

The Crusades – Medieval Confrontation between Orient and Occident and its consequences

Feldbacher Rainer¹ and Shengda Guo²

Abstract

The upheavals and mutual influences hand in hand with the conquests under the half moon and the cross are indisputable. About 100 years after the foundation of Islam the Arabian conquerors crossed the Djebel el-Tariq (Gibraltar in Spain) and influenced Europe in culture / philosophy / science / religion / medicine / language / etc. by their adopted mentality from antiquity. In spite of the partially peaceful coexistence soon the reaction in shape of the “Reconquista” (“conquering back”) can be observed, and in shape of the crusades. The crusades should bring the war into the enemy’s region, though officially they have been the response to Near Eastern Christians’ cry for help (“Liberation of the Holy Land”). Even under those circumstances both sides won culturally and economically. As always information and know-how has been exchanged not only by trade and diplomacy, but by wars. The borders have been fluid, for Christian cities (Zara, Constantinople) have been plundered by the crusaders as well. Actually both sides had their inner conflicts weakening themselves and made invasions by Turks (Seljuks, Ottomans) and Tatars/Mongols easier. The destructions by the Mongols in the 13th century in particular led to radicalization, and a more unified Muslim world. This suddenly more excluding attitude by both sides goes on until today and leads to mutual misunderstandings and therefore distrust, hindering a dialogue between the monotheistic religions, in spite of their common origin.

Introduction

This article sheds light on the confrontation between East and West, a topic that had been born when in the passing years due to globalization the world moved closer, and the present news bring details about every corner in the world concerning wars, civil wars, “clash of cultures”, and terrorism. In particular nowadays, in a fast moving world, the discrepancies between technical progress, economic crisis and social as well as religious tradition grow, showing us the differences quite plainly. To the authors’ mind one of the main problems not being able to solve the gap between the Eastern and Western societies is the lack of understanding each other, the lack of interest concerning history and culture, and ignoring present-day inner and outer problems. The article exposes some of the paths leading to the Eastern-Western relationship. Of course not everything can be revealed due to the complexity of history, but some points should be brought up.

¹ Kompetenzzentrum für Kulturelles Erbe und Kulturgüterschutz, University of Vienna, c/o Blue Shield Office Vienna, Schottengasse 3a, II. Hof, V. Stiege, 1. Stock, Tür 19, 1010 Vienna. Email: Rainer.feldbacher@univie.ac.at

² School of Public Administration, Nanjing Normal University. Wenyuanstr.1, 210023 Nanjing, P.R.China. Email: 14192@nynu.edu.cn. Project Funded by the Priority Academic Program Development of Jiangsu Higher Education Institutions (PAPD).

Islamic World

In late antiquity, all the cultures around the Mediterranean Sea have been small city-states except two empires – the Byzantines and the Sasanidsⁱ. At the end of the 6th century (Christian era), trading centres flourished along the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula. The products have been brought through the deserts to Syria-Palestine. In this way the traders got to know monotheistic religions as Christianity and Zoroastrianism. Jews as the third monotheistic religious group already lived in Arabia, for they have been expelled from Palestine by the Romans around 70 C.E. after their uprising, not being allowed returning to their country and their Holy city, Jerusalem. They lived in the so-called Diaspora all around the world, always being eager to enter their home. That circumstance is one of the main characteristics of the present-day conflict between Jews and Arabs - both Semites, seeing themselves as successors of Abraham. The dividing line is from his sons on, Isaac and Ismail, but usually they recognize their common origin. As toured traders, the Arabs came into contact with these monotheistic religions. For the citizens of Mecca the best business was religion – but the Pagan one. That city contained temples for hundreds of gods being visited by pilgrims from everywhere. That pilgrimage business was comparable with a strong tourism sector. Of course the responsible people felt themselves and their religious tourism challenged by Muhammad when he exclaimed a monotheistic religion with Allah as its God. So Muhammad and his followers had to flee from Mecca to Yathrib, later called Medina (“the city”). That event took place in the year 622 (Christian era), and is known as Hijra (“cutting the bounds”), for his followers apostatised from their old tribes and accepted the new community under Muhammad. This new community was an important part of Islam, not being just a religion in the beginning, but also a political unit. When the Muslims created their own calendar, they put the Hijra as year zero, for it was the turn of their own history.

In the following years several battles had been fought between the new religious community and the pagan conservative society, battles between Arab tribes. Most of the battles have been won by the newcomers, seen as evidence for their right way. But when a battle was lost (as at Uhud), explanations for the reason had to be given, too. Then Muhammad told his followers that most of them forgot their fair war. They disobeyed the prophet’s order and just wanted booty; and God’s support was not a Muslim’s self-evident right. They had to win his grace by acting under his commandments and by submitting his will. This explanation for a defeat was a model Muslims used in the forthcoming centuries, either after the terrible storm by the Mongolians in the 13th century or as reaction to the supremacy of the west, beginning in the 18th century, and partially prolonging today.ⁱⁱ

After Muhammad’s death the caliphs (Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, Ali) became the leaders of the Muslim world. The strength and conviction of the Muslims led them from one victory to another. Both mighty empires – the Byzantines and the Sasanids, already very weakened by their struggles with each other, had no chance against those people strengthened by their new religion. The Sasanids, for three centuries not even overwhelmed by the Romans, had fallen after only three years by the Arab tribes. In contradiction to the Sasanid Empire, the capital of Constantinople could stand. But when they its emperor sent an army to stop the Arab expansion it was defeated by the Arabs at the Yarmuk river in Jordan. The surrounding region became unprotected, and one city after another was merged into the world of Islam, after the Arabian armies expelled the Byzantines from their former properties. Therefore they won in just a few years not only Syria-Palestine, but even Egypt and the North-African coast line. But a jewel in all those conquests had been Jerusalem, after Mecca and Medina the 3rd holiest city for the Muslims, because the prophet Muhammad had a vision being brought from Jerusalem to paradise. So under Omar, the 2nd caliph, the city capitulated without bloodshed. When the Christians offered him to pray in the Holy Sepulchre, Omar neglected, being aware it would become an excuse to confiscate the church and to change it into a mosque. Omar was the first shining example for a proper relationship between Muslims and conquered peoples. Christians had to

pay a tax from now on, but it was lower than the former ones under the Byzantine rulers who even had been less flexible in religious questions, for they intervened in ritual and theological questions of each Christian sect, as there had been many of them. For Muslims there only were Christians without any further difference. Of course Christians preferred living under Muslim rule and sometimes even supported them in the battles against Constantinople. All those conquests did not simply change the political map in that time, but had an effect on the world of today due to the attendant cultural transformation process, as we will see.

