The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

Edited by
Fred M. Donner

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THE FORMATION OF THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC WORLD

General Editor: *Lawrence I. Conrad*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The pagination of articles originally published in English has been maintained for this volume. In articles translated into English, the original pagination has been indicated in the text in bold-face type.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

Since the days of Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), generally regarded as the founder of Islamic studies as a field of modern scholarship, the formative period in Islamic history has remained a prominent theme for research. In Goldziher's time it was possible for scholars to work with the whole of the field and practically all of its available sources, but more recently the increasing sophistication of scholarly methodologies, a broad diversification in research interests, and a phenomenal burgeoning of the catalogued and published source material available for study have combined to generate an increasing "compartmentalisation" of research into very specific areas, each with its own interests, priorities, agendas, methodologies, and controversies. While this has undoubtedly led to a deepening and broadening of our understanding in all of these areas, and hence is to be welcomed, it has also tended to isolate scholarship in one subject from research in other areas, and even more so from colleagues outside of Arab-Islamic studies, not to mention students and others seeking to familiarise themselves with a particular topic for the first time.

The Formation of the Classical Islamic World is a reference series that seeks to address this problem by making available a critical selection of the published research that has served to stimulate and define the way modern scholarship has come to understand the formative period of Islamic history, for these purposes taken to mean approximately AD 600–950. Each of the volumes in the series is edited by an expert on its subject, who has chosen a number of studies that taken together serve as a cogent introduction to the state of current knowledge on the topic, the issues and problems particular to it, and the range of scholarly opinion informing it. Articles originally published in languages other than English have been translated, and editors have provided critical introductions and select bibliographies for further reading.

A variety of criteria, varying by topic and in accordance with the judgements of the editors, have determined the contents of these volumes. In some cases an article has been included because it represents the best of current scholarship, the "cutting edge" work from which future research seems most likely to profit. Other articles—certainly no less valuable contributions—have been taken up for the skillful way in which they synthesise the state of scholarly knowledge. Yet others are older studies that—if in some ways now superseded—nevertheless merit attention for their illustration of thinking or conclusions that have long been important, or for the decisive stimulus they have provided to scholarly discussion. Some volumes cover themes that have emerged fairly recently, and here it has been necessary to include articles from outside the period covered by the series, as illustrations of paradigms and methodologies that may prove useful as research

develops. Chapters from single author monographs have been considered only in very exceptional cases,and a certain emphasis has been encouraged on important studies that are less readily available than others.

In the present state of the field of early Arab-Islamic studies, in which it is routine for heated controversy to rage over what scholars a generation ago would have regarded as matters of simple fact, it is clearly essential for a series such as this to convey some sense of the richness and variety of the approaches and perspectives represented in the available literature. An effort has thus been made to gain broad international participation in editorial capacities, and to secure the collaboration of colleagues representing differing points of view. Throughout the series, however, the range of possible options for inclusion has been very large, and it is of course impossible to accommodate all of the outstanding research that has served to advance a particular subject. A representative selection of such work does, however, appear in the bibliography compiled by the editor of each volume at the end of the introduction.

The interests and priorities of the editors, and indeed, of the General Editor, will doubtless be evident throughout. Hopefully, however, the various volumes will be found to achieve well-rounded and representative syntheses useful not as the definitive word on their subjects—if, in fact, one can speak of such a thing in the present state of research—but as introductions comprising well-considered points of departure for more detailed inquiry.

A series pursued on this scale is only feasible with the good will and cooperation of colleagues in many areas of expertise. The General Editor would like to express his gratitude to the volume editors for the investment of their time and talents in an age when work of this kind is grossly undervalued, to the translators who have taken such care with the articles entrusted to them, and to Dr John Smedley and his staff at Ashgate for their support, assistance and guidance throughout.

<div align="right">Lawrence I. Conrad</div>

INTRODUCTION

The Expansion of the Early Islamic State

Fred M. Donner

The First Expansion of Islam as a Problem of World History

If we are to judge the importance of historical phenomena by the range and duration of their consequences, the appearance and rapid first expansion of Islam, a process that began in the early seventh century CE and that continued, in desultory fashion, well into the eighth century, must be reckoned among the most important chapters in all of world history. For, there can be no doubt that this process transformed much of the ancient world profoundly, and in some ways, apparently, with noteworthy swiftness. The significance of this process was indeed the focal point of the famous "Pirenne thesis" advanced by the great Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), who argued that the rise of Islam in the seventh century definitively ended the civilization of classical antiquity and inaugurated, or generated, the Middle Ages.[1] Many aspects of Pirenne's thesis were severely criticized by scholars in the years after its appearance, and it is now no longer accepted in its original form; but Pirenne did put his finger on the undeniable fact that the formerly unified "classical" world, clustered around the Mediterranean Sea, rapidly evolved in this period into two quite different cultural worlds on its northern and southern littorals—the early Medieval European and the early Islamic worlds—even if the role of Islam (or Muslims) in this change was not one of simple cause and effect as Pirenne had thought. Pirenne's work raised significant questions that even today still stimulate productive debate. At any rate, there can be no doubt that the changes that we associate with the appearance and first expansion of Islam represent a kind of historical milestone.

This process of expansion has, however, often puzzled historians, who have offered widely divergent explanations of why and how the expansion could take place, and even of just what its actual nature was. Part of this challenge of explanation is attributable to the fact that what we here call "the first expansion of Islam" actually embraces two different, but intricately interrelated, phenomena—the appearance and spread of a new religion, Islam, and the rise of a

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[1] Pirenne's theories were presented especially in his books *Medieval Cities: their origins and the revival of trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925) and *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1937). A good introduction to the debate over Pirenne's ideas is Alfred F. Havighurst (ed.), *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism and Revision* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1958).

new state, ideologically motivated by Islamic concepts, and its drive to imperial expansion.

This dual character of the early expansion sometimes led historians to confuse features of one aspect with those of the other. Many earlier studies of the expansion, for example, focused above all on the military campaigns that, our sources tell us, were a significant part of the process; hence they tended to conceptualize the expansion simply as "conquest", sometimes ignoring other aspects of the process of state-formation and state-expansion of which the military campaigning was a part, as well as ideological and social dimensions related to the spread of Islam as a faith and as a cultural system. To be sure, it can sometimes be difficult to decide whether a particular change was a consequence of the conquests themselves, or whether it is better seen as a consequence of the emergence of the Islamic faith or of the Islamic state; indeed, in many cases one is entitled to ask whether it is possible to separate the consequences of the three processes of military conquest, state-formation, and establishment of religious hegemony.

