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Pirenne Again: A Muslim Viewpoint

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WHAT IS KNOWN TO TEACHERS of western history as the “Pirenne Thesis” lives on in textbooks and other literature although often disputed, and some might say disproved. Briefly, the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne argued, in his 1937 book *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, that the view of European historians that the Western Roman Empire collapsed in the fourth century because of the invasion of Germanic peoples was largely wrong. Rather, it was the Islamic conquest of the seventh century which, by breaking down Mediterranean unity, cut Europe off from antiquity, enabling the rise of the Carolingians and the beginnings of a distinctive “Western” history. I will offer some examples of the persistence of this thesis, outline it more fully and sketch its present status, and then offer evidence from a Muslim source which further challenges it.¹ Because Muslims are major players in Pirenne’s thesis, their evidence ought to be more widely considered. There has been a relative lack of attention by western historians to Islamic sources in the Pirenne debate, probably because of a lack of acquaintance with such sources.²

To illustrate the persistence of the thesis I note that the latest edition of the undergraduate history survey by Kagan, Ozment, and Turner promotes Pirenne’s ideas that the Mediterranean was transformed by the early Arab conquests into an “Islamic Lake”; that Arabs considerably reduced Western navigation and trade in the Mediterranean; and that populations in great

numbers in western Europe therefore had to switch from trade-related work in cities to feudal agriculture in the interior.³ In another example, Lerner, Meacham, and Burns' survey of Western Civilization, now in its eleventh edition, recognizes that the Pirenne thesis is "no longer widely accepted" but recommends its study by students and upholds its themes:

When the Arabs conquered the southern Mediterranean shore and took to the sea in the seventh century, northwestern Europe was finally thrown back upon itself and forced to look away from the Mediterranean.⁴

Even in Charles Kimball's recent study of Christian-Muslim relations, which pleads for respect for Muslim points of view, the same use of Pirenne arises. Muslims "disrupted the unity of the Mediterranean world and displaced the axis of Christendom to the North."⁵

Outline and Status of the Pirenne Thesis

Using the available economic, social, and linguistic evidence, Pirenne asserted that the institutional western Roman Empire was actually perpetuated by the invading Germanic peoples. Far from deliberately destroying classical Roman culture, they admired and maintained its essential features. The trading unity of the entire Mediterranean was preserved with its concomitant unity of language and ideas. Constantinople was the power center of Mediterranean unity, and the "Byzantinization" of the West was underway by 600 CE in Pirenne's opinion.

The Islamic conquests in the Mediterranean basin were identified by Pirenne as the true cause of the dissolution of the western Roman Empire. He said that Muslims halted trade between the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire and that areas governed by Germanic rulers who did not submit to Islamic rule were cut off from the eastern Mediterranean, as was Gaul. Westerners who resisted were blockaded by the Muslims and forced to live on their own resources. Such developments sealed the disappearance in Gaul of the Romanic, Mediterranean-oriented Merovingians and enabled the rise of the Carolingians with their more northern capital at Aachen, their more Germanic orientation, and their feudal vassalage. The western Mediterranean became a "Muslim lake." The Pope in Rome eventually found relations with the Emperor in Constantinople too arduous to sustain in view of Islamic strength. He therefore turned to the Carolingians for protection and alliance. Christian administrators and their institutions were welcomed in the new and unfolding structures of the Carolingians. Pirenne believed that this developmental phase, when antiquity disappeared and European feudalism surfaced, took place roughly during 650 to 750 CE at the time of the Islamic conquests. At Rome on Christmas Day in

800 CE, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Emperor, leading Pirenne to assert boldly, "It is therefore strictly correct to say that without Mohammed Charlemagne would have been inconceivable."⁶ This striking and often quoted passage has turned out to be not so strictly correct.