So there are several factors for the fast triumphal procession of the Muslim world in the first centuries:

1. The inhabitants lived better under Muslim rule, and therefore supported them or at least did not hinder them.
2. The Arab tribes have been powerful, with fresh troops, whereas the remaining strong powers had been at the end of their strength after many years of war with each other.
3. The Muslims had been convinced that the battle for this topic would not only give sense to their lives, but also to their deaths. It was not just conquering land; it was something higher – bringing God's message to all other peoples. The majority of the Byzantine army on the other hand mainly consisted of mercenaries and had no deeper cause.
4. Propaganda – people heard about the Arab's victory, even against stronger armies. Those stories of course did not encourage people fighting against somebody under whose rule life would not change anyway.
5. Therefore the easier the Arabs succeeded in conquest, the longer they could keep their own idealism and motivation.

But not even 40 years later the Islamic community broke apart: After the violent death of the 4th caliph Ali by the Umayyads, that dynasty kept the power of the so far conquered area with their new capital Damascus in Syria. But due to his death, Ali's followers split up with the new power and became the Shi'ites (Shiites, also divided in many sects). The name Shia comes from the historic phrase *Shīa'ū 'Alī*, meaning "followers of Ali". They were fighting the new caliphs, because for them the Umayyads had not been the real successors of Muhammad. This gap becomes deeper and deeper in the following centuries; even nowadays we can observe that conflict between Sunnite and Shiite communities.

During the reign of the Umayyads, the Arabs crossed the Mediterranean Sea in the far west and conquered in the year 711 parts of the Iberian Peninsula, nowadays known as Spain, defeating the Visigoths. That tribe had been responsible for the fall of Rome 300 years before. The Frankish stopped the Arabs at Tour and Poitiers in nowadays France, and put an obstacle and border between those two worlds. In the Arabian core land also the dynasty of the Umayyads diminished, and had been replaced in the 8th century (120 years after the Hijra) by the Shiite dynasty of the Abbasids. A sect named the Banu Haschim, nowadays still forming the ruling clan in Jordan, had initiated and supported the new dynasty. In those days that group had a message: The community of believers had left the right path, the prophet's mission was on the way to become faked, and the only solution was to overthrow the leading powers. That attitude had been adapted during history and had also been one motivation during the Arab Spring. In former days the enemy had been the Umayyads, nowadays it is the west or not accepted rulers. During the Abbasid's reign a new capital had been founded: Baghdad. The Umayyad dynasty had already been progressive, but during the Abbasid the Islamic society was on its peak.ⁱⁱⁱ Baghdad offered the centre for trade and science, and goods had come from Spain, Africa, China and India. Even paper had been sold, an invention, recently imported from China, when the Abbasids met and defeated a Chinese army in the year 751 in nowadays Kazakhstan. Baghdad was one of the first metropolises containing a million of inhabitants. It was the city of thousand and one nights with all the famous oriental stories, written down under the reign of Harun ar-Raschid. That "caliph" – they

still called themselves successors of the prophet – even had contacts with Europe that began to rise again under the Frankish first so-called Roman emperor Charlemagne. Both rulers became mystified.

Concerning philosophy during the first centuries it must be said that Islam lived for the Koran and the Hadīth, the words and deeds of Muhammad. In the first years after his death the people collected everything they heard about him, and used that as policy. The Hadīth-collecting was a highly developed discipline of critical historiography. On the other side, the expansion of Islam brought the Arabs in contact with ideas and efforts of many peoples. When they had conquered Alexandria in Egypt, they won the spiritual capital of the antique Greek-Roman world thanks to its library and universities. The Abbasids were interested in all philosophy and science. They needed interpreters for the Greek books, but also from Sanskrit (Old Indian), Chinese and Persian into Arabic, filling the cities with classical texts. The Muslims had been the first ones being able to compare Greek and Indian mathematics, Greek and Indian medicine, Persian and Chinese cosmology, and metaphysical systems of different cultures. Concerning mathematics it must be emphasized that the Islamic community adopted the geometry of the Greeks, and the numeral zero by the Indians, and the free variable parameter by the Babylonians. The Muslims systematized everything, invented Algebra and laid the foundation of modern mathematics. They analyzed different philosophical ideas, and how they could fit to the Islamic revelations. The philosophers worked with practical questions as medicine, comparing the knowledge of different cultures and developing a modern understanding of diseases, treatment and anatomy. Chemistry, geology, botanic, and other disciplines of the natural sciences became part of the academic world. On the other side, the mysticism by Sufis came up. In philosophy, the Arab world tried to analyze the connection between science and religion. All of them, theologians, scientists and mystics tried to impel the development of Islamic doctrine, discovery of principles and laws of nature and the development of technique for the unification with God. Sometimes those groups overlapped, but most times differences became too big. In this time, about the middle of the 11th century, one of the most important philosophers, al-Ghazali came up, who wanted to support the religion in learning more about mundane philosophy becoming able to fight it. He engaged himself very thoroughly with Greek philosophy and described it to prove its mistakes. His books came to Spain, being part of the Muslim world. In Western Europe most classical Greek philosophy had been lost already. By al-Ghazali's works, in fact trying to disprove the philosophy, Europeans after a long time got into contact again with e.g. Aristotle influencing their Christian philosophy, because they tried to incorporate Aristotelian philosophy into the doctrine of church. After a while the conflict between Islamic belief and sciences became stronger. Whereas in the beginning many shades of grey existed allowing the society to have many opinions and points of view, that tolerance diminished. Sciences became suppressed, as well as rationality as instrument of ethic and social cognition. Beside that radical division the rights for women became cut back, too. When women had an important role during the first years after Hijra, from about 1000 C.E. on, they became excluded from public life. The open-minded attitude the Arab world has been known for, was gone. What was the reason? Crisis and fear, due to several factors leading to instability!

