MEDIEVAL ARABIC HISTORY

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Early Islam** : The Islamic Expansion**.

Reading: Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 111-188.
Donner, Fred McGraw. *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. Read chapters 2, 6 and conclusion.
Hodgson, Marshall G. S. "The Role of Islam in World History." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1.2 (1970): 99-123.

A New Religious Movement. The national language of Morocco is Arabic; nearly half of the vocabulary of Persian is Arabic; and the Spanish words for the common foodstuffs "olive" (*aceitun*a), oil (*aceite*), "rice" (*arroz*), and "sugar" (*azúcar*) are Arabic as well. None of this would have been the case if it had not been for a tiny religious movement that began in the early seventh century in the Western Arabian town of Mecca and led to the creation of a vast world empire, changing the course of history in the Middle East, Europe, and beyond. Mecca, dominated by the Quraysh (Little Shark) tribe, had two main claims to fame. It was the site of an important religious shrine, a rectangular building called the Ka`bah, the site of an annual pilgrimage that brought devotees from all over the Arabian Peninsula in the last month of the year. The Meccans also controlled the trade caravans that linked Yemen with Syria. Over several preceding centuries, Jews and Christians had established an increasing presence in and around the Arabian Peninsula. Jewish communities existed in a number of North Arabian towns, including Yathrib, Khaybar, Tayma', and others. The Himyarite kings had converted to Judaism along with large numbers of the populace, and Jewish communities continued to thrive in Yemen after the end of their reign. The vassal kingdoms of the Ghassanids and the Lakhmids had witnessed the conversion of many tribes on the outskirts of the Syrian Desert to Christianity. Ethiopia, across the Strait of Mandib from Yemen, was home to the Aksumite kingdom, and the Negus or King Ezana had converted to Christianity in 325 or 328 C.E. Christianity was the dominant religion throughout Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Najran, A Christian town north of Yemen and not too far from Mecca, had a cathedral and a bishop; it had been the site of a massacre of Christians in 523 C.E. at the instigation of the Himyarite ruler Dhu Nuwas. The new religion emphasized monotheism and the Biblical tradition. The new message embodied in the Qur'an presented itself as a scripture and a confirmation of earlier scriptures, including the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel. The sole recognized deity was Allah or al-Rahman (the Beneficent One), the Arabic word for God, meaning the God of the Bible.

The Prophet Muhammad. The outlines of the Prophet Muhammad's life are known less from the Qur'an than from the *Sirah* of Ibn Ishaq (d. 767) as edited and presented by Ibn Hisham (d. 833), which is the Islamic version of the Christian gospels, in that it begins with the Prophet's genealogy, the prediction of his mission, and his miraculous birth, then follows his life chronologically until his death, concentrating on the events of his mission. He was born ca. 570 and grew up an orphan, his father Abd Allah having died before his birth, and his mother Aminah having died while he was very young. He was raised by his uncle Abu Talib and grew up a well-behaved and trustworthy youth. He traveled to conduct trade with the caravans to Syria. At the age of about twenty-five, he married Khadija, and older woman who had been married several times before. They had a number of daughters, but no sons, and the only daughter who survived her father was Fatimah. In about 610, Muhammad had his first revelation while on a retreat in a cave on Mt. Hira outside Mecca. The angel Gabriel instructed Muhammad to recite, and he was inspired with Q 96: "Recite in

the name of thy Lord who created, * Created man from a clot. * Recite: And they Lord is the most bounteous, * Who taught by the pen, * Taught man what he knew not. * …"

Preaching and Flight to Medina. The revelations continued, and three years later Muhammad began to preach. He urged the Meccans to forsake their gods and therefore the town's ancient and revered shrine, which provoked a negative reaction on the part of the leaders of Quraysh. Muhammad and the small but growing group of converts were ostracized. Because Muhammad was protected by his clan, the Banu Hashim, he was safe from harm, but when his uncle Abu Talib b. Abd al-Muttalib died in 619 and was replaced as head of the clan by Abd al-Uzza, another uncle who was a sworn enemy of Muhammad, he lost the support of the clan and began to face danger. He attempted to seek refuge in Ta'if, a nearby town, but that did not work. He was then asked to go to Yathrib to act as a mediator in ongoing tribal disputes. In 621, he and his followers escaped to Yathrib, which came to be known as al-Madina (*the City* of the Prophet), in an event called the Hijra (the Flight).

Conflict with the Meccans. In the period from this time until the Prophet's death in 632, the Muslim community became a political entity with the Prophet as its leader. The followers who came from Mecca were called *Muhajirun* ("those who made the Flight"), and the new converts from Medina were labeled *Ansar* ("the Allies"). After a series of battles against the Meccans, the Muslims established a sufficient power base through allegiances with numerous tribes in the area. By 630, they had amassed enough power to be able to take Mecca. By the times of the Prophet's passing in 632, most of the Peninsula was under the sway of the Muslim community. There is some indication that the Prophet was intending to expand to the north, because he sent a military force to raid Tabuk in far northwestern Arabia shortly before his death.

Expansion, Byzantium, and the Sassanian Empire. After the passing of the Prophet, many of the Arab tribes that had sworn allegiance conceded their obligation to pay zakat on the grounds that it was tribute due to Muhammad in particular. From the Muslims' point of view, however, they had converted to Islam and so could not back out. Under the leadership of the first caliph, Abu Bakr (632-34), they conducted *Hurub al-Riddah* (the Wars of Apostasy) in order to unite the Peninsula once again under their leadership. Under the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-44), an incredible expansion of the Islamic polity took place. Muslim armies pushed northward into Syria and Iraq, defeating the armies of the two superpowers of the time, the Byzantines and the Sassanians. The political fates of Byzantium and the Sassanian Empire of Iran differed radically. On the one hand, the Sassanian Empire was toppled quickly: by 652, just twenty years after the Prophet's death, the last Shah was killed and the Empire ceased to exist, granting the new Islamic Empire vast territories in Iraq and Iran. On the other hand, the Byzantine Empire would survive until Constantinople fell to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror in 1453, over 800 years after the death of the Prophet. Certainly, the Byzantines lost extensive territory in the Middle East and North Africa, but already in the seventh century a stable border was established a bit north of the contemporary border between Turkey and Syria, and this remained the border between the Islamic Empire and Christian powers for many centuries. The following chronologies provide a synopsis of the expansion of the Islamic Empire.

Expansion into Syria, Anatolia:
634 Battle of al-Ajnadayn
635 Damascus taken
636 Battle of Yarmouk
638 Jerusalem taken
639 Caesarea and Ascalon taken
641 Raids into Anatolia

642 Dvin in Armenia attacked
649 Cyprus taken
655 the Battle of the Masts—Byzantine navy defeated
674-78 First siege of Constantinople
717-18 Second siege of Constantinople
820 Conquest of Crete

Expansion into Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia:
637 Battle of al-Qadisiyyah, Sassanian forces defeated
637 Sassanian capital, Ctesiphon, captured
642 Battle of Nahavand, Sassanians defeated again
643 Central Persia conquered
643 Invasion of Azerbaijan begins
649-50 Istakhr (Persepolis) taken
652 Merv, seat of Yazdegird III, taken; the Sasanian Empire comes to an end
705 Balkh
706-9 Bukhara
710-12 Samarqand
712 Khwarazm
712 Sind (modern Pakistan)
713-15 Farghanah

Egypt and North Africa:
640-42 Egypt conquered
647 First invasion of Libya and Tunisia
670 Qayrawan founded
682 Uqbah ibn Nafi` reached the Atlantic coast of Morocco
710 Tangier falls to Tariq ibn Ziyad
711 Tariq ibn Ziyad crosses into Spain
717-18 Conquest of most of Iberian Peninsula
718 Muslim forces cross the Pyrenees into France
721 Battle of Toulouse—al-Samh killed by Odo of Aquitaine
720-759 Narbonne in southern France adopted as center of Muslim territory
732 Battle of Poitiers or Tours—Charles Martel defeats and turns back Muslim forces

Sicily and southern Italy:
827 Conquest of Sicily begins
832 Palermo taken
843 Messina taken
878 Syracuse falls
902 Taormina, last holdout in Sicily, falls
846, 849 attacks on Rome
869 Malta taken
847-871 Bari, in southern Italy, becomes capital of independent emirate
909 Fatimids take control of Sicily, attack southern Italy
915 Fatimids defeated at Battle of Garigliano in southern Italy by Pope John X
934-35 Fatimid sack of Genoa
1060-1091 Norman conquest of Sicily

Questions

What is Muhammad's claim vis-à-vis Judaism and Christianity?

How does the Qur'an relate to the Hebrew Bible and the Gospel Tradition?

Compare the Qur'an and Bible in terms of structure.

When did Islam become a political entity and not simply a religious mission?

Did the Prophet envisage the conquests that occurred after his demise, or not?

How did the conquests proceed? Why?

Did the Islamic conquests change the course of subsequent history? What are some salient results of the conquests?

Further Reading

Eaton, Richard. *Islamic History as Global History*. *Essays on Global and Comparative History.* Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1990.

