1 Islam across the Oxus (Seventh to Seventeenth Centuries)

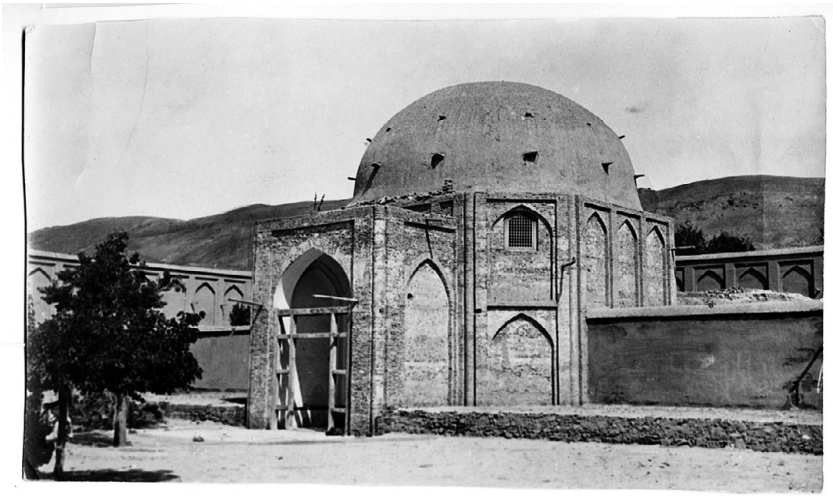

Figure 1.1 The mausoleum of Mahmood of Ghazni (Ghazna, Afghanistan).
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No Muslim conqueror passed beyond the frontier of Kabul and the river Sindh until the days of the Turks, when they seized the power of Ghazna under the Samani[d] dynasty, and the supreme power fell to the lot of Nasir-addaula Sabuktagin [Sebuk Tegin]. The prince chose the holy war as his calling, and therefore called himself *al-ghazi* (i.e. *warring on the road of Allah*). In the interest of his successors he constructed, in order to weaken the Indian frontier, those roads on which afterwards his son Yamin-addaula Mahmud marched into India during a period of thirty years and more. God be merciful to both father and son! Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there

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> wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims.[1]

Al-Biruni (973–1025) was an Uzbek scholar known for his writings on geography, anthropology, astronomy, mathematics, and more. And it was to collect detailed knowledge of the ways of the Hindus that he had been sent to India by Mahmud (d. 1030), the ruler of Ghazni. He obviously had no words of praise for his patron, whom he thought would need God's mercy to redeem his actions. Mahmud, enshrined in the mausoleum pictured here (Figure 1.1), was the son of a slave soldier (*ghulam*) from Kyrgyzstan – the Sebuk Tegin of al-Biruni's text – whom, after rising in the ranks of the Samanid army, eventually settled in the Afghan town of Ghazna, at the time a minor commercial and agricultural center between Kabul and Kandahar. "Mahmud of Ghazni" would go on to establish a semi-independent Turkic dynasty, the Ghaznavids (977–1186).

Afghanistan was not a unique case: as the Abbasid Empire continued to expand, its central authority weakened, leading to a loose imperial structure and the emergence of local dynasties across Asia. Since the ninth and tenth centuries, local rulers paid tribute to the Abbasid Caliph by dedicating to him the Friday congregational prayer sermon (*khutba*), by minting the Empire's coins, and by sending to Baghdad slaves captured during raids on Turkic territories. These slaves were then (sometimes forcibly) converted to Islam and absorbed by the Abbasid army as soldiers; some succeeded in rising through the ranks and reached political-military power, as Mahmud's father did. While paying allegiance to the Abbasids, these new dynasties also sought to conquer as much territory as possible, in their own drive to obtain more resources. In the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Islamized Turkic dynasties descended from slave soldiers ruled over the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent as well as much of Central Asia and "Western China" (i.e. the "Tarim Basin").

Under Mahmud I, the Ghaznavids gained control of Afghanistan, eastern Persia (Iran), and northern India, asserting Sunni Islam's hegemony *vis-à-vis* the growing influence of Shi'ism in Persia and Egypt. But in fact, the discourse on *jihad* as a theologically justified war against infidels and heretics had emerged as an expedient to further the political and territorial dominion of the 'Umayyad Empire, not to spread the faith (more on *jihad* in Chapter 7). Indeed, the Ghaznavids seemed less interested in converting the "heretics" than in ransacking their properties: the regular winter expeditions against the Shi'is (and Hindus) were as valuable for retaining prestige in the eyes of the Abbasid Caliph in

Baghdad as they were necessary to finance the Ghaznavids' own army, bureaucracy, and construction efforts.

The history of Mahmud's southern expansion is, then, until today often recalled in connection with violence and the destruction of Hindu traditions and heritage, as hinted in al-Biruni's account. In fact, as the Ghaznavids patronized the arts, they also built forts and garrisons, gradually asserting their presence in northern South Asia in a physical way that would constantly remind the local population of the new cultural matrix that had come to dominate in the area. At the time of Mahmud's death, the caliphal office in Baghdad formally recognized the Punjab as part of the Abbasid Empire, marking the widest expansion of its territory.

The mausoleum depicted here was decorated with "several pieces of Hindoo sculpture in white marble, some of them said to be fragments of the idol of Somnath, [which] lie scattered in the portico … the doorway in which hang the gates, [is] said to be of Somnath,"[2] one of the most important temples in India, as it is considered to be one of Shiva's twelve traditional shrines. Other fragments of this idol were cast on the threshold of Ghazni's congregational mosque, and yet more were said to have been sent to Mecca and Medina. Reminding us of al-Biruni's "atoms of dust scattered in all directions," and as argued by Barry Flood, the looting, destruction and "reconfiguration" of India(n artifacts) mirrored the Islamic conquest of this Hindu area and its integration in the "land of Islam."[3]

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At the time of Muhammad's death in 632, Islam had affirmed itself in Mecca, Medina, and some parts of the Arabian Peninsula. By the early eighth century it reached from Morocco to northern India. Known as the "rightly guided" caliphs (*al-khulafa' ar-rashidun*), the first four caliphs – Abu Bakr (573–634), 'Umar b. Al-Khattab (579–644), 'Uthman b. Affan (577–656) and 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (600–661) – led their armies westward conquering Egypt; north to gain control of Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Armenia; and east toward Persia (651) and Khorasan, reaching the Oxus/Amu Darya river. It was under the 'Umayyads (661–750) – the first line of hereditary rulers in Islam – that the Empire eventually crossed the Oxus in 673, conquering the region known as Transoxiana or *ma wara' an-nahr*, in Arabic "that which is across the river" (roughly in today's Uzbekistan). In rapid succession the army also gained control of most of North Africa, Spain, Anatolia, and Sindh (the northwestern corner of the Indian subcontinent). By 711 the Arab Empire spread from Toledo (Spain) to Multan (Pakistan). The last push to the east took place

as the 'Umayyads lost control of their Empire to the Abbasids (750–1258).