Basic Outlines of the Expansion

Except for revisionist studies appearing since the 1960s (which we shall discuss subsequently), scholarship on the early expansion of Islam since the nineteenth century has accepted the general outlines of the picture of "what happened" conveyed to us by traditional Islamic sources. According to this consensus view, Islam began with the prophet Muḥammad (d. 632 CE), who preached strict monotheism in the polytheistic surroundings of his home town of Mecca and brought forth the Qurʾān as God's revelation. In the face of increasing opposition from his fellow-townsmen of Mecca, Muḥammad and his followers emigrated in 622 CE to Yathrib (Medina), where they established the first autonomous community of Muslims with Muḥammad as its leader. In Medina, this first Muslim community gradually grew in size and influence until, by the prophet's death in 11/632, it had come to dominate most of western Arabia (including the other major towns and many nomadic groups) and could be seen as the embryo of a new state. The prophet seems to have inaugurated the process of Islam's expansion by dispatching, during the last years of his life, a series of campaigns against increasingly distant objectives in northern Arabia, such as Khaybar and Dūmat al-Jandal, and even on the fringes of southern Syria, such as Muʾta. The goal of these campaigns seems to have been to secure the allegiance of these communities to the idea of monotheism, and their submission of taxes to Muḥammad's regime.

Upon the prophet's death, his followers decided that they should remain a united political community, and that one of the prophet's close companions,

whom they styled *amīr al-mu'minīn* or "commander of the believers", should lead them. The choice ultimately fell on Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–634), Muḥammad's father-in-law and one of his most intimate advisers, but not, apparently, without some disagreement and intense debate within the community. During this period, some groups in Arabia that had earlier submitted to the prophet's authority tried to regain their political independence from Medina; some even attempted to take advantage of the Muslims' temporary disarray to attack Medina. In response, Abū Bakr and the Muslims in Medina organized a series of military expeditions against rebellious or hitherto unsubdued groups in Arabia to quell these strivings for autonomy, which the (later) Muslim chroniclers characterize as *ridda* or "apostasy".

The so-called *ridda* wars mark the beginnings of the new Islamic state's first major expansion; during them the regime in Medina was able to reduce to tax-paying status almost all the inhabitants of Arabia, even in distant Yemen and Oman and in centers of powerful opposition like the large oasis of al-Yamāma in eastern Arabia, home of the powerful Ḥanīfa tribe. The final campaigns of the *ridda* wars brought the Muslim forces into contact with Arabic-speaking groups on the fringes of Syria and Iraq; by subduing or drawing them into their movement, the Muslims precipitated a clash with the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, to which these groups had formerly been subject.

But the clash with the empires was not merely accidental; it appears that the Muslim leadership had settled upon a policy of expansion that aimed to seize as much territory from the empires as possible, and perhaps even to overthrow them. Already in the last months of Abū Bakr's life, and under the second *amīr al-mu'minīn*, ʿUmar (r. 13–23/634–644), well-organized military columns were being dispatched against key objectives in both southern Syria and southern Iraq. Four major forces were sent against Byzantine Syria, and two against Iraq (one to the center and the other to the south of the country, respectively). In several years of on-and-off campaigning during the 630s, these forces managed to occupy major cities and towns of these regions and to defeat the standing armies of the two empires in a number of pitched battles that marked the decisive transfer of regional hegemony from the Byzantines or Sasanians to the Muslims ruling from Medina: in Byzantine Syria, the battles of Ajnādayn and, especially, Yarmūk; in Sasanian Iraq, the battle of al-Qādisiyya. From Syria, a force marched along the Sinai coast into Egypt and seized this important province from the Byzantines. Already by about 640 CE, then, a mere 18 years after Muḥammad's death, the Muslims ruling from Medina had come to control a vast area encompassing not only the whole Arabian peninsula, but also most of Egypt, geographical Syria, and Iraq—in other words, Arabia and all the open lands adjoining it to the north, up to the Taurus and Zagros mountain barriers.

The Muslims consolidated their control over these newly-conquered areas by establishing a number of central garrison towns (*amṣār*); these quickly outgrew

their original character as places to billet troops and developed into large cities that attracted both new migrants from Arabia, some of them families of the soldiers, and many local people. In Syria, the Muslims seem to have used vacant quarters in existing towns, notably Ḥimṣ, as their main military centers, whereas in Iraq two new settlements, al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra, were established adjacent to existing towns (al-Ḥīra and al-Ubulla), which were soon absorbed by their new neighbors. In Egypt, the Muslims created a new camp-town, al-Fusṭāṭ, adjacent to the old Byzantine stronghold of Babylon (near modern Cairo).

These *amṣār* served as the staging-points for further conquests by the Muslims to the north, east, and west. During the reigns of ʿUmar and his successor, the third *amīr al-muʾminīn* ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (23–35/644–656), a series of campaigns were sent against the Iranian plateau. The remnants of the Sasanian army were decisively defeated at the battle of Nihāvand in the Zagros region, and later expeditions, most launched from al-Baṣra, brought ever more distant parts of Iran and its main cities—Hamadhān, Qom, Qazvīn, Rayy, Qūmis, Iṣṭakhr, Dārābgird, Kāshān, Yazd, Harāt in Afghanistan, and many others—within the Muslims' control. Other forces subdued the lowlands of Khūzistān and the highlands of Azerbaijan to the north of Iraq. From Syria, armies were dispatched against northern Mesopotamia and Armenia and brought important towns, such as Edessa, Mosul, and the Armenian capital at Dvin, under Medina's sway. From Syria also were organized raids northward across the Taurus mountains and deep into Anatolia, the Byzantine heartland; these were launched on an almost annual basis, but Byzantine opposition here proved very stiff and, despite some notably deep penetrations over the years (sometimes even to the walls of Constantinople itself), the Muslims' frontier with the Byzantines stabilized for a long period just north of a chain of border-fortresses they established at Ṭarsūs, Maṣṣīṣa (Mopsuestia), and other places near the Taurus. From Egypt, periodic raids were dispatched along the Mediterranean littoral into Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and treaties were made with the kings of Nubia, southward along the Nile.

