

# The Medieval Islamicate World: 570-1250

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# Contents

<b>Course description</b>	<b>5</b>
Resources and reading materials . . . . .	7
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 The Rise of Islam in Late Antiquity</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3 Muhammad and his successors</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4 The Umayyads: an Arab-Islamic monarchy</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5 The ¢Abbasids: an Islamic empire</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6 Conversion to Islam and the non-Muslim communities</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>7 Shi¢ism and Shi¢i communities</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>8 The Fatimids and the Islamic West</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>9 Al-Andalus: Conquest to the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>10 From competing Caliphates to the rise of non-Arab dynasties</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>11 Crusaders</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>12 The Mongols and the New World Order</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Examination</b>	<b>33</b>



# Course description

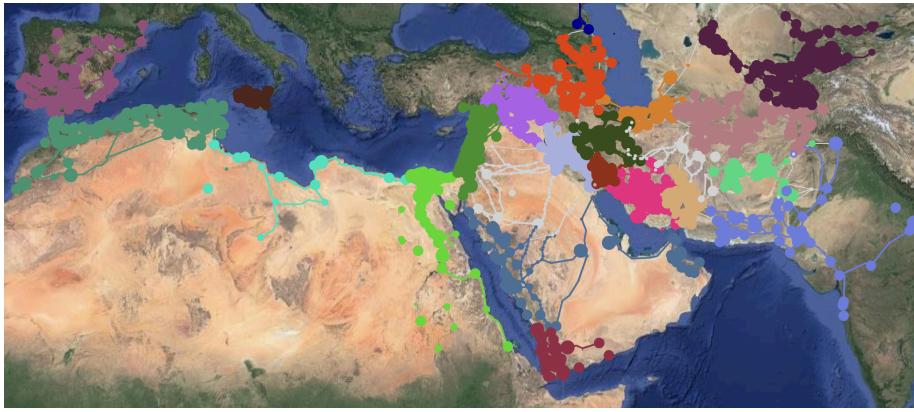


Figure 1: A map of settlements and routes of the medieval Islamic World, Al-Turayyā Project by Romanov M. and Seydi M.

The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to the early and medieval history of the Islamic world, from the rise of Islam in Arabia to the formation of a world civilisation. Students will learn how to relate ideas to historical, geographical, and material factors. Particular attention will be paid to religious and cultural continuity, as a backdrop to the evolution of an Islamic identity and institutions of government, administration, and education.

## Intended learning outcomes

1. Students will learn about the most important developments in Islamic history, main questions in the historiography of Islam, and be able to reflect historically and critically about a range of topics related to the way Muslim societies functioned in the past.
2. They will be able to find their way around major reference works for Islamic history and gain some familiarity with some primary sources.

3. They will learn how to write critical essays following the conventions of style and referencing in the field of Islamic history.
4. They will be able to apply the skills and methodological approaches to other subjects of study. They will be able to situate topics from Islamic studies in their historical context.
5. They will gain exposure to innovative approaches to the study of medieval Islamicate history, digital methods and techniques, and will be able to use apply skills in other areas of their interests.

## Lectures

Weekly lectures will cover the period from the rise of Islam in Late Antiquity to the decline of the major caliphates and the appearances of new polities ruled mostly by non-Arabs, culminating with the Mongol invasion of the Middle East by the end of the 1250s CE. Each lecture will highlight historiographical issues, which will then be picked up during the seminars.

## Seminars

Seminars will follow the themes of the lectures but will expect input from students. For this, in addition to the discussion of secondary sources, students will be expected to engage with short excerpts from primary sources listed in the syllabus. Presentations will also take place during the seminars.

To prepare for the seminars you must read the weekly readings listed first closely as these will provide you with the general framework. Reading these will help you to be more selective about books and articles recommended for further reading. The short primary source readings are also essential for the seminars. All of this will help you with the exams.

## Assessment

*Essay (50%), open-book exam (30%), presentation (15%), participation (5%).*

**Essay**, of maximum 2500 words. Essay questions will be drawn from the lectures and seminars topics and will be given one week before the submission date. You will be expected to be able to connect several topics and draw upon readings from several weeks, in addition to topic specific readings which will be provided with the questions.

**Open-book exam.** The questions for open-book exam will be based on the list of books provided in the end of this syllabus. You will be asked to answer one of the questions within three hours, drawing on your knowledge of the course materials. The response must demonstrate a good overall understanding of the topics of Islamic history, an ability to select relevant material, and a close

engagement with the selected books that you will have access to during the exam. You will not be penalised for poor referencing, spelling mistakes, and typos.

