Evola Regeneration | Islam seen from Evola

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edited by the editorial staff of RigenerazionEvola

 What is Islam really? We thought the best way was to let Julius Evola speak in this speech by Claudio Mutti.

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

When in 1956, following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Egypt had to face the Anglo-Franco-Zionist aggression, many of those who in the Second World War had fought conscientiously as political soldiers against the "democratic plutocracies of the 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-islamIndeed, in the Italian fascist circles of the 1950s, the memory of the pro-Islamic position assumed 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 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 the CSR the "absolute respect for those peoples, especially Muslims who, like Egypt, are already civilly and rationally organized ”.

And it was precisely in Egypt, in the 1950s, that the revolution of the Free Officers, after having driven out the king enslaved to Great Britain, proclaimed the republic (June 18, 1953), abolished party politics, 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, undertook to build a national socialism which, according to Nasser's project of unity of the Arab nation, should have become a real pan-Arab socialism, based on the spiritual assumptions provided by Islam.

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

First of all, writes Evola, the neo-fascists, who view with sympathy " the irredentist movements of the Arab peoples and the Egyptian initiatives themselves" , make the mistake of indiscriminately attacking colonialism, "forgetting how until yesterday it was linked to the very principle of hegemony of the white race" . Secondly, you write, "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 by the Muslim Brotherhood organization ”, even if the latter, he adds, have included in their program “very radical 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 faced in a much more critical way the problematic nature of the "supremacy of the white race" (2). It is even more difficult to understand how Evola could attribute a character of Islamic orthodoxy to a country such as Saudi Arabia , governed by a faction which throughout the Muslim world, both Sunni and Shiite, has always been mostly regarded as sectarian and heterodox . Furthermore, it is truly strange that 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 covert operations of Great Britain, interested in hurling the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire and in securing 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 "at the stage of the idea", but in a tactical reconnaissance of the contingent circumstances, represented the "lesser evil". (3). In fact, the main enemy, as is known, was for him communism, 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 too, like 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 of doing no harm.

In Evola's article, on the other hand, a point that the author himself considers "essential" and which he formulates in the following terms, highlighted by italics, seems more realistic and well-founded: "the Islamic peoples themselves are not making themselves independent of the West that insofar as they become westernized, that is, that insofar as they suffer the western invasion spiritually and culturally ”. That is to say, continues Evola, "they emancipate themselves materially only by largely abandoning their own traditions and constituting themselves more or less imperfect facsimiles of Western states ". In short, if Evola was not entirely wrong when he noted that the political emancipation of colonized Muslim countries was often accompanied by the adoption of cultural elements foreign to Islamic culture, he was wrong when he maintained that Westernization would bring Muslim countries into the arms of communism.

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conference-mutti-brescia-evola\_12112016-21What Evola wrote in 1956 constitutes further confirmation of the need to distinguish Evola as a political observer from Evola as a scholar of the traditional world, since, in the face of the positions that emerge from the article on which I paused, Evola's work contains pages that are anything but 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 in some way assimilated 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 which from Evola's point of view are worth characterizing it as, I quote verbatim, "a tradition of a superior level not only to Judaism, but also to the beliefs that conquered the West" (4), that is to say 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 also rejects the specific themes: original sin , redemption, priestly mediation, etc. It is worth reading the passage directly from Evoli:

As in priestly Judaism, here at the center is the law and tradition as a formative force , to which however the Arab lineages of the origins offered a much purer, nobler 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 heaven. If Islam considers itself as "the religion of Abraham" and of these he also wanted to make the founder of the Kaaba , where the "stone" occurs, the symbol of the "Centre", 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 point of reference is the mysterious figure of the Khidr , conceived as superior and prior to the biblical prophets. Islam excludes the characteristic theme of Judaism, which in Christianity will become dogma and basis of the Christic mystery: it maintains, significantly weakened, the theme of Adam's fall, without however drawing from it that of "original sin". (…) Thus the idea of ​​"redeemers" or "saviors", the center of Christianity, is not only 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 in 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 lingers. We read again the prose of Revolt Against the Modern World :

Conceived the Divine in absolute monotheistic purity , without a "Son", without a quality of "Father", without a "Mother of God", every man as a Muslim appears directly connected to God and sanctified through the law, which permeates and organizes life in all its juridical, religious, social expressions into something absolutely unitary. As mentioned, in original Islam the only form of asceticism that was conceived was that of action, in terms of jihad, of "holy war", war, theoretically, to never be interrupted, until the full consolidation of the 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 operating capable of providing, to those endowed with the necessary qualifications, the means useful for achieving a spiritual realization that goes beyond the exoteric goal of pure and simple "salvation of the soul".