In 751 the Abbasid army engaged a small contingent of the Tang's Chinese army at Talas, north of the Ferghana Valley (not far from Samarkand, on the border of today's Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), and won. The Tang Empire would shortly after shrink back. Nonetheless, this battle drew a symbolic line between the Muslim and Chinese empires, creating a buffer zone where two distinct cultural spheres – the Islamosphere to the west and the Sinosphere to the east – would continuously encounter, confront, and influence each other.

As pointed out by Richard W. Bulliet in the mid-1990s,

> the view from the center leaves too many questions unanswered …[4] portray[ing] Islamic history as an outgrowth from a single nucleus, a spreading inkblot labeled "the caliphate" … [T]he view from the edge does the opposite. It starts with individuals and small communities scattered over a vast and poorly integrated realm, speaking over a dozen different languages, and steeped in religious and cultural traditions of great diversity.[5]

Hence, this chapter explores the territorial trajectory of Islam's expansion across Asia, from the time of Muhammad's revelation through the consolidation of Muslim polities in West, Central, South, East, and Southeast Asia in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. This narrative focuses on the military conquest of territories outside of Arabia as well as the movement of people (such as merchants, mystics, travelers, etc.) who connected the Mediterranean to China via maritime and continental routes (see Maps 2–5). This endeavor is pursued in order to lay the foundations for the exploration of "Islamization" as a broad set of processes that led cumulatively to the conversion of many societies across Asia.[6]

An Expanding Empire

In the very early days of Islam, the new faith had spread by word of mouth, and following kinship networks of allegiance. Within this framework, women had played a crucial role: Khadija (d. 620), Muhammad's first wife, was also the first convert. A powerful and wealthy businesswoman, she had been able to exert influence on many others from her own clan, the Quraysh, thus expanding the ranks of the converts. Many women had also participated in the migration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina in 622, in the early battles, and in religious congregations. 'A'isha (ca. 613–ca. 678) – Muhammad's youngest and favorite wife – was regularly consulted on Muhammad's

practice, gave interpretative statements on Islamic laws and customs, addressed the believers in Mecca's mosque after Caliph 'Uthman's death (656), and led soldiers at the Battle of the Camel against 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (who would become the fourth Caliph; for more on him see Box 3.1). As argued by Leila Ahmed, Arab women enjoyed much freedom of movement and personal rights, and could choose their husbands and own property. This social reality was matched by the "stubbornly egalitarian" ethical vision of the Qur'an; however, she argues, this foundational aspect of Islam went unheard and left no trace in public discourse, as Islamic rule consolidated itself in the context of the conquest.

Arab women's participation in society was gradually curtailed, as practices detrimental to women were instead embraced by the male elite of the Abbasid era. As the empire expanded, it also incorporated elements of local culture, bureaucracy, and social norms. Alongside coin iconography and court protocol, the Abbasids assimilated to luxuries common in the urban Mediterranean (i.e. Byzantium and Sasanian Persia), such as ownership of slaves and concubines, refined foods and clothes, and sheer gathering of wealth. In this context, the ethical vision of the Qur'an was sidelined to privilege instead its legal and social visions, which established a political and legal sexual hierarchy centered around women's obligations as wives and mothers. Thus, Leila Ahmed affirms that "The weight Abbasid society gave to the androcentric teachings over the ethical teachings in Islam in matters concerning relations between the sexes was the outcome of collective interpretative acts reflecting the mores and attitudes of society."[7]

Interpretation and contextuality were thus key aspects of the Arab expansion. Alongside the position of women, it is worth addressing the position of non-Muslims and non-Arabs in this new (and constantly changing) socio-political environment. Territorial conquest at the hand of the Arab army did not directly translate in the religious conversion of newly subjected populations, especially in the early decades of the expansion. The Sasanian Empire of Persia (established in the third century) fell to the 'Umayyads in 651, but as Caliph 'Umar determined that Zoroastrianism – the predominant religion in Persia at that time – was to be recognized as a protected religion (with Zoroastrians considered *dhimmi*), Islam would take a long time to affirm itself there. Half a century later, the same would happen in northern India (Sindh), as the 'Umayyad general Muhammad Ibn al-Qasim (d. 715) determined Hindus and Buddhists to be protected *dhimmi*.[8] How, then, did the Arab Empire become a Muslim Empire?

Box 1.1 *Dhimmi*

A *dhimmi* is a non-Muslim who is under a pact of protection (*dhimma*) with the Muslim authority. In the scriptures this was a pact, or covenant, made exclusively with the "people of the book" (*ahl al-kitab*). This expression referred to other religious communities who were deemed to have a foundational "book." Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans are explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, but in the early decades of the Arab Empire, Zoroastrians and Hindus were also assimilated as *dhimmi*. This status, offered in exchange for a land tax (*kharaj*) and a poll tax (*jizya*, calculated as a portion of each individual's income), guaranteed freedom of religious practice, a degree of communal self-government, and personal safety; but it also demanded respect of Muslims and Islam as well as refraining from proselytism.

The Islamic revelation called for a universal religion, yet its early practice reflected the Arab tribal ideal that Arabs were superior to other peoples, and that Islam was an "Arab" religion, as the Qur'an had been delivered through Muhammad to the Arabs, in Arabia, in Arabic language. Most new settlements were then built to retain the separation between the conquering Arab Muslims and the conquered non-Arab non-Muslim peoples.