**Presentation.** You will choose to present on one of the weekly topics, during one of the seminars. A strong presentation will combine a good understanding of the readings and an engaging and convincing use of material and archaeological evidence.

**Participation.** It is essential to attend the lectures and seminars. You will be marked on your contributions to class discussions.

## Resources and reading materials

### Reference Works

- Bosworth, C. E. *The Islamic Dynasties: A Chronological and Genealogical Manual*. Edinburgh, 2004.
- *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd and 3rd Editions (online)
- *Encycloædia Islamica* (online)
- *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online)
- *Index Islamicus* (online)
- *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*
- *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire* (online)
- *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (online)
- *The New Cambridge History of Islam* (online)
- *The Cambridge History of Iran* (online)

### Textbooks

- Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*. Cambridge, 2002.
- Hodgson, Marshall. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilisation. Vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam and Volume 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*. Chicago and London, 1977.

### Surveys

- Barthold, Vasiliĭ V. *Turkestan down to the Mongol Invasion*, 3rd ed. London, 1968.
- Brett, Michael and Elizabeth Fentress. *The Berbers*. Oxford, 1996.
- Bulliet, Richard. *Islam: The View from the Edge*. New York, 1994.

- Hitchcock, Richard. *Muslim Spain Reconsidered: From 711 to 1502*. Edinburgh, 2014, 1-121.
- Lapidus, Ira. *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, 2002.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *Muslim Spain and Portugal: a political history of al-Andalus*. London and New York, 1996.
- Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphate*. Harlow, UK, 2004.
- Silverstein, Adam. *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 2010.
- van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World, 600-1800*. London and New York, 2021.

## Historiography

- Anthony, Sean. *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam*. Oakland, 2020.
- Donner, Fred. *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The beginning of Islamic Historical Writing*. Princeton, 1998.
- Humphreys, Stephen. *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry, Revised Edition*. London, 2009.
- Hoyland, Robert. *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam*. Princeton, 1997.
- Khalidi, Tarif. *Arabic Historical thought in the Classical Period*. Cambridge, 1994.
- Melville, Charles and Jürgen Paul (eds.) *Persian Local Histories*, Special issue of *Iranian Studies* 33 (1-2).
- Robinson, Chase. *Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge, 2003.
- Rosenthal, Franz. *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed. Leiden, 1968.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*An introductory lecture to discuss course requirements, readings, lectures and seminars schedule and assessment criteria.*

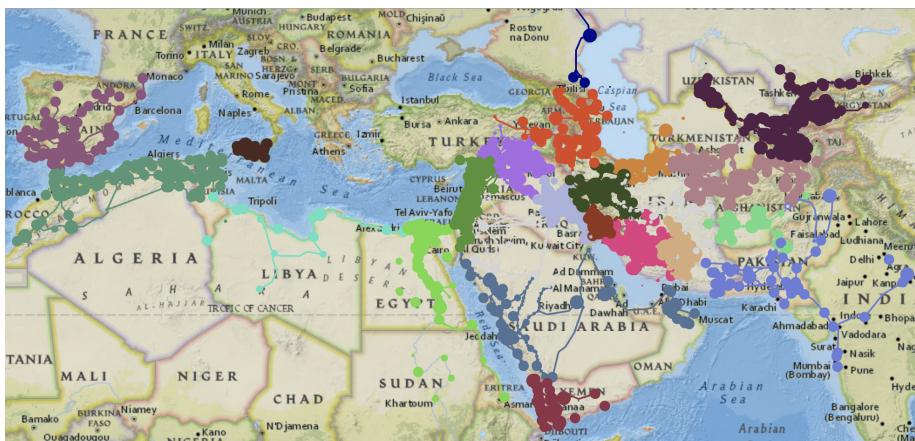


Figure 1.1: Image credit: Al-Turayya Project by Romanov and Seydi. See Resources



## Chapter 2

# The Rise of Islam in Late Antiquity

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation of Islam*, ch. 1-3.

Brown, Peter. *The World of Late Antiquity*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971, 160-189.

*Primary source:* The Qur'an. (selections).

*Further reading:*

Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-700*, London, 1993, 152-176.

Crone, Patricia. "Serjeant and Meccan Trade." *Arabica*. 39 (1992), 216-240.

Crone, Patricia. *Meccan Trade and the Origins of Islam*. Princeton, 1987.

Garth Fowden. *Empire to commonwealth: consequence of monotheism in late antiquity*, Princeton, 1993, 1-25.

Hawting, Gerald. *The Idea of idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*, Cambridge, 1999.