Finally, Islam presents a highly traditional completeness in that the world of the Shariyah and the Sunna, of law and tradition, has its complement not so much in a mysticism as in real initiatory organizations - turuq - to which it is the esoteric teaching, the ta'wil and the metaphysical doctrine of the Supreme Identity , tawhid . The notion, recurring in these 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 , logically falls within the truth of an unbroken race and formed by a tradition 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 term Arabic with the overused expression "holy war" and defines jihâd as the only form of asceticism conceived by the original Islam. We will note that Evoli's definition takes up the concept expressed by a traditional saying – a hadîth – of the Prophet Muhammad, according to which "the asceticism of Islam is jihâd ". In this regard it is important to observe that Revolt against the modern world contains a chapter, entitled The Great and the Little Holy War , in which Evola's debt to a book by René Guénon, Le symbolism of the Croix, especially 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 jihâd , an aspect which is precisely indicated by the title The great and the small holy war .

In the context of Evola's work, this notion of "great and small holy war" occupies a very important place, also because Evola attributes a paradigmatic value to it. 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 path of spiritual realisation.

What importance the doctrine of large and small holy wars has for Evola can be deduced from the fact that he often takes up this concept when he has to illustrate the asceticism of action. For example, he took it up again and developed it a few years after the first edition of Rivolta , precisely on 7 December 1940, in a conference 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 come as no surprise that we will refer above all to the Islamic tradition. The Islamic tradition stands here in place of the Aryan-Iranian. [ Die islamische Tradition steht hier am Platze der arisch-iranischen ] The idea of ​​'holy war' (…) thus had, at the same time, the late Renaissance meaning of a primordial Aryan 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).

Therefore, Evola entrusts the doctrine of the great and small holy war with the task of representing the traditional conception pertaining to the warrior experience and, in a broader sense, to action understood as a way of spiritual realisation. The teachings concerning the warrior action that are found in different traditional contexts (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 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 Evola uses to refer to this doctrine originates from a famous hadîth of the Prophet Muhammad, who, upon returning from a military campaign, said: “ Raja'nâ min al-jihâd al-açghar ilâ 'l-jihâd al-akbar ” That is: “We have returned from the minor effort to the major effort”. (“Effort”, in fact, is the literal meaning of the term jihâd , which is commonly rendered with “holy war”).

Evola comments on this hadith as follows:

In the Islamic tradition two holy wars are distinguished: one is the 'great holy war' – al-jihâdul akbar – the other the 'small holy war' – al-jihâdul açghar (…) The great war is of an internal order and spiritual; the other is material warfare, that which is fought externally against an enemy people (…) However, the 'great holy war' is to the 'little holy war' what the soul is to the body ; and it is fundamental for the understanding of heroic asceticism to understand the situation in which the two things 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 action which expresses and bears witness to the reality of the former. In fact, orthodox Islam originally conceived of only one form of asceticism: that linked precisely to 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 man's non-human element against everything in him that is (…) governed by the principle of chaos and disorder . (9).

Further on it continues as follows:

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

crusades-islam-knights-warEvola reports a whole series of Koranic passages relating to the concepts of jihâd and the "Way of Allah"; alongside them are also cited, by way of example and illustration, two maxims: "Paradise 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 whose details Evola does not supply, originally sounds quite different: "The ink of the wise and the blood of the martyrs will be weighed in the Day of the Resurrection, and the balance will tip in favor of the wise” ( hadîth referred to by Suyûtî, Al-jâmi' aç-çaghîr ).