Discrimination between Arabs and non-Arabs subsisted within the Muslim community, especially in the outer regions of the Empire. There, even though non-Arabs had succeeded in gaining some degree of power in military hierarchies, they were still governed by Arabs. Segregation soon led to tensions, and by the end of the seventh century non-Arabs who sought to improve their social status – whether in the military, administration, or commerce – attempted to do so by converting to Islam, even though they were required to commit most of their property to Islamic philanthropy (*waqf*). Real change only begun to occur after Caliph 'Umar II (r. 717–720) actively encouraged popular conversions and equality among Muslims, regardless of ethnicity. It was this shift in policy, demanded by the expanding geographical reach of the Empire, that allowed for its transition from being "Arab" to being "Muslim".

As Abbasid rule (750–1258) soon became characterized by a weakening of the caliphal authority and the increased autonomy of the provinces on the eastern and western edges alike, starting in the ninth century the history of Islam in Asia took on a life of its own, separate from developments at the Arab '"center" of the Empire.

Box 1.2 The Five Pillars

Islam, literally meaning "submission" (from the verb *aslama*), refers to a complex religious system that has manifested itself in multifarious ways through time and space, and it can be approached as a theological, political, ritual, social, or historical phenomenon. The question of what "constitutes" Islam has been posed by many scholars, leading to multiple answers. At its core, however, are some principles that are recognized by many Muslims as "pillars" (*arkan*) of the faith, and which most believers agree constitute Islam's theological and ritual backbone. That being said, these pillars should not be taken as a "checklist" by which to evaluate someone's belonging to the faith.

Each of these five pillars represent a different way in which individual Muslims stand as part of their community of believers, the *umma* (see Introduction, Box 0.1), yet they are never mentioned in the Qur'an as a "package." The five pillars are discussed as a whole only in the prophetic traditions (*hadith*) and later scholarly exegesis.

The first pillar is the profession of faith, or *shahada*, which affirms a Muslim's belief in the "One and only God" – hence, a declaration of monotheism – and in Muhammad as the Prophet of God. Muhammad also stands as the "seal of the Prophets" in a sequence that encompasses Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, among others.

The testimony of faith is followed by *salat*, understood as the ritual prayer owed to God, performed in the direction of the Ka'ba in Mecca (*qibla*) and at specific times of the day, as announced by the *adhan* (call to prayer). Next comes *sawm*, the ritual fasting pursued from dawn to dusk during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The fourth pillar is *zakat*, a tax set at 2.5 percent of a Muslim's own net worth (although its accurate calculation is more complex than this suggests). Last is the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca which is to be pursued, if one has the means and health to do so, during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. (Mecca, the *qibla*, and the *hajj* are further discussed in Chapter 2.)

Muslims of Continental Asia

The Islamization of the Asian continent east of Persia proceeded in a tightly interlocked sequence of events, albeit not by design, as Hindus, Buddhists, and Shamanic peoples converted to Islam following their rulers or inspired by informal networks of knowledge, commerce, and spiritual allegiance. Non-Muslims embraced the new faith following a variety of paths and in ways that might have looked profoundly different. This variety manifested itself along the urban/rural and settled/nomadic divides, as well as across classes and professions, and amid changing historical-political circumstances.

Islam traveled overland following the expansion of the Abbasid Empire and its affiliated Islamized Turkic dynasties from the ninth century onwards, along a trajectory that moved from Khorasan and Transoxiana eastward into the Tarim Basin (today's Xinjiang Province in western China) and southward into Afghanistan and northern India.

The Abbasid Empire's territorial expansion and political unity had been sustainable only by establishing loose but stable relationships with other dynasties that controlled the edges of the Empire territorially and culturally, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. While the Empire granted them affiliation, in return these rulers paid tribute to the Caliph; this was intended at the discursive level (local states minted coins that showed allegiance to the Caliph) as well as territorially (Transoxiana became a bulwark against nomadic incursions), and financially, as the Caliphate received a constant supply of Turkic slaves, who were either sold on markets across West Asia, or absorbed by the army as soldiers (*ghulam*, *mamluk*, etc.). And where local rulers decided to rescind this affiliation and assert their own independent sovereignty, they minted their own coins and had Friday congregational prayer sermons dedicated to themselves.

Central Asia became a crucial site for the Islamization of the "far east" from the tenth century onwards. In the pre-Mongol period, Islamized dynasties were able to exert enough influence to effect conversions (as the Qarakhanids (992–1212), who converted *en masse* to follow the conversion of their leader, the *khan*; see Source 3.1 for the conversion of the Qarakhanid Satuq Bughra Khan (d. 955)), but there are too few sources from this period, and these are also heavily influenced by later narratives, to paint an accurate picture. The narrative of Sufi mystics' roles in converting Central Asia's nomadic peoples has dominated local imaginations of the past as well as scholarly literature for many decades. But this approach was largely based, first, on the reliability of later surviving manuscripts that projected a certain view of the region's Islamization; and second, on a scholarly sense that for nomadic peoples to be converted the message of Islam had to be simplified, supposedly something that only the Sufis would have been amenable to doing (as opposed to the jurists; see Chapter 3).[9]

Conversion of non-Muslim peoples across Asia mostly occurred gradually and non-systematically, as individual non-Muslims strived to insert themselves in newly constituted networks – whether these were military, financial, political, social, familial, or spiritual. They might have desired to obtain financial benefit from trading with Muslims as Muslims, enter the bureaucracy, marry a local woman, or enter the entourage of a Sufi order.

As seen in this chapter's opening discussion of the Ghaznavids, Turkic military slaves (converted as Muslims) were often able to rise through the ranks and obtain political-military power and territorial autonomy, which led to the further establishment of Islamized Turkic polities across Central Asia and northern India. Some early Arab traders had settled around the Bay's coast in Dhaka (today's Bangladesh) and Arakan (today's Burma/Myanmar) sometime in the tenth century. Yet, Richard Eaton has convincingly argued that the history of Bengal's Islamization is more accurately told as part of the Turkic expansion into the Subcontinent from Central Asia.

In fact, it was only after the Ghurids' takeover of the Ghaznavids in 1186 that Islam stretched significantly further across India. Under the military command of the former Turkic slave Qutb al-Din Aybak (1150–1210), the Ghurids entered Delhi in 1193, and then moved on to conquer Rajasthan, Awadh, Bihar, and Bengal. Mu'izz ad-Din Muhammad of Ghor (1149–1206) was assassinated shortly after, at which point Qutb al-Din Aybak proclaimed his autonomy, starting what came to be known as the Mamluk dynasty, the first in the string of five that would make up the so-called Delhi Sultanate.

