

Caliphates and Tooth Fairies Are Cousins.  
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Those Islamists who have announced that they are a new Caliphate must also look under their pillows when they lose a tooth. Maybe they will find a quarter there. The likelihood of the quarter is better than that of a Caliphate. However, they represent pure Islam, tracing their decapitation of non-Muslims to the example of the Prophet himself. Mohammad preached a war of terror, with plenty of examples of it in the Koran.

Caliph is the Arabic word for successor to the Prophet Mohammad, who died without leaving a will. Nobody knew whom Mohammad might have appointed to lead his new religion, and nobody knows that even today. Out of necessity, his small leadership group met and selected among themselves a competent warlord who began the process of moving Islam beyond the Arab peninsula and into the outside world. Abu Bakr moved his army into Persia, a powerful old empire, and against the imperial holdings of Byzantium. These two great powers never saw it coming.

Abu Bakr was a successful Caliph, but died just a few years after taking power. One of the candidates in the original leadership was Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad. He and his followers believed that the Caliphate should go to the Prophet's direct bloodline. The other leaders did not believe this, and passed over Ali twice, until finally he was selected as the third Caliph. He was, as were most Caliphs, assassinated, and the leadership refused to continue the bloodline Caliphate; they appointed someone else.

Ali's family took their grievance to the battlefield and lost definitively. The slaughter of Ali's family became a rallying point for Ali's followers, known as the Party of Ali (Shiites). They still commemorate his children's martyrdom in bloody processions of men beating themselves with whips and chains, women keening and crying, and reenactments of the disastrous battle.

Except for the first Caliph, no other Caliph died in bed as an old man. Poison and assassination while at prayer were the most frequent modes. Arab tribalism is vicious, savage, and backstabbing, habits that live on in the Muslim Middle East to this day. The latter-day reverence for a Caliphate is just wishful thinking that somehow, someone can unify a religion that has never been unified.

The original Caliphates flowered briefly in Baghdad; the famous Golden Age of Islam actually lasted in Baghdad only about 80 years, and it was golden only because one Caliph supported science and Greek philosophy. He famously reported a dream in which God told him that Aristotle was good, and his philosophy should be accepted. His successor disagreed.

A rival Caliphate was set up in Spain, which lasted once again only about 80 years. As the lights were dimming in Baghdad, the Spanish Caliphate was producing great science in Cordoba. Both Caliphates fell to outside attackers after they first collapsed internally when religious fanatics shut down the learning.

When a motley rabble of modern day Islamists announces that they are now creating a Caliphate and that all Muslims must join with them and accept their leader as Caliph, I can hear the guffaws. Immediately, other Islamists break off from them; even Al Qaeda condemns them; and every Muslim who has suffered abuse and torture at the hands of ISIS or ISIL follows the disdain with promises of vengeance.

The disdain of the rest of us is aimed at what this new Caliphate is offering: total ignorance of everything except mayhem; trying to put the emancipation of women back in the bottle from which it escaped; offering unbelievers and even conflicting Muslim sects amnesty if they join, death if they refuse; and threatening modern states that they will infiltrate from inside and make the whole world Muslim.

These people are just the latest version of anarchists with nothing to offer but destruction. They can use pickup trucks as car bombs, but haven't a clue how to make a new one. Medieval values produce neither cell phones nor modern medicines, and not even Viagra, their favorite drug of choice.

Misguided multiculturalists: consider yourselves warned. This is a bad culture.

683 words

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