

The background of the cover is a photograph of a tall, modern skyscraper with a curved, glass facade. The building is the Kingdom Tower in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In the lower right foreground, a traditional Islamic mosque with a large dome and a minaret is visible, partially obscured by the skyscraper's reflection in the glass. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

# A HISTORY OF THE MUSLIM WORLD SINCE 1260

THE MAKING OF A  
GLOBAL COMMUNITY  
SECOND EDITION

**Vernon O. Egger**

# A History of the Muslim World since 1260

*A History of the Muslim World since 1260* continues the narrative begun by *A History of the Muslim World to 1750* by tracing the development of Muslim societies, institutions, and doctrines from the time of the Mongol conquests through to the present day. It offers students a balanced coverage of Muslim societies that extend from Western Europe to Southeast Asia. Whereas it presents a multifaceted examination of Muslim cultures, it focuses on analysing the interaction between the expression of faith and contemporary social conditions.

This extensively updated second edition is now in full colour, and the chronology of the book has been extended to include recent developments in the Muslim world. The images and maps have also been refreshed, and the literature has been updated to include the latest research from the last 10 years, including sections dedicated to the roles and status of women within Muslim societies throughout history.

Divided chronologically into three parts and accompanied by a detailed glossary, *A History of the Muslim World since 1260* is a perfect introduction for all students of the history of Muslim societies.

**Vernon O. Egger** is Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern and Islamic History at Georgia Southern University. His other books include *A History of the Muslim World to 1750* and *A Fabian in Egypt: Salamah Musa and the Rise of the Professional Classes in Egypt, 1909–1939*.



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# A History of the Muslim World since 1260

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Global Community

Second Edition

Vernon O. Egger

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# Contents



|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <i>List of Figures</i>  | <i>xi</i>   |
| <i>List of Maps</i>   | <i>xiii</i> |
| <i>Preface</i>  | <i>xv</i>   |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>  | <i>xvii</i> |
| <i>Note on Transliteration, Dating, and “the Muslim World”</i>  | <i>xix</i>  |
| <b>INTRODUCTION      THE MAKING OF A CIVILIZATION, 610–1260</b> | <b>1</b>    |
| The Formative Period, 610–950                                   | 1           |
| A Civilization under Siege, 950–1260                            | 7           |
| <b>PART ONE      MONGOL HEGEMONY, 1260–1405</b>                 | <b>15</b>   |
| <b>CHAPTER 1      THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION</b>                  | <b>18</b>   |
| The Mongol Khanates   | 19          |
| The Golden Horde  | 19          |
| The Il-khanate  | 23          |
| The Chaghatay Khanate   | 26          |
| New Centers of Islamic Culture                                  | 27          |
| The Mamluk Empire   | 28          |
| The Delhi Sultanate   | 32          |
| The Ottoman Sultanate   | 36          |
| Scourges  | 41          |
| Plague  | 41          |
| Timur Lang  | 43          |
| Conclusion  | 47          |
| Further Reading   | 48          |
| <b>CHAPTER 2      UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN ISLAMIC TRADITIONS</b> | <b>50</b>   |
| Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century                     | 51          |
| The End of the “Golden Age”?                                    | 51          |
| Against All Odds  | 53          |

|   |                                     |            |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Law   | 62                                  |            |
| The Queen of the Sciences                         | 62                                  |            |
| The “Closing of the Gate of Ijtihad”?             | 63                                  |            |
| The Varieties of Religious Expression             | 66                                  |            |
| “Orthodoxy” and “Heterodoxy”                      | 66                                  |            |
| The Proliferation of Sufi Groups                  | 69                                  |            |
| Conclusion  | 76                                  |            |
| Further Reading                                   | 77                                  |            |
| <b>PART TWO</b>                                   | <b>MUSLIM ASCENDANCY, 1405–1750</b> | <b>79</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 3</b>                                  | <b>THE CENTRAL MUSLIM LANDS</b>     | <b>83</b>  |
| The Ottoman Empire                                | 84                                  |            |
| The Creation of an Empire                         | 84                                  |            |
| Society   | 88                                  |            |
| The State   | 91                                  |            |
| The Economy                                       | 99                                  |            |
| Culture   | 100                                 |            |
| From Dominance to Parity                          | 104                                 |            |
| The Arabian Peninsula                             | 111                                 |            |
| The Holy Cities                                   | 111                                 |            |
| Yemen and Oman                                    | 113                                 |            |
| The Eurasian Steppes                              | 119                                 |            |
| Conclusion  | 123                                 |            |
| Notes   | 123                                 |            |
| Further Reading                                   | 124                                 |            |
| <b>CHAPTER 4</b>                                  | <b>THE UMMA IN THE WEST</b>         | <b>126</b> |
| The Iberian Peninsula                             | 126                                 |            |
| Mudejars  | 128                                 |            |
| Granada   | 130                                 |            |
| Moriscos  | 131                                 |            |
| The Maghrib                                       | 136                                 |            |
| The Land  | 136                                 |            |
| The Berber States                                 | 138                                 |            |
| Crusaders, Corsairs, and Janissaries              | 141                                 |            |
| The Regencies                                     | 145                                 |            |
| Alawite Morocco                                   | 147                                 |            |
| The Sudan   | 148                                 |            |
| Trans-Saharan Trade                               | 149                                 |            |
| The Islamization of the Western and Central Sudan | 151                                 |            |
| The Islamization of the Eastern Sudan             | 156                                 |            |
| The Intensification of the Slave Trade            | 157                                 |            |
| Islam in the Sudan                                | 159                                 |            |
| Conclusion  | 161                                 |            |
| Notes   | 162                                 |            |
| Further Reading                                   | 162                                 |            |