Fowden, Garth. *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Kaegi, Walter Emil. *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Pirenne, Henri. *Mohamed and Charlemagne*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954.

Voll, John Obert. "Islam as a Special World-System." *Journal of World History* 5, no. 2 (October 1, 1994): 213–226.

The Umayyad Dynasty

Reading: Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 189-296; Robinson, *Abd al-Malik*.

Caliphs or Kings? The Prophet Muhammad is famously held to have predicted, "The Caliphate will be thirty years, and after that there will be kings." This repeated apocryphal statement was evidently promulgated by enemies of the Umayyads who hoped to discredit them by characterizing them as secular rulers concerned only with their own wealth and power, who had lost sight of their religious duty to serve God in ruling over the Muslim Community. The image of the Umayyads spread by their enemies and successors, the Abbasids, is one of immoral, materialistic, hedonists who spent their reigns hunting and swimming in baths of wine with slavegirls in the harem. This is history as told by the conquerors, of course, and may not be reliable as a portrayal of reality. The problem is that few historical sources from the Umayyad period have survived, so that we may never know their side of the story.

Restoration of the Tyrants of Quraysh. If one steps back to take a broad view of the first Islamic century, it is shocking that the Umayyads came to rule the Islamic Empire so quickly after the rise of Islam, for they were the leading clan of Quraysh, the enemies who had most bitterly opposed the Prophet's early mission and the nascent Muslim community. Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Umayyad clan, was the general of the pagan Quraysh in their battles against the Muslims. His son Mu`awiyah battled `Ali b. Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Yazid, Mu`awiyah's son, sent the troops who killed Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, on the plains of Karbala in 680. Considered from this perspective, the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty represents the triumph of the worst nemesis of the Prophet's family, as if the son of King George III (1760-1820) had become the president of the newly independent United States and then created a new monarchy. When Mu`awiyah named Yazid his successor, he made the Caliphate into a hereditary office, a major change from earlier practice. At least according to later sources, the first four Caliphs had a right to the office on account of their superior merits and virtues and the principle of heredity was avoided on purpose. (It is often overlooked that all of the first four caliphs were related to the Prophet by marriage—this may in fact have been the decisive criterion.) The hereditary principle established by Mu`awiyah continued unopposed for the remainder of the Umayyad period, and was adopted not only by the Umayyad dynasty in Spain and the Abbasids but also by the Fatimid Caliphs and the Twelver Imams.

An Empire based in Syria. The Umayyads established their capital in Damascus. This occurred originally because Mu`awiyah, the founder of the dynasty, was the governor of Syria and had the support of the Arab tribal troops under his command there. It had far-reaching consequences. It meant that the strongest influence on their administration of the Empire and their general culture came from the Byzantines. At the beginning, state administration was done in Greek, and Greek-speaking functionaries were hired as part of the state apparatus. Governors were appointed to other provinces, and judges to serve along with them. Umayyad architecture betrayed substantial Byzantine influence in the form of Roman columns, frescoes, and mosaics. The Cathedral of St. John was converted and expanded to create the Umayyad Mosque. The Dome of the Rock, built by Byzantine craftsmen at the behest of Abd al-Malik in Jerusalem in 691, outdid even the Umayyad Mosque's fame but used Byzantine craftsmen and had similar Byzantine features, such as the octagonal design typical of a Christian *martyrium*, the lavish use of mosaics, and a golden dome. The switch of the administration to Arabic language was undertaken by Abd al-Malik in the late seventh century, but Greek would survive alongside Arabic in official documents for several centuries.

Expansion under the Umayyads. The Empire expanded rapidly during the Umayyad period, and reached to southern France in the West and Sind (modern Pakistan) in the East. Two major sieges of the Byzantine Empire's capital Constantinople, in 674-78 and 717-18 failed to topple the city. The Umayyad state engaged in more or less constant border skirmishes with the Byzantines, and instituted the practice of sending a *sayfiyyah* or summer campaign against them each year. Such campaigns continued in the Abbasid period; because the Abbasid capital was further away, Harun al-Rashid made the city of al-Raqqah, on the upper Euphrates, his base for military operations in the Byzantine Marches.

Shiite Rebellions in Iraq and the Hejaz. The Umayyad period witnessed a number of major revolts aimed at toppling the regime and making a member of the Prophet Muhammad's family the leader of the Muslim community. The most famous of these is the revolt of Husayn, who refused to give allegiance to Islam's first hereditary ruler, Yazid, son of Mu`awiyah, when he acceded to power in 680. Husayn marched from Medina across northern Arabia to Iraq, answering the plea of the inhabitants of Kufa to lead them in rebellion. However, spies warned the Umayyad authorities, and an army was sent to prevent Husayn from reaching Kufa. The Umayyad force stopped Husayn on the plain of Karbala' before he reached the Euphrates, and after a standoff of several days, during which Husayn refused to swear allegiance to Yazid and the Kufans failed to come to his rescue, a battle ensued in which all the adult males in Husayn's group were killed. This is the tragedy of Karbala that Shiites remember—and in many regions reenact—on `Ashura', the 10th of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar. Yazid's right-hand man was al-Hajjaj, renowned for his shrewdness and brutality, who not only ruled the Shiites of southern Iraq with an iron fist but also served as commander of the entire eastern half of the empire. Southern Iraq was the site of several subsequent rebellions of the same type, including that of the Tawwabun (Penitents) in 684, that of Mukhtar al-Thaqafi in 686-87, and that of Zayd in 740 C.E.

A major setback for the Umayyads was a revolt in the Hijaz, the historical cradle of Islam, led by Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, who established himself as ruler from Medina between 680 and 692. The revolt gained wide support, succeeded in gaining the allegiance of several provinces, and prevented the Umayyads from controlling the annual pilgrimage and access to Islam's holiest cities. It provoked the Umayyads' alarm particularly since they were faced for the first time with an internal rebellion they could not easily suppress. This may have led the Umayyads to stress the Islamic religious importance of Jerusalem and to build the Dome of the Rock.

Tribal rivalries. Another challenge for the Umayyads was the continuation of ancient rivalries between the confederations of Qays and Kalb, representing the Northern and Southern tribes of the Arabs, both of which were represented in the Umayyad forces. Some of the Caliphs were not successful in controlling this rivalry and exacerbated them by favoring one side over the other.

The Abbasid Revolution. From the perspective of later sources, the Umayyads' tendency to act like secular kings or Arab chieftains rather than leaders of an explicitly religious empire led to their downfall. General discontent of the piety-minded and disgust with the Umayyads' extravagance, drinking, hunting, and other vices, combined with the Shiites' goal of restoring control over the Islamic community to the family of the Prophet, fueled the Abbasid revolution. The revolt began as an underground plot that stretched throughout Syria, Iraq, and Iran. It began in earnest in Khurasan, eastern Iran, led by a talented commander named Abu Muslim in the name of an anonymous would-be caliph whose identity was not at first revealed. Instead, the revolutionaries referred to *al-rida min ahl al-bayt* "the acceptable man from the family of the Prophet". In 750, the revolutionaries took Damascus and put an end to the Umayyad regime, executing the caliph and his male

relatives. One member of the family, an uncle of the Caliph named Abd al-Rahman, escaped to Egypt and crossed all of North Africa in disguise. He eventually made his way to al-Andalus and established a new Umayyad dynasty there, ruling from the capital, Cordoba. The new Abbasid regime immediately shifted the imperial capital to Wasit in southern Iraq, then to Baghdad, presumably because that was a region of strong Shiite and anti-Umayyad sentiment, as opposed to Syria, which was home to staunch supporters of the old regime. After the success of the revolution, the Caliph, a descendant of the Prophet's uncle Abbas, turned on the Shiite leaders who were instrumental in making the revolution possible and had them killed. This purge earned the first Abbasid caliph the epithet al-Saffah "the shedder of blood." Shiites completely changed their attitude to the new regime that they had initially supported, now viewing them as sworn enemies, just as unsavory as the Umayyads had been.

Questions

How did Abd al-Malik try to compensate for the alleged failures of his Umayyad kinsmen?

According to Robinson, why did Abd al-Malik concentrate so heavily on building the mosque at Jerusalem?

From Robinson's perspective, why is it not appropriate to describe the political project of Ibn al-Zubayr as a counter-caliphate?

What role did the Ahl al-Bayt play in the Abbasid revolution?

Were the Abbasids Shiite?

Further Reading:

Hawting, G.R. *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate A.D. 661-750.* London: Routledge, 2000.

Sharon, Moshe. *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the Abbasid State*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1983.

The Abbasids

Reading: Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 297-428.