The murder of ʿUthmān in Medina by mutineers from the *amṣār* in 35/656 unleashed five years of struggle within the Muslim community that we call the First Civil War (or, in the terminology of later Muslim chroniclers, the first *fitna*). This period saw several rivals competing for leadership of the new Islamic state: above all Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (a relative of the slain ʿUthmān) and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a cousin and son-in-law of the prophet). ʿAlī was at first recognized by the Medinese as the fourth *amīr al-muʾminīn* (35–40/656–661), but in the end it was Muʿāwiya who emerged victorious after ʿAlī was murdered by a disgruntled supporter, and the Muslim community finally recognized Muʿāwiya as the fifth *amīr al-muʾminīn* (r. 40–60/661–680). The civil war marked a lull in the process of expansion, since key figures in the leadership of the community were too preoccupied with it to worry about campaigning on now-distant frontiers.

Mu'āwiya had been for many years 'Uthmān's governor of Syria, so he moved the capital of the Muslim empire from Medina to Damascus, and it was from Syria that all of the succeeding rulers of Mu'āwiya's family, the Umayyad dynasty, exercised their rule. Under the Umayyads (661–750), the state was once more able to devote attention to the expansion. Many of the campaigns in Mu'awiya's days aimed to consolidate Muslim control of areas, particularly in Iran, that had been occupied earlier but were still only weakly controlled. In 680, the community entered upon another period of turmoil over leadership, the Second Civil War (680–692), that, once again, brought the expansion to a halt. When unity and order were restored, however, the Umayyad 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705) and his sons al-Walīd (r. 86–96/705–715) and Sulaymān (r. 96–99/715–717) were able to pursue vigorous campaigns of expansion and conquest. From this time forward, moreover, the military and administrative institutions of the Umayyad state were more fully developed and it is clear that campaigns were a deliberate and regular part of imperial policy, intended to fulfil the ideological imperative of striving to bring the whole world within the realm of the empire. In eastern Iran, new areas were brought within the Umayyads' domain: Gorgān and Khurāsān, and even the regions adjacent to and beyond the Oxus river. A force was dispatched for the first time to distant Sind (the Indus valley, modern Pakistan) by 711 and established a permanent Muslim presence there. Muslim control over Armenia was strengthened and aggressive campaigns launched against Byzantium, including a lengthy (but ultimately unsuccessful) siege of Constantinople in 97/715–716. In the west, renewed campaigns across North Africa led to the conquest of Ifrīqiya (modern Tunisia) and other parts of the Maghreb, and in 711 a Muslim force crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and, within a few years, vanquished the last Visigothic king and took control of most of the Iberian peninsula. From there they mounted campaigns against southern and central Gaul, raiding as far as the Loire valley (battle of Tours or Poitiers, 732 CE) and establishing their control for several decades over some towns in southern France, such as Carcassonne. These campaigns were now so distant from the center of the empire in Syria, and even from the earlier *amṣār*, that additional "second-stage" *amṣār* were established as centers of military and, eventually, cultural activity: in the east, Marv in Khursāṣan, to which thousands of fighting men and their families were transferred from al-Baṣra, and in the west, Qayrawān in Ifrīqiya. In al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), long a dependency of either Egypt or Qayrawān, a provincial capital developed at Cordoba, and many towns and rural districts had significant numbers of Muslim settlers, of Syrian, Arabian, or North African origin.

Within little more than a hundred years following the death of the prophet Muḥammad, then, the early Muslim community had established a state in western Arabia and engineered its expansion to embrace all of Arabia and most of the Near East, from Spain to India and Armenia to Yemen. Clearly military action was

a central part of this process of expansion, so much so that most scholars who have studied the expansion have referred to it as the "Islamic Conquest" or the "Arab Conquest". This emphasis on conquest, often neglecting other aspects of the expansion, may be in part a reflection of the Islamic sources themselves, which have a special genre of *futūḥ* literature the object of which was to relate how the many towns and districts of this vast empire came to be part of it. Actually, however, the word *futūḥ* does not mean "conquest", although it is often so translated; its use in relation to the expansion is probably to be associated with the Qurʾāanic use of the term to mean a favor or act of grace granted by God to His faithful believers (cf. Qurʾān 2:76 and many other passages). The implication being made by the purveyors of the *futūḥ* literature, then, was that the Muslims' domination of these territories was legitimate because they were literally something bestowed upon them by God. In any case, the existence of the *futūḥ* genre may have contributed to the emphasis on "conquest" in scholarly discussions of the expansion. We shall return to this point below, in discussion recent revisionist views of the expansion.

Scholarly Interpretations of the First Expansion of Islam

The expansion sketched so briefly above posed many problems for historians, who were puzzled by its astonishing scale, by its swiftness, by the Muslims' success in overcoming the armies of well-established empires, by their ability to maintain their hegemony over much larger populations of non-Muslims, by the persistence with which an expansionist policy was pursued over several generations, and by many other matters. Until the rise of revisionist scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s, most scholars who worked on the early expansion of Islam subscribed to a common set of assumptions in their work: (a) that the Arabic–Islamic sources provided a generally reliable picture of the events of the expansion, (b) that the religion of Islam, as taught by Muḥammad, was clearly defined from early in his career, particularly in terms of its relationship to Christianity and Judaism, (c) that Islam provided the ideological motivation for the expansion/conquest, particularly through the doctrine of *jihād* or "striving in God's way", and (d) that the early Islamic state, headed by the *amīr al-muʾminīn*, was the key institution in organizing and directing the waves of military conquest that were a central component of the expansion.

Viewing the expansion through the lens of these assumptions (which, to repeat, most scholars did), generated a number of interrelated problems of interpretation. In the following, we discuss briefly several of the more salient of these issues.

WHAT CAUSED THE CONQUESTS?

A first answer to this question had, of course, been offered by the traditional Islamic sources, which presented an essentially theological interpretation of the conquests. In this view, the expansion of Islam was an expression of God's will for mankind, and was linked to the religious dedication of the first Muslims, who, galvanized by the new faith, embarked on their march to establish the universal sovereignty of Islam and the Islamic state. It was also due, in their view, to the fact that God favored the Muslims and had a hand in their victories on the battlefield.

