

- The Islamic Concept of the Term: *Halîfa*

The term comes from the Arabic verbal form halafa, which means: 1) To be successor of something or someone. 2) To follow, or to take the place of... 3) to appoint as successor. 4) To disagree. 5) To be opposed.

In the *Qur'ân* the people designated by the term *Halîfa* are called “successors,” as entering into the blessings enjoyed by their forefathers.

The singular term is used of *Adam*, either as a successor of the angels who lived on earth before him, or as representative of God and *David* (*O. XXXVIII. 26*).

**In none of the verses of the *Qur'ân* which are referred to the *Halîfa* there is the explicit indication that the term was intended to serve as a title of the Prophet *Muhammad*.**

Muslim historians commonly assert that it was first used by *Abû Bakr*. However, from the reign of 'Umar the term has been the common designation of the *Amîr al-mu'minîn*, which stands for "Commander the Faithful, the Caliph."

The designation of the *Halîfat rasûl Allâh*, which stands for: “Successor of the Apostle of *Allâh*,” implies the assumption of the activities and privileges exercised by the Prophet *Muhammad*, with the exception of the prophetic function which was believed to be ceased with him.

In the religious orders of the Islamic brotherhood (*Tariqa*), such as the *Qâdirîya*, the *Halîfa* is the designate of the *Šayh*,<sup>1</sup> the leader of a religious organization. The *Halîfa* represents the leader of the order in remote countries.

Among the *Tigâniya*, the *Halîfa* is the inheritor of the spiritual power (*Baraka*) of the founder of the order.

In the Mahdist movements (*ši'a*), the *Halifa* is the successor of the *Mahdi*.

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<sup>1</sup> Plural, *mašayh*, *šuyuh*, *ašyâh*.

- The Islamic Concept of the Term: *Sultân*

The term comes from the Arabic verbal form: *salata*, which means: 1) To give power, 2) To establish a ruler, 3) To be absolute master, 3)To rule, 4) To control, 5) To supervise, 6)To command.

According to Islamic tradition whether *Sultan* or *Sulta* indicate the power and the authority. By the 4<sup>th</sup> /10<sup>th</sup> century often passes to the meaning of holder of power, authority. It could then be used by provincial and even quite petty rulers who had assumed *de facto* power alongside the caliph. However, by the 5<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> century, the term was especially used by the dominant power in the central lands of the former caliphate, the Great Seljuks, who initially overshadowed the 'Abâsids of Bağdâd.

In the Perso-Turkish and Indo-Muslim worlds the feminine form *Sultâna* evolves to denote a woman holder of power.

Muslim rulers in South-east Asian Archipelago did not immediately adopt the term of *Solotan* (Malay), or *Sulṭān* (Arabic), after their conversion to *Islām*, but they maintained the Sanskrit title of *rājā* or *mahārājā* which was rooted in their respective cultural and tribal tradition. However, after the conversion of many of the rulers of Malaysia peninsula and Sumatra to *Islām* and the consequent establishment of the Islamic dynasties, the title *Solotan* appears to have been adopted alongside of Sanskrit titles.

Emblematic was the case of the first ruler *al-Malik al-Salih* (d.696H./1297A.D.), of Samudra, who was converted to *Islâm* in a dream in which the Prophet himself magically transferred the basic knowledge of *Islâm* to him and presented him with the title of *Solotan*. After this dream a messenger from the Caliph of Makka arrived and installed him as a *Solotan*, while a mystical preacher from India, who came with the same vessel, is said to have taught *Islâm* to the people.

This story, like many others of the same kind which probably belong to a legendary material, underlines the great importance that the Islamic rulers of the Archipelago gave to

**the fact of being linked to the caliphate of Makka, in order to legitimate their dynasties and their institutional and political powers.**