Historians have scrutinized Pirenne's thesis from a variety of perspectives. Alfred Havighurst's collection of critical essays went through three revised editions. Although in Pirenne's time the scarcity of evidence from the years 400-800 CE made conclusions problematic, it has been possible for scholars since then to refute his thesis in many particulars and to weaken, revise, or even discard it. Critics claim first that there are explanations other than the Islamic conquests for the disappearance in Gaul of imported goods from the East. Second, in the Islamic tradition there has been no blanket prohibition on trade with non-Muslims. Third, the Carolingians carried on appreciable foreign trade, but it was in a northerly direction. Fourth, there are a variety of plausible reasons other than Arab disruption why the Carolingians abandoned Roman gold coinage and switched to silver. Finally, Hodges and Whitehouse, handling archeological evidence, place the final degradation of Rome in the sixth century, so that before the Arabs arrived, conditions in the western Mediterranean bore little resemblance to those in the second century.⁷

A search through the literature shows that Hodges and Whitehouse, who published in 1983, have had the last word. Scholars have not issued anything in English on the Pirenne Thesis since then. This dearth may mean that the conclusions from the new archeological evidence of researchers such as Hodges and Whitehouse cannot be refuted. However, my study of an Islamic source shows a further criticism of the Pirenne Thesis: on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and Spain between 650 and 750 CE, Muslims conquered with horsemen, were not seafaring in this part of the Mediterranean, and found no vital, unified trading network or institutions to depredate.

Description of an Islamic Source: al-Balādhuri

Current evidence for economic activity in the central and western Mediterranean during the years 650-800 CE is meager on the Islamic side. Primary documents in English are difficult to locate, and much research on documents remains to be done before scholars can judge this period more confidently. An early Islamic historian of the Arab conquests is Aḥmad al-Balādhuri (d. 892 CE), a native of Baghdad.⁸ His eminent history, *The Origins of the Islamic State* ("Futūḥ al-Buldān"; literally, "Conquests of the Lands"), is an important source for many later Muslim geographers and historians of the Arab conquests. In addition, al-Balādhuri is said to have travelled from Iraq to visit the provinces about whose conquests he wrote.

The writing style of al-Balādhuri's "Futūḥ" seems unfamiliar to someone accustomed only to traditional western historiography. Instead of the usual western linear narrative reflecting one point of view, al-Balādhuri's method is to sift and select among available reports and then order them. One type of report is explicitly prefaced by the names of a chain of oral reporters representing the path of transmission of that particular text. Al-Balādhuri is typically third in line for such reports about the early Islamic conquests. His second type of report is not attested, and he often strings these together to form a short narrative on the lines of western historiography. Al-Balādhuri frequently relays without comment or resolution reports that conflict with one another. His style is to present a balanced but critical image of events instead of merely his personal judgment.¹⁰ Thus it is not strictly correct to oppose al-Balādhuri's "view" with that of Pirenne, for al-Balādhuri offers a diversity of views. What I have done is to mine al-Balādhuri's history for whatever evidence is germane to Pirenne's thesis.

What follows is the result of my investigation of pages 335-375 of al-Balādhuri's history. This section is the only part that concerns Egypt, North Africa, Spain, and Sicily. It covers the period from 640 CE through the reign of the 'Abbāsīd caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd, ca. 800 CE, the period during which Pirenne claimed the Arabs destroyed the western Roman Empire and enabled the emergence of Charlemagne's kingdom. Al-Balādhuri provides dates either according to the reigning caliph or according to the Islamic calendar (AH).

Al-Balādhuri writes that a Muslim commander, 'Amr ibn-al-'Āṣ,¹¹ sallied forth from Caesarea in Palestine with 3,500 soldiers in 19 AH (640 CE) and effected the first invasion of Egypt. He conquered al-Fuṣṭāṭ (part of present-day Cairo) and made his headquarters there as governor.¹² He was responsible to the caliph 'Umar in Medina. Al-Balādhuri's reports differ about whether 'Umar ordered 'Amr to invade Egypt or wanted to restrain 'Amr from doing so. After the victory at al-Fuṣṭāṭ, 'Amr established material proof of subjection by levying a head-tax on all non-Muslims and a tax on their land. He also parcelled out plots of their land to the conquerors.¹³

