, in his perspective, the specific position of the Islamic tradition.

The picture of the Islamic tradition traced by Evola in his main work, Revolt against the modern world (1934), does not occupy more than a couple of pages, but presents with sufficient prominence those aspects of Islam that from the evolving point of view are worth to characterize it. as, I quote literally, "a tradition of a higher level not only to Judaism, but also to the beliefs that conquered the West" (4), that is to say to the Christian religion.

In the first place Evola points out how the symbolism of Islam clearly indicates a direct reconnection with the primordial Tradition itself, so that Islam is independent of Judaism and Christianity, religions of which it rejects the particular themes: original sin , redemption, priestly mediation and so on. It is worth reading the evoliano passage directly:

As in priestly Judaism, here at the center is law and tradition as a formative force , to which, however, the Arab stocks of the origins offered a much purer, noble material, marked by a warrior spirit. Islamic law, shariyah , is divine law; its basis, the Koran, is conceived as the very word of God - kalâm Allâh - as a non-human work, an "uncreated" book, existing ab aeterno in the heavens. If Islam considers itself as "the religion of Abraham" and he also wanted to be the founder of the Kaaba , where the "stone" occurs, the symbol of the "Center", however, the fact remains that it affirms its independence from Judaism no less than from Christianity, that the center of the Kaaba with that same symbol is pre-Islamic and has remote origins that are difficult to determine; that in the Islamic esoteric tradition the reference point is the mysterious figure of Khidr , conceived as superior and anterior to the biblical prophets. Islam excludes the characteristic theme of Judaism, which in Christianity will become the dogma and basis of the Christic mystery: it maintains, considerably weakened, the theme of the fall of Adam, without however drawing from it that of "original sin". (…) Thus the idea of ​​"redeemers" or "saviors", the center of Christianity, not only, is also rejected, but the mediation of a priestly caste is excluded. (5)

Revolt against the modern world2-evolaThe radical formulation of the doctrine of Unity, the absence of any stain of anthropomorphism, the restoration of the primordial direct contact with the Principle, the integration of every sector of existence into a ritual order, the asceticism of the action culminating in the rite of jihâd , the ability to shape a "race of the spirit" in terms of ummah , an Arabic term that indicates the community founded on the same spiritual orientation: these are the aspects of Islam on which Evola's attention subsequently focuses. Let us again read the prose of Revolt against the modern world :

Conceived of the Divine in absolute monotheistic purity , without a "Son", without a quality of "Father", without a "Mother of God", every man as a muslem appears directly connected to God and sanctified through the law, which permeates and organizes life in all its juridical, religious and social expressions is something absolutely unitary. As mentioned, in the original Islam the only form of asceticism that was conceived was that of action, in terms of jihad, of "holy war", war, theoretically, never to be interrupted, until the full consolidation of divine law. And precisely through the holy war, not through an action of preaching and apostolate, Islam had a sudden, prodigious expansion, forming not only the Empire of the Caliphs, but above all the unity proper to a race of the spirit - umma - the "Islamic nation". (6)

Lastly, Evola observes, Islam is a complete traditional form , in the sense that in its context an esotericism is alive and operative capable of providing, to those with the necessary qualifications, the means to achieve a spiritual realization that goes beyond the exoteric goal of pure and simple "salvation of the soul".

Finally, Islam presents a traditionally high degree of completeness in that the world of Shariyah and Sunna, of law and tradition, has its complement not so much in a mysticism, but in real initiatory organizations - turuq - which it belongs to. the esoteric teaching, the ta'wil and the metaphysical doctrine of the supreme Identity , tawhid . The notion, recurrent in such organizations and, in general, in the so-called Shia, of the ma'sum , of the double prerogative of the isma , or doctrinal infallibility, and of the impossibility of being affected by guilt, for the leaders, the visible and invisible Imams, and the mujtahids , it logically falls within the truth of an unbroken race formed by a tradition of a level superior not only to Judaism, but also to the beliefs that conquered the West. (7)

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crusades-warrior-islam-holy-war-jihadWe have mentioned jihâd . Evola follows the widespread custom of rendering the Arabic term with the abused expression "holy war" and defines jihâd as the only form of asceticism conceived by the original Islam. We will note that the Evolian definition takes up the concept expressed by a traditional saying - a hadîth - of the Prophet Muhammad, according to which "the asceticism of Islam is the jihâd ". In this regard, it is important to note that Revolt against the modern world contains a chapter, entitled The great and the small holy war , in which Evola's debt to a book by René Guénon is evident (and indeed declared).Le symbolisme de la Croix , in particular the chapter entitled La guerre et la paix . In this chapter of Revolt against the modern world the author refers to a particular aspect of the doctrine concerning the jihâd , an aspect that is indicated precisely by the title The great and the small holy war .