The Turkic strand continued to rule the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. As recounted by the Moroccan jurist and world-traveler Ibn Battuta (1304–1377 or 1369), "the first who ruled in the city of Delhi with independent power" was Iltutmish (d. 1236), Aybak's slave-general, conqueror of Multan and the Bengal, defeater of the Ghaznavids, patron of Islam, and "the Sultan of the Sultans of the East," as his rule was sanctioned by the Abbasid Caliph in 1228/29. Iltutmish was also Aybak's son-in-law, as his allegiance had been further cemented through marriage. The Turkic sultans, then, continued to rule also through the reign of Radiyyah (d. 1240), reaffirming the dynasty's semi-independence and minting coins that glossed her name with the title "Blessed of the earthly world and of the faith."

A favorite of her father, Radiyyah had been raised as heir apparent, often shadowing Iltutmish in government and battle: "my sons are incapable of leading, and for that reason I have decided that it is my daughter who should reign after me," he is known to have declared. Upon Iltutmish's death, a feud ensued, but as she enjoyed the support of the Army, Radiyyah was soon after instated as Sultan. She reigned as an absolute monarch for four years, leading military campaigns and asserting her presence on the streets of Delhi, as she was known for roaming the markets, unveiled and dressed as a man, to keep abreast of events. After her untimely death, she was made "into a saint" as "a dome was built over her grave, which is now [mid-fourteenth century] visited, and people

obtain blessing from it;"[10] in the eighteenth century she was still recalled as a capable ruler by local historians.

The Delhi Sultanate era (1205–1526) was characterized by the sustained political role of former Turkic slaves, influential women, and the further confluence between Central and South Asia by means of conquest, commercial and spiritual mobility, and diplomacy across the Himalayan region – here broadly meant to comprise Tibet, Nepal, and the northernmost areas of Pakistan. Parts of Nepal were annexed by the Sultanate in the fourteenth century, at the same time as the Kathmandu valley was being (briefly) invaded by a Bengali Sultan. By the fifteenth century, Muslim Kashmiri traders had begun to settle in Nepal[11] and had already become long-term residents in central Tibet;[12] concurrently, a Kashmiri Sufi had made an impact converting the Balti people in northern Pakistan and Tibet.[13] The Central Asian Sultan Sa'id Khan of Yarkand (r. 1514–1533) waged a "holy war" on Tibet, a seventeenth-century Balti prince invited scholars from Kashgar to contrast the spread of Shi'a Islam in his reign, and Samarqandi Sufis initiated Himalayan Muslims in a variety of orders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[14]

Since the Islamization of Baltistan in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, Muslim princesses were sent as brides for Ladakh's Buddhist princes "as promises of unity and peace … alleviating conflict" when the threat of a Kashmiri invasion might otherwise have seemed imminent. They were visible in court politics (sometimes even acting as dowager queens), and consistently stood out as patrons of both Islam and Buddhism, as they sponsored the arts, culture, and the building of both mosques and Buddhist monasteries. The memory of these women has remained impressed in Tibetan culture through the centuries, as they were integrated in Ladakh's traditional folksongs:

> The Royal Palace of Great Pashkum
> Is all aglow with the light of
> Sun and Moon.
> Not the light of Sun and Moon it is
> But the charming complexion of "Queen Muslim Bekim," the Queen!
> Not the glow of the full moon it is
> But the charming appearance of
> Queen Muslim Bekim!
> Verily, Queen Muslim Bekim
> Does excel
> A hundred queens;
> Verily, Queen Muslim Bekim does possess
> The grace and charm of
> A thousand queens.[15]

The poem refers to the Kashmiri wife of King Drag Bumde (ca. 1410–1435) as *bekim*, probably a derivation of the Indo-Persian *begum*, but these Muslim queens of Buddhist kingdoms were more broadly known as *khatuns*, the title borne by Mongol women who played a public role. They might have been wives of sovereigns – Ibn Battuta recalls that "Among the Turks and the Tatars their wives enjoy a very high position; indeed when they issue an order, they say in it, 'By command of the Sultan and the Khatuns'" – or sovereigns themselves.

The same title of Khatun had in fact already identified Ilkhanid Mongol queens, such as Kutlugh Turkan Khatun (r. 1257–1282) and Padishah Khatun (r. 1291–1295); the latter also enjoyed the Islamic titles of "purity of the earthly world and of the faith" and "Sovereign of the world," or *Khadawand 'Alam* (as it appeared on her coins), combining a first word in Turkish and a second one in Arabic.[16] Such combination of Islamic and local symbols of legitimacy were not unique to Central Asia, but were common in Persia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia too.

In the meantime, the Mughal Empire (1526–1857) affirmed itself as a Persianate Muslim polity. Although the Mughal characterized themselves as Muslims, their rule had very little that was specifically "Islamic": the court was inhabited by diverse ethnic and linguistic groups; the population was ruled according to their respective religious laws; and the Hindu majority was treated as a *dhimmi* "protected minority" (see Box 1.1). It is on these grounds that Barbara and Thomas Metcalf have suggested that: "For the Sultanate rulers, as for the Mughal who succeeded them, Islamic ambitions focused on extending Muslim power, not on conversion."[17] The two regions that experienced the deepest process of Islamization in northern India were the western Punjab and eastern Bengal, notably areas that experienced relatively weak Muslim rule.

While Islam and Muslim rulers were asserting themselves in northern India, Genghiz Khan (d. 1227) had begun his takeover of continental Asia in the early thirteenth century. In 1258, his grandson Mongke Khan (r. 1251–1259) entered Baghdad, bringing an end to the Abbasid Empire. Alongside destruction and warfare, the Mongol invasion also brought political unity to Asia for the first time in history, from the eastern coast of China through the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

Mongke Khan's reign did not last long, and as he died without designating a successor, the empire was divided shortly thereafter. From this internecine war emerged four polities, or Khanates: China came to be controlled by the Yuan Khanate under Kublai Khan; Persia's Ilkhanate initially included today's Iran, Azerbaijan, and parts of Turkey, and later expanded north into Armenia and Georgia; east into Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, and south into Pakistan; the Golden Horde, or Khanate of

Kipchak, stretched from eastern Europe to Siberia through the Northern Caucasus; and finally, Central Asia was ruled by the Chagatai Khanate, which controlled the Tarim Basin and the area between the Oxus/Amu Darya river and the Altai Mountains (thus including the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand) (see Map 2).