After seeking permission from 'Umar, 'Amr embarked on the conquest of the major coastal city of Alexandria in 21 AH (641 CE). He took the city by force, plundered it, forwarded one-fifth of the booty to Medina, and set a head tax on everyone. There is no mention of what the city meant to the Muslims apart from the spoils and the taxes. In particular, there is no mention of Alexandria's economic importance, if any. 'Amr simply appointed a governor and returned to al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Heraclius, "The Chief of the Greeks" (reigned 610-641 CE), dispatched troops by sea to Alexandria. They re-took the city and its surrounding villages. In 26 AH (646 CE), during

the caliphate of 'Uthman, 'Amr headed north with his army and captured Alexandria a second time, although his headquarters remained at al-Fuṣṭāṭ. If Alexandria had been a thriving mercantile center involved in significant trade with all parts of the Mediterranean, then conceivably 'Amr would have remained on the spot from the beginning to oversee and exploit the wealth.¹⁴

Among the early conquerors that al-Balādhuri describes in this part of his history, 'Amr alone seemed to have had some sense that there was benefit in cultivating commerce and promoting productivity among those he vanquished. In one instance, he refused to mete out newly won Egyptian land to the Muslim invaders. He wrote to 'Umar, "Leave it as it is, so that the descendants of the descendants may profit by it."¹⁵ In another instance, 'Uthmān noticed that his relative, 'Abdallāh ibn-Sa'd, whom he appointed as governor of Egypt, could raise double the taxes from the Egyptians that 'Amr had been remitting to Medina. 'Uthmān then declared to 'Amr, "After thee the milch camels have yielded more milk." 'Amr replied, "This is because ye have emaciated their young."¹⁶

Taxes on the Egyptians were expected to be paid in cash, in dinars, but they were also collected in the form of food that was shipped to Medina: wheat, oil, honey, and vinegar are specifically mentioned.¹⁷ Oil and Gaza wine were two items whose disappearance from western Europe after 700 CE was cited by Pirenne in support of his thesis. However, there is no suggestion in al-Balādhuri that the Muslim rulers were diverting these Egyptian foodstuffs from an export trade.

Before his re-conquest of Alexandria, 'Amr had raided westward along the coast of North Africa. He prevailed against the coastal towns of Barḳah¹⁸ and Zawīlah.¹⁹ The area, al-Maghrib, was fertile land. 'Amr assessed the residents of Zawīla an amount of tax that "he saw would be tolerated by them."²⁰ The inhabitants of al-Maghrib, whom the Arabs called "Berbers," consisted of sedentary farmers, probably Christian. They lived in settlements near the coast, but there were also nomadic groups farther inland.²¹ 'Amr is reported reckoning Berber slave women or children as forms of payment of the poll-tax. Some Arabs must have been seizing Berber women for slaves or wives because 'Umar wrote an order forbidding this practice: Muslims who wished to marry Berber women had to do so legally and by correct custom.²² 'Umar's prohibition can be construed as evidence of the Islamic state's desire to respect rather than disrupt the lives of local people in the conquered territories.

'Amr then advanced to Aṭrābulus,²³ seized it, and carried away its merchants' silk brocade. The silk must have originated from east of the Mediterranean, but al-Balādhuri's reports contain no suggestion of any maritime trade, whether in silk or other products. 'Amr then asked

permission from 'Umar to advance to Ifrīkiyah²⁴ (Carthage/Tunis). 'Umar refused, claiming that the inhabitants were known for their treachery in not paying tribute. One of al-Balādhuri's reports claims that 'Amr proceeded anyway and took Ifrīkiyah by capitulation. Other reports state that the new caliph 'Uthmān dispatched not 'Amr but 'Uthmān's relative 'Abdallāh on a raid with horsemen against Ifrīkiyah and that the area was taken by force. The upper classes bribed the invaders with gold to quit their region, which they did. Again there is no mention of commercial activities or the invaders' interest in any such thing.

The Muslims returned and captured Ifrīkiyah about twenty years later in the time of the Umayyad²⁵ caliph Mu'āwīyah (ruled 661-680 CE) of Damascus. On this occasion the military commander parcelled out Ifrīkiyah to the victorious Muslims and built a new city, al-Kairawān, near a silver mine south of Ifrīkiyah. The silver mine must have been a singular attraction because otherwise the site of al-Kairawān was "a thicket covered with tamarisk and other trees and which nobody could attempt because of the beasts, snakes, and deadly scorpions."²⁶ It is notable that the Muslim victors would build a new city in a pestiferous area and not find it more attractive simply to remain in the Carthage/Tunis enclave. If, contrary to Pirenne's claim, there were no Mediterranean trade or activity of any scale in that region to be exploited, then it would make sense that the acquisitive Muslims would fasten on a silver mine instead.