|   |                               |            |
|---|-------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER 5</b>                        | <b>CENTRAL ASIA AND IRAN</b>  | <b>164</b> |
| Central Asia                            |                               | 164        |
| The Timurids                            |                               | 166        |
| The Uzbek Khanate                       |                               | 169        |
| The Islamization of Central Asia        |                               | 172        |
| Iran                                    |                               | 177        |
| The Nizaris Regroup                     |                               | 178        |
| The Safavids: A Militant Sufi Order     |                               | 179        |
| The First Twelver Shi'ite Empire        |                               | 180        |
| The Apocalypse Postponed                |                               | 184        |
| Society                                 |                               | 187        |
| The State                               |                               | 192        |
| The Decline of Tariqa Sufism in Iran    |                               | 194        |
| The Economy                             |                               | 197        |
| Culture                                 |                               | 198        |
| The End of an Empire                    |                               | 200        |
| Conclusion                              |                               | 202        |
| Notes                                   |                               | 203        |
| Further Reading                         |                               | 204        |
| <br>                                    |                               |            |
| <b>CHAPTER 6</b>                        | <b>SOUTH ASIA</b>             | <b>206</b> |
| South Asia after the Delhi Sultanate    |                               | 206        |
| Southern and Central South Asia         |                               | 207        |
| The Indo-Gangetic Plain                 |                               | 210        |
| Islam in South Asia                     |                               | 212        |
| Patterns of Muslim Influence            |                               | 212        |
| South Asian Sufism                      |                               | 214        |
| An Isma'ili Revival                     |                               | 216        |
| The Timurids in South Asia: The Mughals |                               | 218        |
| The Formation of the Mughal Empire      |                               | 219        |
| Society                                 |                               | 224        |
| The State                               |                               | 227        |
| The Economy                             |                               | 232        |
| Culture                                 |                               | 235        |
| The End of Imperial Rule                |                               | 238        |
| Conclusion                              |                               | 244        |
| Notes                                   |                               | 245        |
| Further Reading                         |                               | 245        |
| <br>                                    |                               |            |
| <b>CHAPTER 7</b>                        | <b>THE INDIAN OCEAN BASIN</b> | <b>247</b> |
| A Muslim Lake                           |                               | 248        |
| The East Coast of Africa                |                               | 249        |
| Berbera and the Land of the Zanj        |                               | 250        |
| The Impact of Imperialism               |                               | 253        |
| Kerala                                  |                               | 255        |
| The Land of Pepper                      |                               | 255        |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| The Impact of Imperialism                      | 256   |
| Southeast Asia                                 | 259   |
| The Malayo-Polynesian Lands                    | 260   |
| Muslims Establish a Presence in Southeast Asia | 263   |
| The Impact of Imperialism                      | 266   |
| The Appeal of a Universal Faith                | 273   |
| A Loss of Dynamism                             | 279   |
| Conclusion                                     | 282   |
| Further Reading                                | 283   |
| <b>PART THREE</b>                              | <b>THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN,<br/>1750–PRESENT</b> |
|  | <b>285</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 8</b>                               | <b>REFORM AND RENEWAL, 1750–1875</b>                  |
|  | <b>289</b>  |
| Developments within Twelver Shi‘ism            | 290   |
| The Growth of Mujtahid Authority               | 290   |
| Twelver Ritual Life                            | 292   |
| Sunni Reform Movements                         | 295   |
| A Search for First Principles                  | 296   |
| Jihad Movements                                | 300   |
| European Intervention and Annexation           | 310   |
| South Asia                                     | 310   |
| Southeast Asia                                 | 315   |
| The Indian Ocean Basin                         | 318   |
| The Caucasus and Central Asia                  | 321   |
| North Africa                                   | 326   |
| Governmental Responses to External Threats     | 329   |
| The Ottoman Empire                             | 329   |
| Iran   | 333   |
| Cultural Fragmentation                         | 338   |
| Conclusion                                     | 339   |
| Notes  | 340   |
| Further Reading                                | 340   |
| <b>CHAPTER 9</b>                               | <b>THE LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY, 1875–1920</b>             |
|  | <b>343</b>  |
| European Imperialism, 1875–1914                | 344   |
| The Balkans                                    | 345   |
| North and West Africa                          | 346   |
| The Western Indian Ocean                       | 350   |
| Central Asia and Iran                          | 353   |
| Southeast Asia                                 | 354   |
| Imperial Rule                                  | 356   |
| Encounters with Tradition                      | 360   |
| Movements of Political and Social Reform       | 361   |
| Movements of Religious Reform and Renewal      | 379   |
| The Great War                                  | 391   |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Conclusion   | 397        |
| Notes  | 398        |
| Further Reading                                    | 399        |
| <b>CHAPTER 10 THE INTERWAR YEARS, 1920–1939</b>    | <b>401</b> |
| Independent Muslim States                          | 402        |
| The Republic of Turkey                             | 402        |
| The Pahlavi Monarchy of Iran                       | 405        |
| States in the Arabian Peninsula                    | 408        |
| The Kingdom of Afghanistan                         | 411        |
| Muslim Minorities in the USSR                      | 412        |
| Nationalist Movements                              | 413        |
| North Africa                                       | 414        |
| The Eastern Arab World                             | 417        |
| South Asia   | 420        |
| Southeast Asia                                     | 424        |
| Islamic Movements                                  | 427        |
| The Muslim Brothers                                | 428        |
| Abu'l A'la Mawdudi                                 | 430        |
| Tablighi Jama'at                                   | 434        |
| Indonesian Religious Organizations                 | 436        |
| Women's Issues                                     | 438        |
| Conclusion   | 443        |
| Notes  | 444        |
| Further Reading                                    | 444        |
| <b>CHAPTER 11 REGAINING SOVEREIGNTY, 1939–1970</b> | <b>447</b> |
| World War II                                       | 448        |
| The Middle East                                    | 448        |
| Southeast Asia                                     | 450        |
| Africa   | 450        |
| South Asia   | 451        |
| Formal Independence                                | 452        |
| The 1940s  | 454        |
| The 1950s  | 460        |
| The 1960s and 1970s                                | 465        |
| Muslim Minorities in the USSR and China            | 467        |
| Disillusionment with Secular Nationalism           | 469        |
| Pakistan   | 469        |
| Indonesia  | 473        |
| Iran   | 476        |
| The Arab World                                     | 477        |
| Turkey   | 483        |
| Voices of Urgency                                  | 485        |
| Conclusion   | 493        |
| Further Reading                                    | 494        |

|   |                                     |            |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER 12</b>                                       | <b>NEW DIRECTIONS, 1970–PRESENT</b> | <b>497</b> |
| The Watershed Years                                     |                                     | 498        |
| The Arab World  |                                     | 498        |
| Iran  |                                     | 502        |
| Afghanistan   |                                     | 505        |
| Responding to the Divine Imperative: Political Islam    |                                     | 506        |
| Egypt   |                                     | 508        |
| Tunisia   |                                     | 510        |
| Turkey  |                                     | 512        |
| Responding to the Divine Imperative: A Revival of Jihad |                                     | 514        |
| Jihad as the Means to Implement an Islamic State        |                                     | 515        |
| Jihad as National Liberation                            |                                     | 519        |
| Global Jihad  |                                     | 529        |
| Twenty-First-Century Challenges and Opportunities       |                                     | 534        |
| A Siege Mentality                                       |                                     | 534        |
| A Crisis of Religious Authority                         |                                     | 536        |
| Whither Islamism?                                       |                                     | 539        |
| Economic and Social Issues                              |                                     | 542        |
| New Frontiers   |                                     | 546        |
| Conclusion  |                                     | 549        |
| Notes   |                                     | 549        |
| Further Reading   |                                     | 549        |
| <i>Glossary</i>   |                                     | 552        |
| <i>Index</i>  |                                     | 560        |

