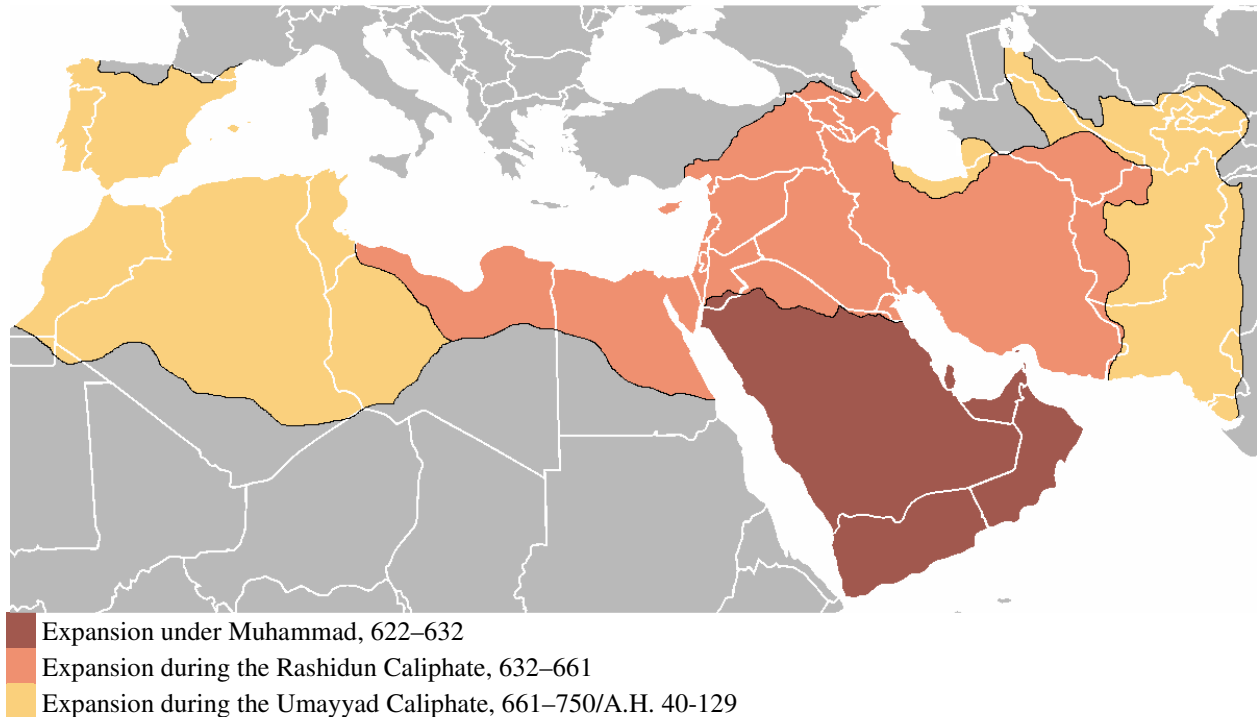


## Islamic Political and Military History



### Muslim Conquests and Attempted Conquests

- 570 AD: Mohammed born.
- 624 AD: Mohammed and three hundred Muslim warriors raid a Meccan caravan, provoking the Battle of Badr; they are victorious despite being outnumbered three to one.
- 624 AD: Mohammed orders the Jews of the Qaynuqa tribe, who dwelt at Medina, to convert to Islam or fight. ‘The unequal conflict was terminated in fifteen days; and it was with extreme reluctance that Mahomet yielded to the importunity of his allies and consented to spare the lives of the captives.’<sup>1</sup> Mohammed then initiates the banishment of Jews from Medina. The following year sees open hostilities between Jewish tribes and Muslims.
- 627 AD: A disputed event: Mohammed presides over the massacre of 600 – 900 men of one Jewish tribe – the Banu Quraiza – for supporting the Meccans against him. Mohammed orders the men to dig a trench for their own grave. He beheads all males over the age of puberty. He enslaves all the women and children, taking one of the most beautiful women for himself. He confiscates all the Jews’ property. This event appears to be recorded in Qur’an 33:26 – 27: ‘And He drove down those of the followers of the Book who backed them from their fortresses and He cast awe into their hearts; some you killed and you took captive another part. And He made you heirs to their land and their dwellings and their property, and (to) a land which you have not yet trodden, and Allah has power over all things.’
- 627 AD: Mohammed then conquers the rich Jewish community of Khaybar – a vast date palm plantation ninety miles south of Medina. On this occasion, Mohammed orders the torture of a Jewish chief to acquire information about the location of his treasures. When the treasure was discovered, Mohammed beheads the leader for trying to conceal the goods. Mohammed, on the same day he has her husband executed, then takes as a slave the wife of the chief, a very beautiful 17 year old woman named Safiyah, to be his eighth wife. Mohammed was then sixty. He takes another Jewish woman for another wife. Large numbers of Jews are taken prisoner and sold. This story is compiled in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by Sahih al-Bukhari in writings that form one of the two pillars of Islamic jurisprudence (Volume 5, Book 59, Number 512). The distribution of booty is described in al-Bukhari Hadiths No.143, page 700.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 50

- 629 AD: Mohammed sends three thousand of his troops north to fight Arabs on Transjordanian soil in the Battle of Mu'tah, where they were defeated.
- 630 AD: Mohammed and his army of ten thousand Muslim men conquer Mecca.
- 632 AD: Mohammed dies. Abu Bakr becomes caliph and wages the Ridda Wars, also called the 'Wars of Apostasy,' against the Arab tribes that rebelled against him. Usama ibn Said leads a force to Northern Arabia and Abu Bakr defends Medina. Some examples include:
  - Musaylima also "recited revelations in rhymed prose" perhaps before Mohammed claimed to have visions. In 631 AD, "Musaylima sent envoys with a message to Muhammed proposing that they share authority." Muhammed replied, "If it were not that enjoys must not be slain I would cut off your heads." He then dictated an angry response to Musaylima "the liar." Shortly before his death, Muhammed sent troops against Musaylima, who was killed in the battle."<sup>2</sup>