The invasions of Sicily were undertaken during the caliphate of Mu'āwīyah. Apparently a lengthy, troublesome process was involved because at the time of his writing 150 years later, al-Balādhuri states that twenty of its cities "are still in the hands of the Moslems." The only booty he mentions is "idols of gold and silver studded with pearls."²⁷ There is no record of how these raiders reached Sicily or from where; or of any mercantile activity the Muslims coveted, disrupted, or with which they interfered.

In the year 89 AH (707 CE), the governor of Ifrīkiyah, Mūsa ibn-Nuṣair,²⁸ struck out westward with his horsemen and occupied Ṭanjah.²⁹ The distance covered was roughly 1,000 miles, in the space of which Mūsa apparently encountered no opposition. According to the previous practice in North Africa, he distributed plots of land in Ṭanjah to the Muslim victors and set taxes. Before returning to Ifrīkiyah, Mūsa appointed Ṭāriḳ ibn-Ziyād as governor. Three years later in 92 AH (710 CE), Ṭāriḳ arranged to use the ships of a certain Ulyān, the commander of the Straits of Gibraltar, to cross into Andalusia with his horsemen.³⁰ Mūsa reprimanded Ṭāriḳ in a manner reminiscent of the 'Umar/'Amr friction for acting without orders and for risking Muslim lives. After establishing headquarters at Cordova, Ṭāriḳ conquered the Christians' capital, Ṭulaitūlah.³¹ Al-Balādhuri records

his only booty to be a wonderful table which, in 96 AH (714 CE), was offered to the caliph 'Abd-al-Malik in Damascus.³² There again is no sense that Ṭārik smashed a unified and vital commercial network nor that he was seeking local control of such trading operations. He himself was without ships.

For the next century there were incessant problems of political unrest in the conquered territories of North Africa and Spain. The Muslim garrisons of North Africa rebelled against one another, against the Umayyads at Damascus, and later against the 'Abbāsids at Baghdad. Al-Balādhuri records chronic assassinations, intrigue, and uprisings throughout these frontier regions. Both local inhabitants and Muslim troops themselves frequently revolted against the garrison governors. Such conditions are hardly conducive to sustaining or establishing long-distance, maritime trading networks.

At this stage al-Balādhuri's history breaks off. One general assessment of the situation at this point comes from the noted Islamicist Marshall G.S. Hodgson who indicates that at the beginning of the ninth century CE, there was anything but unity in the western Islamic areas. Spain was ruled by separatist Umayyads, the Tangier area by the Idrīsids, and Ifrīkiyah by the Aghlabids, with the Rustamids sandwiched between the latter two rivals. Egypt was under 'Abbāsīd control from Baghdad. The western groups did not take orders from the 'Abbāsīds but set their own laws and policies.³³

Inferences Relevant to the Pirenne Thesis

The impression from al-Balādhuri's history first of all is that Egypt, North Africa, and Spain in the first two Islamic centuries were a frontier backwater. Al-Balādhuri devotes only forty pages out of 750, or six percent of his book, to this geographic area. In describing the conquest of Barḡah, he quotes the son of 'Amr as saying, "Had it not been for my possessions in al-Hijaz (western Arabia), I would live in Barḡah, because I know of no place that is more safe or isolated than it."³⁴ Medina, then Damascus, and finally Baghdad were the centers of the Islamic world in the time frame under discussion. Outlying areas in the Maghrib were brought into the Islamic orbit not because they were wealthy or attractive to the caliphate but apparently because they offered easy opportunities for land-grabbing by adventurous, semi-independent chiefs like 'Amr and Ṭārik.