Baghdad, the Abbasids' Capital of the Islamic Empire:
In 750 C.E., the Umayyad dynasty, which had ruled from their capital in Damascus since 661 C.E., came to an end, overthrown by a revolt that had started in far-off eastern Iran. The victors established a new dynasty of Caliphs, called the Abbasids because they were descendants of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle al-`Abbas. The new dynasty immediately moved the capital of the Islamic empire to Iraq, ruling first from a city called Wasit—i.e. Middleton—between the Tigris and Euphrates in southern Iraq. In 762, the Caliph al-Mansur founded the new capital city of Baghdad, situated on the Tigris River at a point where the Tigris and Euphrates come close together but do not join—they join far to the south, just north of Basra. This was very close to Ctesiphon, the ruined site of the capital of the Iranian dynasty, the Sassanians, which had been toppled by the Islamic invasion over a century earlier. The new city was built as a circle with the Caliph's palace at the center. It has been claimed by some that this plan was inspired by Euclid's geometry. Baghdad grew rapidly. It was the capital of an empire that stretched from Spain to Pakistan and received a enormous revenues from the provinces. In addition, advances in irrigation, central control, and technology produced an unprecedented agricultural surplus in Iraq itself. In addition, through the port city of Basra at the northern end of the Persian Gulf, Baghdad controlled trade from the Indian Ocean coming into the Middle East, a trade route made famous by the stories of Sindbad the sailor, who, whenever he got fed up with the easy life in Baghdad, took a boat down the Tigris to Basra, where he outfitted a ship with merchandise and sailed down the Persian Gulf and out into the Indian Ocean. After braving horrific dangers, he returned laden down with spices, jewels, cloth, wood, and other luxury items. The tremendous income produced by agriculture was supported in part by the labor of slaves from East Africa, who rose in a tremendous revolt around Basra in southern Iraq between 869 and 883. By 850, Baghdad was the largest city in the world outside China, several times larger than the largest contemporary cities in Europe. It is estimated that Baghdad had roughly one million inhabitants, and reports state that there were ten thousand public baths in the city. One frequently cited symbol of the Abbasids's power is the fact that the Caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809) sent a white elephant as a diplomatic gift all the way to Charlemagne in France.

Persian influence. Whereas under the Umayyads, Byzantine influence had been strongest, under the Abbasids, Persian influence was paramount. This is seen in the Abbasid caliphs' adoption of Persian royal culture as a model for their own imperial rule, with huge palace complexes, elaborate protocol and ceremonies, and the employment of men from prominent Persian administrative families as ministers and high functionaries in their government, such as Ibn al-Muqaffa`, the Barmakids, and the Nawbakhtis. It was also evident from the tremendous Persian influence on both high and low culture, including cuisine, fashion, music, didactic literature, mirrors for princes, and more, in Abbasid Iraq.

Foreign women. One aspect of this shift in palace culture had a profound effect on the caliphal line itself. Whereas the Umayyads generally married Arab tribal women from a prominent family in order to cement tribal alliances with military commanders and other nobles, the Abbasid Caliphs began to marry foreign women who had come to the palace as slave concubines, and these women became influential in palace politics and successfully got their sons to accede to the caliphate. An important type of influential woman for the early Abbasid period was the *qayna* or professional singer-slavegirl, who was also adept at composing poetry and setting poems to music, endowed with erudition and ready wit, and served as an intellectual companion for the caliphs and other elite men.

Civil war. Persian influence came to a peak after the civil war that pitted two sons of Harun al-Rashid, al-Amin and al-Ma'mun, against each other between 809 and 813. Al-Amin was born of an Arab mother, had an Arab vizier, al-Fadl ibn Rabi`, and held the western half of the empire, while al-Ma'mun was born of a Persian mother, had a Persian vizier, al-Fadl ibn Sahl, and held the eastern half of the empire. Ma'mun, and the Persian side, won in 813, when he was able to leave his temporary capital in Merv and march into Baghdad. The rivalry between Arab and Persian culture erupted in a societal and literary debate termed the *Shu`ubiyyah*, in which champions of each side praised their group's accomplishments and superior qualities while denigrating their opponents. The Arabs denounced the Persians as cowardly, stingy, and effeminate, while the Persians denounced the Arabs as uncouth, ignorant, and unsophisticated.

Religious authority. The Abbasids were not entirely satisfied with their imperial image and, consciously countering the Umayyads' supposed lack of concern with the faith, actively sought to engage in religious action and propaganda. One telling sign of this is their adoption of theophoric caliphal titles that were clearly religiously charged: *al-Mahdi bi-llah* "Guided by God", *al-Mutawakkil `ala llah* "Placing Trust in God", *al-Muntasir bi-llah* "Victorious through God", and so on. Between 833 and 848, the caliphs from al-Ma'mun (813-833) until al-Mutawakkil (847-861) led, along with Mu`tazili theologians, the Inquisition (*al-mihnah*) designed to force judges, other officials, and prominent religious scholars to accept the theological doctrine that the Qur'an was created and not eternal, a policy that ultimately failed. The Caliph al-Qadir (991-1031) promulgated a document called the Qadiri Creed a number of times during his reign with the express aim of removing Shiism and Mu`tazili theology from the public sphere. Even the late caliph al-Nasir (1180-1225) sought to exert his religious authority by granting diplomas to the leading jurists of the four Sunni legal schools. While it is true overall that the Abbasids lost political and religious authority over time, episodes like these show that they continued to claim religious authority in various ways throughout their long reign.

Intellectual Center. Baghdad became a center not only for wealth, power, and luxury, but also for scholarship. Scholars of all fields flocked to the city because of opportunities to learn, obtain books, get support through stipends provided by wealthy patrons, and find work as copyists, tutors, and lecturers. In nearly every field, whether grammar, literature, history, Islamic law, mathematics, or astronomy, the academics of Baghdad were soon producing the most advanced scholarship in the world at the time. This blossoming of scholarship was helped by the discovery of a way to make paper quickly and cheaply. Before the late eighth century, scholars in the Middle East wrote on parchment, made of animal skins, or papyrus, made of the papyrus reed native to Egypt. Parchment was extremely expensive and time-consuming to produce. Papyrus was less expensive, but was brittle when dry and did not last in humid climates. The Abbasids learned to make paper out of pulp from craftsmen in Khurasan (north-eastern Iran) who had in turn learned to make paper from Chinese craftsmen who had been captured at the Battle of Talas in 751 C.E. By 800 C.E., factories around Baghdad were producing paper at an astonishing rate. The availability of cheap paper led to an explosion in publishing that saw Baghdadi authors writing individual works of 3,000, 5,000, even 30,000 pages. It is estimated, for example, that Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923 C.E.), the famous historian, hadith scholar, jurist, and commentator on the Qur'an, wrote 40 pages a day for 40 years. A new profession came into being, that of *warraq*, or "paper man". The *warraq* was a combination copyist, bookseller, and publishing agent. In the ninth century, there were over 100 bookshops in the "Market of the Papermen."

The Translation Movement. The translation movement was important from about 750 C.E. until 950 C.E. A few works had been translated before the Abbasids came to power, but translations began to be produced rapidly and in large numbers soon after the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty. The Abbasid caliphs who were most active in promoting translation and supporting translators were al-Mansur (775-785), al-Hadi (785-786), and al-Ma'mun (813-833). Many other figures, including viziers, government secretaries, and individual scholars, patronized and supported translation. The Caliph al-Ma'mun built a royal library called the Bayt al-Hikmah ("House of Wisdom"), which served as an important resource for scholars and translators. He and other caliphs paid to have scientific works brought from the Byzantine Empire to Baghdad, including superior manuscript copies of works that were available only in corrupt form. Works were translated into Arabic from a number of languages, primarily Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit. In some cases, the works were translated directly, say, from Greek into Arabic or Persian into Arabic. In other cases, works were translated from Greek into Syriac, and then from Syriac into Arabic, or from Sanskrit into Persian and then from Persian into Arabic.

The Sciences. Numerically, the most important body of material translated was made up of Greek scientific works, which were held to be the most valuable. Some literary works were translated, such as *Kalila and Dimna*, an originally Sanskrit work that had been translated into Persian and was translated into Arabic in the early Abbasid period by Ibn al-Muqaffa` (d. ca. 756). This work was a collection of advice tales with animal characters, but was understood to contain valuable advice for rulers and government officials. The scientific works translated focused primarily on astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, medicine, and philosophy, and secondarily on other topics such as music. Many Greek works became standard textbooks in the Islamic world, including Euclid's *Elements*, on geometry, Ptolemy's *Almagest* and *Tetrabiblios*, on astronomy; Aristotle's *Organon*, on logic, dialectic, and philosophy; and Galen's sixteen books, which constituted the entire curriculum for the study of medicine.

Christian translators. Many of the most famous translators were Middle Eastern Christians who spoke Arabic as a native language but had learned Syriac and Greek in the course of their religious education. Perhaps the most famous is Hunayn ibn Ishaq, who translated hundreds of works, including most of the books of Galen, in addition to supervising a workshop of other translators, including his nephew and others.