The Ilkhan Mahmud Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) was the first Mongol ruler to convert to Islam, and he pulled with him most of his tribes. Shortly after, Oz Beg Khan (1282–1341) of the Golden Horde embraced the new faith, ruling over several Muslim peoples. Worth noting is that the public status of Mongol women mentioned above was not affected by this wave of conversion: as witnessed by Ibn Battuta,

> it is [Sultan Muhammad Oz Beg Khan's] custom to sit every Friday, after the prayer, in a pavilion … the sultan sits on the throne, having on his right hand the khatun Taitughli and next to her the khatun Kabak, and on his left the khatun Bayalun and next to her the khatun Urduja. Below the throne, to his right, stands the sultan's son Tina Bak.[18]

By the mid-fourteenth century, Tughluq Timur Khan (r. 1347–1362) took control of the eastern provinces of the Chagatai Khanate, thus leading to most Turkic peoples of Central Asia becoming Muslims. Upon his conversion (narrated in Source 1.1), Tughluq entered a mutually beneficial relationship with the local Sufis: they made proselytes and legitimized his power, while he provided them with infrastructures, most notably building and maintaining Sufi lodges (*khanaqa*s) and their shrines (for images of shrines, see Figures 1.2, 2.3, and 2.4). This illustrates how after the Mongol expansion new dynamics created the opportunity for Sufi *shaykh*s and ruling *khan*s to connect as agents of mutual legitimation.

Sufism had emerged as a tradition of ascetism and worldly withdrawal in eighth- to ninth-century Iraq. Largely in response to the lavishness displayed by the 'Umayyad and early Abbasid empires, it advocated the primacy of a self-effacing life of meditation and devotion oriented toward an individual quest to reach knowledge of, and a connection with, God. With time, other approaches and geographical centers competed with Baghdad, most notably Khorasan. The Khorasanian "way" (*tariqa*, or "order"), especially since the eleventh and twelfth centuries, demanded a stronger tie between disciple and master, and had a heavier accent on "training." This focus on the Sufi master led to three important consequences. First, the possibility of forging political alliances with rulers; second, the emergence of Sufi lodges as gathering places for students of specific masters; third, women – who had been widely present among the ranks of early

Source 1.1

The Conversion to Islam of Tughluq Timur Khan. Text by Mirza Haydar Dughlat (1499–1551)

Tughluq Timur Khan (r. 1347–1362) was a Turkic military and political leader, a descendant of Genghiz Khan, who came to power in the Chagatai Khanate in the mid-fourteenth century. His conversion, narrated below, led also to the conversion of the population of his Khanate, estimated at over 15,000 individuals. This text illustrates the close relationship between the Khan and a Sufi shaykh.[19]

At that time Tughluq Timur Khan was in Aqsu. When he had first been brought there he was sixteen years of age. He was eighteen when he first met the Shaykh [Jamal al-Din], and he met him in the following way. The Khan had organized a hunting-party, and had promulgated an order that no one should absent himself from the hunt. It was, however, remarked that some persons were seated in a retired spot. The Khan sent to fetch these people, and they were seized, bound, and brought before him, inasmuch as they had not presented themselves at the hunt. The Khan asked them, "Why have you disobeyed my commands?" The Shaykh replied, "We are strangers, who have fled from the ruined town of Katak. We know nothing about the hunt nor the ordinances of the hunt, and therefore we have not transgressed your orders." So the Khan ordered his men to set the Tajik free. He was, at that time, feeding some dogs with swine's flesh, and he asked the Shaykh angrily, "Are you better than this dog, or is the dog better than you?" The Shaykh replied, "If I have faith I am better than this dog; but if I have no faith, this dog is better than I am." On hearing these words, the Khan retired and sent one of his men, saying, "Go and place that Tajik upon your own horse, with all due respect, and bring him here to me."

The Moghul went and led his horse before the Shaykh. The Shaykh noticing that the saddle was stained with blood (of pig) said, "I will go on foot." But the Moghul insisted that the order was that he should mount the horse. The Shaykh then spread a clean handkerchief over the saddle and mounted. When he arrived before the Khan, he noticed that this latter was standing alone in a retired spot, and there were traces of sorrow on his countenance. The Khan asked the Shaykh, "What is this thing that renders man, if he possess [*sic*] it, better than a dog?" The Shaykh replied, "Faith," and he explained to him what Faith was, and the duties of a Musulman. The Khan wept thereat, and said, "If I ever become Khan, and obtain absolute authority, you must, without fail, come to me, and I promise you I will become a Musulman." He then sent the Shaykh away with the utmost respect and reverence. Soon after this the Shaykh died. He left a son of the name of Arshad al-Din, who was exceedingly pious. His father once dreamed that he carried a lamp up to the top of a hill, and that its light

Source 1.1 (*cont.*)

illumined the whole of the east. After that, he met Tughluq Timur Khan in Aqsu and said what has been mentioned above. Having related this to his son, he charged him, saying, "Since I may die at any moment, let it be your care, when the young man becomes Khan, to remind him of his promise to become a Muslim; thus this blessing may come about through your mediation and, through you, the world may be illumined."