Most non-Muslim historians, however, either rejected this religious interpretation outright, or sought to temper it by calling attention to other, non-religious factors, that in their view contributed to the movement. Some European authors of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, themselves thoroughly steeped in contemporary concepts of nationalism of a decidedly racialist cast, saw the expansion as one chapter in a series of mass migrations of Semites from the Arabian peninsula, and thus as not really related to Islam as a doctrine. This "nationalist" interpretation was particularly pronounced in the works of Hugo Winckler[2] and Leone Caetani (Chapter 1).[3] The latter's work on early Islam, in particular his massive *Annali dell'Islam* in ten bulky folio volumes, was very influential at the beginning of the twentieth century, and his views were picked up in subsequent years by Thomas Arnold and many others. Arnold noted the religious tolerance of the conquerors—who did not require the conquered peoples to convert to Islam—as evidence that the expansion movement was not rooted in religious conviction.[4] Indeed, such ideas continued to be repeated even many years later.[5]

Other Western scholars saw the original impetus for the expansion movement as Islam's goal of subjecting the whole world to Islamic rule. However, they puzzled over how this broad goal was translated effectively into the military conquests described in the sources. That is, they asked what drew or induced people to join the conquest armies in the first place. They concluded that the expansion was driven by economic factors—mainly by the cupidity of the conquerors. Caetani argued that most Arabs had no real religious fervor and

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[2] Hugo Winckler, "Arabisch-Semitisch-Orientalisch", *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptische Gesellschaft, Berlin* 6 (1901), 151–374.

[3] Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (10 vols., Milano: U. Hoepli, 1905–1926), II, 855–61; idem, *Studi di Storia Orientale* I (Milano: U. Hoepli, 1911), 364–371.

[4] Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (2nd ed. London: A. Constable, 1913), 45–71.

[5] E.g., Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1950), 55–56: "Initially the great conquests were an expansion not of Islam but of the Arab nation, driven by the pressure of overpopulation in its native peninsula to seek an outlet in the neighboring countries. It is one of the series of migrations which carried the Semites time and again into the Fertile Crescent and beyond". It should be noted that this passage remains unchanged in the revised edition of 1993 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 55).

stated sarcastically that their "religion" could be reduced to the satisfaction of their sensual desires. Carl Heinrich Becker, similarly, argued that economic inducements, not religion, were of fundamental importance as a cause of the conquests.[6]

A definite advance came in 1956 with the appearance of two penetrating studies by G.H. Bousquet (Chapters 2 and 3).[7] In them he not only demonstrated the serious weaknesses of the "nationalist"/Semitic migration and economic motivation theories, but argued effectively that religious motivations could not be reduced to being simply a cover for materialist incentives. As he pointed out, Muḥammad is universally recognized as having been the bearer of a religious message, and a century after the conquests a new civilization was crystallizing around *fiqh*, religious law—so it would be strange to argue that the conquests that connected these two facts and established a new society was not religious in character.[8] Moreover, the fact that the conquerors did not stress conversion of subject peoples does not mean that the conquerors were not motivated by religious idea. Bousquet also made, apparently for the first time, a number of important analytical distinctions of crucial importance to understanding the early expansion of Islam. One is to differentiate between the causes of the conquests themselves—that is, the factors that caused the movement to begin in the first place—and the causes of the conquests' success once it had gotten underway. Another is the importance of distinguishing between different phases of the expansion movement: particularly between the earliest phases (roughly up to the First Civil War), before the state was well-articulated, and later phases, when the Umayyad dynasty ruled over a more highly-developed state with a standing army, the beginnings of a bureaucracy, and so on.[9] Building on Bousquet's work, it was proposed by the present writer in 1981 that the conquests were in part the result of the superior level of social and political integration introduced into Arabian society by the rise of Islam, which resulted in the crystallization of an embryonic state and put at its disposal the resources of manpower needed to fuel the expansion.[10]

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[6] C.H. Becker, "Der Islam als Problem", in his *Islamstudien* (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1924), I, 1–23 See also Henri Lammens, *Le berceau de l'Islam* (Rome, 1914), 116–21 and 174–77, who emphasizes, in addition to climatological factors and hunger, the penchant for raiding of the bedouins. For Caetani, see the works cited in note 3.

[7] G.H. Bousquet, "Quelques remarques critiques et sociologiques sur la conquête arabe et les théories émises à ce sujet", in *Studi Orientalistici in Onore de Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, I (Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956), 52–60; idem, "Observations sur la nature et causes de la conquête arabe", *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956), 37–52.

[8] Bousquet, "Quelques remarques..." 59–60.

[9] On these points see also F.M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 3–9; idem, "The Islamic Conquests", in Youssef Choueiri (ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 28–51.

[10] Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, esp. 251–71.

The puzzle posed by the rapid expansion of Islam (that is, of the early Islamic state) led some to consider more generally the relationship between a religious leader and states in which nomads played an important part, and to look for parallels in other historical settings. Included in this collection is one such exercise in comparative history, John J. Saunders's study of the first expansion of Islam and the Mongol conquests (Chapter 4).[11]

At root, however, the question of what caused the conquests forces us to consider what kind of movement we think Islam originally was. As noted above, for almost all writers before about 1970, this was answered *a priori* by the assumptions they embraced—that Islam was a proselytizing religious movement bent on spreading Islamic hegemony. Since 1970, however, some other answers have been proposed, but these take us into the terrain of recent revisionist interpretations and so will be dealt with below.

WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO THE CONQUESTS' SUCCESS?

Bousquet's articles had noted the importance of distinguishing between the causes that initiated the conquests and the reasons for their success, once they had begun. The question of why and how the conquests succeeded proved, in its own right, to be quite challenging to historians, because the traditional view of the conquests presents it as a movement that originated in and was first sustained from an area—western Arabia—that had little, if any, of the resources and infrastructure usually considered essential to sustain a military expansion. Yet, somehow the movement succeeded in challenging the two "great powers" of the day, which obviously did have access to such resources and infrastructure. In a nutshell, the first expansion of Islam seemed to be a conquest that succeeded against staggering practical odds in terms of political economy.

Medieval Muslim authors had sometimes attributed this success to God's support for His believers on the battlefield. Western writers, rejecting such supernatural interventions, attempted to explain the conundrum of Islam's early success by resorting to a variety of mundane factors. One argument was that the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, after a long and bitter struggle with one another, were in a weakened state and their armies too battered to offer effective defense against the invaders from Arabia.[12] Although there may be some merit to this argument for the Sasanians, it has recently been shown that the Byzantine

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[11] John J. Saunders, "The Nomad as Empire Builder: A Comparison of the Arab and Mongol Conquests", *Diogenes* 52 (1965), 79–103. Another comparison of the same phenomena is found in Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 18–26. The relationship of the early Islamic state to Arabian nomads was the focus of analysis in Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests.*

[12] Caetani in particular (see note 3) emphasized this view.

armies were still forces to be reckoned with at the time of their first contact with the Muslims.[13] Other factors stressed were the zeal of the Muslim warriors inspired by their new faith, the presence of good commanders and of leaders with organizational skills and experience in the Muslim armies, or the disaffection of the Monophysite populations of Syria and Egypt because of oppressive Byzantine religious policy; these were advanced by both Bousquet and by Marius Canard in an important essay on military elements in the conquest (Chapter 5).[14] On the military side, Gustave von Grunebaum stressed the advantage to the Muslims of "inner lines of communication" (Chapter 6).[15] In recent years, a renewed emphasis has come to be placed on the importance of religion in the movement, particularly in creating cadres of disciplined warriors in the armies of conquest; a good example is found in the general book on the rise of Islam by Christian Décobert (Chapter 7).[16]

WHAT WERE THE MAIN CONSQEUENCES OF THE CONQUESTS?