Transmission and elaboration. The translation movement played an important role in preserving classical heritage. There are still many classical Greek works that have only been preserved in Arabic versions—the original Greek versions have been lost. Greek manuscripts were copied in Byzantine territory specifically for the translation movement, which led to a revival of scholarship in Byzantium itself. The Islamic world played a crucial role in transmitting knowledge of these works to medieval Europe. Primarily in Spain and Sicily, many of the Arabic translations were translated into Latin. However, the scholars of the Islamic world were not mere transmitters. They assimilated and built on the achievements of the Greeks in nearly every field. They developed algebra, produced the general solution to the quadratic equation, discovered the lesser or pulmonary circulation of blood in the human body, and made many other similar advances. Examples of works by Muslim scholars that criticized and revised classical scholarship include Abu Bakr al-Razi's *Doubts about Galen*, on medicine, Ibn al-Haytham's *Doubts about Ptolemy*, on astronomy, and Avicenna's *Eastern Philosophy*, which outlines his major areas of disagreement with Aristotelian philosophy. Moreover, the effect of the translation movement reached beyond the scientific fields in which works were actually translated, exerting a profound effect on the theoretical discussion of grammar, theology, law, and the other Islamic sciences. By the end of the ninth century, Baghdad was home to the most advanced scholars in the

world in most fields, something that would have been impossible without the translation movement.

Decline. The translation movement ended in the late tenth and early eleventh century. Sources of patronage dwindled. A conservative coalition opposed to the rational approach adopted by most scholars in the sciences grew strong, and was supported by the Caliph al-Qadir (991-1031) and the Turkish ruler Mahmud b. Sebuktegin of Ghazna (997-1030). Mahmud's conquest of the Buwayhid capital of Rayy in Iran in 1020 and the Seljuk conquest of Baghdad in 1055 put an end to much official support. Funds were funneled into other areas where the study of the rational sciences was limited, such as *madrasa*s or colleges of Islamic law, and the religious sciences were favored overall. Moreover, there was less and less tolerance for strictly rational approaches in society at large and among scholars as well.

Questions

Why did the Abbasids found their capital in Iraq?

Compare and contrast the Umayyads and the Abbasids.

What were the Abbasids' claims to authority? What were their religious policies?

What role did Abbasid Baghdad play in intellectual history and the transmission of knowledge?

How might one define the periods of Abbasid history?

Explain the causes of the civil war between al-Amin and al-Ma'mun. How did the war end, and what were the consequences?

What were the salient features of Abbasid court culture? To what extent were these related to Persian models?

Discuss the function and status of the *qiyan* or professional female slave singers and musicians.

Further Reading:

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Fragmentation of Islam : The Shiite Century**.**

Reading: Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 429-89, 617-32.

Shiite political hegemony. Between about 950 and 1050 C.E., Shiites controlled nearly all of Islamdom. During this period, which Hodgson called the Shiite century, Shiite dynasties were formed and acquired unprecedented power. They included the Buyids (or Buwayhids), who controlled most of Iraq and Iran; the Fatimids, who controlled Tunisia, part of Algeria, Sicily, Libya, Egypt, the Hejaz, and southern Syria; the Hamdanids, with capitals at Aleppo and Mosul, who controlled northern Syria and northern Iraq. In addition, the Mirdasids and `Uqaylids controlled parts of northern Syria and Iraq for a time, while the Mazyadids, based in Hillah, reigned over a territory in southern Iraq. Ismaili states ruled in Pakistan and Eastern Arabia, and the Isma`ili Sulayhid dynasty reigned in Yemen. Zaydi Shiite states were established in Gilan, Azerbaijan, and Yemen. Because of the political power of these dynasties, Shiites enjoyed unprecedented freedom and influence in society in general. They had better access to high offices in the state, serving as ministers, judges, secretaries, and treasurers. They were economically prosperous and excelled as merchants dealing in cloth and other goods. For perhaps the first time in history, they were able to debate religious doctrine openly with their opponents.

Public presence. Shiite Islam entered the public sphere in an unprecedented manner. Shiites publicly performed the distinctive Shiite call to prayer, with the added creedal statement, "I witness that `Ali is the ward of God," or with the statement, "Come to the best of works," replacing the Sunni phrase, "Prayer is better than sleep," in the call to dawn prayer. They celebrated other distinct rituals, which may have existed for many years prior but which had been performed only in private. The two most important such holy days were `Ashura', commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn at the Battle of Karbala, and `Id al-Ghadir, commemorating the Prophet's designation of Ali as his successor in a speech on his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage, which Shiites celebrated openly in Buwayhid Baghdad as well as Fatimid Cairo. Shiite pilgrims to Karbala, the site of Husayn's martyrdom, proceeded in a parade from Baghdad with decorative banners.

Shiite religious literature. Prominent Shiite scholars wrote many works defending Shiism from ideological attacks on the part of the Sunnis and providing the basis for later elaborations of Shiite religious literature. Baghdad and Cairo became major centers of learning for Shiites. It was during this period that the four "canonical" hadith books of the Twelver Shiites were compiled, paralleling the six books of the Sunnis: *al-Kafi*, by Muhammad b. Ya`qub Kulayni (d. 941); *Man la yahduruhu al-faqih*, by Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi (d. 991); and *Tahdhib al-Ahkam* and *al-Istibsar*, both by Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. 1067). Legal manuals that served as standard legal textbooks for aspiring Twelver jurists were published, including al-Shaykh al-Mufid's *al-Muqni`ah* and al-Shaykh al-Tusi,'s *al-Nihayah*. For the Isma`ilis, al-Qadi al-Nu`man (d. 973) compiled the major legal work *Da`a'im al-Islam*, a compendium of the law that included a detailed statement on *wilayah* or allegiance to the current Imam. Leading Twelver jurists wrote works on *usul al-fiqh*, legal hermeneutics or jurisprudence; these included a work by al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 1022) which has been preserved only in abridged form, al-Sharif al-Murtada's (d. 1044) *al-Dhari`ah ila usul al-shari`ah*, and al-Shaykh al-Tusi's *al-`Uddah fi al-usul*. Al-Qadi al-Nu`man wrote *Ikhtilaf usul al-madhahib*, a sweeping refutation of Sunni legal hermeneutics. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid wrote *Kitab al-Irshad* (The Book of Guidance) on the lives of the Imams. Abu al-Faraj al-Isbahani (d. 967) wrote *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin*, a work detailing the long history of failed Shiite revolts and the imprisonment and martyrdom of their leaders. Al-Sharif al-Murtada completed major works on Shiite theology, including *al-Dhakhirah*, a general compendium, and *al-Shafi* (The Cure), on the Imamate. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi wrote a

major Shiite commentary on the Qur'an, *al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur'an*. Al-Sharif al-Murtada's brother, al-Sharif al-Radi (d. 1016), compiled the speeches and sayings attributed to `Ali b. Abi Talib, which he gave the title *Nahj al-balagha*h (The Path of Eloquence).

Shiite intellectual contributions. In addition to works related directly to Shiite doctrine, Shiites made many contributions to general Arabic and Islamic letters during this period. The Persian Shiite minister of the Buyid ruler Baha' al-Dawlah (988-1012), Abu Nasr Sabur b. Ardashir (d. 1025-26) founded Dar al-`Ilm (The House of Knowledge), an extensive library and research institute, in Baghdad in 991 or 993, following the model of al-Ma'mun's famous Bayt al-Hikmah (The House of Wisdom), which had been extremely influential in ninth-century Baghdad. Perhaps in an attempt to rival Sabur b. Ardashir's Dar al-`Ilm, the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim (996-1021) founded Dar al-Hikmah (also The House of Wisdom) in Cairo in 1004. Ibn al-Nadim (d. 990), a Twelver Shiite, Mu`tazili theologian, native of Mosul, and professional bookseller, wrote *al-Fihrist* (The Catalogue) in Baghdad in 987. One of the most important sources for intellectual history of the Arab and Islamic worlds, this work presents a virtual card catalogue of all the libraries of Iraq in the tenth century, listing all works in Arabic that Ibn al-Nadim had either seen, heard of, or read about in earlier biographies, along with curious anecdotes such as an account of al-Ma'mun's dream of meeting Aristotle, the supposed cause of his profound interest in Greek learning. Another major general work by a Shiite author of this period is Abu al-Faraj al-Isbahani's (d. 967) *Kitab al-Aghani* (*The Book of Songs*), the single most important source for the history of music in the medieval Arab world. Some of the most famous poets of this period were Shiites, including al-Mutanabbi (d. 965), considered by many to be one of the greatest poets in the history of Arabic literature.

The Sunni Revival. The period came to an end with what has been called the Sunni Revival. The Caliph al-Qadir several times during his long reign (991-1031) promulgated the Qadiri Creed, the chief purpose of which was to forbid the open debate and teaching of Shiite and Mu`tazili doctrines, and tried to have it enforced in Baghdad, forcing prominent scholars, including the Shiite jurist and theologian al-Sharif al-Murtada, to sign it. His campaign was supported in by Mahmud of Ghazna, who, when he conquered Rayy in 1020, executed or exiled Shiite and Mu`tazili scholars and philosophers and burned their books. The anti-Shiite banner was taken up by the Ghaznaids successors, the Seljuks, who sacked the Dar al-`Ilm and the house of al-Shaykh al-Tusi when they conquered Baghdad in 1055, forcing the Shiites to remove their religious scholarship to Najaf. The Zengids, Ayyubids, and Mamluks promoted similar policies of excluding Shiism from the public sphere, with the result that Shiite populations in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere, which had grown during the period of Shiite political dominance, dwindled, disappearing in Egypt, Aleppo, and elsewhere.