Having completed his injunctions to his son, the Shaykh died. Soon afterwards Tughluq Timur became Khan. When news of this reached Mawlana Arshad al-Din, he left Aqsu and proceeded to Moghulistan, where the Khan was ruling in great pomp and splendour. But all his efforts to obtain an interview with him, that he might execute his charge, were in vain. Every morning, however, he used to call out the prayers near to the Khan's tent. One morning the Khan said to one of his followers, "Somebody has been calling out like this for several mornings now; go and bring him here." The Mawlana was in the middle of his call to prayer when the Moghul arrived, who, seizing him by the neck, dragged him before the Khan. The latter said to him, "Who are you that thus disturb my sleep every morning at an early hour?" He replied, "I am the son of the man to whom, on a certain occasion, you made the promise to become a Muslim." And he proceeded to recount the above related story. The Khan then said, "You are welcome, and where is your father?" He replied, "My father is dead, but he entrusted this mission to me." The Khan rejoined, "Ever since I ascended the throne I have had it on my mind that I made that promise, but the person to whom I gave the pledge never came. Now you are welcome. What must I do?" On that morn the sun of bounty rose out of the east of divine favour, and effaced the dark night of Unbelief. Mawlana ordained ablution for the Khan, who, having declared his faith, became a Muslim. They then decided that for the propagation of Islam, they should interview the princes one by one, and it should be well for those who accepted the faith, but those who refused should be slain as heathens and idolaters […]

The Khan was circumcised, and the lights of Islam dispelled the shades of Unbelief. Islam was disseminated all through the country of Chaghatay Khan, and (thanks be to God) has continued fixed in it to the present time.

ascetics in West, Central, and South Asia alike – were now seeing their horizons limited due to the perceived impropriety of a male master/female pupil relationship. In the early years, women had been seen as equally capable of achieving communion with God, as Islamic mysticism "left no room for the distinction of sex." In the twelfth century, al-Ghazali (d. 1111) had stated:

Consider the state of the God-fearing women and say (to your soul), "O my soul, be not content to be less than a woman, for a man is contemptible if he comes short of a woman, in respect to her religion and (her relation) to this world."

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Figure 1.2 The shrine of Satuq Bughra Khan, Atush (Xinjiang, China). © Chiara Formichi

This applied in historical terms, as "the first place among the earliest Muhammadan mystics" was given to a woman, Rabi'a al 'Adawiyyah of Basra (born ca. 717);[20] Rabi'a was credited with miracles and – possibly more importantly – with transforming "somber ascetism into genuine love mysticism," to borrow from Annemarie Schimmel. After centuries of practicing ascetism, being disciples of great masters, and participating (sometimes leading) community gatherings of *dhikr* ("remembrance" of God), by the twelfth century women disciples and their male masters were compelled to explore new ways to properly and "legally" pursue initiation ceremonies in their *tariqa*s without any direct touching.[21] But by the fourteenth century social norms of segregation had taken over in the institutionalized mystic orders.

In this *tariqa*-oriented, increasingly sectarian environment, the *khanaqa*s became centers for both teaching and conversion, as they retained their physical openness, allowing local poor and itinerant merchants (but not women) to take shelter. In their last transformation, *khanaqa*s became mausolea and shrines for the bodies of their past masters, and thus developed into pilgrimage destinations. By extension, the graves of other saints took on the function of bestowing blessings (*baraka*) and thus also the shrines of women mystics attracted many seekers of miracles (men and women alike) (see Chapter 2).

Sufism took shape as a form of Islam that was deeply rooted in the territory while also encouraging mobility both eastward and westward. Also, it opened a new way to win converts to Islam; in this period Sufism became key in the spreading of Islam in Central Asia, through the Tarim Basin, into northwest China (Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia), and possibly Tibet from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries onwards. Sufism also remained important to the construction and projection of political power after the conquest of the Chagatai Khanate (in 1370) at the hand of the Muslim Turco-Mongol Timur Lang (known as Timur "the Lame" or Tamerlane in Europe, 1336–1405), as Naqshbandi Sufis held leading positions in the Timurid Empire (which stretched as far west as Baghdad, conquered in 1393). (Sufism is further discussed in Chapter 3).

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, what had been Timur's territory was controlled by four different polities: alongside the Shi'i Safavids (1501–1736) (see Box 3.1) who had emerged victorious in Persia, the Shaybanids took Bukhara in 1500 (the local Khanate would last until 1785, followed by the Emirate of Bukhara until 1920) while the Khanate of Khiva, on the eastern shores of the Aral Sea (1511–1920), emerged as an independent polity. The Yuan dynasty in China (1271–1368) remained the one of the four khanates that never had a Muslim leader, and yet, as testimony to the fact that Asia was indeed a profusely Islamized space, during the Yuan period many Muslims were involved in the administration of the new Empire.

Muslim merchant sojourners who had been coming "east" since the battle of Talas in 751, were joined by Sufis and "professionals" expressly invited by Yuan rulers. They were technocrats, scientists and military men. The Bukharan Sayyid 'Ajall Shams al-Din (d. 1279), for example, was appointed governor of Yunnan soon after the province's annexation by the Mongol in the late thirteenth century, and while he did not advance an Islamization agenda per se, he enabled Chinese Muslims to lead pious lives (building mosques, allowing religious education, etc.) while "provid[ing] them with a useful model for balancing one's obligations as a Muslim with those as subject of the imperial throne."[22] Muslims continued to come to China, and became an integral part of society, yet Islam remained associated with foreignness. In Lipman's words, Muslims were "familiar strangers."[23]

The Yuan era is also the time for which there is evidence of the cultural and intellectual exchanges that were occurring across Asia, and specifically within an Islamic framework. A case in point pertains to the sciences, such as medicine, pharmacology, and astronomy. In the late thirteenth century, the Yuan dynasty established medical academies in Beijing, which hosted several Muslim physicians, and Islamic pharmaceutical

texts were translated in Chinese. If translation was a key element of knowledge transmission, the Mongols went even further, actually adapting and incorporating new, local research. This was the case with astronomy, as manuscripts have survived illustrating Islamic astronomical tables and explanations for calculating luni-solar eclipses and occultations of the moon based on observations made in China.[24]

Initially these texts were primarily used to compile calendars and almanacs for China's Muslim communities only. But by the Ming period, Islamic sciences were also used to the direct benefit of the Chinese establishment, as the title of Emperor, "Son of Heaven," created a direct connection between worldly authority and celestial movements. In fact, the official history of the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, Hongwu (r. 1368–1398), explicitly mentioned Islamic astronomical sciences to justify his political legitimacy.[25] During the Ming era the Chinese and Muslim "Bureaus for the Administration of the Heaven" were merged, enabling collaboration and the emergence of a Chinese–Islamic system of calendrical astronomy. Portions (or versions) of the most influential *Huihui li* ("Islamic Calendar") manuscript were included in several texts, including: the official history of the Ming (*Mingshi*); the *Complete Books of the Four Imperial Archives*, a collection ordered by the Qing Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1796) listing the most valuable books ever written; the official history of the Korean Yi dynasty; and a unique copy of a related manuscript found in Tibet, with the main text written in Arabic but glossed in Mongolian and Tibetan.[26]

In the early decades of the Ming era (which lasted from 1368 to 1644), then, Muslims in the Empire were seen as "Chinese," whether as part of the military apparatus, the bureaucracy, sciences, or literary tradition (e.g. the *Han Kitab*, a new intellectual tradition that merged Islamic knowledge and Chinese frames of understanding; see Chapter 2). The case of Zheng He (1371–1433) is exemplary: a Chinese Muslim born in Yunnan, he was captured by the Ming army in the 1390s. After a career as a palace eunuch, this Muslim Chinese ethnic, who hailed from a landlocked province, was appointed as a naval admiral by the newly installed Ming Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424) with the task of leading expeditions to southern Asia and Africa and establishing a rapport with those trading Muslim populations.