Surprisingly, fewer scholars have tackled this issue explicitly or comprehensively. Some have addressed aspects of the consequences without linking them to the conquests themselves. When we begin to consider what the impact of the conquests was on the Near East, however, we quickly realize that a number of major issues are involved—so many, indeed, and of such varied kinds, that it is possible to include in this collection of essays only a very small selection of the articles representing these themes.

(1)   The most obvious consequence of the first conquests (which was the first phase of the expansion of the new Islamic state based in Medina) was that it totally transformed the political landscape of the Near East. The new empire that gradually emerged not only had borders different from those of the earlier Byzantine and Sasanian states, it also represented the rise to power in the region of a new ruling elite (mainly of Arabian origin) and the humbling of at least the upper echelons of the former Byzantine or Sasanian elites. Lower elements of the former ruling establishments, such as tax administrators, sometimes remained

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[13] Michael Whitby, "Recruitment in Roman Armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615)", in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, III: *States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), 61–124, esp. 119–24.

[14] E.g., Bousquet, "Observations"; Marius Canard, "L'expansion arabe: le problème militaire", *L'Occident e l'Islam nell'Alto Medioevo*, I (Spoleto, 1965), 37–63. John W. Jandora, *The March from Medina: a Revisionist Study of the Arab Conquests* (Clifton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1990) emphasizes the military merits of the Muslim forces, whereas Bousquet and Canard deny that they had any advantage.

[15] Gustave von Grunebaum, "The First Expansion of Islam: Factors of Thrust and Containment", *Diogenes* 53 (1966), 64–72.

[16] Christian Décobert, *Le mendiant et le combattant* (Paris: Seuil, 1991) pp. 57–66.

in place and simply worked for their new Arabian masters, but this phenonemon has generated some discussion of the relative importance of continuity and innovation in the early Islamic administration and of the pace of change.[17]

(2) Another consequence of the early conquests was demographic—in particular, the migration of large numbers of Arabians (whether settled people or nomadic pastoralists) from their home districts in Arabia to adjacent regions, especially in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. In some earlier studies of the expansion, as we have seen, this migration was considered a cause of the conquests, confusing the analysis of the causes of the conquests and of the nature of both the conquests (which were undertaken by organized armies, not by migrating tribes) and the migrations. The fact that these migrations followed the key conquests in Syria and Iraq, rather than preceded them, had already been pointed out early in the twentieth century by C.H. Becker,[18] but subsequent scholars sometimes continued to put the cart before the horse in this way (particularly those who continued to advance the idea that the conquests were merely the latest in a series of "Semitic migrations"). Unfortunately, relatively few scholars have tackled directly or comprehensively the question of these migrations that resulted from the first conquests, probably because we lack the kind of statistical evidence needed to draw a clear overall picture. A few studies of specific localities, relying on scattered anecdotes and the testimony of biographical dictionaries, give us some idea of the influx of migrants in particular localities that resulted from the conquests and the establishment of the first Islamic empire that followed,[19] but a comprehensive and thoughtful examination of this theme remains a *desideratum*.

(3) Economic changes of several kinds were clearly another important consequence of the conquests, but the analysis of economic history has remained confused. Of the various interpretations, only the Pirenne thesis and responses to it have received much attention from scholars, for example, in an essay by Andrew

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[17] Above all, Michael G. Morony's magesterial *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), esp. Part I (27–164); the inadequacy of scholarship on administrative development is discussed by him on pp. 575–93. See also Jørgen Bæk Simonsen, *Studies in the Genesis and Early Development of the Caliphal Taxaton System* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1988); M. Sprengling, "From Persian to Arabic", *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 56 (1939), 175–224, 325–36; on the military, the first chapters of Hugh Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[18] C.H. Becker, "The Expansion of the Saracens—the East", *Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 329–64.

[19] See, for example, Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest*, 236–64; Hichem Djaït, "Les Yamanites à Kufa au Ier Siecle de l'Hégire", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 19 (1976), 148–81; F.M. Donner, "Tribal Settlement in Basra During the First Century A.H.", in Tarif Khalidi (ed.), *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1984), 97–120; F.M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquests*, 226–50 on migration and settlement in Iraq and Syria; Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī, "Khiṭaṭ al-Baṣra", *Sumer* 8 (1952), 72–83 and 281–302; Jamāl Jūda, *al-ʿArab wa l-arḍ fī l-ʿIrāq fī l-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī* (Amman: al-Sharika al-ʿarabiyya li -ṭibāʿa wa l-nashr, 1979).

S. Ehrenkreutz (Chapter 8).[20] To some extent, however, the Pirenne Thesis has distracted scholars from analyzing other aspects of the conquests' economic impact more closely. Among the other economic changes were shifts in the balance between sedentary and nomadic peoples, which affected everything from rural agriculture to urban life to overland commerce.[21] The conquest also resulted in a massive redistribution of wealth (some of it from churches?); wealth was now in the hands of groups that, in some cases, had hitherto had little of it (e.g., the Arabian soldiery), and resulted in the emergence of a new propertied elite (mostly Arabian townsmen in origin) that in time increasingly competed with or supplanted the older elites, some of whom fled or were dispossessed. None of these issues has been fully and properly studied to date, again partly because the requisite detail is scarce in the extant sources.