Questions

What were the Shiite dynasties that ruled in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries in the Islamic world? Why did they appear at this point in history?

What were the bases of the Buwayhids' power? What was their relationship with the Abbasid Caliphs? Why was it expedient for them to convert from Zaydi to Twelver Shiism?

The Ismaili movement had attempted to foment rebellion and to found a state in many parts of the Arab world and elsewhere. Why and how did they succeed in Tunisia?

Why did the Fatimids move their capital to Egypt?

What Shiite holy days became public rituals during the tenth century?

What are some of the major works of Shiite religious literature produced during this period by the Twelver Shiites? By the Fatimids? What is the evidence of the influence of Sunni models and Sunni concepts in their works?

What are some of the Shiites' major contribution to Arabic and Islamic letters and learning in general from this period?

By what sorts of arguments did Shiites support their doctrines against the Sunnis?

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The Arabs in Spain and Sicily : Influence on Europe

Reading: Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 493-614.
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Channels of cultural transmission. Throughout history, there has been sustained or intermittent contact among the cultures that surround the Mediterranean, and the contact between the Arab-Islamic cultural region and Western Europe is one part of this larger phenomenon, which goes back to the civilizations of ancient Egypt, the Near East, and Anatolia, and perhaps even earlier, to prehistoric times. In particular regions in particular periods, though, this interaction was more intense than in others, and one may single out historical cultural conduits of Arab and Islamic influence to Europe, including the Arab presence in the Iberian Peninsula (711-1492); Arab rule in Sicily (827-1091) and the period of the Norman and Hohenstaufen kings until 1266; the Crusader presence in the Levant (1097-1291); the Ottoman presence in the Balkans and Eastern Europe (14th c. – World War I); and the trade contact of the Genoese and the Venetians with Arab and Islamic economic centers throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. One might include as well the French, British, and Italian colonial presence in the Arab world, which resulted in the importation of foods and other influences back to the metropole. In these last cases, however, the bulk of the influence was going the other way, since the colonial powers were radically transforming Arab polities and societies. Of the conduits of Arab-Islamic influence to Europe, the most important for the transmission of knowledge was undoubtedly the Arab presence in Iberia, which had a tremendous impact not only on Spanish and Portuguese language and culture but also on the culture and learned traditions of Western Europe in general.

Arab-Islamic presence in Iberia. By 712, only seventy years later, the Islamic Empire controlled all of the Middle East and North Africa, spanning from Morocco to Pakistan, and Muslim troops crossed from Morocco into Spain. They rapidly conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula (now occupied by Spain and Portugal), leaving only small sections in the north unconquered (the province of Gallicia, for example). They even took over southern France for about thirty years, and were only defeated by Charles Martel near Poitiers in 732. The Muslims did not maintain control of southern France and northern Spain for long, but they would hold on to about two thirds of the Iberian peninsula for over four centuries, one half for two more centuries, and the kingdom of Granada in the south for two further centuries, eight centuries in all.

The Umayyad Caliphate and its aftermath. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus as the result of the Abbasid revolution in 750, a member of the Umayyad family escaped in disguise, fled across North Africa, and ended up in Spain, where he was named amir of Cordoba in 756. He established a new Umayyad dynasty that would last nearly three centuries. In the mid-tenth century, these Spanish Umayyads revived their claims to the Caliphate and adopted the Abbasid custom of taking religious titles designed to stress their roles as religious leaders and authorities. The Umayyad state disintegrated over a thirty-year period as a result of civil war, ushering in a period that is known as that of the "Party Kings." During this period, Islamic territory was divided into many petty kingdoms with capitals at Toledo, Malaga, Seville, and so on. The warring between these states weakened the Muslims, politically. In cultural terms, however, this period was a high point in Andalusian arts and letters because of the expanded opportunities for patronage. The "Party King" period came to an end with the conquest of nearly all the Muslim territory in the Peninsula by a new Berber dynasty from North Africa, called al-Murabitun ("border warriors") or the Almoraves (1086-1147). They ruled in Spain for about a century, until

they were overrun by another North African Berber dynasty called al-Muwahhidun ("those who confess the unity of God") or Almohades (1147-1228).

The Reconquista. In 1085, Castile took Toledo, the first major capital of the petty kingdoms. The Almoraves and the Almohades kept the Christian forces at bay for over a century after that, but a major blow to the Muslims came in 1212, when a combined force of Christian powers defeated the Almohades in the battle of Las Naves de Tolosa in central Spain. Subsequently, the main cities of the Andalus fell in rapid succession: Cordoba in 1236, Valencia in 1238, Seville in 1248, and Cadiz in 1250. From this point on, the only Muslim territory in the Iberian Peninsula was the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada, which would survive until 1492, when it fell to the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabel, and the last Nasrid ruler, Abu Abd Allah, left for exile in Morocco.

Alfonso X and the Translation School in Toledo. In 1085 Toledo became the first major Muslim capitals to be taken permanently by Christian powers. It became a major Spanish capital, and was particularly important as a conduit of Arabo-Islamic cultural material into a Latin, Christian environment. Under the patronage of such rulers as Alfonso X (1252-1284), ruler of Castile, Leon, and Galicia, known as Alfonso the Wise, it became a major center for translation. Among the most famous works he had translated were *Calila e Dimna*, a collection of animal-fables similar to *Aesop's Fables* that derived from the Indian *Panchatantra* (Sanskrit, ca. 300 C.E.). That work had been translated into Persian by Burzuwayh before the advent of Islam (ca. 70 C.E.), the Persian secretary Ibn al-Muqaffa` translated it into Arabic in the eighth century, and Alfonso had it translated into Spanish in 1251 or 1261 C.E. The work became extremely popular and influential in European literature. Another popular work was *El Libro de los Engaños*, a translation of the Sindbad cycle of stories from Arabic. Alfonso had a number of non-fictional works written which apparently drew on Arabic sources as well, including a book on chess and other games, a book on precious stones, and a history of the world. Other texts that were translated during this period include the Qur'an, medical works such as the Canon of Medicine by Avicenna (d. 1037), philosophical works such as commentaries on Aristotle's books by Averroes (d. 1198), and hundreds of other works in mathematics, astronomy, pharmacology, and other fields.

El Conde Lucanor. Some Arabic literature entered Spanish and Latin through less direct channels. *El Conde Lucanor* is a well-known work written after 1326 C.E. by Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348), a noble and nephew of Alfonso X. In this collection of 51 *Exemplos* or advice tales, three are explicitly presented as Arabic in origin, others are demonstrably so, and others portray action in a Middle Eastern setting. The explicitly Arab tales are each based on an Arabic proverb. Each of the three ends with the original Arabic proverb transliterated into Latin letters and accompanied by a Spanish translation. Other stories are clearly of eastern origin though they do not include any actual Arabic phrases. One story depicts Saladin's attempt to have an affair with a noblewoman and her success in deterring him. Another story, now famous throughout the Arab world, features a man and his son who are going to market and have brought their donkey along to carry the goods they will buy. People pass by them and remark that they are stupid, since both of them are walking and neither is riding the donkey. Then the father tells his son to get on the donkey. Another group of passers-by remarks that it is wrong for the son to ride and let his poor old father walk. So they switch places. Then, another passer-by comments that it is mean of the father to ride while his poor, tired son walks. Then they both get on the donkey. Yet another passer-by remarks that it is cruel for both of them to ride the donkey, when they are so heavy. The father uses this experience to teach his son not to base one's actions on what people say. Many other examples of influence have been discussed in scholarship, but still more remain to be detected.

Mudejars and Moriscos. Even after the establishment of Christian political domination over the entire peninsula in 1492, Arab-speaking Muslim populations continued to be an important part of Spanish society, living as *mudéjar*s, that is protected Muslim populations, for a short time in Granada, and longer in Murcia and Valencia. Their status was similar to that which Jews and Christians had held under Muslim rule. In the course of the sixteenth century, this option, too, was closed. Muslims were given the choice to convert or to leave. Many converted, but conversion did not bring an end to their problems. The new converts were termed *moriscos* "Moor-like," stressing their continued similarity to Muslims (Moors). They were continually suspected of having converted for convenience's sake alone and secretly harboring attachment to Islam rather than Christianity. Many became sincere Christians, but it is known that many were crypto-Muslims, pretending to be part of the Catholic Christian faith for fear of punishment while practicing Islam in private. These crypto-Muslims became a primary target for church authorities. In 1502, the Muslims of Granada were baptized by fiat, and Muslims under the rule of Castile had to choose between conversion to Christianity and exile. In 1525-26, Muslims under the rule of Aragon, particularly the large populations living under protected status in Murcia and Valencia, faced the same choice. The final expulsions of Moriscos took place in 1609-14; after that, the Iberian Peninsula was entirely Christian.