Parallel to those intellectual pursuits the political history changed: During the first centuries the Muslims saw themselves as the centre of the civilized world: After the breakdown at the end of antiquity, Europe had not existed. India was divided in several small kingdoms. Beside the monotheistic religions being in the Arab controlled world, the Buddhism was reclusively in China – so-called Cathay, being mighty under the Tang and Sung dynasties, but too far away to be important for the Arab world. Everything was in an isolated context, in spite of conflicts between Shia and Sunnah, Arabs and Persians, philosophy and theology. The Islam had interfused the Old world except Cathay and most parts of Europe (except the Iberian Peninsula and Southern Italy). The common target would have been bringing the Islam to the remaining region, but the strength and impulse was gone, as the unity of the Muslim world was. The caliphate still existed, but not as

one power. As mentioned before, after the Umayyads the Abbasids came to power, not before killing the complete former dynasty except one (Abd ar-Rahman) who fled to Spain, founding a new dynasty there. Suddenly the Islamic world had two political centres. And later on, when the Abbasid dynasty weakened, even the unique Caliphate broke, for the Iberian Muslims exclaimed another one with the capital Córdoba. From Spain the remaining Europe got the first cultural and scientific influences. Nonetheless, resistance by the northern Christian kingdoms against the Muslim supremacy became organized already in the 8th century, lasting until 1492 with the fall of Granada, the last Arab kingdom in Europe.

Beside the philosophical and religious confrontations, another break could be observed in Egypt. When the Abbasids suddenly made profession of the Sunnite faith, the Shiite resistance became stronger. In the year 969 C.E. warriors from Tunisia conquered Egypt, founded their new capital al-Qahira (“the victorious”, nowadays Cairo), and claimed themselves the true caliphs, descendants from Fatima, daughter of Muhammad. The name of their dynasty therefore had become Fatimid. Under their rule Cairo got the world’s oldest existing university, al-Azhar. So three centuries after its foundation three caliphates existed - the unity broke apart.

A deeper problem in fact came from within. The two caliphates in the east, Cairo and Bagdad surrounded themselves with slaves as body guards. The same pattern could be observed centuries before in antique Rome where the emperors relied on their praetorians, eventually consisting of Germanic people, from tribes later responsible for the fall of Rome. In the Abbasid caliphate the so-called Mamluk (word for slaves) had been in charge for that duty, originating from Turkish tribes, being bought at slave markets, for the caliphs did not trust their own Arab and Persian vassals. The Turkish’s home initially had been the central-Asiatic steppes north of Iran and Afghanistan, later they immigrated into the Byzantine area nowadays known as Turkey. The idea behind foreign forces had been disrooting children who got a proper education in fight and came into an elite unit as soon as they were adults. From then on the Mamluk protected their caliphs, but even represented him, for the caliphs only stayed in their palaces whereas the city’s population suffered under the arbitrary violence on the streets by Mamluk forces. That circumstance led to less popularity of the caliph, who as answer needed more bodyguards. Soon the caliphs of Bagdad recognized having created their own doom.^{iv}

The power itself in fact was already held by the Vizier (highest administrator), during that time an inherited assignment by one Persian family. But also the Viziers had their Mamluk bodyguards and army, as had all the governors who became more and more independent from the capital. Only some years later, Mamluk killed their masters and founded their own dynasties. The internal cohesion collapsed, times became insecure, trade broke down, and wars came up between the Turkish Mamluk and the Turkish nomads who threatened the borders in the north. Only in the area between Iran and Afghanistan a kingdom was at its peak, bringing up the Persian beside the Arabian as competitive language of the scholars. But also that dynasty became surrogated by Mamluk whose leader Mahmud saw himself as true upholder of the Islam. He brought up a new definition: Sultan – “arm of the sword”. From now on the caliph still was the head of the Muslims, but the Sultan was on the same level in a military context, and that title existed until the 20th century. Only some years later, Mahmud’s son Masud lost army and power against the Seljuk who conquered the Middle East. Originally followers of the Shamanistic religion, those Turkish tribes gave it up in favour of the Islam. Their interpretation of the Islam was not the original one anymore, with all its ethics and philosophy, but an ideology without tolerance against other religions.

In the year 1053, a Seljuk prince named Alp Arslan (“heroic lion”) sat on the throne. He expanded to the west and defeated the Byzantine army at Manzikert. Arslan even imprisoned the Byzantine emperor, but soon set him free. That battle was the greatest victory for the Seljuk, but perhaps also their biggest mistake, as would have been recognized later.

Alp Arslan's son Malik Shah conquered Syria and the Holy Land. His Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, a Persian, organized the administration of the countries, and founded universities and schools (*madrasas*) to induct a uniform education, being in hands of orthodox Islamic religious scholars. Those actions had been placed to unite the so far three ethnicities of the Islamic community: The Turks should keep the order by their military supremacy, the Arabs would keep the unity with their religious doctrine, and the Persians would upraise civilisation by administration, philosophy, art, architecture and sciences. Therefore the ruling class consisted of a Turkish sultan, an Arabic caliph and a Persian bureaucracy. In spite of a rude Seljuk hegemony it came to an economic stability.^v

But there was another power worth to mention: A Shiite sect who threatened all Sunnite kingdoms, having their base at the fortress Alamut in the north of Iran. In many languages a political murder is named after that movement – Assassins. Marco Polo who visited the court of Kubilai Khan in the 13th century said, the Assassins smoked Hashish to stimulate themselves before a murder, for they had to expect their own death after the act. Nowadays the etymology goes another way: The Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf explains the word as part of the Persian *assas*, meaning “source, original”, meaning the Assassins would lead the Muslims back to their roots.^{vi} Doubtless, that sect had been a dark menace for all powers in the Near and Middle East. The *Fedajin* (“Sacrificer”), those agents killing rulers always committed in public to show people they would be able to do it anywhere and anytime, in sacrificing themselves. Their own death was part of the act to frighten the enemy; they had been suicide attackers. So the Assassins controlled politics, even of the great powers in an indirect way.