But later in the fifteenth century, and into the Qing dynasty (1644–1911/1912), the Empire once again related to Muslims as "foreigners." This was the outcome of two shifts, one social and the other geopolitical. First, in the late Ming era, a general conservative turn enforced assimilationist policies on non-Han peoples. Second, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Qing dynasty advanced more

assertive attempts at "integrating" peripheral regions into the Empire: the mass migration of Han Chinese into resource-bountiful Yunnan created a wedge between local Muslims and Han migrants, while claims to control the Tarim Basin accentuated the dichotomy between Chinese Muslims from the inner provinces (referred to as Hui) and other ethnic Muslim groups (such as the Turkic peoples of the Tarim Basin). (Xinjiang is discussed further in Chapter 7.)

Whereas frictions during the Qing era turned into conflicts, under the Ming the Hui had been better able to create alternative infrastructures for their cultural survival as Muslims, in both central China and Yunnan, or stay focused on Islamic education as a strategy "to save Islam." As suggested by Jaschok and Shui, "in the late fifteenth century respectable *nu junshi* [female religious scholars] existed, and women's talents and roles were acknowledged and approved by Muslims." Capitalizing on this tradition of female religious scholars, equal efforts went into boys' and girls' education, with communities setting up

> schools for common Muslims women. As female religious schools became a main-stay of Central China and Yunnan, they came to be complemented with women's mosques (*nusi*) led by women scholars (*nu ahong*). Ultimately, women began to play a greater part in preserving and transmitting Islamic religion.[27]

Muslims of Maritime Asia

The ninth-century Persian geographer Ibn Khordadbeh recorded how seafaring traders from the Abbasid Caliphate reached as far east as Luqin (in today's Vietnam) and Qansu (Yangzhou) on the Yangtze River Delta. Arabs and Persians had in fact been trading along the Indian Ocean monsoon routes for centuries, as proven by the long-established Nestorian–Christian colonies scattered on the coasts of Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia, including Siam (today's Thailand; see Box 1.3). As suggested by André Wink, in the eighth and ninth centuries the Indian Ocean could have been considered an "Arab Mediterranean,"[28] in the sense that the Islamization of maritime Asia became an inevitable byproduct of commercial relations in the post-Mohammadan era.

Ships from southern Arabia or Persia (Siraf or Hormuz) called at ports on the east coast of India – either north, in Gujarat, or south, Malabar – before pushing off to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the Bay of Bengal, and Siam's Ayutthaya. They would finally touch down on the northern coast of Sumatra before going through the Strait of Malacca, the gateway to the Spice Islands (today's Indonesia). Circumnavigating the Malay Peninsula, some ships – and with them Islam – would redirect north to reach

Guangzhou, with a possible stop in Champa, today's Vietnam. Southeast Asia then had its own internal trading routes, along which Islam pushed south from Malacca to Java's northern coast (the *pasisir*), and further east to the Sulu archipelago (Southern Philippines). And it was this route that Zheng He navigated in the opposite direction in the fourteenth century, bringing Chinese Muslims to the north coast of Java (see Source 1.2).

Source 1.2

The Malay Annals of Semarang

The excerpt below is the beginning of the Malay Annals of Semarang, *offering a concise history of the early history of Chinese Muslim communities on the northern shores of Java. Although in itself a problematic text, this is an important source to understand the multiplicity of intra-Asian Muslim networks in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. This narrative centers around the story of Admiral Zheng He, and it is likely grounded on the Chinese records of the Ming maritime expansion. The text as we have it today comes from a 1964 Indonesian book.*[29]

[1. Introduction]

1368–1644
The Ming dynasty, which employed a very great number of Hanafite Muslim Chinese officials, reigned in China.

1403–1424
The reign of the emperor Ceng Tsu, called the Yung Lo period. This was the heyday of China in maritime matters.
1405–1425
The fleet of the Ming emperor of China, commanded by Admiral Haji Sam Po Bo [Zheng He], dominated the seas and shores of Nan Yang (South-East Asia).

[2. Beginning of the Chinese expansion]

1407
The fleet of the Ming emperor of China seized Kukang (= Palembang) which from ancient times had been a nest of Chinese pirates, non-Muslims, from Hokkien. Cen Tsu Yi, the chief of the pirates of Kukang, was taken prisoner and brought in chains to Peking [Beijing]. There he was publicly decapitated as a warning for the Hokkien Chinese all over Nan Yang countries. In Kukang the first Hanafite Muslim Chinese community in the Indonesian Archipelago was established. In the same year another was settled in Sambas, Kalimantan.

1411–1416
Hanafite Muslim Chinese communities were also established in the Malay Peninsula, in Java, and the Philippines. Java mosques were built in Ancol/

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Source 1.2 (*cont.*)

Jakarta, Sĕmbung/Cĕrbon, Lasĕm, Tuban, Tse Tsun/Grĕsik, Jiaotung/Joratan, Cangki/Majakĕrta, and in other places.

[3. Settlements of Chinese Muslims in Java]

1413
The fleet of the Ming emperor of China put in for a month at Sĕmarang for ship repairs. Admiral Sam Po Bo [Zheng He], Haji Mah Hwang, and Haji Feh Tsin came very often to the Hanafite Chinese mosque in Sĕmarang for divine service.