The Flight of Muslims. As a result of these expulsions, many Andalusian Muslims migrated to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and other Muslim territories. The Andalusian immigrants often faced difficulties in their new Muslim surroundings. In many cases, they spoke Spanish more than Arabic, and their customs made them more like their Christian neighbors in Spain than their new Muslim neighbors. Many knew little about Islam or common Islamic practices, and so were viewed with suspicion by the locals. Eventually, they assimilated, but not without exerting important influences on the local cultures. Andalusian dishes, traditional clothing, and music remain an important part of the cultural heritage in certain parts of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia where there was a high concentration of Andalusian immigrants. Despite the many conflicts of medieval political history in the Andalus, and despite continual interreligious polemics, Islamic rule provided a stable environment in which Muslims, Jews, and Christians flourished and interacted in relative harmony for several centuries. The term *convivencia* "living together" has been used to describe the special situation of harmony and interaction that obtained in al-Andalus.

Chronology of the Arab/Muslim Presence in Spain:

632 death of the Prophet Muhammad
640 conquest of Egypt by Arab/Muslim forces
690 by this date, all of North Africa had been conquered
712 Berber and Arab Muslim army crosses over from Morocco into Spain.
Gothic kingdom with its capital at Toledo collapses.
Cordova becomes the capital of Muslim territory in Spain.
732 Arab/Muslim army defeated by Charles Martel between Tours and Poitiers in France.
This marked the furthest reach of their invasion.
747-50 The Abbasid revolution. The Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus overthrown.
756 Umayyad survivor, Abd al-Rahman, escapes to Spain and named Prince of Cordova.
Umayyad dynasty established in Spain (756-1031)
759 Muslim armies expelled from southern France.
929 Umayyad Caliphate in Spain declared by Abd al-Rahman III (912-961 C.E.)
997 Umayyads attack Santiago de Compostela, the famous shrine city of St. James in the far North of Spain
1009-1031 Protracted civil war in the Umayyad Caliphate

1031 The last Umayyad Caliph, Hisham III, is deposed and replaced by a council of state. Ibn Jahwar is the first consul.
1031 Beginning of the "petty kingdom" period, in which there were as many as twenty-three independent city-states at one time
1085 Fall of Toledo to the Christian ruler Alfonso VI
1086 The Almoravid ruler Yusuf ibn Tashufin crosses over from Morocco. Defeats Alfonso VI of Lean and Castile at Zallaqa near Badajoz.
1091 Almoravids conquer the Abbadids of Seville
1094 Almoravids take the Aftasids of Badajoz
1094 The Cid (Rodrigo Diaz) takes Valenca an holds it until his death, in 1099
1099 Almoravids take Valencia
1110 Hudids of Saragossa vassals of the Almoravids; last "Petty Kingdom" left
1118 Saragossa taken by Alfonso Christian powers
1142 Hudids overrun by Alfonso I el Batallador and Ramiro II of Aragon
1144 End of Almoravid power in al-Andalus
1147 Almohads cross into Spain; take over territory of the Almoravids
1147 Christian powers take Lisbon
1178 Treaty of Cazola partitions Muslim territories to be conquered by Castile and Ragon
1195 Almohad victory over Castile at the Battle of Alarcos
1212 Battle of Las Naves de Tolosa. The Almohads are defeated by combined forces of Castile, Aragon, and Navarre.
1228 Almohads leave the Iberian Peninsula
1229 Jaime I of Aragon conquers Mallorca
1230 Permanent union of Castile-León
1235 Nasrid dynasty founded in Granada
1236 Cordova conquered by Fernando III of Castile-León
1238 Valencia conquered by Jaime I of Aragon
1248 Seville conquered by Fernando III of Castile-León
1250 Cadiz conquered by Christian powers
1266 Alfonso X of Castile-León conquers Murcia
1309 Allied forces of Castile and Aragon fails to defeat Granada
1469 Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon marry. They become known as *los Reyes Católicos* "the Catholic Monarchs."
1478 The Spanish Inquisition is established.
1479 Castile and Aragon are formally joined into one kingdom.
1492 Granada falls to the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabel.
1492 Expulsion of the Jews from Spain.
1501-2 Alpujarras rebellion near Granada
1502 Muslims under the rule of Castile (including Granada) must convert or be exiled.
1525 Muslims under the rule of Aragon (Valencia, Murcia, etc.) must convert or be exiled.
1609-14 Expulsion of the Moriscos from the Iberian Peninsula.

Questions

What is Menocal's perspective on the Umayyad Dynasty in Spain and its relationship to the Abbasid revolution?

What was successful about the model of al-Andalus?

Explain in detail one example of scientific exchange between Europe and the Middle East.

Explain in detail one example of cultural or literary exchange between Europe and the Middle East.

Analyze and comment on the following text by the 9th-century Spanish Christian author, Petrus Alfonsi, who is decrying the youth's obsession with things Arabic in his work *Disciplina Clericalis*, What do we learn from his descriptions about the culture in Spain during his time? Why is he upset? How does he perceive the relations between Muslims and Christians? What role does language play in the conflict? How closely is language related to religion?

> My fellow Christians delight in the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the works of Muslim theologians and philosophers, not in order to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant Arabic style. Where today can a layman be found who reads the Latin commentaries on the Holy Scriptures? Who is there that studies the Gospels, the Prophets, the Apostles? Alas, The young Christians who are most conspicuous for their talents have no knowledge of any literature or language save the Arabic; they read and study with avidity Arabic books; they amass whole libraries of them at a vast cost, and they everywhere sing the praises of Arabian lore. On the other hand, at the mention of Christian books they disdainfully protest that such works are unworthy of their notice. The pity of it! Christians have forgotten their own tongue, and scarce one in a thousand can be found able to compose in fair Latin a letter to a friend! But when it comes to writing in Arabic, how many there are who can express themselves in that language with the greatest elegance, and even compose verses which surpass in formal correctness those of the Arabs themselves!

Read the following excerpt from Exemplo XLI of *El Conde Lucanor*. What are the two "additions of al-Hakam"? Why was the first "addition" inappropriate or undignifed? What is the moral of the story?

There was in Cordova a Moorish king named al-Hakam, who governed the kingdom well. He strove to act honorably on his own part and to be just with others. Indeed, he did all that was required of good kings, not only in guarding their kingdoms, but in augmenting their territories, with the view that they might receive the praises of their people and be remembered after death for their good deeds. Yet this king gave himself up to a life of luxury and enjoyment; vice and disorder reigned in his palace. It so happened that when they played before him on an instrument which the Moors liked very much, and which they called *Albogon*, the king perceived that it did not sound as good as it ought, so he took the instrument and made a hole at the bottom, in line with the other holes. Since that time, the *Albogon* has given a much better sound than before. This must certainly be considered an improvement, but it was not an act suited to the dignity of a king, and so thought the people. When they heard that the improvement was made by the king, they exclaimed in a ridiculing manner in Arabic, *v.a he de ziat Alhaquim* (*wa-hadi ziyadt al-Hakam*), which means "This is the addition of al-Hakam." This saying became so common all over the

country that it at last reached the ears of the king, who begged to know why the people always used this saying, but his attendants took pains to avoid answering his question. He, however, insisted on being told the truth and the meaning of the expression, so they were compelled to tell him. When he heard it he was very much grieved, but instead of punishing those who related the origin of the saying, he resolved to do some worthy deed, in order that the people might be compelled to praise him deservedly.
At this time the mosque of Cordova was not yet finished, so King al-Hakam did all that was necessary for its completion. In this way it became one of the most beautiful mosques the Moors had in Spain. Glory be to God! It is now a church, called "Saint Mary of Cordova," and it was dedicated by the good King Ferdinand to Saint Mary after he had taken Cordova from the Moors.
Now, when the Moorish king had done so good a work as that of finishing the mosque, he said to him self, "The people have hitherto made fun of me for the addition I made to the Albogon (one of which instruments he then held before him), but now they have reason for praising me, for have I not completed the mosque of Cordova?" From this time the Moors ceased to make fun of him; and to this day, when they wish to extol a good act, they say, "This is like the addition of the King al-Hakam." ...

Notes:
The King Alhaquem of the story is probably the Umayyad Caliph al-Hakam II, who ruled from 961 to 976.
Fernando III of Castile conquered Cordova in 1236.
The Mosque of Cordova, which has been converted into a church, is still standing. The main structure of the church has been built inside the mosque. This leaves a great deal of the original structure intact, but disrupts the space and view considerably.

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The Crusades.

***Reading**:* Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 633-707.
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The Crusades, 1095-1291 C.E. The Crusades were a series of invasions of the Middle East led by Western European Christians between the late eleventh century and the end of the thirteenth century, with the aim of conquering territory for Christendom, especially Jerusalem and the surrounding territory. The various campaigns are usually labeled as numbered crusades, though one might view them as a continuous stream. They represent one of the most intense periods of conflict and exchange between the Arab World and Western Europe, and they had a number of long-term effects on the region.
The Border with Byzantium. From the seventh century until the twelfth century, Byzantium was the main enemy power of the Islamic Empire, whether the Umayyad Empire, the Abbasid Empire, the principalities and the Fatimid Caliphate of the Shiite century. The border was not rigidly fixed, but fluctuated back and forth in a region between northern Syria, northern Iraq, and southeastern Anatolia that the Arabs termed *al-Thughur* "the Marches". Border skirmishes and raids were common. From Umayyad times onward, a *sayfiyya* or summer campaign was assembled and set out every year. The Byzantine Marches became the primary locus for *jihad* in the Islamic world, attracting warriors desirous of plunder as well as pious ascetics determined to defend the borders of the Islamic world from fortified towns such as Malatya, Mar`ash, Tarsus, al-Missisa, and Adana. The situation was stable, though there was constant conflict, until the mid-tenth century. In what may be termed the Byzantine Crusade, the generals Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimesces conquered a large swath of territory in southeastern Anatolia and northern Syria, as well as Crete and Cyprus, including the main cities of the border region, but also Antioch and Tripoli. Byzantine forces even besieged Aleppo, capital of the Hamdanid state, in 953, and the Hamdanids were forced to pay tribute for several years after that. The Byzantines held these territories for roughly a century, until the tide turned once again when the Seljuks conquered Iraq in 1055 and then turned toward Syria and Anatolia.