# Figures

|     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 1.1 | Illuminated manuscript   | 23  |
| 1.2 | The tomb of the Il-khan ruler Uljaytu                                    | 28  |
| 1.3 | The Alai Darwaza   | 36  |
| 1.4 | The Gur-i Amir in Samarqand  | 43  |
| 2.1 | Ibn al-Shatir's solution   | 56  |
| 2.2 | Sultan Hasan madrasa–tomb–mosque complex                                 | 65  |
| 2.3 | Sufi shrine in Sudan   | 72  |
| 3.1 | The Selimiye mosque, Edirne  | 96  |
| 3.2 | The <i>tuğra</i>   | 103 |
| 3.3 | A house in Mocha   | 114 |
| 3.4 | Forts at Muscat  | 119 |
| 4.1 | The Court of the Lions   | 132 |
| 4.2 | City walls of Rabat  | 147 |
| 4.3 | The Jenne mosque, Mali   | 153 |
| 4.4 | The Sankore mosque   | 160 |
| 5.1 | Bahram Gur painting  | 168 |
| 5.2 | The Registan Square  | 169 |
| 5.3 | The Great Mosque of Xi'an, China   | 174 |
| 5.4 | The Maydan-e Shah  | 193 |
| 6.1 | The Charminar in Hyderabad   | 211 |
| 6.2 | The Red Fort, Agra   | 225 |
| 6.3 | The Taj Mahal  | 234 |
| 6.4 | The Jantar Mantar, Delhi   | 241 |
| 7.1 | The Kilwa mosque   | 252 |
| 7.2 | The Western Ghats  | 259 |
| 7.3 | The minaret of the mosque at Kudus, Java                                 | 272 |
| 7.4 | A <i>rumah gadang</i> (“big house”) of the Minangkabau people on Sumatra | 279 |
| 8.1 | A performance of ta'ziye in Najaf during Ashura                          | 295 |
| 8.2 | The English East India Company post at Surat, ca. 1680                   | 311 |
| 8.3 | Imam Shamil  | 325 |
| 8.4 | 'Abd al-Qadir  | 327 |

xii Figures

|      |  |     |
|------|--|-----|
| 9.1  | A French journal describing its nation's occupation of Morocco       | 357 |
| 9.2  | Midhat Pasha   | 363 |
| 9.3  | Jamal al-Din al-Afghani  | 379 |
| 9.4  | The tomb of the Sudanese Mahdi, in Omdurman                          | 389 |
| 10.1 | Mustafa Kemal dancing with his stepdaughter at her wedding, ca. 1925 | 407 |
| 10.2 | Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1938  | 416 |
| 10.3 | 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud  | 426 |
| 10.4 | Abu'l 'Ala Mawdudi   | 433 |
| 11.1 | Jinnah and Gandhi during negotiations in Bombay, September 1944      | 452 |
| 11.2 | A demonstration in Algiers during the Algerian war for independence  | 464 |
| 11.3 | Sukarno in 1945  | 475 |
| 11.4 | President Nasser with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru                | 482 |
| 12.1 | Yasir 'Arafat with members of Fatah                                  | 500 |
| 12.2 | Ayatollah Khomeini   | 504 |
| 12.3 | Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri in November 2001               | 529 |
| 12.4 | Members of a demonstration by Muslims in Rome, November 2015         | 545 |

# Maps

|      |   |     |
|------|---|-----|
| 1.1  | The Mongol Empire, ca. 1300   | 20  |
| 1.2  | The eastern Muslim world, late fourteenth century                             | 38  |
| 3.1  | The Ottoman Empire to 1699  | 90  |
| 3.2  | The Arabian Peninsula in the mid-sixteenth century                            | 112 |
| 3.3  | The Golden Horde and its successors   | 120 |
| 4.1  | The Iberian Peninsula in 1491   | 127 |
| 4.2  | The Maghrib in the early sixteenth century                                    | 137 |
| 4.3  | The Sudan, fourteenth to early eighteenth centuries                           | 150 |
| 5.1  | Central Asia and Southwest Asia   | 165 |
| 5.2  | Central Asia and China  | 176 |
| 5.3  | Safavid Iran  | 188 |
| 6.1  | South Asia at the end of the fifteenth century                                | 209 |
| 6.2  | South Asia under the Mughals  | 226 |
| 7.1  | Western Indian Ocean and East Africa  | 250 |
| 7.2  | Indian Ocean trade routes   | 257 |
| 7.3  | Southeast Asia  | 262 |
| 8.1  | West African jihad states   | 309 |
| 8.2  | India under the British   | 314 |
| 8.3  | Southeast Asia under imperialism  | 318 |
| 8.4  | Russian expansion into the Caucasus and Central Asia                          | 323 |
| 9.1  | Ottoman losses in Rumelia, 1878, and the 1907 Anglo-Russian partition of Iran | 347 |
| 9.2  | Imperialism in Africa   | 352 |
| 10.1 | Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire   | 404 |
| 11.1 | Partition of India  | 456 |
| 11.2 | Partition of Palestine  | 461 |



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# Preface

This book continues the narrative begun by *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*. It backtracks to the year 1260 to begin the story, because an understanding of the developments that have taken place in the Muslim world since the eighteenth century requires knowledge of the train of events that were set in motion by the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century. The center of gravity for the Muslim world to that point had been Iraq and Syria; for several centuries thereafter, many of the most important developments in Muslim history took place in Southeastern Europe and South Asia. This shift away from Southwest Asia contributed to the striking fact that, today, half the world's Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia, whereas those in Southwest Asia represent only 20 percent of the world total.

This book is divided into three parts. Part One, entitled “Mongol Hegemony, 1260–1405,” examines the decisive period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It argues that the extreme violence of the campaigns by the Mongols and Timur Lang left a mixed legacy. On the one hand, it obliterated governments and material culture in a region extending from the Mediterranean Sea to northern India; on the other hand, it created the conditions for an even more luxuriant growth of Islamic culture over a far wider area than before.

Part Two is called “Muslim Ascendancy, 1405–1750.” Comprising Chapters 3 through 7, it surveys the development of economies, states, societies, and religious traditions from West Africa to Southeast Asia. This period is rarely treated in history books, and yet knowledge of it is essential for understanding developments in the twenty-first-century Muslim world. In addition to the dramatic geographical expansion of the religion that took place during these centuries, critical changes took place in Islamic doctrine, ritual, and institutions.

Part Three, the last section of the book, is called “The World Turned Upside Down, 1750–Present.” The theme of this section is the unprecedented weakness that afflicted Muslim countries after the mid-eighteenth century. For a millennium following the early seventh century, Muslims had been accustomed to success. Their religion was the final and complete revelation of the three great monotheistic traditions. Even when their normally victorious armies lost, they took solace in the fact that their culture was superior to that of the barbarian victor. The great majority of the time, the barbarian eventually converted to Islam, and the Muslims won after all. Islamic civilization had been so advanced that medieval Europeans eagerly

translated thousands of texts from Arabic to Latin in a quest to gain access to the Muslim world's intellectual achievements. As late as the beginning of the eighteenth century, Europeans were awed by the might and splendor of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires.