In the year 1092 they killed the two mightiest persons in the Arab world: The sultan Malik Shah and his Vizier Nizam al-Mulk, both responsible for the cohesion of the Seljuk Empire, had been their target. After their death, power struggle between the counts came up, dividing the Western core lands. From Syria to Palestine the cities became independent kingdoms, though officially loyal to the sultan of Bagdad. The dream of a consolidated Islamic community on a political level was over. The Ulama – the religious authorities – held society together by Koran, Hadith and Sharia, therefore by help of religion. The philosophers still tried to discuss about rationality, but they were diminishing, for rationality itself disappeared! In the following centuries Islam became heckled from two sides – the west and the east.

Crusades

The more famous menace came from the west, from Europe, a region that had been ignored by the Muslims for in their eyes it was just inhabited by “primitive people” where in former times a higher civilisation existed being lost in the medieval age. And generally they had been right. But during the Middle Ages, especially the 11th century, technological innovations brought a fast development, among others a better cultivation leading to increasing population, and finally to overpopulation with all its social problems. Even among the nobles only the first born sons inherited the land of their fathers; everybody else became either a monk or was left without property. That and of course further circumstances led to social riots and plundering by knights without any real target. That was the situation in Europe, consisting of many small countries, but united by the Christian belief. On the other hand the Byzantines, due to wars with the Muslims lost aside with territory their tax-paying population and the bases for recruitment.

And here the Seljuk expansion and the European invasion overlap: As the reader remembers, the Byzantine emperor had been set free by the Seljuk after the lost battle of Manzikert. When he came back to Constantinople, he called the occidental world for help, for he knew about the surplus of qualified fighters in the west and sometimes already used European mercenaries. But the circumstance was unusual that the Byzantine emperor asked the Western pope for official permission to recruit warriors. Furthermore Christian pilgrims came home from Jerusalem, lamenting about hard times for Christians in the Holy Land. The

Seljuk – as mentioned before – had been less tolerate than their predecessors and disdained all followers of other religions.

As reaction to those events, pope Urban II. made a plea for crusades to Anatolia supporting Constantinople in the year 1095, and officially to liberate Jerusalem. Those actions had been an opportunity to distract from his conflict with the Roman-German Emperor Heinrich IV. as well as an opponent pope, and to valorize his own position. Moreover half a century before, the Roman and Greek-Orthodox Church broke apart in the schism of Constantinople (the old Byzantium). An involvement could clear the path to unification with the Eastern Church again. The clerical council of Clermont in France had been utilized for propaganda: Urban pictured the oriental Christian's desperate situation in the Holy Land needing help. He emphasized that the knights should focus on deeds for God fighting Christian's enemies, instead of vandalizing the own countryside. The warriors would have the possibility to get atonement. As sign they should carry a cross on their outer wear referring to the words in the Bible:

³⁸ “Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10,38

The idea of the crusade was born, a pilgrimage in arms.^{vii} Many people had been willing to leave the grievance in Europe. The Biblical ban to kill could be bypassed by the stories of the Old Testament, when the People of Israel had to conquer their Promised Land. And the apostles Petrus and Paulus acknowledged the state's power of the state, even by sword. And in the 4th century theologian father Augustinus introduced an acceptable concept about a fair war to get peace. That attitude reminded on the Arab excuses that their expansion would bring peace among the pagan world, called the “house of war”. For the Christians it was the same point of view, and falling in battle meant eternal life. But the more important in this world was fleeing the social and economic troubles and expecting the wealth, already known by trading contacts. Pope Urban's call for crusade concerned only the French region so far, but there intensely. In a first step the masses of poor people moved eastwards, encouraged by a certain Peter of Amiens (called “the hermit”), leading to the so-called people's crusade. That movement had already been very destructive in Central Europe. They massacred Jews, though being for their economic prosperity under the protection of bishops and emperors, and they plundered the area of Hungary and the Byzantine realm. But as soon as they reached Anatolia, they had been wiped out immediately by the Seljuk army. So the people's crusade found its rapid end. That was the first movement, but it was not seen as real movement.

In the meantime the knight's armies were on their way. They still had to organize their personal estates before leaving, so they could not start as spontaneously as the commons before. They often had to sell their property, too, for they had not enough money to buy the equipment for the crusade. Moreover some planned to acquire new land in the Orient anyway, not being willing to return. When the knights approached Constantinople after a quite disciplined journey, emperor Alexios did not trust them after the former experience with the Westerners. Conflicts came up, as the emperor's daughter Anna Komnena tells in her *Alexias*, a chronicle glorifying the deeds of her father. That opus is the most important Byzantine source concerning the first crusade. At the end they found consensus, and finally the knight's army ferried to Anatolia besieging - by the aid of Byzantine advisors and military - the strategically important Nicaea, a former Byzantine town, being conquered by the Seljuk and made their capital not even 20 years before. After his experiences with the people's crusaders before, the Seljuk king underestimated the new situation and still fought a war at his eastern border. When he finally came to help, the city was due to negotiations already in Byzantine hands. Also the crusaders had been discontent, for they were not allowed to enter the city because of the Byzantines mistrust, and felt betrayed a further relationship's burden between Byzantines and crusaders in the following years. Nonetheless both armies went further southeast against the Seljuk, pushing them back more and more. In Edessa an Armenian prince called for help to get rid of the Seljuk