The First Crusade. Most analysts agree that the key event leading up to the Crusades was the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, when the Seljuks defeated the Byzantine army and as a result conquered a large part of Anatolia, threatening even more Byzantine territory in subsequent years. The Byzantine Emperor set alarming calls for help to the Pope and Western Christian powers when the Seljuks reached the Marmora, across from Istanbul. It took time for the Western Christians to react, but in Clermont, France in 1095, Pope Urban II announced the First Crusade. By 1097, an army of Western Christians—the Franks, as they are called in Arab sources—assembled in Constantinople and advanced through Anatolia towards Syria, reconquering territory from the Seljuks. Over the next two years, they reconquered most of Anatolia and territory all along the Syrian littoral, establishing five states: the Principality of Armenia, the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. They built fortresses using architectural and engineering principles developed in Europe, and built infrastructure allowing them to receive supplies from the sea.

The Second Crusade. The first of the Crusader states to fall was the County of Edessa, conquered by Zengi, a Turkish vassal of the Seljuks who ruled from Mosul in northern Iraq, in 1144. The fall of Edessa provoked the Second Crusade (1147-49), which focused on Syria. Its leaders decided that they should conquer Damascus, the true center of power in Syria, recognizing that the First Crusade's main failure was not to take either Damascus or Aleppo. The Franks' siege of Damascus failed, however, and they withdrew without

attaining their goal. Nur al-Din, Zengi's son, subsequently adopted a policy of attempting to overthrow the Fatimids and thus unite Syria and Egypt against the Franks. He conquered the important border town of Baniyas in 1164, gaining a reputation that rivaled that of his father, Zengi. However, Amalric I, the King of Jerusalem, was steadily gaining power. He captured Ashkelon, the main outpost of the Fatimids, in 1168, and advanced on Egypt. In order to prevent Amalric from successfully laying siege to Cairo, Shawar, the Fatimid vizier, had Fustat burned, leaving the walled city of Cairo to face the Crusader forces.

The Third Crusade. The third of the great commanders of the anti-Crusade forces was Saladin, son of Shirkuh, a Kurdish vassal of the Zengids who served under Nur al-Din. Saladin ended up replacing the vizier of the last Fatimid Caliph, and then abolishing the Fatimid Caliphate altogether in 1171. With the Fatimid Caliphate removed from the picture, Saladin could coordinate Egyptian and Syrian forces to attack the Crusader states, something that had been impossible before. After cementing alliances and subduing rebellious forces, Saladin led a successful campaign against the Kingdom of Jerusalem, defeating the Franks at the Battle of Hittin in 1187, forcing them to take refuge in Acre and regaining Jerusalem and much of the surrounding territory. This event provoked the Third Crusade (1190-91), the most famous one, in which Richard the Lion-Hearted, Philip Augustus, and Frederick Barbarossa took part. The Third Crusade regained some of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and conquered Cyprus, but failed in it main objective, the recapture of Jerusalem itself.

Later Crusades. The fourth Crusade never reached Syria. For reasons that remain unclear, they attacked the Byzantines and ended up founding the Latin Kingdom of Byzantium (1203-61), forcing the Byzantines to establish a new capital at Trebizond. The Fifth and Seventh Crusades adopted a new tactic. The Franks thought that if they could conquer territory in Egypt, which appeared to them less well defended and more accessible from the sea, they could then bargain with the Muslim powers and get Jerusalem in exchange. They may also have had designs on Cairo, the center of the Muslims' power, and together with it access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean spice trade. Both attempts failed, mainly because the Crusaders failed to hold Egyptian territory for long enough. In the Fifth Crusade (1215-19) the Crusaders succeeded in taking Damietta, on the northern coast of Egypt, in 1219, but held it for only a short time. The Seventh crusade (1249) was much more of a disaster. Louis IX of France attacked Egypt, taking Damietta and Mansura. It was thus more successful than the Fifth Crusade initially, but the Franks advanced too far inland, and the Ayyubid forces surrounded and captured them. Louis IX was held for ransom. The Sixth Crusade (1227-29) was not really a crusade at all but a series of negotiations. The Emperor Frederick II led it while excommunicated and concluded a treaty in 1229 with the Ayyubid Sultan al-Kamil (1218-1238), according to which he rented Jerusalem for ten years for the Christians. The Christians did not give it back when the ten years were up, but in 1244 Ayyubid forces retook the holy city. The Eighth Crusade (1270) never reached the Middle East. Louis IX of France set out ended up attacking Tunisia, a tactic that also failed, and he ended up having to be rescued. By the late thirteenth century, the Muslim forces were in a position of superior power, having united Egypt and Syria. The Mamluk Sultan Baybars (1260-77) reduced the remaining Crusader territories in Syria, and shortly thereafter, in 1291, Acre, last Crusader outpost, fell to the Mamluks.

Cultural exchange. The Crusades had a number of important effects. Despite the conflicts and warfare, significant cultural exchanges occurred, for the Crusader Franks often stayed for long periods, ruled over native Arab populations, and dealt with neighboring states. They learned Arab customs and ways, and brought some back to Europe when they left. While the Muslim forces learned of new weaponry and techniques for building

fortresses, the Crusaders learned how to cultivate sugar cane, acquired a taste for spices, various types of cloth, and luxury goods, and adopted Arab heraldry and falconry.

The Anti-Crusade. The Crusades also provoked the anti-Crusade, an ideological movement the goal of which was to mobilize Arab society as a whole to oppose the Crusaders. This involved propaganda of many types: buildings dedicated to pious causes, books extolling the sacred status of Jerusalem and other holy sites in Syria from an Islamic point of view, and treatises and sermons urging *jihad*. A signal propaganda piece was the ornate and sumptuous *minbar* Nur al-Din had built in Aleppo for the Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, decades before Jerusalem was actually captured. Starting with the Zengids, the anti-Crusade created the unified *jihad* theory, which connected the threat of the Shiites with that of Crusaders. The logic was that Shiites weaken the Islamic polity from within, making it vulnerable to outside attacks. People throughout the region were alarmed by the Assassins, Nizari Ismailis who had split with the Fatimid line in 1094, established a series of fortresses in Iran and Syria, and carried out highly effective attacks under the direction of their leader Rashid al-Din Sinan (1162-92), known to the Crusaders as "the Old Man of the Mountain" because he resided in the mountain fortress of al-Masyaf. Among others, they succeeded in assassinating the Fatimid Caliph al-Amir (1130), Raymond II of Tripoli (1152), Conrad of Monferrat, the King of Jerusalem (1152), and made nearly successful attempts on the lives of both Nur al-Din and Saladin–twice on the latter, who only survived a stab to his neck on one occasion because he was wearing chain mail while sleeping. Nur al-Din, Saladin, and other Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultans regularly discriminated against Shiites and sought to marginalize them. When Nur al-Din captured Aleppo, he outlawed the performance of the distinctive Shiite call to prayer as part of a program to remove Shiism from the public sphere. Saladin broke up and sold the Fatimid libraries, and Sufi masters, law professors, and preachers worked to convert Shiites and suppress the remaining pockets of Shiism in Egypt. Shiites fled to southern Egypt, Yemen, or remote or mountainous areas in Syria, and the population of Shiites throughout the region dwindled, disappearing in Egypt and Palestine. Aleppo, which had been roughly half Shiite, eventually became an entirely Sunni city, as did Tyre on the coast of southern Lebanon. Shiites remained mainly in two areas, Jabal Amil, inland from Tyre and Sidon in southern Lebanon, and the Biqa` valley in northern Lebanon. With regard to the Ismailis, Saladin reduced the threat of the Assassins in Syria, and Baybars reduced their remaining strongholds in the late thirteenth century.

Status of Christians. Another effect of the Crusades was the deterioration of the status of Christians in the region because they were seen as potential allies with the Franks. Both the conflict with the Crusaders and economic troubles led to the mistreatment of and enhanced restrictions on local Christians. Particularly when the Franks committed a perceived crime or infraction of the rules of combat, some Muslim rulers retaliated against the local Christians. An example of this occurred in 1124, when the Franks besieged Aleppo and desecrated the Muslim cemetery outside the city walls. The Zengid ruler, encourage by the judge Ibn al-Khashshab, retaliated by converting four of Aleppo's churches into mosques. Precise information is not available, but it is very likely that large numbers of Christians in the Middle East converted to Islam during the period of the Crusades and their aftermath. Yet another result of the Crusades was the establishment of strong ties between the Maronite Christians of Syria and Lebanon, an offshoot of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Papacy in Rome as well as the kings of France. The Maronites became a Uniate Church, affiliated with Rome and recognizing the authority of the Pope but retaining their own distinctive Syriac liturgy. These ties would continue after the Crusades and have lasted until the present day.