After 1750, by contrast, foreigners found little of interest in predominantly Muslim countries other than raw materials that could be consumed in their industrializing economies. During the course of the eighteenth century, Muslim societies perceptibly fell behind those of Europe in the fields of science and technology. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, almost all of them came under European control. Today, after more than half a century of independence, most Muslim countries are still suffering profound economic, political, and cultural weaknesses. Many Muslims feel humiliated by these circumstances, and small groups have formulated a variety of new interpretations of Islam that advocate the use of unrestrained violence against anyone who disagrees with them, much as the Kharijites did in the seventh century. We should not be *reductionist* and claim that religions are simply products of their social and economic environments, but we should also not be *essentialist* and speak of them as though they are unaffected by the vicissitudes of history. The interaction between the expression of faith and contemporary social conditions should be clear throughout the book, and it is obvious in the various forms that Islam takes today.

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I wish to express my appreciation to the members of the staff of the Interlibrary Loan office of the Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University for their consistently excellent help and to staff members of the various libraries within the University System of Georgia who responded quickly to requests to borrow their books through the marvelous GIL Express system.

The quality of this book was enhanced immeasurably by the comments, insights, and corrections that I received on the manuscript from numerous scholars who commented on the manuscript in both the first and second editions. Many of them were anonymous; those whose names I am aware of include John Parcels, Georgia Southern University; Kimberly Katz, Towson University; Roger Adelson, Arizona State University; Gene R. Garthwaite, Dartmouth College; David Commins, Dickinson College; Byron Cannon, University of Utah; and Rudi Matthee, University of Delaware. They invested a great deal of time in the analysis of some or all of the manuscript, thereby improving my writing, providing me with new information, and saving me from several egregious errors. That the book still has shortcomings despite the herculean efforts of these scholars is due solely to my own limitations.

I am more grateful than I can express to Laura Pilsworth, the medieval and early modern editor at Routledge, and Morwenna Scott, her assistant, who have been astonishingly efficient and gracious in their dealings with me. My wife, Mary, has shared my attention with this project for several years. Her patience and generosity have been priceless, providing yet more evidence for why I love her.

## Disclaimer

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# Note on Transliteration, Dating, and “the Muslim World”

Any work that discusses the Muslim world faces the challenge of the transliteration of words from one alphabet to another. Scholars need a comprehensive system that represents in the Latin alphabet all the vowels and consonants of other alphabets, but nonspecialists can find such a system more confusing and alien than useful. The problem is a serious one when transliterating only one language; in this book we have to deal with several. I have tried to compromise between accuracy and ease of use.

For the most part, this book spells geographic place names as they appear on modern English-language atlas maps (Khorasan, Baghdad, Cairo). In some cases, no consensus exists among cartographers on the spelling of place names, and so this book occasionally provides alternative spellings (Zaragoza/Saragossa, Qayrawan/Kairouan). In a few cases, this book uses names that are more easily understood by English speakers than some that are more culturally authentic. An example is *Transoxiana*, a word with Latin and Greek roots, for the Arabic phrase *ma wara' al-nahr*. In two cases, I simply refused to follow the standard spelling, because they are patently incorrect: I use *Riyad* instead of *Riyadh*, and *Hadramawt* instead of *Hadhramawt*. In both names, the *d* would technically be transliterated *ḍ*; the *dh* is a totally different letter that sounds like the *th* in *then* and changes the vowel sound that precedes it.

In the interest of trying to make transliterated words less of an obstacle to the task of understanding the material, I have also used the more popular spellings for

some words, even when doing so seems inconsistent with the practice of the book as a whole. Thus, I discuss “Sunnis and Shi‘ites” rather than “Sunnis and Shi‘is” or “Sunnites and Shi‘ites.” I have also transliterated “Saudi Arabia” conventionally, although I use “Sa‘ud” when referring to the family.

For personal names and technical words in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages, this book uses a simplified version of the Library of Congress system. The book does not distinguish between long and short vowels nor does it provide diacritical marks for the vowels of words from any language. For the Arabic language, no attempt is made to indicate the so-called velarized consonants, and no distinction is made between the two forms of the letter “h.” The Arabic letter *dhal* appears underlined as *dh*, and represents the sound of the *th* in the English word *then*; *kh* is similar to the *ch* in the Scottish *loch*; *gh* is best described as the sound made when gargling. The *q* is pronounced farther back in the throat than the *k*. The symbol ‘ represents a glottal stop, the sound that begins each syllable of the English expression “uh-oh.” The symbol ʿ represents an Arabic consonant with no English equivalent, but it is important in words such as ‘*Ali* or *Shi‘ite*. Phonetically, it is a “voiced guttural stop” produced in the very back of the throat by constricting the larynx to stop the flow of air. An approximation may be achieved by making a glottal stop as far back in the throat as possible. The Turkish ğ is unvoiced; it lengthens the vowel preceding it. The only two words in the book with it are *tuğra* and *Erdoğān*.

The prefix *al-* is the definite article in Arabic, meaning “the.” Before most letters in the alphabet, the prefix sounds the way it is spelled, but it assumes the sound of certain letters when it precedes them (*t*, *th*, *d*, *dh*, *r*, *z*, *s*, *sh*, *n*). Thus, *al-Rahman* is pronounced *ar-Rahman*.

Notes regarding the significance of names containing ‘*Abd*, ‘*Abu*, and ‘*Ibn* may be found in the glossary. Understanding the terms makes the learning of Arabic-based names easier and more meaningful.

In a book on Muslim history, the most logical (and respectful) way of dating would be to use the a.h. (from the Latin *anno Hejirae*) system, which is based on the Islamic calendar, the first year of which began in July 622 on the Gregorian calendar. Most readers of this book, however, are English-speaking non-Muslims, who, in my experience, are usually confused by, rather than helped by, the use of the a.h. dating system. It is explained in the glossary. All dates in this volume are based on the Gregorian calendar.

The title of this book is *A History of the Muslim World since 1260*. The phrases *the Muslim world* and *Muslim history* appear frequently throughout the volume. The terms are admittedly problematic: Substituting the words *Christian* or *Buddhist* for *Muslim* in either phrase makes the awkwardness of the connotations more clear. The terms would have no currency today but for the concepts of the *dar al-islam* and the *umma*, which are the bases for my use of them.

The *dar al-islam* is a term from Islamic law, which drew a distinction between the Dar al-Islam (the realm of Islam), where Muslims and non-Muslims lived under a Muslim ruler, and the *dar al-kufr* (the realm of unbelief), where non-Muslims ruled. The religious scholars who devised Islamic law assumed that Muslim rulers would enforce Islamic law and that non-Muslim rulers would not. They also decreed that if an army from the Dar al-Kufr should capture part of the Dar al-Islam, Muslims in the affected area had the obligation to move to the remaining areas of the Dar al-Islam.