hegemony, and thought to get it by one knight called Balduin who was proclaimed his successor. When one month later that prince was killed without any protection by his assumed “rescuer”, Balduin took the promised throne, founding the first crusader’s state. The main army went southwards and besieged Antioch, rather powerful because of its walls from Byzantines times at its peak in the 6th century. At this point it must be emphasized that the population still had been the same as in former times: The majority consisted of Greeks, Syrians and Armenians – all of them Christians. So they had not been trusted by their Muslim conquerors. Neither they had been by the crusaders who saw them as part of the oriental world. So they were worn down by both sides. Therefore in most times the oriental Christians had feared the invaders who had been called al-franġ (“the Franks”). Also the Muslim communities had been split, in spite of a common enemy. Nobody trusted each other, and that distrust finally also led to the treason of Antioch and in the next step to the first official massacre in the name of the cross. But the crusaders had been besieged soon afterwards. Without any hope the Holy lance had been found “coincidentally”. Thanks to that wonder the knights recognized God’s support. Motivated by that they could defeat the enemies being in superior numbers. That was a shock for the Muslim world, and nobody dared to bar their way to Jerusalem anymore. Some smaller Muslim kingdoms emphasized their neutrality, others even welcomed that menace for the hateful Shiite Egyptian Fatimid dynasty ruling the southern core of Palestine should be wiped out. So finally, the 7th of June 1099, the crusaders came to Jerusalem. That city was because of its location, the old walls and the mighty citadel still an impressive city and strong fortress; and as mentioned it was after Mecca and Medina the 3rd most important city of the Muslim world.^{viii} Though, Jerusalem was not important in political, cultural or economic meaning, compared with Damascus, Cairo or Bagdad. Its importance and significance came along with the events coming up the 15th of July. After a heavy siege and even prayers around the city, the crusaders could conquer the city, followed by slaughtering everybody in the city. Many reports name countless numbers of killed inhabitants, some exaggerating as Ibn al-Aṭīr, using the information for a beginning anti-Frankish Jihad.^{ix} Doubtless, the crusaders nevertheless went farer than war necessitated, and the cruel conquest of Jerusalem was a traumatic experience, embedded in the collective memory of the Islamic world, being the symbol of conflict between crusaders and Muslims respectively Christianity and Islam. Anyway, the goal had been reached: the Seljuk had been defeated; territory for the Byzantines regained, and parts of the Holy Land, especially Jerusalem itself, had been in hands of Christianity again. One reason for that success had been the crusader’s fanaticism, on the other hand the missing unity of the Arab world. In particular the two great powers of the Muslim world, the Turkish Seljuk and the Egyptian Fatimid had been enemies. Moreover the Seljuk powers were entangled in civil wars at the Central-Asiatic borders, being wealthier and therefore more interesting targets than Palestine. The west had been in the background of interest; to a periphery of politics. Furthermore, in the beginning crusaders had been treated as Byzantines’ mercenaries, the Muslim world already had been confronted with several times. They did not give further attention to a new horde.

But now the Christian menace was in front of Syrian and Transjordanian capitals, and more invaders had to be expected. Some Muslim intellectuals, among them as-Sulamī damned the discord between the rulers enabling the crusaders to conquer Islamic territories, associating the Frankish invasion in Syria with the conquest of Sicily and the “Reconquista” in Spain, pointing out the common global threat for the Muslim world. As-Sulamī made a plea for defence against the Christian danger, reviving the idea of Jihad in the middle of the 12th century. And later, men as Zengi, Nur ad-Din and Saladin used that ideology to unite the Muslim world against the crusaders.

In the meantime, the crusaders installed several kingdoms in the Holy Land, mainly along the Mediterranean coast. For they did not have any maritime infrastructure, they depended on support by Pisa, Venetia and Genoa. Those Italian cities not only became prosperous by trade privileges, they even got complete quarters

in the Palestinian cities. A sea bridge was created to bring pilgrims and immigrants from Europe over the sea more easily. The door was opened for intense contact between the oriental and occidental world, and the seaports became very rich. After the conquest of the Holy Land some crusaders returned to Europe, but among the remaining princes, conflicts came up soon. Beside their inner weakness, they had been aware of the fact that without the countries beyond the river Jordan, their properties would stay endangered. Several campaigns until Wadi Musa and Aqaba in the Southern Jordan had been made, tautening a dense chain of castles and fortresses until the north. Therefore the crusaders could control the trading routes between Damascus and Egypt, too. The system of the Christian realms reminded on European ones, with strong discrimination of its Muslim inhabitants, but also of the Oriental Christians who had been beheld as submitted people. Nonetheless, in the course of time everybody could live together fairly peaceful, in spite of continuous disadvantages in some parts. Another barrier between conquerors and conquered was the language: Though the Arabic still was the administrative language in some spheres, few crusaders were able to use it and needed oriental Christians. Also the higher forms of medicine, customs and luxury had been adapted, but only by assimilation, not by acculturation. They stayed foreigners in that country, in contrary to the former Kurdish and Turkish conquerors, being part of the Islam culture. In spite of that fact the history was not a pure Arabic one anymore, but an Islamic one. As already emphasized, all the Near and Middle Eastern rulers did not trust each other, and sometimes they even made alliances with other crusaders, concerning military actions, yields, law and also on private level.