  - Al-Aswad al-Ansi rose to power in Yemen towards the end of Muhammed's lifetime. "Like Muhammed he organized an army, conducted raids on caravans and towns, and established a large political base. Muhammed sent a select group of ten of his companions to infiltrate Al-Aswad's court. Having gained the support of one of Al-Aswad's wives (whose previous husband had died opposing Al-Aswad), two of Muhammed's supporters gained access to Al-Aswad's bedroom and stabbed him to death while he slept."<sup>3</sup>
  - A woman named Sajah "gained support of a northern nomadic border tribe that had previously accepted Christianity. She, too, had revelations in rhymed prose. Muhammed died before he could take action against her, but Abu-Bakr crushed her dissenting movement during the Ridda wars. Sajah's fate following the defeat of her army is unknown."<sup>4</sup>
- 633 AD: The first Arab Muslim forces go west and enter Syria; other Arab forces go east and invade the Persian Sassanid Empire.
- 634 – 5 AD: Arab Muslim forces in Syria win a series of battles against Byzantines and take Damascus.
- 636 AD: After the Battle of Yarmouk, Arab Muslims overthrow the Christian rulers of the Ghassanid Kingdom in southern Syria and declare the kingdom Muslim; the Byzantines give up Syria in 636; this is the first military victory of Muslims in the then-Christian Levant (a geographical area made up of present day Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and occasionally Cyprus, Sinai, and part of Iraq).
- 638 AD: Arabs take Jerusalem; mass murders of Christian monks and pilgrims become common.
- 640 AD: Arabs take Caesarea Maritima, a center of early Christianity.
- 640 AD: Arabs invade Armenia, the first Christian kingdom.<sup>5</sup> In 652, the Arabs sign a treaty with Prince Theodoros Rshuni ensuring freedom of religion, but ostigans (special representatives of the Caliph) were sent to govern Armenia. In 705 AD, Caliph Abd al-Malik gives the order to murder all Armenian nobles. Four hundred nobles are trapped in a Christian church building and the whole is set ablaze.
- 641 AD: Arabs invade Egypt and take Cairo.
- 642 AD: Arabs take Alexandria, Egypt and begin to build a fleet.
- 642 – 4 AD: Arab Muslim forces in the Persian Sassanid Empire take the capital city of Ctesiphon and conquer the Sassanid Dynasty.
- 649 AD: Arab navy sets out to capture Mediterranean islands, which were strategically important: Cyprus (653 AD), Rhodes (672 AD), Sardinia (809 AD), Majorca (818 AD), Crete (624 AD), and Malta (835 AD). They attempted to invade Sicily in 652, 667, and 720 and failed.
- 655 AD: Arab navy defeats the Byzantine fleet off the Anatolian coast.
- 672 AD: The Caliph sends fifty thousand Muslim soldiers to siege Constantinople, but the attack fails and the Muslim navy is destroyed.
- 705 AD: Arabs raze Carthage to the ground and kill most of the inhabitants.
- 711 AD: An army of seven to ten thousand Muslims from Morocco led by the Berber Tariq ibn-Ziyad cross the Mediterranean at its narrowest point and initiate the conquest of Spain.
- 712 AD: Arab chieftain Mohammed bin Qasim conquers India to the Indus Valley.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.378