Before moving on to explain the formulations according to which the doctrine of the "holy war" was enunciated in traditional spheres other than the Islamic one (above all in the Hindu and Christian ones), Evola identifies a relationship of analogy between the death achieved by the mujahid and the mors triumphalis of the Roman tradition (12); the theme is taken up again further on, where the "meaning of immortalization" (13) attributed to warlike victory by certain European traditions is placed in close relationship with "the Islamic idea, according to which the warriors killed in the 'holy war' - jihad – would never really die” (14).

In this regard, Evola quotes a Koranic verse: “Do not call dead those who were killed in the way of God; no, indeed they are alive, but you do not notice 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 of the dead in war join the golden race which, according to Hesiod, it is never dead, but subsists and watches, invisible” (15).

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

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

The death of Decius Mure, Roman leader example of Devotio and Mors Triumphalis

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Evola notes the presence of an analogous conception in Islam. Another parallel involving Islam is then established between the Roman conception on the one hand, which opposes the law and the pax of the imperial oecumene to the naturalism of the barbarians, claiming at the same time the universality of its own law, and the Islamic doctrine from 'other. Indeed, in the latter, he writes, we have

On an analogous basis (…) the geographical distinction between the dar al-islam, or land of Islam, governed by divine law, and the dar al-harb, or land of war, to include peoples, which in the former are to 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 analogies between certain aspects of Islam and the corresponding elements of other traditional fields are also revealed 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 be 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 allegedly existed between exponents of Christian esotericism and Islamic esotericism:

moreover, the Templars were accused of having secret agreements with the Muslims and of being closer to the Islamic faith than to the Christian one. This last reference is probably to be understood on the basis of the fact that anti-Christolatry is also a feature of Islamism. As for the "secret agreements", 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. (...) The Crusader cavalry ended up being faced with a sort of facsimile of itself, that is, to warriors who had the same ethics, the same chivalric customs, the same ideals of a "holy war" and, moreover, with corresponding esoteric veins . (19)

The mystery of the grail-evolaEvola thus goes on to trace a summary profile of what he, with a certain impropriety, defines as "the Arab Order of the Ishmaelites" , that is, the movement of Shiite origin born towards 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 in the Ishmaelite esotericism the same theme of the Ghibelline imperial saga reappears: the Islamic dogma of the "resurrection" (qiyama) is here 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 recognizes in man the condition in which the Principle becomes aware of itself, 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-based religious domain, recognizes a higher truth and way of realisation, the emotional and devotional element, love and the rest, losing (…) all meaning” morale” and each 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, note, for example, the prominence that in Evoli's work is assigned to the polar theme. 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 summit of the initiatory hierarchy).

kaaba-islam-center-stoneWell, in Rivolta there is an entire chapter, 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 the end, if we want to draw a balance, Evola traces a picture of the Islamic tradition which, if sometimes it is inaccurate in the details and is often conditioned by his "personal equation", nonetheless constitutes a representation inspired by the convinced recognition of what is essentially the Islam, beyond all the deformations and deviations it has known throughout its history and especially today: a manifestation of the traditional spirit which cannot be separated from 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, there was Maurice Bardèche, of whom we report below some excerpts. “'Raise up your head, brother, the days of humiliation are past.' With this phrase, which would have suited 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 unites the different 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 characteristics of pre-war fascism. In particular that character of fascism (…) from which one recognizes the inspirer of a fascist movement and the idea that he has of his mission. In all fascism there is a moral and an aesthetic (…) Nasser and his fascists found this fascist mystique in Islam (…) In the Koran there is something warrior and strong, something virile, something that can be called Roman. That is why Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of hearts ”(M. Bardèche, something that can be called Roman. That is why Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of hearts ”(M. Bardèche, something that can be called Roman. That is why Nasser is so well understood by the Arabs; he speaks the language that speaks their race in the depths of hearts ”(M. Bardèche, What is Fascism? , Rome 1980, p. 88-92).

(2) J. Evola, The problem of the supremacy of the white race , "Lo Stato", July 1936; rest. in J. Evola, Lo Stato (1934-1943) , Rome 1995, pp. 151-160.

(3) J. Evola , Guidelines. Eleven points , Padova 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 air doctrine 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. See 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, Reconnaissance. Men and problems , Rome 1974, p. 50.

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