Second, the conquerors reflected a warrior culture bent on extending their lordship of the land and on winning booty for themselves and their empire. It seems that the pickings were skimpy. All that Ṭārik netted from Spain that could be reported was a table. Sicily yielded some gold and silver figurines decorated with pearls. The wealthiest area may have been

Ifrikiyah, where there was some silk, gold, and a silver mine. These early conquerors appeared indifferent to trade; instead of capitalizing on and developing Tunis/Carthage as a trading area, they founded the inland city al-Ḳairawan instead. They showed no interest in establishing a common religion, language, or law among the subjugated peoples. They were not intent on disruption of what they conquered but only on obtaining ruling control, riches, and perhaps slaves.³⁵ Moreover, there seemed nothing in terms of a unified, vital, or profitable maritime or commercial life in North Africa and Spain that appeared worth milking. Al-Balādhuri's failure to mention an active Mediterranean commercial life of course does not deny its existence. Still, if it did exist, it should have surfaced in some way in these narratives of conquerors enriching themselves and the Islamic state.

Third, a few raiding horsemen could traverse vast distances into North Africa and Spain with next to no opposition. The Arab invaders found the disparate isolated towns succumbing quickly to them. Except for Sicily, the Arabs did not require a fleet to effect the conquests described by al-Balādhuri. Tāriḳ had to commandeer local ships to cross the Straits of Gibraltar. The picture is like the one painted by Hodges and Whitehouse, who talk about a "generalized demographic decline"³⁶ having occurred in the West.

Conclusions

Any evaluation of Pirenne's Thesis from a Muslim point of view must depend upon components from sources such as al-Balādhuri, and al-Balādhuri's contribution cannot validate Pirenne's claim that Muslims disrupted a unified network of Mediterranean commercial activity. Between 650 and 800 CE, significant East-West trade in the Mediterranean did not exist. The accumulating evidence supports the view that after 400 CE, the western Mediterranean entered a long period of gradual disintegration of central Roman institutions. Pirenne himself admits that unified political control had crumbled and that culture, the arts, literature, and science were all in regression; there was pessimism and discouragement.³⁷ The Arabs took advantage and penetrated these poor, provincial, fragmented areas, but there seemed hardly anything in North Africa or Spain of a profitable nature to be exploited. They deemed the area a backwater. Instead of claiming that Arab invaders had shattered an enduring Roman mercantile unity, as Pirenne does, it is more accurate to conclude that the commercial infrastructure and trading facilities of the Roman Empire had disintegrated on the one hand and had yet to be reconstituted by any stable, unified power on the other. During this period in the western Mediterranean areas, Muslims were fighting on land as much with themselves as with the

conquered peoples. Pirenne's portrayal of a monolithic Islamic power repelling Christians northward from the Mediterranean is difficult to accept. The Carolingians, who, like the Muslims, had no western Mediterranean fleet, could procure what they wanted from Byzantium through Italy or the North Sea.³⁸ The triumphant Muslim warrior class was uninterested in the humdrum arts of Mediterranean commerce. Perhaps Charlemagne shared this trait in common with them.

What does it say about western historiography that Pirenne's thesis endures as it does while a quantity of evidence has been marshalled against it? A possible clue lies in Bruce Lyon's 1972 statement that he finds no thesis more credible or convincing on the enigma of the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the Middle Ages.³⁹ The evidence against the Pirenne Thesis implies that there was no single "ancient world" to be conquered by the Muslims; that is, there was no enigma to begin with. Decay from within is a part of human institutional and political existence as much to be expected as the flowering of the same institutions. Such a view is problematic to those who see human history and destiny in linear or developmental terms in which all change occurs because of power struggles, and the stronger survivor dictates the new terms.

Like Pirenne, there are those who judge the appearance of the Greco-Roman world as a valuable "forward step" and its disappearance in the West as an unsettling "backward step" that must be explained by invoking an outside power as the cause. I prefer instead to draw the more sober lesson that every socio-political structure contains the seeds of its own inevitable ruin as well as of its own potential genius. No stronger alien power needs to be blamed in every case for causing cultural, political, social, and economic disintegration. In spite of such observations, what I appreciate about Pirenne is something that he and his supporters had perhaps not intended: namely, to remind us that the history of the West must be seen in global perspective, alongside the history of the Arabs and the Byzantines.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Dr. Lori Anne Ferrell of the School of Theology at Claremont, California, and to Dr. Carl Ernst, recently of Pomona College, California, and now at the University of North Carolina, for their advice and encouragement in the preparation of this article. I am solely responsible for the opinions and/or errors which it contains.