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.378

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.378 – 379

<sup>5</sup> Vahan M. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, Indo-European Publishing: NY, 2008, p.143ff.

- 714 AD: Muslims from Morocco occupy most of Spain to the west. The Umayyad Caliphate stretches from Lisbon, Portugal in the west to the Indus Valley to the east; Caliph Abu'l-Abbas al-Saffah moved the capital of the Muslim Empire from Damascus to Baghdad (called Madina al-Salam, the City of Peace).
- 717 AD: The Muslims try again to conquer Constantinople in greater numbers than in 672, and in as many as eighteen hundred galleys, but fail; only five galleys survive.<sup>6</sup>
- 721 AD: The Muslim governor of Spain, Al-Samh ibn Malik al-Khawlani, leads troops north to Aquitaine in southern Gaul (France), but they lose to Duke Odo of Aquitaine at Toulouse.
- 732 AD: A larger army of Muslims<sup>7</sup> from Spain led by 'Abd-al-Rahman try to take Gaul (France); they come within 150 miles of Paris and are defeated by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours/Poitiers.
- 735 AD: Muslims try to invade Gaul again, and are again defeated by Charles Martel and the Franks.
- 747 AD: 'A tremendous Arab armada consisting of 1,000 donens [galleys] representing the flower of the Syrian and Egyptian naval strength' was defeated by a small Byzantine fleet off the coast of Cyprus and are defeated, leaving only three Arab ships.
- 840 AD: Arabs cross into southern Italy from Sicily and take Taranto and Bari, raze Capua, and occupy Benevento.
- 843 AD: Arabs pillage Rome.
- 846 AD: Arabs pillage Rome a second time, loot famous churches, and force the pope to pay a huge tribute.
- 902 AD: Arab navy finally succeeds in conquering all of Sicily.

#### Political Treatment of Non-Muslims

- Arabia, 624 AD: Mohammed orders the Jews of the Qaynuqa tribe, who dwelt at Medina, to convert to Islam or fight. 'The unequal conflict was terminated in fifteen days; and it was with extreme reluctance that Mahomet yielded to the importunity of his allies and consented to spare the lives of the captives.'<sup>8</sup> Mohammed then initiates the banishment of Jews from Medina. The following year sees open hostilities between Jewish tribes and Muslims.
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- Arabia, 638 AD: Caliph Umar, the second Caliph, expels all Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula, allowing them to settle in Syria or Iraq. He forbids non-Muslims from residing in the Hejaz (the west coast of present day Saudi Arabia, including Mecca and Medina) for more than three days.