(4) The cultural impact of the first conquests and expansion were also significant; in some ways they were the most important and long-lasting of all consequences of the expansion. Foremost among these was, of course, the spread of Islam as a faith among new population groups, a process that continued for many centuries but that had its decisive origins in the conquests and the establishment of a new state directed by a self-consciously Islamic ruling elite. In the seventh century, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians constituted the overwhelming majority of the population of the Near Eastern and North African territories taken over by the Arabian conquerors, but the *amir al-mu'minin*s seem not to have considered the conversion of these non-Muslim communities a high priority. They did, however, strive to establish what we may loosely call an "Islamic order" in the territories they ruled, and over time this created the conditions under which significant numbers of non-Muslims came to embrace Islam. Numerous studies of the Islamization process have been undertaken, but all suffer from a dearth of detailed documentation for the processes involved and must rely, largely, on anecdotal and stray reports, and most lack a coherent methodological approach;[22] a noteworthy exception is Bulliet's book *Conversion to*

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[20] E.g., Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, "Another Orientalist's Remarks concerning the Pirenne Thesis", *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 15 (1972), 94–104. Note especially the stimulating volume of Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[21] See F.M. Donner, "The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity", in F.M. Clover and R.S. Humphreys (eds), *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 73–85; Walter Dostal, "The Significance of Semitic Nomads in Asia", *Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnological Sciences* 3 (1968), 312–16; A.H. Saleh, "Les bédouins d'Egypte aux prémiers siècles de l'Hégire", *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 55 (1981), 137–61; Henri Terasse, "Citadins et Grands Nomades dans l'Histoire de l'Islam", *Studia Islamica* 29 (1969), 5–15; Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Arab Conquests and Agriculture: A Seventh-Century Apocalypse, Satellite Imagery, and Palynology", *Asian and African Studies* 19 (1985), 1–15.

[22] Laurence E. Browne, *The Eclipse of Christianity in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), is grounded in religious polemic and is thus quite unsatisfactory. Daniel C. Dennett, *Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950) discusses

Islam in the Medieval Period, which utilizes an ingenious, if highly speculative, method of extrapolation to estimate conversion trends in various provinces of the empire.[23]

(5) Another important cultural shift associated by many with the conquests was the process of Arabization, that is, the gradual spread of Arabic as the main language in everyday spoken use, at the expense of other languages of the Near East (Aramaic, Coptic, Berber, Greek, and so on), which gave ground. The degree to which this process was related to the conquests or expansion obviously depends on how large the Arabophone area was before the conquests; it is clear that Arabic was already becoming established as a spoken language in parts of Syria and Iraq before the appearance of Islam. The question of Arabization is also related to the emergence with Islam of Arabic as a literary language for the first time, first in the sacred text of the Qurʾān, then increasingly in use as an administrative language. This seems likely to have been a powerful stimulus to the use of spoken Arabic by populations that had not formerly spoken it, but this question remains to be properly explored.[24] The question of the rise of classical Arabic is a different one from the question of Arabization; it is also is a highly complex one, but the formal or "classical" language emerged after the conquests and may plausibly be seen as one of the consequences of the expansion, which created the political and socio-cultural conditions in which the formal language was needed and could crystallize. Much remains to be explained about this process, however.[25]

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the tax consequences of conversion but does not address the conversion process itself. More helpful are some of the essays in M. Gervers and R.J. Bikhazi (eds), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990); Ira M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam", *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), 248–62; Farouk Omar, "The Islamization of the Gulf", in C.E. Bosworth et al. (eds), *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1989), 247–57; Michael Brett, "The spread of Islam in Egypt and North Africa", in M. Brett (ed.), *Northern Africa: Islam and Modernization* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), 1–12; M.A. Shaban, "Conversion to Early Islam", in Nehamia Levtzioin (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (NY: Holmes and Meier, 1979), 24–29; Sam I. Gellens, "Egypt, Islamization of", *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), vol. 3, 936–42.

[23] Richard W. Bulliett, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: an essay in quantitative history* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[24] One of the few studies is A.N. Poliak, "L'Arabisation de l'Orient Semitique", *Révue des Études Islamiques* 12 (1938), 35–63. See also Sidney Griffith, "From Aramaic to Arabic: The languages of the Monasteries of Palestine in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Period", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 11–31.

[25] A first serious effort to address these questions was Johann Fück, *ʿArabīya. Untersuchungen zur arabische Sprach- und Stilgeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950). The process is now being explored mainly in the context of the emergence of Qurʾānic language. The issue was raised in John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); see also Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993).

(6) Another cultural question related to the first expansion of Islam is the reaction to it by non-Muslim populations; Walter E. Kaegi's essay on Byzantine Reactions was among the first to tackle this question (Chapter 9).[26] Also important to consider is the actual effect of the conquest on various non-Muslim communities; an essay by Stephen Gerö on Iranian Christians provides an interesting case study (Chapter 10).[27] Sometimes the change to Muslim rule was understood in symbolic terms (on which see below), and it is natural that the immediate reaction of the non-Muslim populations to the conquerors might differ from the attitudes of their descendants a generation or more later, yet all too often the evolution in such attitudes is not adequately considered.

(7) Finally, there is the need to see the first expansion of Islam in the context of a whole panoply of changes in society, institutions and ideologies of the Near East between about 500 and 800 CE, beyond those already mentioned. Some of these broad changes might be considered simultaneously "causes" and "consequences" of the expansion, or appear as symptoms of changes whose relationship to the rise of Islam is impossible to characterize simply. They include such things as the relationship between monotheism and a universalist, imperial conception of statecraft;[28] changing notions of piety and what constituted proper "public" and "private" behavior;[29] shifts in cultural identities;[30] and changes in the countryside and in the structure and functions of towns and cities, including (but not limited to) the phenomenon of the new Islamic *amṣār*.[31]

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[26] Walter E. Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest", *Church History* 38 (1969), 139–49.

[27] Stephen Gerö, "Only a change of masters? The Christians of Iran and the Muslim Conquest", *Studia Iranica* 5 (1987), 43–48. S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", in Juynboll, *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9–21.

[28] E.g., Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consqeuences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[29] A classic treatment is Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150–750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).

[30] E.g., Averil Cameron, "The Eastern Provinces in the 7th Century AD: Hellenism and the Emergence of Islam", in Suzanne Said (ed.), *HELLENISMOS: Quelques jalons pour un histoire de l'identitê grecque. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 25–27 octobre 1989* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 287–313.

[31] See, for example, Hugh Kennedy, "From *Polis* to *Madina*: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria", *Past and Present* 106 (February, 1985), 3–27; Yoram Tsafrir and Gideon Foerster, "From Scythopolis to Baysan—Changing Concepts of Urbanism", in Geoffrey King and Averil Cameron (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, 2: Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton: Darwin, 1994), 95–116; Donald Whitcomb, "The *Miṣr* of Ayla: settlement at al-ʿAqaba in the Early Islamic Period", in King and Cameron, 155–70; idem, "Islam and the Socio-Cultural Transition of Palestine—Early Islamic Period (638–1099 CE)", in T.E. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London: Leicester University, 1995), 488–501.