Questions

What were the main causes of the Crusades?

What were the lasting effects of the Crusades?

How did Arabs interpret the coming of the Christian crusaders?

How did Christians from Europe understand Islam?

What was the relationship between Arab Christians and Christian crusaders?

What were the salient aspects of anti-Crusade propaganda in the Arab lands? Give examples from literature and architecture.

What role did Shiites play in the Crusades? How do they figure in anti-Crusade propaganda?

Further Reading

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The Mamluks.

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A Shift in power. The period between the tenth and thirteenth century witnessed the shift of the main centers of power in the Middle East from Baghad in Iraq to Cairo in Egypt. Writing in the late tenth century, the traveler and geographer al-Maqdisi claims that Fustat has "abrogated" Baghdad, meaning that it has completely superseded the Abbasid capital, presumably in economic and cultural terms. Part of this shift is explained by the waning of the Abbasids' power, but it is also related to a shift in the Indian Ocean trade, which used to go primarily through the Persian Gulf to Basra and Baghdad, increasingly when through Yemen and the Red Sea to Cairo. This was helped by the Fatimids presence in the Mediterranian, which facilitated trade with Western Europe. Just as control over the extension of this trade to points north and west contributed to the prosperity of Abbasid Iraq, it now contributed to the prosperity of Fatimid, and then Ayyubid and Mamluk, Egypt, which maintained a monopoly over the spice trade, and particularly over that of pepper, selling spices and other luxury goods to the Venetians and Genoese, who then distributed them throughout Western Europe. The arrival of the Turkish Seljuks in the central Middle Eastern lands, their conquest of Baghdad, and their subsequent expansion into northern Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia shifted the centers of power north. Another blow to Baghdad was the Mongol conquest of Hulagu in 1258. Immediately after the conquest, Hulagu established his capital far to the north, in Tabriz, Azerbaijan. From the thirteenth century until the Ottoman conquest of Syria and Egypt in 1516-17, Cairo and Tabriz became the two main centers of power, and the Arab world was divided between the Ilkhans in Iraq and Iran, and the Mamluks in Syria, Egypt, and the Hejaz.

Slaves on horseback. The Mamluks began as imported slave warriors serving under the Ayyubids (1171-1250). Turks had been imported already by the Abbasids as military slaves in the ninth century. Turks were prized as military slave because of their training from a very young age in riding and archery. The excelled at mounted archery, and had special composite bows which allowed them to shoot with a great deal of force while handling the bow on a horse at full gallop. This made the Turks the ideal soldiers to meet the Mongols, who fought in the same manner since they came from a similar geographical and cultural background. Both had been nomadic sheepherders who depended on sturdy horses to herd sheep over vast territories on the steppes of Central Asia and excelled in mounted archery for hunting and tribal warfare. The Mamluks took over when the last Ayyubid Sultan died, and his widow, Shajar al-Durr, took over as regent, marrying Aybak, the commander of the Mamluks. Shajar al-Durr was not long afterward assassinated, reportedly being beaten to death with wooden clogs by the women servants in the bath, and the Mamluk dynasty ruled Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz, the former territories of the Ayyubids, from 1250 until 1517. Ther reputation was established when they defeated the Mongols at the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, stopping the Mongol advance through the Middle East and preventing them from taking over the entire Arab word. Because of this military success, the Arab World came to be divided into three great regions, Iraq, under the Ilkhans (1258-1349), the descendants of Hulagu, with their capital in Tabriz; the Mamluk territories, and North Africa, under various Arab and Berber dynasties, including the Almoravids, the Almohads, the Hafsids, and others.

Cairo as a world capital and intellectual center. Under the Fatimids, Ayyubids, and Mamluks, Cairo became a world capital, and when Fustat burned during the Crusades, the population became more concentrated on the walled Fatimid city, which had been originally

designed for the palace, the government, and the troops. The Mamluks engaged in a large variety of building projects that were connected with purposes of propaganda, legitimating Mamluk rule by presenting them as patrons of Islamic devotion and charity. Their buildings include mosques, *kuttab*s or elementary schools, *sabil*s or public fountains, hospitals, *madrasah*s or colleges of law, *khaniqah*s or hostels for the training of Sufi mystics. Along with this went the building for pious purposes elsewhere, especially in Mecca and Medina but also in many other cities in the realm, including Damascus, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Patronage of the pilgrimage was a major undertaking of the Mamluks, who in addition to providing for the safety and organization of the annual pilgrimage caravans from Cairo and Damascus, also sent an ornate *mahmal* or carriage on the pilgrimage, delivering the new covering (*kiswah*) for the Ka`bah as well as lavish charitable gifts. There was ample response to this patronage, particularly since Cairo and Damascus became havens for scholars fleeing Mongol rule in Iraq, Iran, and Transoxania. The Mamluks followed Turkish rulers' tradition of promoting the Hanafi legal school even in Egypt and Syria, which were predominantly Shafi`i, produced numerous endowed positions for immigrant Hanafi jurists. The immigrants also brought expertise in the rational sciences in particular, including medicine, mathematics, astronomy, logic, and philosophy. As a result, Cairo became the leading intellectual center of the Arab world, and arguably of the entire Middle East.

Two Dynasties. The Mamluk period is generally divided into to dynasties, the Bahri Mamluks, who ruled from 1250 until 1390, and the Burji Mamluks, who ruled from 1390 until 1517. The Bahri Mamluks get their name from the river (*bahr*), because their barracks were on the island of al-Rawdah in the Nile ever since the first corps of Mamluks was established to serve as a bodyguard for the Ayyubid sultan al-Salih Ayyub (1240-49). They were primarily of Turkish and Mongol descent. The Burji Mamluks were named after the Citadel (*burj* = "tower"), and they, of Circassian descent, originated as a bodyguard of the Bahri Mamluk sultan al-Mansur Qalawun (1279-90).

A Military Elite. As with other Turkish dynasties, there was a shard divide between the Turkish ruling military class and the rest of the populace. Mamluks were brought to Egypt as slaves, given rudimentary instruction in Islam and rigorous military training in horsemanship, archery, swordsmanship, and other battle skills. They had two types of powerful loyalty, to their master (*ustadh*), the Sultan of Mamluk commander who had purchased and trained them, and to their comrades (sing. *khushdash*), peers who were members of the same cohort of imported slaves and trainees. Commanders rose through the ranks, becoming leaders of ten, one hundred, one thousand mounted warriors, and then possibly even the sultan. The monarchy was strictly not hereditary, and many sultans passed the rule on either to the leader of a rival faction of Mamluks, or to the most prominent member of his loyal followers. No one outside the military corps could become Sultan or a military commander. The commanders were supported by temporary grants of agricultural land, which they were expected to administrate and use to support the warriors under their command. Even their own offspring were excluded from the military and the positions of command in the government. They formed a subordinate class termed *awlad al-nas*, literally "the sons of the people, meaning sons of the members of the ruling class. From this period in Egypt and Syria, even more than in earlier centuries, Turkish identity came to be associating with the ruling, military caste. The Turkish rulers were separate from and inimical to the Arab-speaking populace, and prone to act violently and arbitrarily, and tyrannically towards them, something that would continue in later periods. In addition, during the Mamluk period began the process of borrowing Turkish vocabulary and linguistic features into the Arab dialects of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria that would continue and intensify under the Ottomans.

The Abbasid caliphate of Cairo. In an unusual attempt to legitimate their rule in yet another Islamically sanctioned manner, the Mamluks fostered a new line of Abbasid Caliphs in Cairo, beginning in 1261 with a fugitive uncle of the Abbasid line. Deprived of all territory and removed from their base in Baghdad, these caliphs become something like the emperors in Japan. Well kept, they were trotted out on special occasions to lend solemnity to the celebrations, and they confirmed the appointment and sovereignty of each new Sultan. When the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517, the Cairo Abbasid Caliphate came to an end. Eventually, the Ottoman Sultans would claim the title of Caliph for themselves, until Atatürk abolished the Caliphate along with the Ottoman Sultanate in 1924.

Questions

Describe the organization of the Mamluk government and military elite.

What was the relationship between the military rulers and the judiciary and religious scholars and officials under the Mamulks?

How was trade organized under the Mamluks? What were the major trade routes, and who were the Mamluks' main trading partners?

Compare and contrast the Mamluks with any other Turkish dynasty: the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks, the Zengids, the Ottomans.

Compare and contrast the Mamluks to their contemporaries, the Monghol Ilkhans.

How did the Mamluks engage in Islamic religious propaganda?

Examine and analyze one outstanding monument that was built during the Mamluk period.

Further Reading

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