Hoyland, Robert. *Arabia and the Arabs: from the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam*, London, 2010.

Serjeant, Robert B. "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110, no. 3 (1990): 472-86.



## Chapter 3

# Muhammad and his successors

Hoyland, Robert. "Writing the Biography of the Prophet Muhammad: Problems and Solutions", *History Compass* 5 (2007): 581-602.

Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 29-81.

**Primary sources:** 1) Ḥadīth (selections of \*ahādīth\* about the Prophet); 2) Ma‘mar b. Rāshid. *Kitāb al-maghāzī*, edited and translated by Sean W. Anthony as *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muhammad*. New York and London, 2014, 193-215.

**Further reading:** Anthony, Sean. *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith*. Oakland, 2020, 1-82.

Crone, Patricia. *Slaves on Horses*, 18-26.

Hoyland, Robert. "Writing the Biography of the Prophet Muhammad: Problems and Solutions", *History Compass* 5 (2007): 581-602. Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 29-81.



## Chapter 4

# The Umayyads: an Arab-Islamic monarchy

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation of Islam*, ch. 8.

van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World*, 45-56.

**Primary source:** 1) Ibn al-Muqaffa'. *Al-Adab al-kabīr*, tr. in G. van Gelder, *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology*. New York, 2013, 168-175

### Further reading:

Bulliet, Richard. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*. Cambridge, MA, 1979, ch. 3 and 4.

Crone, Patricia and Martin Hinds. *God's Caliph*. Cambridge, 1986, 1-80.

Hawting, Gerald R. *The first dynasty of Islam: the Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*. London: 2000, 1-19.

Marsham, Andrew. *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*. Edinburgh, 2009, 1-60.



## Chapter 5

# The ‘Abbasids: an Islamic empire

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation of Islam*, ch. 8, 102-109.

Bennison, Amira. *The Great Caliphs: The Golden Age of the Abbasid Empire*, London, 2009, 24-47.

Crone, Patricia. *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*. Cambridge, 2012, ch. 1.

**Primary source:** 1) al-Tabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tārikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk*, tr. H. Kennedy as *The History of -al-Tabari*, Vol XXIX: “Al-Mansūr and al-Mahdī.”\* New York, 1990, selected years.

### Further reading:

Agha, Saleh. *The Revolution which toppled the Umayyads: Neither Arab nor Abbasid*. Leiden 2003.

Borruat, Antoine. “Vanishing Syria: Periodization and Power in Early Islam”, *Der Islam* 91/1 (2014), 37–68.

Bennison, Amira. *The Great Caliphs*, London, 2009, esp. 94-136.



## Chapter 6

# Conversion to Islam and the non-Muslim communities

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation*, 159-175.

Bennison, Amira. *The Great Caliphs*, 122-33.

**Primary source:** 1) “The Pact of Umar” (versions of al-Turṭūshī and al-Shāfi‘ī, tr. Bernard Lewis) in Milka Levy-Rubin, *Non – Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire: From Surrender to coexistence*. Cambridge, 2011, appendixes I-II, 171-6.

### Further reading:

Goitein, Shlomo D. *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*. Leiden, 1968. 279-94.

Hoyland, Robert (ed.). *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*. London, 2004.

Levy-Rubin, Milka. *Non–Muslims in the Early Islamic Empire*, 2011, 113-176

Renard, John. *Crossing Confessional Boundaries*. Oakland, 2020, esp. Part 1.

Sahner, C. Christian. “The Monasticism of My Community is Jihad”: A Debate on Asceticism, Sex, and Warfare in Early Islam,” *Arabica* 64 (2017): 149-183.



## Chapter 7

# Shi<sup>c</sup>ism and Shi<sup>c</sup>i communities

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation*, ch. 14, 130-40, 189-202.

Kennedy, Hugh. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. 2d ed. Harlow, UK, 2004, 50-75.

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. "How Did the Early Shī'a Become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 75, no. 1, 1955, 1–13.

**Primary sources:** 1) Shī'ī ḥadīth and akhbār, selections; 2) al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. XX, tr. G. Hawting, New York, 1989, 80-93 (on the *Tawwābūn*).

### Further reading:

Crone, Patricia. *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*. Edinburgh, 2005, 65-98.

Daftary, Farhad. *A Short History of the Ismā'īlīs*. Edinburgh, 1997, 21-62.

Haider, Najam Iftikhar. *Shī'ī Islam: An Introduction*. Cambridge, 2014, for major Shi<sup>c</sup>i communities.

Halm, Heinz. *Shi<sup>c</sup>ism*. 2d ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, 1-28.