THE CONQUESTS AS SYMBOL OR SOURCE OF LEGITIMATION

Any comprehensive consideration of the expansion of Islam must take into account not only the debates over its causes, motivation, and direct consequences, but also the way such an epoch-making event was used retrospectively to articulate diverse ideas in later times. Three particular arenas are identified here.

One is the role of the Islamic conquests in later eschatological writings, both Muslim and non-Muslim. Later Muslims of an apocalyptic bent tended to see the conquests not only as evidence of God's favor and divine plan for the Islamic community, but as a portent of the impending Last Judgment; whereas Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian apocalyptic writers saw the conquests as evidence of Divine wrath, and looked forward to a coming reversal of their fortunes. Suliman Bashear's essay on apocalyptic tendencies in Islamic historiography of the conquests[32] can be contrasted with Bernard Lewis's study of a Jewish apocalyptic version of Islamic history (Chapter 11),[33] and both with essays on Christian or Zoroastrian apocalyptic writings that saw the conquests as some kind of marker of God's favor or disfavor.[34]

The conquests were also used in a second symbolic way—as a model for political inspiration among Muslims engaged, in later centuries, in military struggles against Christian enemies. At the time of the Crusades, for example, there appeared a number of "Pseudo-Wāqidī" works—that is, books attributed to the famous early historian al-Wāqidī—that offered completely spurious legends about events that supposedly took place during the first conquests. The purpose of this legendary literature was to inspire the Muslim community in its struggle with the Christian Franks by offering heroic tales about the earlier struggle against Christian Byzantium. This phenomenon was the subject of a key study by Rudi Paret (Chapter 12).[35]

Third, the reports about the conquests came to be collected (and perhaps fabricated) in later discussions among Muslims of the taxation policies of the state, and fed into the systematization of tax issues in Islamic legal thought. This is

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[32] Suliman Bashear, "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: a Review", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1991), 173–207.

[33] Bernard Lewis, "An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1950), 305–38.

[34] E.g., G.J. Reinink, "Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam", in Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (eds), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, I: *Problems in the Literary Source Material* (Princeton: Darwin, 1992), 149–88; idem, "The Romance of Julian", in Pierre Canivet and Jean-Paul Caquot-Rey (eds), *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam* (Damascus: Institut Français d'Études Arabes, 1992), 75–86; Han J.W. Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles: A Syriac Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period", in Cameron and Conrad, *op. cit.*, 189–214. Zoroastrian materials are reviewed in K. Czegledy, "Bahrām Chubīn and the Persian Apocalyptic Literature", *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 8 (1958), 21–43.

[35] Rudi Paret, "Die Legendäre *Futūḥ-Literatur*", in *La poesia epica e la sua formazione* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1970), 735–49.

because, in later Islamic law, the way an area was said to have been conquered or first brought under the rule of the Islamic state—whether by conquest ('anwatan) or by force of arms (ṣulḥan)—determined the area's later tax status. Albrecht Noth's classic study of this question demonstrates some of the issue's complexity (Chapter 13).[36]

Revisionist Views of the Expansion

As with all other aspects of early Islamic history, our understanding of the first expansion of Islam depends on the reliability of the sources from which we try to reconstruct "what actually happened". Pride of place was generally given to the thousands of narrative reports contained in the Arabic literary sources (chronicles, biographical dictionaries, etc.), most of which were compiled between a century and several centuries after the expansion. These belonged to the genre of *futūḥ* reports (accounts of the campaigns of conquest and related issues, such as treaty arrangements with various localities); others dealt more generally with the coalescence and evolution of the state. As noted above, most Western scholarship on the early expansion of Islam, from the nineteenth century and into the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, accepted in large measure the validity of the Islamic community's narratives of this *futūḥ* tradition. They favored this literary material for two reasons. First, the amount of truly documentary information actually dating to the time of the expansion, especially to its first years, is vanishingly small—so a reconstruction of the course of the expansion from their testimony alone would be difficult and, in any case, highly incomplete. The second reason Western scholars long favored the Islamic narrative sources was because they provided the historian with a "ready-made" picture of what had happened that seemed plausible and fairly coherent.

Despite this generally positive view of the sources, there were occasional studies that called into question the sources' reliability. The most important were works dealing with Islamic tradition and law by Ignaz Goldziher and, a generation later, Joseph Schacht.[37] One study that related directly to the conquests was a pioneering examination by Robert Brunschvig of Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's work on the conquest of North Africa and Spain, which Brunschvig showed to have been so shaped by later juristic debates that its relationship to the actual events of the conquest was called into question (Chapter 14).[38]

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[36] Albrecht Noth, "Zum Verhältnis von Kalifater Zentralgewalt un Provinzen in Umayyadischer Zeit. Die 'Ṣulḥ'—"Anwa'-Traditionen für Ägypten und den Iraq", *Die Welt des Islams* 14 (1973), 150–62.

[37] E.g., Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle: Max Niemayer, 1889–1890); Joseph Schacht, "A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1949), 143–54.

[38] Robert Brunschvig, "Ibn ʿAbdelḥakam et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord", *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* (University of Algiers) 6 (1942–1947), 108–55. The essay by Noth cited in note 32, above, bears similar implications.

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, however, a number of scholars began to raise fundamental challenges to the received picture of Islam's origins. Building on earlier critical studies by Goldziher, Schacht, and others, they contended that these sources could not in fact tell us even in general terms "what actually happened" during the period of the conquests, or even if they happened at all, much less lead us to satisfactory interpretations of those events. This view was first advanced in the writings of John Wansbrough,[39] and subsequently inspired works in a similar vein by others, including G.R. Hawting, Yehuda Nevo, and Moshe Sharon.[40] In their view, the Byzantine and Sasanian empires collapsed for internal reasons or, at any rate, somehow lost their grip over vast provinces in the Near East, in the aftermath of which Muslims rose to prominence and eventually emerged as rulers of the new empire; the new Muslim rulers then retrospectively created the myth of a divinely-aided "Islamic conquest" emanating from Arabia to explain and justify their rise to power. An essay by Sharon on "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land" represents one effort of this kind (Chapter 15).[41] This revolutionary view of the Islamic conquests raises profound questions about how the Islamic community and a self-conscious Islamic identity managed to coalesce, and must be seen as part of the broader effort to revise our understanding of just how "Islam", as it came to be understood by about 150 AH, emerged.