In the context of Evoliano's work this notion of "great and small holy war" occupies a very important place, also because Evola attributes to it a paradigmatic value. The notion of "great and small holy war", in fact, exemplifies and represents, for Evola, the general conception that the world of Tradition refers to the warrior experience and, in a broader sense, to action understood as a way of spiritual realization.

What is the importance that the doctrine of the great and small holy war has for Evola can be deduced from the fact that he often takes up this concept when he has to illustrate the ascesis of action. For example, he took it up and developed it a few years after the first edition of Rivolta , precisely on 7 December 1940, in a lecture he gave in German in the Science of Civilization section of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut , at Palazzo Zuccari in Rome.

On this occasion Evola says: “It should not be surprising if we refer above all to the Islamic tradition. The Islamic tradition stands here in the place of the Ario-Iranian. [ Die islamische Tradition steht hier am Platze der arisch-iranischen ] The idea of ​​'holy war' (...) had, therefore, at the same time, the meaning of the late Renaissance of a primordial air inheritance [ Die Idee des 'heiligen Kampfes' (…) Hatte also gleichsam die Bedeutung der späteren Renaissance eines altarischen Erbgutes ] and, from this point of view, it can certainly be used "(8).

To the doctrine of the great and the small holy war, therefore, Evola entrusts the task of representing the traditional conception relating to the warrior experience and, in a broader sense, to action understood as a way of spiritual realization. The teachings concerning warrior action that are found in different traditional fields (for example in the Bhagavad Gîtâ and in the Templar doctrine) are considered by Evola in the light of their convergence with the Islamic doctrine of the jihâd and are exposed through the use of a notion which is also of Islamic derivation: the notion of the "Way of God" ( sabîl Allâh is the corresponding Koranic expression). The formula used by Evola to refer to this doctrine originates from a famous hadîth of the Prophet Muhammad, who, on his return from a military campaign, said: " Raja'nâ min al-jihâd al-açghar ilâ 'l-jihâd al-akbar ”That is:“ We have returned from the least effort to the greatest effort ”. ("Effort", in fact, is the literal meaning of the term jihâd , which is commonly rendered as "holy war").

Evola comments on this hadîth as follows:

In the Islamic tradition, two holy wars are distinguished: one is the 'great holy war' - al-jihâdul akbar - the other the 'little holy war' - al-jihâdul açghar (...) The great war is of internal order and spiritual; the other is the material war, the one that is fought externally against an enemy people (…) However , the 'great holy war' is to the 'little holy war' as the soul is to the body ; and it is fundamental for the understanding of heroic asceticism to understand the situation in which the two become one, the 'little holy war' becoming the means through which a 'great holy war' is carried out and vice versa: the 'little holy war' - the external one - almost becoming a ritual actionwhich expresses and testifies to the reality of the former. In fact, Orthodox Islam originally conceived only one form of asceticism: that which is linked precisely to the jihâd, to the 'holy war'. The 'great holy war' is man's struggle against the enemies he carries within himself. More precisely, it is the struggle of the non-human element of man against all that is in him of (…) governed by the principle of chaos and disorder . (9).

Later it continues like this:

In the world of traditional warrior ascesis the "little holy war", that is the external war, is pointed out or even prescribed as a way to carry out this "great holy war" and for this reason in Islam "holy war" - jihad - and " way of Allah ”are terms often used interchangeably. In this order of ideas, action rigorously has the function and task of a sacrificial and purifying rite. (...) Naturally, the spiritual orientation, the "right direction" - niyyah - which is that directed to the supraindividual states of being (symbols: the "sky", the "paradise", the "gardens of Allah", and so on) is presupposed as a basis; otherwise the war loses its sacred character and degrades into a wild and irrational story where the Warrior is replaced by the soldier and the "hero" in the ancient sense by the beast, or, at most, the exalted one. (10)

crusades-islam-knights-warEvola reports a whole series of Koranic passages relating to the concepts of jihâd and "Way of Allah"; alongside them are also cited, by way of example and illustrative, two maxims: "Heaven is in the shadow of swords" and "The blood of heroes is closer to God than the ink of philosophers and the prayers of devotees" (11 ).