The Dar al-Islam was a useful concept until imperialists began seizing large chunks of Muslim-ruled territory in the second half of the eighteenth century. By 1920, almost all Muslims were subject to non-Muslim rulers. Even after they gained their independence, most Muslims continued to live in secular states. With the advent of imperialism, the Dar al-Islam ceased to have meaning, at least temporarily.

The *umma* is the “community of believers,” a group of people who share the conviction that, as Muslims, they are living in accordance with the final revelation from God. The ideal of community is often more theoretical than real. Throughout their history, Muslims have found numerous ways to erect differences between themselves and to engage in ferocious fighting with each other over national or sectarian differences. If this were not enough to vitiate the concept of the Umma, Muslims have also frequently allied with non-Muslims against fellow Muslims. The concept of the Umma has historically been weak when Muslim states are strong; when Muslims feel weak, the Umma is important as a reassurance that they belong to a large community that may be a source of assistance. In those circumstances, the sense of belonging to the Umma transcends cultural frontiers and national boundaries and is sometimes strong enough to obliterate sectarian differences, such as those between Sunnis and Shi‘ites. The importance of the Umma grew during the age of imperialism, and it stimulated a high level of communication among various Muslim nationalities as they sought solutions to their subjugation. It is also strong today, when it is common for Muslims to feel threatened when Muslims on the other side of the globe are attacked, regardless of how small or remote the region.

Thus, although the terms *Muslim world* and *Muslim history* lack the precision of *Greenland* or *Australian history*, respectively, they are not meaningless. In this book, the term *Muslim history* refers to the events that took place in *the Muslim world*, by which is meant the Dar al-Islam, those parts of the Dar al-Islam that were captured by non-Muslims, and those communities of Muslims where the conviction of belonging to the Umma stimulated the forging of bonds with other Muslim societies. In this book, the phrase *Islamic history* refers to specifically religious developments rather than to elements of the larger culture.



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# The Making of a Civilization, 610–1260

### **The Formative Period, 610–950**

The Prophet Muhammad began his mission in the city of Mecca, on the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula. In the year 610, he began to receive a series of revelations that would later be collected into the book of scripture known as the Qur'an. His teachings provoked hostility from some of the Meccan elites, and tensions rose until his life and the lives of his followers were in danger. In 622, he accepted an invitation extended to him by a delegation from the oasis community of Medina (then known as Yathrib), which asked him to mediate a civil conflict that was tearing the community apart. His 220-mile trek to Medina is known as the Hijra. Because of the significance of the event for later Islamic history, Muslims mark the year in which it occurred as the first year on the Islamic calendar.

At Medina, Muhammad began implementing his vision of a community of believers who attempt to live in submission to the will of God. Islam's first mosque was constructed adjacent to his home, and the site became the center of political and religious affairs in the city. During the Prophet's decade in Medina, the Qur'an's twin themes of monotheism and social justice became more fully developed, and Muslims came to understand that Islam was the fulfillment and completion of Judaism and Christianity: The Hebrew prophets and Jesus had previously brought God's message, but their followers had corrupted and misunderstood their teachings. Muhammad was bringing the message yet again, this time to the Arabs. Jews and Christians were "People of the Book" due to their possession of the scriptures, but their understanding of God and His purposes was deficient.

Muhammad's vision of a community of believers in which merit was based on one's relationship with God was incompatible with the interests of the Meccan elites,

whose status was based on tribal hierarchy and wealth. Friction between Mecca and Medina led to a series of three bloody battles, and Medina won the first and third. Muhammad's military achievement and his skillful diplomacy attracted support from around the peninsula. He rapidly built up his military and political power as well as his religious following. Mecca finally capitulated without a struggle in 630. Many more tribal leaders from across the Arabian Peninsula then sought out Muhammad and made alliances with him. When he died two years later, he was the recognized leader of some two-thirds of the peninsula.

The Muslim community was unprepared for the Prophet's death. His stunned companions were initially immobilized, but they soon met together and selected a successor, or caliph, to Muhammad. The caliph was to be responsible for religious and political guidance but was not expected to continue Muhammad's prophetic role. The choice of Abu Bakr as the first caliph was not to everyone's liking, for one group of Muslims thought that Muhammad had already designated his cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali, to be his successor. A further complication for the new caliph was that several of the Arabian tribes refused to recognize him or to send tribute. Abu Bakr began a military campaign to force them back into the new Muslim state. As the campaign pushed farther north into the peninsula, it made a seamless transition into a war of conquest of regions outside the peninsula.

Two great empires lay on the northern frontiers of Arabia. Bordering the Mediterranean Sea was the Byzantine Empire, which was the successor to the Roman Empire. Its language of administration was Greek, and its official religion was a version of Christianity that has come to be called Orthodoxy. To the east lay the Sasanian Empire, which occupied the region from Iraq to western Afghanistan. Its administrative language was Persian, and the religion of the court was Zoroastrianism, although its province of Iraq contained a large number—perhaps a majority—of Jews and Nestorian Christians. By 640, the Muslim Arabs had conquered Syria and Egypt from the Byzantines and had taken Iraq from the Sasanians. Within a decade, the Sasanian Empire had been destroyed.

There is evidence that the Arab Muslims expected all polytheists to convert to Islam. They did not, however, expect Christians and Jews to convert to Islam. The Prophet's designation of the Jews and Christians as People of the Book meshed with the needs of the Muslim elite. Under the new administration, all non-Muslims would pay a head tax and a tax on property, whereas Muslims paid a tax only on property. Because of a need for revenue, for several decades the Arabs actually discouraged many non-Muslims from converting.

In 656, 'Ali finally became the fourth caliph, but his entire caliphate was consumed by a civil war. It was during this war that his followers came to be called *Shi'ites* (from a word that means "partisan"). For five years, Mu'awiya, a rival from the Meccan clan of Umayya, challenged 'Ali's right to be caliph, and the two men amassed huge armies in defense of their respective claims. In 661, 'Ali agreed to a request for mediation of the conflict so that Muslims would not shed each other's blood. Some members of his army were outraged at his agreement to negotiate, saying that the chosen one of God would never be willing to give up his rightful position. They left his army, gaining the label of *Kharijites* (from an Arabic word meaning "to leave"). Shortly thereafter, one of the Kharijites assassinated 'Ali. Kharijites subsequently gained a reputation for regarding anyone who disagreed with them to be heretics who deserved to be killed.

The death of ‘Ali opened the way for Mu‘awiya to become the fifth caliph. Two decades later, on his deathbed, rather than leaving the choice of the new caliph to a council, as had become customary, he designated his own son. This was the beginning of the Umayyad dynasty, which made Damascus its capital. The Umayyads ruled the Muslim world until 750. They instituted several important administrative reforms and annexed North Africa from Tunisia to Morocco, most of the Iberian Peninsula, the Indus River valley, and lands within Transoxiana, the area that lay to the north of the Amu Darya River (which roughly defines the border of modern Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). Despite their accomplishments, they were unpopular. Their practice of dynastic succession reeked of monarchy rather than of qualification by integrity and spirituality. They favored certain Arab tribes to the exclusion of others, and they were accused of violating the modest and sober values of Islam by indulging in wine, women, and song.