2. The Havighurst editions contain only two treatments of the Pirenne Thesis that utilize an Islamic source or point of view to any degree. Both essays are from the 1940s. An

examination of the original versions of these essays shows that Robert S. Lopez looked at al-Balādhuri, among others, to draw conclusions against Pirenne based on numismatic inscriptions and commerce in papyrus. Daniel C. Dennett, Jr., devoted about one third of his 1948 essay to argue that the Arabs had no fleet in the seventh and eighth centuries CE, and therefore the Mediterranean was hardly a “Muslim lake.” However, Dennett relied on secondary works by orientologists. Richard N. Frye wrote in a posthumous note to Dennett’s study that “we must wait for the specialist in Islamic history to obtain a complete critique of the theses of the Belgian scholar” (Dennett, p. 165). No such critique in English has been issued since Frye’s call.

3. Kagan, Ozment, and Turner, pp. 204;216. These authors consciously advance Pirenne’s ideas. In their recommended further reading on p. 247, they list Pirenne’s *History of Europe, I*, as presenting “controversial views on the demise of western trade and cities in the Early Middle Ages.” They also recommend Havighurst’s collection of essays for its “scholarly debate over the extent of western trade in the East during the Middle Ages.”

4. Lerner, Meacham, and Burns, p. 280. The Pirenne recommendation is on p. 290.

5. Kimball, p. 38.

6. Pirenne, p. 234.

7. Hodges and Whitehouse, pp. 52, 53.

8. His full name is Ahmad ibn Yayhā ibn Jābir al-Balādhuri. He is said to have died mentally deranged as a result of drinking the juice of the “anacardia” (balādhur), which resulted in the name by which he is known. Al-Balādhuri, Introduction, p. 6; EI¹, “al-Balādhuri.” The anacardaceae include the cashews, mangoes, pistachioes, and sumacs.

9. English transliterations of the Arabic are reproduced here from the English version of al-Balādhuri’s history. In cases where these transliterations significantly do not match the standard of EI¹, EI², or equivalents likely to be encountered by the modern reader of English, an alternative is supplied.

10. Al-Balādhuri’s history of the Islamic conquests occupies a significant place in the development of Islamic historiography. At the time of his writing he had available to him the scholarly collectings known as the “maghāzī” (accounts of the military expeditions of the Prophet Muhammad) and the “siyar” (biographical materials on the Prophet), both of which resulted from carefully constructed schemes of attestation and verification. He also had the works of the “akhbārīyūn,” those who narrated historical episodes of early Islam. It is these two styles, that of the attested report and the narrative report, that al-Balādhuri used when composing his own history. Al-Balādhuri’s history was esteemed by his tradition precisely because of his trustworthiness in presenting those accounts which varied from one another at critical points and because he presented impartial versions of controversial episodes. Duri, Ch. 1, especially pp. 60-64 and 72-75; EI¹, “siyar”; EI², “maghāzī,” “akhbārī.”

11. EI² gives ‘Amr ibn-al-‘Ās as the main variant.

12. What ‘Amr apparently captured was a Greco-Coptic fortified point at Babalyon on the border between upper and lower Egypt. It was guarding a passage on the Nile River. He established himself there as governor of Egypt, essentially founding the first Muslim city in Egypt, al-Fustat. EI², “al-Fuṣṭāṭ”; “Bābalyūn.”

13. Qur’ān 9:29 refers to a tax that all non-Muslims must pay. In the first century of the Islamic conquests, the dominated peoples were thus required to pay taxes, although these varied in nature from one region to another between a head tax (poll tax), a land tax, a communal tax, or some combination of these types. EI², “djizya.”

14. Alexandria (EI² = al-Iskandariyya) was in a period of decline when the Arabs arrived. One of its two harbors was not in use in the early European Middle Ages. It did not again attain fame as a great commercial port until the twelfth century CE. EI², “al-Iskandariyya.”