Other studies focused closely on the historigraphical shortcomings of the conquest narratives, but held back from complete rejection of the usual narrative of the events of the early Islamic era, including the conquests. The works of Albrecht Noth on conquest-historiography offered a sobering critique of the sources that challenged the reliability of many of their features (Chapter 16).[42] His work was inspired by the work of Biblical critics, particularly studies of the Deuternomistic history—a field to which Noth's own father, Martin Noth, had been a major contributor. Like the Biblical critics, however, Noth stopped short of rejecting the traditional sources as complete fabrications, insisting that if one

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[39] Wansbrough, *Qur'ānic Studies*; idem, *The Sectarian Milieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Wansbrough's prose is so dense that the neophyte is well-advised to begin with an explanation by one of his sympathizers, e.g. Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of *Qur'ān, Tafsīr*, and *Sīra*: the Methodologies of John Wansbrough", in Richard Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 151–63.

[40] E.g., G.R. Hawting, "The Origins of the Muslim Sanctuary at Mecca", in G. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1982), 23–47; Y. Nevo and J. Koren, "The Origins of the Muslim Descriptions of the Jāhilī Muslim Sanctuary", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (1990), 23–44; for Sharon, see the next note.

[41] Moshe Sharon, "The Birth of Islam in the Holy Land", in M. Sharon (ed.), *Pillars of Smoke and Fire: the Holy Land in History and Thought* (Johannesburg: Southern, 1988), 225–35.

[42] Albrecht Noth, "Iṣfahān-Nihāvand. Eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 118 (1968), 274–96. See also Albrecht Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen, und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1993); idem, "*Futūḥ*-History and *Futūḥ*-Historiography: the Muslim Conquest of Damascus", *Al-Qanṭara* 10 (1989), 453–62.

painstakingly identified and set aside the elaborations and manipulations of generations of transmitters one could eventually lay bare a kernel that went back to early times and provided the modern historian with sound historical information. Lawrence Conrad, inspired by Noth's work, demonstrated that the narratives about the conquest of Arwād are marked by discontinuity, instability, and luxuriant literary elaboration and must be considered, essentially, fiction,[43] but nonetheless has not voiced the opinion that the conquests never occurred.

Other revisionist authors also took a nuanced position—recognizing the difficulties posed by the sources, but contending that somehow an historical reconstruction could be achieved. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, for example, in their epoch-making book *Hagarism* (which really established the need to take revisionist views seriously and hence set the historical agenda for scholarship on early Islam for the next generation) accepted that the movement began in Arabia and that the conquests happened, but drew on earlier critiques of the sources (including those of Noth and others) to challenge prevailing notions of what the nature of the expansion was; in their view, it was an amalgam of messianic fervor of Jews exiled from Edessa by the Byzantines and latent "nativist" feeling among west-Arabians.[44] More recently, it has been suggested that, even if the expansion did follow the general outlines laid out in the Muslim *futūḥ* narratives, the *futūḥ* genre tended to overemphasize the military aspects of the expansion, responding both to the desire of the conqueror's descendants to show their ancestors as heroic, and to a theological desire to demonstrate that the military victories were achieved against overwhelming odds and hence were signs of God's favor for the nascent community.[45] This opens up the possibility that the original expansion of the Believers' movement may have been far less violent and more a question of accomodation than usually supposed, in keeping with a view that the movement was originally a tendency to monotheistic reform that may have been broadly acceptable to, and accepting of, many Christians and Jews.

These issues—both regarding the historicity of the early sources, and regarding the nature of the conquest or expansion itself—are still matters of active debate, but it seems that total rejection of the Islamic sources, and of the notion of a conquest with some centralized impetus, is probably too extreme a

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[43] Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Conquest of Arwād: A Source-Critical Study in the Historiography of the Early Medieval Near East", in Cameron and Conrad (eds), *op. cit.*, 317–401. Its length precludes its inclusion here.

[44] Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the making of the Islamic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). While *Hagarism* largely sidesteps the Islamic narrative sources as evidence, Crone's later works show a greater willingness to wrestle with these sources to win some information; see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses*; eadem, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[45] See F.M. Donner, "Islamic Conquests", in Youssef Choueiri (ed.) *Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwells, 2005), 28–51.

judgment (Chapter 17).[46] For one thing, some recent work, such as Chase F. Robinson's essay on the conquest of Khūzistān, shows that aspects of the traditional Islamic conquest narratives are confirmed by documentary evidence or by the testimony of non-Muslim sources of early date (Chapter 18).[47] In general, the revisionist scholarship of the past four decades has underlined the need to attain a fuller understanding of the historiographical complexities of the Islamic sources for the conquest and for early Islamic history generally. It has also led to a greater interest in exploring the testimony of the non-Islamic (often non-Arabic) sources on the early expansion. An excellent example is Sebastian Brock's article on how Islam first appears to Syriac authors (Chapter 19).[48] The non-Islamic sources are of value not because they are automatically to be considered superior to the Islamic ones, for they have their own deficiencies,[49] but simply because they offer us additional information and alternative prespectives that may prove valuable to us as historians. Working patiently on the basis of a careful analysis of all the available sources, both Islamic and non-Islamic, documentary and literary, scholars should gradually be able to construct a comprehensive and historically convincing picture of Islam's first expansion.

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[46] See F.M. Donner, "Centralized Authority and Military Autonomy in the Early Islamic Conquests", in Averil Cameron (ed.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, III: *States, Resources and Armies* (Princeton: Darwin, 1995), 337–60.

[47] E.g. Chase F. Robinson, "The Conquest of Khūzistān: a Historiographical Reassessment", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67 (2004), 14–39.

[48] S.P. Brock, "Syriac Views of Emergent Islam", in G.H.A. Juynboll (ed.), *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 9–21. See also the essay by Kaegi cited in note 26 above. The most comprehensive effort of this kind is Robert Hoyland's invaluable *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin, 1997).

[49] This point is stressed by Conrad, "Conquest of Arwād", esp. 399–401.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note. No bibliography on the subject of this volume could claim to be exhaustive, given the thousands of relevant works that exist in dozens of languages. The following bibliography lists items the volume editor deems significant as major works or representative contributions to one of the sub-themes covered in the volume. Entries have been subdivided by major subthemes: I. General; II. Origins—Causes—Early Phases; III. Conquest of Specific Regions; IV. Consequences; V. Symbolic Views; VI. Historiographical Studies. Recent revisionist works have been integrated with other themes, mainly under sections I and VI. Clearly, some works are germane to several sub-themes; they have been placed where they seem to the editor most relevant, but such classifications are always somewhat debatable.

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