In the middle of the 12th century a Turkish leader named Zengi conquered the Christian realm Edessa, proving the weakness of the Christians and the possibility to expulse them. The fall of Edessa shocked the other crusaders' states and Europe. The pope called for a new crusade, not getting the same echo anymore. When abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) delivered a speech, he succeeded in persuading even the French and the German king. That abbot became especially famous for his support of the Templers, the first clerical knight order, committing to monastic ideals as well as armed fight against pagans. The order had been founded in a quarter of Jerusalem in the year 1120, near the Temple of Salomon, at the location of the present-day Al-Aqsa mosque.^x They had been the first armed troop with a uniform, a red cross on white background. Shortly afterwards, another order had been founded in the Holy Land, the Hospitallers, also called "Order of St. John". Concerning the new crusade, the 2nd one, the kings' armies wanted to conquer Damascus in Syria, though the crusaders had a non-aggression pact with it. The city asked Nur ad-Dīn, son of Zengi, for help. When he approached, the crusaders cancelled the siege, and the kings returned to Europe. Therefore the only effect of that crusade was that Nur ad-Dīn was seen as rescuer of the Islam, and he could make the first step uniting the religious and political Islamic World. The crusaders made a further mistake: They tried to invade Egypt. When the Fatimid dynasty asked for help, also addressing to Nur ad-Din, he sent a Kurdish commander, whose nephew Saladin soon succeeded. He liquidated the Fatimid dynasty, and after Nur ad-Din's death he even proclaimed himself sultan of Syria, everything legitimated by the caliph of Bagdad, still the religious but stagnant head of Islam. The caliph hoped the Muslim unity in the west would become a stronghold against the crusaders. Yet, in spite of strong armies Saladin wanted to develop his power. He made and kept non-aggression pacts with the crusaders, just waiting for a reason to break them. When the crusader's prince of al-Kerak ambushed a Muslim caravan, Saladin proclaimed the Jihad. He attacked Tiberias at the Lake of Galilee, and awaited the king of Jerusalem with his army at the Horns of Hittin. The 4th of July 1187, their greatest army had been annihilated there, and their king imprisoned. Without any troops Jerusalem capitulated the 2nd of October, and had been spared from plundering and massacres. Not only that: Saladin charged a Muslim family to be responsible for the Holy Sepulchre for its own protection. The church where Jesus Christ had been crucified and buried, had already been divided by a huge amount of Christian confessions, rivalling each other, everyone eager to get the best locations inside

the building and even on its roof (as the Coptic Ethiopians). That Muslim responsibility for a Christian church is valid until today, still in hand of two Arab families. Anyway, after the occupation of Jerusalem, Saladin marched to the coast and conquered several cities. Just some further seaports, fortified cities and castles still held their stand. Now the Christian world in Europe was shocked, and the 3rd crusade followed 1190, under Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa who drowned on his way to the Holy Land in Cilicia (Turkey), with the effect that his army did not continue its way. Two other kings had chosen the sea way, and approached the Holy Land – the French king Philipp and his English rival Richard I. Lionheart. The latter one became famous in his conflict with Saladin. Both of them could not win, Richard due to lack of soldiers, and Saladin in spite of more resources, for his men had become tired of fighting. A peace treaty had been signed – Jerusalem was opened for pilgrims, moreover the crusaders got back some lost sea ports. Richard sailed back to Europe, being imprisoned for a while in nowadays Austria.^{xi} In the meantime, Saladin died soon after Richard had left the country, his united empire split up between his sons and brother.^{xii} The peace treaty was still valid, and both sides profited of that.

In spite of the peace treaty, the pope in Europe initiated a new crusade with Egypt as target. That plan made obvious that the Holy Land became more and more just peripheral. Venetia should be responsible for the crusaders' transport who could not effort it. So they made a deal with the "Serenissima" and attacked their concurring Christian trading city Zara in Dalmatia. After the successful conquest the Venetians persuaded the crusaders to involve themselves in an inner-Byzantine throne conflict. In fact Venetia wanted to get rid of that mighty rival and concurrent; and Rome wanted the church of Constantinople under the observance of the pope. At the end, the crusaders soon plundered the city.^{xiii} During the sack of Constantinople in the year 1204 by Christian conquerors, a lot had been destroyed. Constantinople was in the crusaders' hands until 1261, before the Byzantines reconquered their city. Though, for the Byzantine pressure was gone, the Turkish Seljuk could regain their strength, and Anatolia became more turkified. And Venetia could deviate from the target Egypt, for they had prosperous trade relationship including the Red Sea access to India. Beside Venetia, also Pisa and Genoa already had their trading ports in Egypt, providing the country with arms industry, for it had not sufficient raw material. In exchange the Italian cities got spices, sugar, and even mummies for medicine. Both sides had been criticized for collaboration with the enemy, but already Saladin told the Caliph, before the Muslims depend on armoury import for the fight against the Christian disbelievers, and also the Italians could bypass the embargo by the pope.

On the other hand the Roman-German emperor Friedrich II. who wanted to follow the next crusade, was excommunicated by the pope. In that time the Hungarian and Austrian kings wanted to attack Egypt anew. These crusaders federalized with the Anatolian Seljuk who wanted to conquer Syria at the same time. Both thrusts could be prevented. The kings returned to Europe before the Arab leaders fought each other again. The Djihad was forgotten again, pure power politics were kept in foreground. Due to that inner conflict and weakness, the Muslim king al-Kāmil in the Palestine sphere solved the topic Jerusalem with his rival Friedrich II. - finally on his way to the Holy Land - through diplomatic channels.^{xiv} Against the opposition of religious bigots in both camps they found compromises. At the end, just by negotiations, Friedrich could wear the lost crown of Jerusalem without any war, and in spite of his clerical ban by the pope in Europe. Friedrich went home to Sicily after that legendary victory; but it did not last long due to all the conflicts in the so-called Holy Land. Many wars had been fought; sometimes Muslim armies had even been supported by Frankish resp. Christian ones in their inner conflicts. In one of those battles fighting for Muslim kings, the supposed "crusaders" lost the majority of their warriors, so they called again for help from Europe. This time the French king Louis IX., later called "the Holy" (1226 – 1270) came and attacked Egypt again, but soon failed and sailed after imprisonment back home.^{xv} His campaign led to the beginning of the end of the

crusaders: the successful defenders of Egypt had been the Mamluk. They usurped the throne and led their armies by stronger fanaticism than their predecessors from one victory to another.

