Conversion and the Simple
Jack Tannous

in The Making of the Medieval Middle East

This chapter looks at the observation that a person who was actually learned in both his own religious tradition and in the Islamic tradition would never convert for anything other than nontheological reasons. Most Christians and Muslims were not learned in their own religious tradition, much less in that of a rival religion, and will have been ill-equipped or simply unable to discuss and debate religious difference at the level of sophisticated theology in a proper and informed way. For this reason, if when speaking about Christian–Muslim relations, one's focus is on difference at the level of doctrinal theology, one will gain only a distorted understanding of seventh- and eighth-century realities. One will overlook the existence of a layering and continuum of knowledge in the Christian community and fail to take into account the reality that most conversions by Christians to Islam will have been conversions of simple Christians into simple Muslims.

Eastern Approaches
Charlotte A. Quinn and Frederick Quinn

in Pride, Faith and Fear: Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa

From earliest times, Muslims were a visible presence along the Indian Ocean of East Africa, coming from different locations in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and elsewhere. Islam moved inland in Kenya and surrounding countries during the nineteenth century, largely brought by traders. Kenyan Islam is divided along structural, ethnic, personality,
geographical, and doctrinal lines, resulting in a divided community, accounting for perhaps 30% of the population. Despite the influence of Iran and Libya, Kenya has successfully contained radical Islam, especially following the bombing of the American Embassy in Nairobi, but Islamic discontent is unabated since the root causes of societal discontent remain unresolved. The short-lived effort by Shaikh Khalid Balala proved more of an irritant than a threat to the government, which continues to dole out bits of patronage to coastal and Somali Muslims in the country's northeast.

A New Convivencia
Sasha D. Pack

in The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland
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This chapter looks at Spanish administration of northern Morocco after the Rif War. As the physical border between Spain and Morocco disintegrated, Spanish colonial administrators looked for ways to promote “Hispano-Moroccan brotherhood” while preserving religious, social, and sexual boundaries between Moroccan Muslims, Jews, and Spanish settlers. While much scholarship in this area has been dedicated to exposing the Spanish colonial rhetoric of brotherhood to be a ruse, this chapter takes seriously the notion that the Spanish colonial administration attempted to distinguish itself from its French counterpart—even to the point of weakening the positions of the sovereign Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla. It aimed to demonstrate greater respect for local customs and traditions and to elevate the zone’s Muslim “caliph” to the status of sovereign, although in other ways its practices resembled the French model.

The Murderous Sword of the Saracen
Walter D. Ward

in Mirage of the Saracen
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This chapter moves beyond the chronological and geographic parameters of the rest of the book to describe the broader implications of the Christian application of the word “Saracens” to Muslims. Contemporaries of the Muslim invasion, such as the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius, initially did not comprehend that the invasions were launched by followers of a new religion and called them Saracens, thinking that they were just ordinary nomadic raiders. Once it became clear that the Muslim attacks were something different, the term stuck, and some Christians engaged in polemical arguments with tropes previously connected to the pre-Islamic Saracen image. Authors, such as John of Damascus, wrapped these rhetorical descriptions together into a neat package, defining the standard Christian understanding of Islam for centuries. This chapter also examines the transformations of the Sinai after the Muslim conquest, and concludes with a brief discussion of Christian-Muslim relations.

Before the Nation
Nicholas Doumanis

The Greek Christians expelled from Anatolia between 1912 and 1924 often spoke about earlier times when they ‘lived well with the Turks’. They yearned for the days when they worked and drank coffee together, participated in each other’s festivals, and even revered the same saints and miracle-working shrines. Historians have never given serious regard to such oral traditions, given the refugees had been victims of horrific ‘ethnic’ violence that appeared to reflect deep pre-existing animosities. This book considers the rationality of such unlikely nostalgic traditions, which happen to be common among refugees from dismembered multi-ethnic societies. It claims that intercommunality, a mode of everyday living based on the accommodation of cultural difference, normally played a stabilizing function within societies like the Ottoman Empire. Along with a genuine longing for lost homelands, the refugees were nostalgic for moral environments in which religious communities claimed to have lived in accordance with their respective religious and ethical values. Although these traditions depicted worlds that were implausibly pristine, the intention was to counter the dominant but spurious national narrative, which reviled Turks as irredeemable barbarians and dismissed these refugee histories of coexistence as pure fantasy. Drawing largely from an oral archive containing 5,000 interviews, the book investigates the mentalities, cosmologies and value systems of these ordinary Anatolians, and shows how their popular perspectives pose serious challenges to the historiography. The book also examines the role of
political violence in destroying this Ottoman society, and the way it effectively transformed these Anatolians into Greeks and Turks.