The inhabitants of the Iraqi city of Kufa had been among the staunchest supporters of ‘Ali during the civil war with Mu‘awiya. In 680, they invited his sole surviving son, Husayn, to the city in order to lead a revolt against the Umayyads. An Umayyad army unit intercepted Husayn’s entourage near the village of Karbala, however, and murdered Husayn and nearly all of his family. The bloody deaths triggered within many of the Kufans a sense of remorse, grief, and guilt for not having come to the aid of the helpless band. The event at Karbala appears to have transformed Shi‘ism from a political sentiment to a religious conviction, as well. Soon there developed the notion that descendants of ‘Ali possessed the blessing of God to rule due to a unique, God-given spiritual ability. For some people, this ability passed from ‘Ali to sons of any of his wives, but by the middle of the eighth century C.E., most Shi‘ites had narrowed the line of succession to the descendants of the two sons of ‘Ali and his wife Fatima, a daughter of the Prophet. Numerous competing Shi‘ite movements arose with the purpose of installing an Alid (one of the descendants of ‘Ali and Fatima) as caliph. In their spiritual capacity, Alid leaders were referred to as *Imams*. Thus, each group of Shi‘ites regarded its Imam to be the rightful political and spiritual ruler of all true Muslims in place of the caliph, whom they considered illegitimate.

In 750, the Umayyads were overthrown by another clan, the Abbasids. The Abbasids tried to exterminate the Umayyads, but one member of the former ruling family escaped to the Iberian Peninsula, where he gained the allegiance of most of the local Arab army garrisons. His descendants would eventually rule most of the peninsula as Umayyads. The Abbasids established their capital at Baghdad and began consolidating their authority. They managed to secure control over all the areas that the Umayyads of Damascus had ruled except for the regions west of Tunisia. For more than a century, the Abbasid caliphal court was rivaled only by the Chinese imperial court for grandeur and spectacle. The caliphs were powerful and sophisticated, and their realm stood in sharp contrast to contemporary Western Europe, where Charlemagne was struggling to find literate people for his administration. The Abbasids began a systematic program of translating scientific, mathematical, medical, and philosophical texts from other languages into Arabic. This intellectual enterprise resulted in a dazzling intellectual renaissance in which the contributions of India, Iran, Greece, and Rome were not only preserved but synthesized and reworked into novel patterns. It laid the foundation for the intellectual advances of the next several

centuries, including the development of modern mathematics and impressive advances in medicine, optics, pharmacology, astronomy, agricultural sciences, and numerous other fields.

The Abbasid period was also the setting for four important religious developments. One was the development of Shi'ism. The early history of Shi'ism is astonishingly complex due to the sheer number of groups that arose and the schisms that rent many of them apart. Many of 'Ali's descendants attracted loyal followers who regarded them as the rightful Imams and who rejected the candidates of the other groups. For the purpose of understanding the modern world of Shi'ism, however, it is possible to simplify the matter in four paragraphs without distorting it beyond recognition.

Out of the dozens of different Shi'ite groups that emerged, three have persevered to the present day: the *Zaydis*, the *Isma'ilis*, and the *Imamiya*. Zayd was a great-grandson of 'Ali who won a devoted following because of his teaching of the centrality of the duty of ensuring justice. He burned with hatred for the Umayyads, and he believed that inaction in the face of oppression was a sin. He raised a revolt against the Umayyads in 740, in the course of which he was killed. His followers, the Zaydis, continued to follow Imams who were Alids, but they were not convinced that an Imam had to have been the son of another Imam. They also did not regard their Imams as infallible. The important criterion for a Zaydi Imam was that he was an Alid who took an activist stance against injustice. Because duty was more important than doctrine to the Zaydis, they did not develop a sense of identity that contrasted as sharply with the majority of Muslims as the other Shi'ites did. They went on to found small states in remote areas such as the mountains of Iran and Yemen. Zaydis continue to play an important role in Yemen's national life, where they constitute almost half the country's population.

The two other main Shi'ite groups respected Zayd but did not regard him as an Imam. Instead, both groups believed that the Imamate passed from 'Ali through the generations to Zayd's half-brother, Muhammad al-Baqir. Muhammad al-Baqir was a quiet scholar, not an active soldier. Toward the end of his life, he designated his son, Ja'far al-Sadiq, to be the sixth Imam. Sometime around the year 760, Ja'far named one of his sons, Isma'il, to be his successor. Isma'il, however, died soon thereafter, plunging the community into confusion, for the Imam's designation of his successor was regarded as an infallible choice. Ja'far, however, was still alive, whereas Isma'il was dead. The evidence suggests that Ja'far never designated another successor. Upon his death in 765, his followers splintered into numerous factions. In this book we will be following the history of two of them. One regarded Ja'far's choice of Isma'il as determinative and followed Isma'il's son, Muhammad ibn ("son of") Isma'il. The other group followed one of Isma'il's brothers, Musa al-Kazim.

The members of the group that followed Muhammad ibn Isma'il came to be known as Isma'ilis. They are also known less formally as "Seveners" because of the controversy over who should be the seventh Imam. After Muhammad died several years later, their activities became lost to history for a century. They disappeared into secret cells, and they apparently taught their followers that Muhammad ibn Isma'il would soon return, bringing justice to a world that had failed to follow God's teachings. During the last quarter of the ninth century, agents from this group appeared in Iraq and Syria, engaging in active missionary work and teaching the

need for social revolution. One of their leaders made his way to North Africa at the beginning of the tenth century, claiming that Muhammad ibn Isma‘il had deputized him to be the new Imam. Soon his followers overthrew the governor of what is now Tunisia and the Imam took his place. The new state came to be known as the Fatimid Empire (910–1171). It denied the legitimacy of the Abbasid Caliphate, claimed to be the true caliphate, and soon conquered all of North Africa, including Egypt. Two notable schisms occurred within the Isma‘ili movement during Fatimid times. During the course of this book we will have several occasions to discuss the groups that split off: the Nizaris (known today as Khojas) and the Tayyibis (known today as Bohras). Both continue to have Imams, and most live today in India.

The Shi‘ites who followed Ja‘far’s son Musa al-Kazim remained a public group during the period that the Isma‘ilis went underground. They were known as the Imamiya, and they avoided political confrontation with the Abbasids. The Imamate passed down from father to son until 874, when the eleventh Imam died. Most of his followers thought that they had become leaderless, and they fragmented into two dozen factions. One group among the Imamiya, however, proclaimed that the eleventh Imam had been survived by an infant son. They asserted that God was protecting him from his enemies and that he would return to lead his people in the fullness of time. Because God is hiding him, he has become known as the Hidden Imam. From 874 to 941, he was in the Lesser Concealment, during which he communicated with spokesmen within the Imamiya. After 941, however, he has been in the Greater Concealment. In the Greater Concealment, the Imam is still the spiritual guide and light of the world, but there is no longer any direct communication between the Imam and his followers. The most learned and spiritual among the Imamiya can obtain guidance from the Imam through dreams and visions. Because the Imamiya believe that there have been only twelve Imams, they are widely known as the Twelver Shi‘ites. The Twelvers are by far the largest group of Shi‘ites today. They compose the bulk of the population of Iran, the majority of the population in Iraq, and a large minority in Lebanon, Bahrain, and Pakistan.