Something else should happen during that time – the Mongolian storm in the year 1258. Coming from the east, they had already conquered Persia and then, further west, diminished the caliphate of Baghdad. The city itself had been devastated. The Syrian region with its capitals Aleppo and Damascus suffered the same fate. In the whole Muslim world the Mongolians had been known as cruel barbarian people who destroyed everything and let no one survive. The Muslim world had been paralysed for some time due to that shock.^{xvi} But the Mongolians went too far. Even when their main army went back to Karakorum, the Mongolian's capital, for a new successor had to be found by whatever means necessary, they thought to be invincible. When the Mongolian emissaries, sent to the Mamluk in Egypt for their submission, were executed, war was inevitable. It found its end in the battle of 'Ain Ğālūt, near the lake of Genezareth, on the 3rd of September 1260. The Mongolians had been defeated and never came back, and Islam saved. The Mamluk united the Muslim world, and intended now to get rid of the crusaders forever, already being in defensive position along the Mediterranean coast. Within one generation all the sea ports had been conquered and destroyed. Only some castles still had been held by the knight orders until they gave up, too. In the year 1291 the last European properties had been lost. The Mamluk devastated the landscape along the coast to prevent a new European attack from the sea. Hate and fear against foreign influence had been strong after a long, though sometimes prosperous contact with the crusaders, and a short but terrible experience from the Mongolian storm. The menace from the crusades was over anyway: The idea was worn out, and the definition of crusade had extended to wars against each enemy of the church, be it the political rivals as European rulers or be it movements as the religion of Catharism in Southern France. And from the 14th century on the Ottoman armies went against Eastern Europe.^{xvii} The crusades began to be a defensive war against Muslim conquerors. Nonetheless, contact had been intensified by missionaries, traders and scientists who engaged themselves with the Oriental world, not ending in the Muslim sphere of influence but going further to the so-called Far East.

When the Arab world spoke about Christians they meant the Byzantine and Orthodox Church. And when Arabs and Byzantines fought each other, it was only for land reclamation without religious and ideological background.^{xviii} Unfortunately, now from the Mamluk supremacy on, the idea of the Jihad – the Holy war – had become stronger, and even aimed at Oriental Christians and Arab deviants as philosophers. The spiritual tolerance got lost and led to a stricter interpretation of religion, being present among militant Islamists nowadays. In fact, both sides became more self-confident of their culture, and recognized their unity by religion and in Europe even by a beginning nationalism. Both sides, but in particular the European world had been influenced by the foreign world of the opponent, and until today discussions come up, whether that event known as crusades damaged the relationship between East and West. Most times the fact of the first offensive step by Arab expansion to European regions as Spain and Sicily is ignored. Moreover, until the last decades of the crusade era under Mamluk powers, it was only partially a clash of culture and religion – after the conquest of Jerusalem it became during those two centuries a fight between different secular powers for land.

Islamic political and philosophical reaction

The Mongolian storm was more intense than the European migration, a catastrophe for the Muslim world. A majority of the academics emphasize that the Islamic civilisation had suffered total devastation. Others say that the Mongolians had been merged in the Il-Khan dynasty. Later, when they converted to Islam, they gave new dynamics and ideas to the Muslim world. Though, after the defeat by the Mongolians, Muslim theologians had problems explaining the reason for their defeat, because military success meant the truth of

Muhammad's revelations. The situation in the former years pitched the Islam into a crisis. The crusaders had at least been a "people of the Book", but the Mongolians not even that.

The most inconvenient answer had been given by a Syrian judge: Ibn Taimiya. He had grown up in those terrible times as refugee; and terrible times always provoke extreme attitudes. Ibn Taimiya took two stands:

1. Islam and its revelation was not the problem, but the people practicing it. They deviated from the truth, so God weakened them. The Muslims had to return to the original Islam, and to get rid of new ideas, interpretations, and innovations. The first decisions and morals under Muhammad had been the best.
2. Jihad was one of the Muslim's central obligations, beside prayer, fasting and other religious duties. Jihad originally stood for the great Jihad - an inner battle, against personal weaknesses, and the small Jihad as defence of religion, property and life. To Ibn Taimiya's mind now Jihad even signified an active fight for expansion of the Muslim community.

Ibn Taimiya's message had been set: Strength by unity against the enemy. In a community being threatened for many years by enemies from outside, of course he found a sympathetic ear and therefore followers. But he also extended the list of enemies, including heretics as philosophers, apostates, non-Sunnites. He damned interpretations of the Islam and emphasized the perfection of the Koran. At the end he died in prison, for even the Ulama (the Muslim theologians) could not accept his attitude, in particular because he did not accept their establishment either. But risking life for a conviction of course made his message the more attractive, independent of its intellectual worth. As often in history, courage had been equated with truth. Hence several variations of his doctrine came up in Northern Africa and India in a movement named *Salafism* (from *as-Salaf as-salih*: "the devout ancestors"). Nowadays, that word sometimes is connoted with Islamic fundamentalism, having found its ignition in the shadow of the Mongolic storm.

The Cold War had some influence on nowadays situation as well: The Soviets had left Afghanistan in the 1990s, for they neither could hold nor control the country. Some historians say the effort of military resources – of course not only in Afghanistan - led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the USA, the conservative historian Francis Fukuyama wrote its collapse not only marked the end of the Cold War between USA and the Soviets, but the end of history. The capitalist democracy has won, no ideology can stand her. The world was led to the only truth. The title of his book: "The end of history". The Jihadists and Wahhabi – extremist groups - had another point of view: The true Muslims under Ayatollah had overthrown the Shah in Iran and chased away the USA protecting him, in Afghanistan they not only had defeated the Red Army, but they were responsible for Soviet Union's collapse. The Jihadists recognized a well-known pattern: The Muslim community had defeated both super powers at the time of Muslim's rising with God's help - the Byzantine and the Sassanid Empires. And now they had again been confronted with two super powers; one had been defeated already. In that way, for the Muslim's point of view history had just begun. The West made the mistake thinking that countries like Afghanistan could be ignored after the Cold War and turned its back on them. Therefore its tribes still fought each other with weapons they had won from their enemies or they had required by their former allies. Moreover foreign Jihadists installed their operating bases in those forgotten countries for the war against the west, supporting the Taliban originating from refugee camps at the Afghan-Pakistan border. Those preparations found the climax in 9/11. What happened afterwards proves repetition of history: Bush chose in his rhetoric motifs as they had already been used in similar patterns during the crusades, against National Socialism and against Communism: Terrorists want to destroy freedom and democracy, and those moral values have to be defended with blood and money. The Jihadists or the well-known Al-Qaida never integrated fighting freedom or democracy into their rhetoric slogans. They talk about discipline and moral purity against moral decadence - opposing values that have come up when the western supremacy over Muslim communities had been responsible for the erosion of