Now, if the first of these two maxims is actually a hadîth , the second, taken from a source of which Evola does not provide the extremes, originally sounds in somewhat different terms: "The ink of the wise and the blood of the martyrs will be weighed in the Day of the Resurrection, and the balance will tilt in favor of the wise " ( hadîth referred to by Suyûtî, Al-jâmi 'aç-çaghîr ).

Before going on to expose the formulations according to which the doctrine of the "holy war" was enunciated in traditional spheres other than the Islamic one (especially in the Hindu and Christian ones), Evola identifies a relationship of analogy between the death achieved by the mujâhid and the mors triumphalis of the Roman tradition (12); the theme is taken up later, where the "meaning of immortalization" (13) attributed to warrior victory by certain European traditions is closely related to "the Islamic idea, according to which the warriors killed in the 'holy war' - jihad - they would never really die "(14).

In this regard Evola quotes a Koranic verse: “Do not say dead those who were killed in the way of God; no, indeed they are alive, but you do not realize it " (II, 149) (14bis). He indicates the convergence of this verse with a passage from Plato 's Republic ( Resp. 468 e) in which it is said - I quote Evola's words - that "some dead in war join the golden race which, according to Hesiod, it is never dead, but it subsists and is awake, invisible ” (15).

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Another topic that, in Revolt against the modern world , provides the starting point for some references to the doctrine of Islam is the one dealt with in the chapter on “The Law, the State, the Empire”. Noting that

even in medieval civilization the rebellion against the authority and the imperial law was considered in the same title as the religious heresy and the rebels were worth, no less than the heretics, as the enemies of their own nature, as those who contradict the law of their own essence , (16)

The death of Decio Mure, a Roman leader, an example of Devotio and Mors Triumphalis

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Evola notes the presence of a similar conception in Islam. Another parallel involving Islam is then established between the Roman conception on the one hand, which contrasts the law and the pax of the imperial ecumene with the naturalism of the barbarians while claiming the universality of its own law, and the Islamic doctrine from 'other. In fact, in the latter, he writes, we have

On a similar basis (...) the geographical distinction between dar al-islam, or land of Islam, governed by divine law, and dar al-harb, or land of war, to include peoples, which in the former must be taken up through the jihad, the "holy war ". (17)

In the same chapter, dealing with the imperial function of Alexander the Great, subjugator of the hordes of Gog and Magog, Evola refers to the Koranic figure of Dhû'l-qarnayn (the Bicorne, who is currently identified with Alexander), as well as to sura XVIII of the Koran . (18)

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The similarities between certain aspects of Islam and the corresponding elements of other traditional fields are also found in the Mystery of the Grail ; but, while in Rivolta we are dealing with pure doctrinal parallels, which sometimes see traditional forms that have never come into contact with the Muslim world compared with Islam, in the essay on the "Ghibelline imperial idea" the similarities between Islam and Templarism are instead pointed out in the picture of the relationships that would have existed between exponents of Christian esotericism and Islamic esotericism:

furthermore, the Templars were accused of having secret agreements with Muslims and of being closer to the Islamic faith than to the Christian one. This last hint is probably to be understood on the basis of the fact that anti-Christolatry also characterizes Islam. As for "secret understandings", they must appear to us to be synonymous with a less sectarian, more universal, and therefore more esoteric point of view than that of militant Christianity. itself, that is to warriors who had the same ethics, the same chivalrous customs, the same ideals of a "holy war" and, in addition, to corresponding esoteric veins . (19)

The mystery of the grail-evolaEvola thus goes on to draw a summary profile of what he, with a certain impropriety, defines "the Arab Order of the Ishmaelites" , that is the movement of Shiite origin born in the middle of the century. VIII:

Thus the Templars were exactly matched in Islam by the Arab Order of the Ishmaelites, who also considered themselves as the "guardians of the Holy Land" (even in an esoteric, symbolic sense) and had a double hierarchy, one official and one secret. (...) It is also interesting that the same theme of the Ghibelline imperial saga reappears in the Ishmaelite esotericism: the Islamic dogma of the "resurrection" (qiyama) here is interpreted as the new manifestation of the Supreme Head (Imam) who became invisible in the so-called period of "Absence" (ghayba) (20).

Islamic esotericism is defined by Evola as "a doctrine which even comes to recognize in man the condition in which the Principle becomes aware of himself, and which professes the Supreme Identity" (21), so that, thanks to it, the Islam constitutes

a clear and eloquent example of a system which, while including a strictly theistic religious domain, recognizes a higher truth and a way of realization, the emotional and devotional element, love and the rest, losing (...) all meaning " moral "and any intrinsic value and acquiring only that of one of the many techniques . (22)

Well, Islamic esotericism, with its complex of notions and symbols, provides Evola with various ideas and references.