<sup>6</sup> Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (Harper One: New York, 2009) p.39 quoting Paul K. Davis, *100 Decisive Battles from Ancient Times to the Present* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2001)

<sup>7</sup> estimates range from Victor Davis Hanson's thirty thousand to Paul K. Davis' eighty thousand to Muslim sources claiming hundreds of thousands

<sup>8</sup> Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter 50

- Palestine,<sup>9</sup> early 700's AD: The Muslim governor of Caesura executes seventy Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem from Asia Minor, except for seven who convert to Islam; shortly thereafter sixty pilgrims, also from Asia Minor, are crucified in Jerusalem.
- Palestine, late 700's AD: Muslims attack the Monastery of Saint Theodosius near Bethlehem, slaughter the monks, and destroy two nearby church buildings.
- Palestine, 796 AD: Muslims burn to death twenty monks from the Monastery of Mar Saba.
- Palestine, 809 AD: Muslims conduct multiple attacks on many churches, convents, and monasteries in and around Jerusalem, involving mass rapes and murders.
- Palestine, 813 AD: Muslims renew the attacks from 809 AD.
- Palestine, 923 AD: On Palm Sunday, Muslims carry out a new wave of violence, destroying church buildings and killing many Christians
- Spain, 800's AD: Persecution and outbreaks of violence against Jews.<sup>10</sup>
- Spain, 900's and 1000's AD: Antisemitic propaganda "made Jews out to be untrustworthy, treacherous oppressors, and exploiters of Muslims." This propaganda "inspired outbreaks of violence and caused many casualties in Egypt." An eleventh century Moorish poem describes Jews as "a criminal people" and alleges that "society is nearing collapse on account of Jewish wealth and domination, their exploitation and betrayal of Muslims; that Jews worship the devil, physicians poison their patients, and Jews poison food and water as required by Judaism, and so on."<sup>11</sup>
- Spain, 1011 AD: In Moorish Spain, a Muslim pogrom against Jews occurs in Cordoba.
- Spain, 1032 – 1033 AD: In Morocco, Muslims kill more than six thousand Jews en masse.<sup>12</sup>
- Spain, 1066 AD: In Moorish Spain, Muslims murder 4,000 Jews in the Grenada massacre because the Jews had become wealthy and advanced to some positions of power.
- Spain, 1090 AD: In Moorish Spain, Almoravid (Berber) Muslims murder several thousand more Jews in Granada.
- Spain, 1148 AD: In Moorish Spain, all Christians and Jews are ordered to convert to Islam or leave Spain immediately, on pain of death; the rabbinical scholar Moses Maimonides (1135 – 1204) pretends to convert and lives in fear of being found out.
- Cyprus, 1570 AD: Muslims kill tens of thousands of Christian civilians on Cyprus.<sup>13</sup>

"But even when banishment or murder were not in the offing, Jews and Christians in Muslim societies were placed under severe restrictions and highly stigmatized. As the remarkable historian of Islam Marshall G. S. Hodgson (1922 – 1968) pointed out, from very early times Muslim authorities often went to great lengths to humiliate and punish dhimmis – these being Jews and Christians who refuse to convert to Islam. It was official policy that dhimmis should "feel inferior and to know 'their place' ... [imposing such laws as] that Christians and Jews should not ride horses, for instance, but at most mules, or even that they should wear certain marks of their religion on their costume when among Muslims." In other places non-Muslims were prohibited from wearing clothing similar to that of Muslims, nor could they be armed. In addition, non-Muslims were invariably severely taxed compared with Muslims."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Moshe Gil, *History of Palestine, 634 - 1099*

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Schweitzer and Marvin Parry, *Anti-Semitism: myth and hate from antiquity to the present*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p.267-268

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.267-268

<sup>12</sup> Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (Harper One: New York, 2009) p.29

<sup>13</sup> Stark, *God's Battalions*, p.29 quoting Capponi 2006

<sup>14</sup> Rodney Stark, *Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief*, HarperOne, p.377