Islamic virtues, as diminishing religion by entertainment and alcohol, secularisation of their elites and the deeper gap between rich and poor people. Their point of view is not right either, for the mundane and occidental are not synonyms, because especially in the USA a high percentage among its population makes profession of a faith, mainly the Christian confession. In fact, that conflict is not between religious and non-religious groups. On the other side the west, in particular the Americans think in patterns as the world order had been used to in former times - a conflict of national states. Even the Cold War had been a confrontation between blocks of nations. Therefore the strategists and media under the Bush-administration had searched for a tangible counterpart, a responsible government they could fight in a conventional war as they were used to. So, after an attack on Afghanistan in the year 2001, with an (until 2011) intangible Bin Laden as primary target they focused on Iraq in March 2003. The campaign, leading to a further human catastrophe is well-known, as is the failing in its goal to weaken terrorism. Nowadays the glimpse is on Iran (forced mainly by Israel), Syria (torn apart by civil war, and as in Iraq threatened by IS), and Pakistan as its supporters. The more or less Western hegemony encouraged “democratic” elections without bringing peace or social justice into those countries, only the further alienation from values the west wants to bring into formerly independent countries. The former months proved that countries cannot be brought to democracy and free market economy, neither by supporting rulers as Mubarak in Egypt before the Arabian spring nor by violence as against Hussein in Iraq. The future will show if democracy comes up by their own will.^{xix} European or later American involvement upon Near and Middle Eastern countries never led to success. Both spheres went another path, influenced by their own culture and environment. Every time their paths crossed, the encounter led to a clash with a long aftermath. One problem is the misunderstanding between the – and here the problem of definition already is recognizable – religions, ethnics or cultures. Another problem is history itself, making the Muslim world aware of the shift of having been the guardian of a cultural and intellectual most progressive culture and centre of the world before the crusades, losing it afterwards to the west, and people pointing out only the faults and crimes committed by the other side. For Europe the time of the crusades had been the beginning of a real revolution, economically as well as culturally, thanks to the contact with the Oriental world. The Muslims had been pressed hard by all sides. As reaction they backed away and became partially more sensitive and intolerant. The more advanced the remaining world became, the more the Muslims tried to isolate themselves, also from economic and social progress. Later on some states, among them Turkey and Iran tried to go the modern way, endangering their Muslim identity. That development led in Iran under Khomeini to radicalism. Forced westernizing and radical religion alternated.^{xx} Now, in the 3rd millennium, Muslim political and religious leaders often refer to Saladin and the fall of Jerusalem and its re-conquest. From time to time, in people’s opinion Israel is equated with a crusader’s state.^{xxi} The Suez war from the year 1956 reminded on the French and English crusade; and the conflict concerning the control of the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria is like Jerusalem’s confrontation with Damascus. Unfortunately, some people suit action to the polemic words, as the Turkish Mehmet Ali Agca who shot the Pope the 13th may of 1981. He explained his intentions in a letter: “I decided to kill John Paul II., sovereign warlord of the crusaders.” In spite of individual actions, also some Oriental institutions see the west in general as an enemy. Each action against the Western world, politically, militarily and economically, becomes legitimate revenge for humiliation in the past. And, though history should not be forgotten, as long as the former confrontations are kept alive and the former rival is blamed for, the conflict may not be solved!

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ⁱ The Sasanids are also known as Sasanian Empire, Sassanid or Neo-Persian Empire. Annotation by the authors.

ⁱⁱ Ansary 2010, 32.

ⁱⁱⁱ The following Abbasids became more and more raised by rituals, they learned from the Byzantines and Sasanids. In that way those empires, one of them even not existing anymore influenced and changed the Islam. Annotation.

^{iv} Ansary 2010, 89.

^v Azhari 1997, 46.

^{vi} Maalouf 2010⁶, 78.

^{vii} The word crusade („Kreuzzug“) had been introduced by the German philosopher Leibniz in the 17th century, though in some old French sources of the 13th century the word croiserie already had been mentioned. Thorau 2007³, 43.

^{viii} Muhammad flew in a vision from there to heaven, getting a glimpse what awaits a good Muslim. Annotation.

^{ix} Ali 2003, 63.

^x Boas 2001, 39.

^{xi} During Richard's prison his brother John Lackland occupied the throne, losing many privileges for the English crown. Annotation.

^{xii} In Damascus there are two sarcophagi for Saladin. The original one is rather modest; the second was given by the Germans as a gift, when they were looking for allies before the 1st world war. Annotation.

^{xiii} The Quadriga in Venetia reminds on those events. Annotation.

^{xiv} Kössner 2008, 115.

^{xv} Dickson 2000, 67.

^{xvi} In the crusader's eyes they had been allies against the Islam, for the Mongolian ruler in that region – the Il-Khan – even had been a Nestorian Christian. In fact Nestorians were seen as heretics by the Roman church who fled eastwards and did missionary work in the Chinese area, too. Annotation.

^{xvii} Brentjes 2010, 27.

^{xviii} When the Holy Sepulchre once already had been destroyed and Christians persecuted, it must be reduced to the act of one crazy Fatimid caliph, and not to general anti-Christian resentments. Annotation.

^{xix} Upcoming elections or the call for it, are in spite of still active turmoil not sure or again influenced by other forces, as the Muslim brotherhood or Military forces. Annotation.

^{xx} Tahir 2011, 52.

^{xxi} Among the three divisions of the Palestine Liberation Organisation one carries the name Hittin (the place the crusader's army had been defeated), and another one Ain Jalout (where the Mamluk defeated the Mongolian army). Annotation.