15. Al-Balādhuri, p. 337.

16. Ibid., p. 340.

17. Ibid., p. 338.
18. EI² = Barka. This is the modern al-Marǧj (al-Marj/Barce) in ancient Cyrenaica/modern Libya.
19. = Az-Zawiyah(?), near Tripoli, Libya.
20. Al-Balādhuri, p. 353.
21. Lapidus, p. 368.
22. Al-Balādhuri, p. 354.
23. EI² = Tarābulus, modern Tripoli.
24. EI² drops the final "h." Note the homonymic "Africa."
25. EI² = Umayyad.
26. Al-Balādhuri, pp. 358, 359. Other historians have documented substantial strategic reasons not given by al-Balādhuri for settling al-Ḳairawān, protected as it was from coastal towns. EI², "al-Ḳayrawān."
27. Al-Balādhuri, p. 375.
28. EI² = Mūsā ibn-Nuṣayr.
29. EI² = Ṭandja, modern Tangier.
30. Ulyān = Julian. A more legendary narrative of the conquest of Spain given by a contemporary of al-Balādhuri, Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam (798-871 CE), offers details concerning Ulyān's motives in arranging for Ṭarīḳ to cross the straits into Spain. These have to do with Ulyān's desire for revenge on Rodrigo, the ruler of Spain, for making Ulyān's daughter pregnant, Lewis, pp. 110-118; EI², "Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam."
31. EI² = Tulaytila, modern Toledo.
32. Al-Hakam's somewhat legendary narrative elaborates on this tale, which was said to have belonged to Solomon the son of David and was adorned with gold and jewels. Al-Hakam, who was more of a legal scholar than a historian, highlights the enmity that existed between Ṭarīḳ and Mūsā. This tale played a role in establishing exactly which one should be given credit in the caliph's eyes for conquering Spain. It is a mark of al-Balādhuri's more impartial and less lurid historiography that he does not include al-Hakam's type of legendary material. Lewis, pp. 113-120.
33. Hodgson, pp. 308-312.
34. Al-Balādhuri, pp. 352, 353.
35. This picture can be compared with Greek writings of the same period, which portray the Arabs as barbarians and their conquests as a divine chastisement of Christians for their sins. Constantelos, pp. 327, 350.
36. Hodges and Whitehouse, p. 53.
37. Pirenne, pp. 44, 45; 118.
38. Havighurst, Map No. 2, p. xxvii. Map No. 1, p. xxvi, is misleading with regard to Abbasid control of North Africa. Hodgson's map on p. 293 or Lapidus' Map 14 on p. 369 should be consulted.
39. Lyon, p. 87.

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- Hodgson, Marshall G.S. *The Venture of Islam*. Vol1: *The Classical Age of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
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- Lopez, Robert S. "Muhammad and Charlemagne: A Revision." *Speculum* 18 (Jan.-1943):14-38.
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- Lewis, Bernard, ed. and tr. *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*. Vol. 1: *Politics and War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
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- Pirenne, Henri. *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. Tr. by Bernard Miall from the 10th French ed. London: Bradford&Dickens, 1939.

Recommended Further Reading

The following annotated reading list is for non-specialists in Islamic history who would like to pursue the study of early Islamic conquests in the Mediterranean from a Muslim viewpoint.

- Bacharach, Jere L. *A Middle East Studies Handbook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. An outstanding reference work for Islamic history consisting of charts, genealogical trees and lists, chronologies, historical maps, bibliographies, glossary, notes on transliteration systems and Islamic names, and more. Available in paperback.
- Denny, Frederick. *An Introduction to Islam*. New York: Macmillan, 1985. For westerners wishing an introduction to Islamic history at the undergraduate level. Available in paperback.
- Donner, Fred M. *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. A specialized but masterful study of the conquests of Arabia, Syria, and Iraq.

Hodgson, Marshall G.S. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974. A magisterial and authoritative treatment of Islam's place and meaning in world history. Assumes a minimal introductory knowledge. Available in paperback in three volumes.

Jandora, John W. *The March from Medina: A Revisionist Study of the Arab Conquests*. Clifton, NJ: Kingston, 1990. Jandora disputes the legends that the success of early Islamic conquests revolved around a galvanizing religious influence or a supposed mystique of the bedouin warrior. His analysis rests on military grounds.