Mirage of the Saracen
Walter D. Ward

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The Mirage of the Saracen analyzes the growth of monasticism and Christian settlements in the Sinai Peninsula through the early seventh century CE. It uses a post-colonial lens to examine the ways that Christian monks justified occupying the Sinai through creating associations between Biblical narratives and Sinai sites and assigning uncivilized, negative, and oppositional traits to the indigenous nomadic population, whom the Christians pejoratively called “Saracens.” By writing edifying tales of hostile nomads and the ensuing martyrdom of the monks, not only did the Christians reinforce their claims to the spiritual benefits of asceticism, they also provoked the Roman authorities to enhance the defense of pilgrimage routes to the Sinai. Included in these defenses was the monastery now known as Saint Catherine’s. When Muslim armies later began conquering the Middle East, Christians also labelled these new conquerors as Saracens, connecting Muslims to these pre-Islamic representations. The main sources used in this work are the Sinai Martyr Narratives – Ammonius’s Relatio and Pseudo-Nilus’s Narrationes, though many other literary sources as well as archaeological and anthropological information is used extensively.

The Tunis Crusade of 1270
Michael Lower

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Why did the last of the major European campaigns to reclaim Jerusalem wind up attacking Tunis, a peaceful North African port city thousands of miles from the Holy Land? In the first book-length study of the campaign in English, Michael Lower tells the story of how the classic era of crusading came to such an unexpected end. Unfolding against a backdrop of conflict and collaboration that extended from England to Inner Asia, the Tunis Crusade entangled people from every corner of the Mediterranean world. Within this expansive geographical playing field, the ambitions of four powerful Mediterranean dynasts would collide.
While the slave-boy-turned-sultan Baybars of Egypt and the saint-king Louis IX of France waged a bitter battle for Syria, al-Mustansir of Tunis and Louis’s younger brother Charles of Anjou struggled for control of the Sicilian Straits. When the conflicts over Syria and Sicily became intertwined in the late 1260s, the Tunis Crusade was the shocking result. While the history of the crusades is often told only from the crusaders’ perspective, in The Tunis Crusade of 1270, Lower brings Arabic and European-language sources together to offer a panoramic view of these complex multilateral conflicts. Standing at the intersection of two established bodies of scholarship—European History and Near Eastern Studies—The Tunis Crusade of 1270, contributes to both by opening up a new conversation about the place of crusading in medieval Mediterranean culture.

Islam and the West
David Nirenberg

in Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today
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This chapter sketches two influential and roughly opposed examples of how moderns approach questions about the inter-relation of “Islam” and “the West” (as if each were monolithic), and of the work that the past is asked to do in the construction of our present. It shows how models that posit a history of synthesis or “alliance” between Islam and the West quickly reproduce the “clashes” or oppositions that they pretend to overcome, while bi-polar models that insist on Islam’s exclusion from or irreducible opposition to the triumphs of Europe and the West fare no better. Despite their seeming political differences, this chapter demonstrates that to the extent that these two major modes—clash and alliance, opposition and synthesis—for understanding the Christian West’s relationship to Islam (or Judaism) are equally dialectical, they are equally fantastic, and equally complicit in producing the dangers that they deplore.

Render unto the Sultan
Tom Papademetriou

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The received wisdom about the nature of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire is that Sultan Mehmed II re-established the Patriarchate of Constantinople as both a political and a religious authority to govern the post-Byzantine Greek community. However, relations between the Church hierarchy and Turkish masters extend further back in history, and closer scrutiny of these relations reveals that the Church hierarchy in Anatolia had long experience dealing with Turkish emirs. Decreed as scandalous, these arrangements became the modus vivendi for bishops in the Turkish emirates. Primarily concerned with the economic arrangements between the Ottoman state and the institution of the Greek Orthodox Church from the mid-fifteenth to the sixteenth century, this book argues that the Ottoman state considered the Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy essentially as tax farmers (mültəzim) for cash income derived from the Church’s widespread holdings. The Ottoman state granted individuals the right to take their positions as hierarchs in return for yearly payments to the state. Relying on members of the Greek economic elite (archons) to purchase the ecclesiastical tax farm (ıltızam), hierarchical positions became subject to the same forces of competition that other Ottoman administrative offices faced. This book allows us to consider internal Greek Orthodox communal concerns, but from within the larger Ottoman social and economic context. It challenges the long-established concept of the “millet system,” the historical model in which religious leader served both a civil as well as a religious authority.

Arabic-Islamic Views of the Latin West
Daniel G. König

The study explains how Arabic-Islamic scholars, i.e. Muslim scholars writing in Arabic, portrayed medieval Western or ‘Latin-Christian’ Europe between the seventh and the early fifteenth century. At the end of the period of investigation, Western Europe had not only emerged as a dynamic sphere at the brink of becoming active on a global scale, but also as a discernible though roughly defined and multiple phenomenon in Arabic-Islamic sources. Tracing this double process is the main objective of the present study. Chapter 1 questions previous interpretations of related Arabic-Islamic records that reduce a large and differentiated range of Arabic-Islamic perceptions to a single basic pattern subsumed under the keywords ‘ignorance’, ‘indifference’, and ‘arrogance’. Chapter 2 lists channels of transmission by means of which information on the Latin-Christian sphere reached the Arabic-Islamic sphere. Chapter 3 deals
with the general factors that influenced the reception and presentation of this data at the hands of Arabic-Islamic scholars. Chapters 4 to 8 analyse how these scholars acquired and dealt with information on certain themes, i.e. the western dimension of the Roman Empire, the Visigoths and the Franks, the papacy and, finally, Western Europe in the age of Latin-Christian expansionism. Against this background, Chapter 9 provides a concluding re-evaluation.