As far as symbols and motifs related to Sufism are concerned, it is worth noting, for example, the importance assigned to the polar theme in the Evolian work. In this regard Evola writes that "the term Qutb , 'pole', has designated not only the sovereign but, more generally, the one who gives law and is the head of the tradition of a given historical period" (23). (To be exact, the Qutb represents the supreme apex of the initiatory hierarchy).

kaaba-islam-center-stoneWell, there is an entire chapter in Rivolta , the third of the first part, which focuses on this traditional function and uses precisely the terms "pole" and "polar"; the strange thing is that there is no explicit reference to the Islamic tradition in it.

In the end, if we want to take stock, Evola draws a picture of the Islamic tradition which, if it is sometimes inaccurate in its details and is often conditioned by its "personal equation", nevertheless constitutes a representation inspired by the convinced recognition of what is essentially the Islam, beyond all the deformations and deviations known from it throughout its history and especially today: a manifestation of the traditional spirit which cannot ignore what Evola has called the "revolt against the modern world".

Note

1) Among those who recognized one of the forms of post-war fascism in Nasserian national socialism was Maurice Bardèche, of whom we report some passages below. “'Raise your head, brother, the days of humiliation are past.' With this phrase, which would be adapted to Germany in 1934, Nasser announced on the walls of Cairo, in 1954, the advent of a new era. Twenty years later, another people broke their chains. (…) The structure of the republic of Egypt reproduces the characteristics of the fascist political structure. The head of state gathers the various powers in his hands, (…) the political parties are dissolved and contact with the people is maintained through the single party, the National Union. (…) But looking even better, we find in Nasser's regime visible characters of pre-war fascism. In particular, that character of fascism (...) from which the inspiration of a fascist movement and the idea that the latter has of its mission is recognized. In every fascism there is a moral and an aesthetic (...) Nasser and his fascists found this fascist mysticism in Islam (...) In the Koran there is something warrior and strong, something virile, something that can be called Roman. Therefore Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of their hearts "(M. Bardèche, something that can be called Roman. Therefore Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of their hearts "(M. Bardèche, something that can be called Roman. Therefore Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of their hearts "(M. Bardèche,What is fascism? , Rome 1980, pp. 88-92).

(2) J. Evola, The Problem of the Supremacy of the White Race , "The State", July 1936; rest. in J. Evola, The State (1934-1943) , Rome 1995, pp. 151-160.

(3) J. Evola , Orientations. Eleven points , Padua 2000, p. 24.

(4) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , Milan 1951, p. 324

(5) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , Bocca, Milan 1951, p. 323.

(6) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., Pp. 323-324.

(7) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 324.

(8) It should not come as a surprise if we primarily refer to the Islamic tradition. Here the Islamic tradition takes the place of the Aryan-Iranian. The idea of ​​the 'holy fight' (...) had the meaning of the later renaissance of an altar heritage and can be used from this point of view without further ado ” J. Evola, Die Arischen Lehr von Kampf und Sieg , Vienna 1941, p. 14; J. Evola, La dottrina aria di lotta e vittoria , Padova sd [ma: 1968], p. 15

 (9) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , Rome 1951, pp. 171-172.

(10) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., Pp. 172-173. See also, by the same author, The doctrine of the air of struggle and victory , cit., P. 16 and Philosophical Diorama , Rome 1974, pp. 307-308.

 (11) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 180. Cf. Philosophical Diorama , cit., P. 308, where the second maxim is given in a somewhat different form.

 (12) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 174.

(13) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 193

(14) Ibidem.

(14bis) “And the righteous are the ones whom Allah knows; but the ahya'un wa lakin la tash'urun” (II, 149).

(15) Ibidem.

(16) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., Pp. 52-53.

(17) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 59.

(18) J. Evola, Revolt against the modern world , cit., P. 58.

(19) J. Evola, The mystery of the Grail , Milan 1962, p. 147.

(20) J. Evola, The mystery of the Grail , cit., Pp. 147-148.

(21) J. Evola, East and West , Milan 1984, p. 212.

(22) Ibidem.

(23) J. Evola, Recognitions. Men and problems , Rome 1974, p. 50.

\* In 2016, the conference "Julius Evola, an ever-present thinker" was held in Brescia, in front of a room packed with about seventy people, organized by the International Study Center Dimore della Sapienza , to which interventions were made, after the introduction by Paolo Rada, Claudio Mutti and Enzo Iurato . We have thus reported to our readers the text of the speech given by Claudio Mutti, concerning Evola's relationship with Islam.