The second major development during this period was the rise of a Sunni self-consciousness. The vast majority of Muslims were not Shi‘ites, and they did not have an Imam to provide spiritual leadership. By the Umayyad era, few caliphs could pretend to be spiritual authorities. As a result, many people began seeking religious guidance not only from the Qur’an but also from collections of reports (*hadith*) that conveyed the Prophet’s extra-Qur’anic sayings and narratives of his behavior in certain situations. These hadith were believed to portray accurately the Prophet’s *sunna*, a word that suggests “practice,” “way,” or “custom.” The Muslims who used them as models for their own practice began calling themselves *ahl al-sunna wa al-jama‘a*, or “the People of the (Prophet’s) Sunna and of the Community.” The term *Sunni* refers to these people, who accepted the idea that the caliphate was a legitimate political institution, even when they realized that it needed to be more responsive to the people’s needs and to the requirements of God’s will.

The third development during the eighth and ninth centuries that merits notice here was jurisprudence. As Muslims moved out of Medina into regions as far west as the Pyrenees Mountains and as far east as the Indus River, they encountered new customs and laws. Many of the existing laws worked well enough, but pious Muslims wanted their lives to conform to the rules and principles that the Prophet

had taught. During the late Umayyad era, religious scholars (*ulama*), began discussing with each other how to formulate a comprehensive system of guidelines for living in accordance with God's will. They studied the Qur'an even more assiduously, and they began examining the hadith for guidelines. By synthesizing the Qur'an and the hadith, these individuals began formulating rules that embraced all aspects of life, including marriage, divorce, inheritance, theft and murder, and religious ritual. This body of work came to be known as the *shari'a*.

It is important to note that the development of these regulations was the result of initiatives made by private individuals and was not a governmental activity. The Abbasid government encouraged this juristic activity and appointed many of the ulama to be judges (*qadis*), but the Shari'a, or Islamic law, was recognized by Muslims everywhere as the product of a sincere effort by pious scholars to discern God's will. Inevitably, scholars from different regions used a variety of techniques to determine guidelines, and local customs helped to shape their conclusions. In the ninth century, there were literally hundreds of juristic traditions, or "schools," of Islamic law. By the early tenth century, however, most scholars had agreed with a reform movement that proposed a common set of four techniques: The Qur'an and hadith were the basic sources of principles, but a scholar could make analogies with other cases and could also employ *ijtihad*, or "independent judgment." As a result of this synthesis, the number of legal traditions gradually dwindled until there were only four major Sunni ones: the Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Hanafi. In general, Shi'ites were not active in developing legal texts during this period because they could consult their Imams for guidance. The eminent scholar and sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, however, had laid the foundation for a Shi'ite school of law, and his teachings were revived and expanded during the Greater Occultation. His school is called the Ja'fari school.

One subject that the jurists developed in the Shari'a was what they called *jihad*. Forty years ago, it would have received little attention in a book like this, because it was a long-dormant historical relic then. Today, thousands of people claim to be engaging in jihad, and so we will be tracing its use throughout this book. The doctrine of jihad in the Shari'a is somewhat analogous to the concept of "just war" in the Christian tradition. It was an attempt to formulate the rules of war so that war did not degenerate into random and senseless slaughter. The jurists distinguished between two types of jihad. There was an *offensive* jihad that was conducted against areas not ruled by a Muslim caliph. All non-Muslim-ruled land was known as the *dar al-kufr*, or "Realm of Unbelief" (because the Dar al-Kufr was a legitimate target for warfare, it was also known as the *dar al-harb*, or "Realm of War"). Only the caliph was to declare and lead such a war, and he was to do so only after demanding that non-Muslims convert to Islam or submit to the caliph and pay the protection money required of non-Muslims. If war ensued, it was to follow explicit rules of a "just war," such as not killing noncombatants and not destroying certain types of property. A *defensive* jihad was obligatory on all Muslims when non-Muslim armies invaded the *dar al-islam*, or "Realm of Islam." Its purpose was to repel the invader. This neat formulation of war soon became obsolete. We will see how the doctrine of jihad has been reformulated during the last few years.

A fourth major development of this era was Sufism. Sufism was the result of a yearning to attain purity of heart and to experience a deeply spiritual relationship

with God. It is the primary expression of mysticism in Islam. It is similar, although not identical, to the mystical expressions within Christianity exemplified by Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Merton. Sufis sought to spend as much time as possible in prayer and the contemplation of the attributes of God. They often fasted and deprived their body of comforts in order to focus their spiritual life.

Tension developed between Sufis and non-Sufis. Some Sufis were openly contemptuous of the religious habits of most Muslims, which often hardly went beyond performing the five daily prayers, attending the Friday sermon, giving alms, and abstaining from the consumption of pork and alcohol. Some Sufis neglected to participate in such rituals, claiming that they were prescribed only for the masses, who could not respond to the deeper, more spiritual aspects of the faith. A few Sufis even claimed that their religious experiences had enabled them to realize that they were God Himself, a patently blasphemous claim within the context of the uncompromisingly monotheistic Islamic tradition. By the mid-tenth century, however, Sufi leaders had developed a theoretical framework for helping initiates understand that the mystical experience required being grounded in the Shari'a, including the rituals of worship. Although some ulama never overcame their suspicions of the heretical possibilities latent within the mystical path, Sufism rapidly became popular both among the masses and among the learned elite.

By the mid-tenth century, the small movement that the Prophet had founded in Mecca was transformed into a civilization that stretched across 5000 miles, from Iberia to western India. Intellectually, religiously, and economically, it was dynamic and creative. Politically, however, the dream of a united Muslim community had collapsed by that time. Shi'ites had never accepted the caliphate of non-Alids, and the Abbasids had not been able to restore caliphal control over areas west of Tunis. During the late ninth century, some of the caliph's Iranian governors began withholding taxes, and in 910, the Fatimids created their rival caliphate in North Africa. Shortly thereafter, in 929, the Umayyad ruler of Iberia declared his own caliphate. The Abbasid caliph may well have asked himself whether things could get worse. He was soon to discover that things could, indeed, get worse: In 945, a group of military adventurers from a mountainous area on the southwestern shore of the Caspian Sea seized Baghdad, the rest of Iraq, and western Iran. The new rulers, the Buyids, allowed the caliph to remain in his palace as a figurehead, but they exercised all real military and political power. For most of the next three centuries, the Abbasid caliph was merely a reminder of what had been.