Madelung, Wilferd. *The Succession to Muhammad: a Study of the Early Caliphate*. Cambridge, 1996, 1-27.



## Chapter 8

# The Fatimids and the Islamic West

Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation*, ch. 14, 130-40.

Heinz Halm. *Empire of the Mahdi: The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century (3rd edition)*, tr. M. Bonner. Routledge, 2016, 1-22.

Daftary, Farhad. *A Short History of the Ismā‘īlīs*. Edinburgh, 1997, 63-119.

**Primary source:** 1) Al-Qādī al-Nu‘mān. *Iftitāh al-da‘wa*, tr. Hamid Haji as *Founding the Fatimid State: The Rise of an Early Islamic Empire*. London and New York, 2006, 202-236 (the arrival of the Mahdi in Ifrīqiya); 2) al-Muqaddasi. *Ahsan al-taqāsim fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*, tr. B. Collins as *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*. Reading, 1994, p. 203. (A description of Ṣabra al-Manṣūriyya, the Fātimid capital near Qayrawān).

### Further reading:

Bloom, Jonathan. *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt*. New Haven and London, 2007, p. 37.

Brett, Michael. *The Fatimid Empire*. Edinburgh, 2017, 1-37.

Brett, Michael, and Elizabeth Fentress. *The Berbers*. Oxford, 1996.

Ivanow, Wladimir. *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*. Oxford, 1942.



## Chapter 9

# Al-Andalus: Conquest to the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate

Fierro, Maribel. *‘Abd al-Rahman III: The First Cordoban Caliph*. Oxford, 2011, esp. 1-78.

Lapidus, Ira. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge, 2002, 299-319.

**Primary source:** Ben Haián de Córdoba. *Muqtabis II: Anales de los Emires de Córdoba Alhaquem I (180-206H./796- 822J.C.) y Abderramán (206-232/822-847)*, ed. Joaquín Vallvé Bermejo. Madrid, 1999. (facsimile of a manuscript held in the Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid) (selected translations handout)

### Further reading:

Hitchcock, Richard. *Muslim Spain Reconsidered*. Edinburgh, 2014, 1-121.

Kennedy, Hugh. *Muslim Spain and Portugal: a political history of al-Andalus*. London and New York, 1996.

Safran, Janina. “The Command of the Faithful in al-Andalus: A Study in the Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30/2 (1998): 183-198.



## Chapter 10

# From competing Caliphates to the rise of non-Arab dynasties

van Steenbergen, Jo. *A History of the Islamic World*, 142-65.

Crone, Patricia. *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*. Cambridge, 1980, 74-91.

Kennedy, Hugh. "The Decline and Fall of the First Muslim Empire", *Der Islam* 81 (1981), 3-30.

**Primary sources:** 1) Al-Māwardī. Abū'l-Hasan. *Al-Aḥkām al-sultāniyya*, translated by Wafaa H. Wahba as *The Ordinances of Government*. Reading, 2000, 1-22; 2) Firdawṣī, Abū'l-Qāsim. *Šāhnāmeh*, selected excerpts on Iranian kingship; 3) Rūdakī, Abū 'Abd Allah. *Dīwān*. selected panegyrics for the Sāmanīd emir.

### Further reading:

Bosworth, C. E. "Barbarian Invasions: The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World," in D.H. Richards (ed.) *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*. Oxford, 1973, 1-16.

Hodgson, Marshall. *The Venture of Islam*, vol 2., 3-61.

Ibn Khaldun. *Muqaddimah*, tr. Franz Rosenthal. Vol. 2. Princeton, 1980, "How disintegration befalls dynasties," 118ff.



## **Chapter 11**

# **Crusaders**



## **Chapter 12**

# **The Mongols and the New World Order**



# Examination

## Open Book Exam

These are the readings for your Open Book Exam. You will be allowed to use printout from these book during the exam.

- Crone, Patricia (1981). *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*. Cambridge, 1980.
- Crone, Patricia. *Meccan Trade and the Origins of Islam*. Princeton, 1987.
- Ibn Khaldun. *Muqaddimah*, tr. Franz Rosenthal. Vol 2. Princeton, 1980.
- Fowden, Garth. *Empire to commonwealth: consequence of monotheism in late antiquity*. Princeton, 1993.

## Final Essay

The essay questions will be published here three weeks before the deadline.

## Presentation

You are asked to make a 15 minute presentation at the beginning of one of the weekly seminars. The presentation should touch upon historiographical questions pertaining to the topic of the week, draw on primary sources, engages with modern scholarship, and be prepared to answer questions related to the topic.