## **A Civilization under Siege, 950–1260**

Historians of Western Europe point out that the violence experienced by the peoples of that region from at least the eighth century into the eleventh century contributed to the poverty, illiteracy, and overall misery of life characteristic of the latter part of the period popularly known as the Dark Ages. Some of the violence was self-inflicted in the form of feudal competition, and some of it was inflicted from outside in the form of invasions from Muslims, Norsemen, and Magyars. It was only when the violence began to wane toward the end of the eleventh century that urban life could

resume and the amenities of civilization could appear. It was only then, too, that people had the confidence to explore new avenues of thought, even when they conflicted with traditional dogmas.

For much of the Muslim world, the wavelengths of violence and stability did not correspond chronologically with those of Europe. From the mid-eighth century to the mid-tenth century was a time of relative stability and exciting intellectual inquiry for the Muslim world, but the late tenth century inaugurated a long era of instability and violence. This period of violence and anxiety was a transition from political unity to political fragmentation, from intellectual curiosity to a suspicion of new ideas, and from a tradition of political leadership having been vested in Arab and Persian hands to a long era of Turkish leadership.

The Buyids were constantly harassed by the Byzantines and by nomads in their own territory. Preoccupied with these security problems, they had no inkling that they should be prepared for a threat from the east. In 1055, however, the Buyid holdings in Iran and Iraq were captured by the Saljuq Turks. The Saljuqs were part of a large Turkish migration from Central Asia that had begun in the mid-tenth century. At the turn of the eleventh century, the Saljuqs adopted a Sunni Muslim identity. In the 1030s, they moved into Khorasan (roughly, the region of modern northeastern Iran, Turkmenistan, and western Afghanistan), and in 1055 they seized Baghdad. They claimed to be “saving” the Sunni Abbasid caliph from the Twelver Shi’ite Buyids. In fact, however, the caliph remained a figurehead while the Saljuq leader, or *sultan*, exercised real power.

In the 1060s, a minor Saljuq chieftain rebelled against the Saljuq sultan and withdrew with his followers into Asia Minor, which was part of the Byzantine Empire. The original and much larger group of Saljuqs soon became known as the Great Saljuqs. They quickly consolidated their control over Iran and Iraq. Then, in 1071, they began massing troops for a campaign to conquer Syria (historically, that meant modern Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan) and Egypt from the Fatimids. While the Saljuqs were focused on the upcoming campaign, the Byzantines took the opportunity to attack them from the rear. The Byzantines arrayed almost their entire army at the battlefield, which was at Manzikert, near Lake Van, in the extreme eastern region of modern Turkey. The army of the Great Saljuqs obliterated its Byzantine opponent. The entire Anatolian plateau now lay open to Turkish herdsmen, whose widespread presence there would soon prompt some observers to coin the name of “Turkey” for the region.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Manzikert, Byzantine factions began quarreling with each other over rights to the throne in Constantinople. One faction requested aid from the Saljuq group that had split from the Great Saljuqs in the 1060s. It even gave the Turkish band the city of Nicaea, east of Constantinople, for use as its headquarters. This group of Saljuqs soon became known as the Saljuqs of Rum, because the Arabs had called Byzantine territory (the area covered by the eastern half of the Roman Empire) *Rum*, or “Rome.” The Saljuqs of Rum, like the Great Saljuqs, began to acquire the trappings of urban life and to patronize art and architecture. They became rivals of the Byzantines, but not their mortal enemies. Over the next century, the Byzantines found themselves far more threatened by fellow Christians to the west than by the Saljuqs of Rum, with whom they cooperated as often as they fought.

Also after Manzikert, the Great Saljuqs resumed their campaign against the Fatimids and conquered Syria from them. By 1090, however, Fatimid “special forces” groups had established themselves in remote and seemingly impregnable fortresses in Syria and Iran. The most famous of the strongholds was Alamut, in the Elburz Mountains of northern Iran. From these outposts, Fatimid agents conducted assassinations of Great Saljuq officials. They were the first of the legendary “Assassins.” In 1092 they murdered the powerful Saljuq prime minister, Nizam al-Mulk. A few months later, the Great Saljuq sultan died. At that point, the Saljuq princes began fighting with each other in order to determine who would be the new sultan. The result was a devastating civil war. Although a new Saljuq sultan established power over Iran and Iraq, the civil war had shattered Syria into a mosaic of petty Saljuq principalities. Their rulers jealously defended their city-states against each other, the Fatimids, the Saljuq sultan, and the Assassins (who, after 1094, welcomed the Nizari refugees from Egypt and embraced their cause).

The Battle of Manzikert, the civil war among the Great Saljuqs of 1092–1095, and Fatimid weakness after 1050 set the stage for a famous episode in the history of Southwest Asia: The crusades. In 1094, the Byzantine emperor had finally secured himself against fellow Byzantine rivals and wanted to begin rebuilding his army, which had still not recovered from the devastation of Manzikert. He sent a delegation to Rome that requested the aid of the pope in recruiting Frankish cavalymen for his army, because he was facing active threats from Normans, Serbs, and Bulgarians to the west and a potential threat from his sometimes friendly rivals, the Saljuqs of Rum. In 1095, the pope appealed to the knights of Western Europe to respond to the emperor’s request, but he mistranslated the call for recruits into the Byzantine army as a call for a volunteer Frankish army that would go to the aid of the Christians of the East and take control of the holy sites in Jerusalem. In 1096, a massive army of Frankish knights began its march across Europe. The crusaders had no intention of joining the Byzantine army, and when they arrived at Constantinople, their arrogance and independence alienated the emperor.

The crusaders continued their march to Jerusalem, and what had begun as a campaign to aid the Christians of the East quickly turned into a cold and often hostile relationship between the Catholic Franks and the Orthodox Byzantines. The crusaders endured a difficult siege of Antioch, but overall they encountered little serious opposition: The fragmentation of Saljuq power in Syria and the economic and military decline of the Fatimids had left the region vulnerable to outside invaders. The crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099 and set up a string of feudal principalities from Jerusalem northward to the Taurus Mountains. Had the First Crusade been attempted a decade earlier, it would have confronted the united power of the Great Saljuqs, and the results would have been quite different.

In the western Muslim world, the Umayyad dynasty continued to consolidate its power in the Iberian Peninsula. Prior to 929, it had claimed only the status of an *amirate*, or rule by a prince. Muslims called the area ruled by the Umayyad prince and other Muslim chiefs *Andalus*. Andalus covered roughly the southern two-thirds of the peninsula, while the northern one-third was an arc of territory occupied by feuding Christian kingdoms. The Umayyad rulers were based in the city of Cordoba from the time of their arrival there in 756. By 929, the Umayyad ruler had forced all rival Muslim chiefs to submit to him, and he claimed the title of caliph. Even then