1419
Admiral Haji Sam Po Bo [Zheng He] appointed Haji Bong Tak Keng in Campa to control the flourishing Hanafite Muslim Chinese communities which were spreading along the coasts all over the Nan Yang countries. (Note this was again done by the Japanese Army which appointed Marshal Terauchi in Saigon, 1942–1945, to control all Japanese generals/Saikosikikans all over the Nanyo countries.) Haji Bong Tak Keng appointed Haji Gan Eng Cu in Manila/Philippines to control the Hanafite Muslim Chinese communities there in Matan/Philippines.

1423
Haji Bong Tak Keng transferred Haji Gan Eng Cu from Manila/Philippines to Tuban/Java to control the flourishing Hanafite Muslim Chinese communities in Java, Kukang, and Sambas. At that time, Tuban was Java's main port, with the kingdom of Majapahit as hinterland.

Haji Gan Eng Cu became a kind of consul-general of the Chinese government, the Ming emperor, having control of all Muslim Chinese communities in the southern Nan Yang countries including Java, Kukang, and Sambas. In respect of the still existing but degenerated Majapahit kingdom Haji Gan Eng Cu became a kind of Muslim "Kapten Cina" [Head of the Chinese community] in Tuban. But then, since the Chinese fleet of the Ming Emperor dominated all navigation in the seas of the Nan Yang countries, Haji Gan Eng Cu became also de facto harbourmaster in Tuban. As a reward for his services as a provider to the court of Majapahit [of foreign supplies] from the harbour of Tuban he was given the title A Lu Ya by the Majapahit Government. It was given to him by Raja Su King Ta, Ruler [Queen] of Majapahit, 1427–1447 (Supposition: Haji Gan Eng Cu is Aria Teja, and he is the father of Nyi Agĕng Manila who was born in Manila, Philippines.)

1424–1449
His Excellency Haji Ma Hong Fu was appointed ambassador of the Ming emperor of China at the court of Majapahit. Haji Ma Hong Fu was a son of the War Lord of Yunnan, and a son-in-law of Haji Bong Tak Keng. On the way to the court of Majapahit Haji Ma Hong Fu and his family were escorted by Haji Feh Tsin who had already visited the court of Majapahit three times as a roving ambassador. (Supposition: Putri Campa was the wife of Haji Ma Hong Fu.)

Despite their long-standing existence, these networks received a boost when the Mongols conquered Baghdad in 1258: the Mongols themselves sponsored the establishment of Hormuz as a port with direct connections to China, to sustain their flourishing trade. The increase in the volume of commercial exchanges through maritime connections took place at the same time as the expansion of Sufi networks, further contributing to maritime Asia's exposure to, and affirmation of, Islam in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see Chapter 3).

Each region and location experienced its own path to Islamization, but the embracing of this new faith seems to have resulted from a recognizable combination of factors along the oceanic route. First, Perso-Arab (male) Muslim traders settled along their routes to become local agents or taking temporary residence while waiting for the "return monsoon": in either case, they took local wives, their offspring forming the first kernel of local Muslim communities as they inherited the religion of their fathers (such as the Mappilas of Malabar, discussed below). Second was the perception that Muslim traders preferred to do business with other Muslims (along the Indian Ocean as well as the Silk Road), possibly because of the fact that Muslim societies respected trade, and had specific laws dedicated to its fair conduct. This attitude was embraced by individual traders as well as by local rulers whose main revenues came from commerce. Third, with the emergence of Islamic polities, many individuals with ambitions to rise in the new hierarchies chose to convert. Last but not least, some people who were exposed to the contents of Islam as a religious system embraced the new faith as their chosen path to connecting with salvation and the divine. Thus, as seen in the case of Central Asia, conversion was a result of multiple factors, ranging from individuals' spiritual encounters to changing political and military power structures.

The trading centers along the Indian coast had been small cosmopolitan entrepôts since the beginning of oceanic commercial connections, inhabited by Christians, Jews, Parsees, and others. With the spread of Islam in the Arab–Persian lands, these centers became dominated by Muslims, but remained surrounded by a solid and dense Hindu backdrop. The majority of the population and their rulers indeed remained Hindu, and uninvolved in commerce, even though the trade of Indian pepper and other luxury products (especially "spices," from incense to ginger, sandalwood, musk, and more) was very profitable. It was mostly the foreign Arab Muslims and the few mixed Arab-Indian Muslims who engaged in trade.

The Muslims of southern India – mostly located on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts – all claimed Arab and trading backgrounds, actively

distinguishing themselves from the Muslims of northern India, who were either of Turkic origins or recent converts. They held this distinction in high consideration, and reaffirmed it in practical terms following the Shafi'i school of law (*madhab*, see Box 2.2), which had been predominant in southern Yemen. On the Malabari coast, then, trade was in the hands of the foreign Arabs and the Mappilas. It is unknown when this Islamic community first emerged, but the Mappilas were South Indian Muslims, the offspring of Arab men and local, low-caste women. Although locally they were seen as having low social status, they were the only community with direct access to the incoming Muslim traders. Similar dynamics were at play in Tamil Nadu, on the Coromandel coast.[30]

As narrated by Ibn Battuta, the Hindus kept these Muslims at a distance, considering them impure. Conversion of the local population was thus very slow. However, as in the thirteenth century considerable numbers of littoral Muslims joined the indigenous armies as mercenaries, and as a new wave of Arabs from southern Yemen – referred to as Hadramis, including *sayyid*s, Sufi *shaykh*s, and scholars – arrived in South India, the social status of Muslims began to change and Islam was more widely accepted. Whereas segregation remained a characteristic of the closed and introvert garrison cities of northern India, these open and outward-looking coastal entrepôts became sites of interaction and conversion, even though realistically speaking the phenomenon was probably limited in numbers and scope, mostly involving low-caste Hindus.

Between the thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries the coast of Malabar was still turning to Islam through local processes of conversion and increased trade. Far from being an exclusively "Arab" phenomenon, Muslim sojourners and settlers in Malabar continued to hail from all over the Indian Ocean, including those from Southeast Asia (Malacca, Sumatra, Pegu, and Tenasserim), northern India (Gujarat), West Asia (Mecca, Syria, and Turkey) and Persia. In fact, while Mappila Muslims were in control of the regional spice trade around southern India, it was foreign Muslims from the east and the west that connected the Mediterranean to China. The arrival of the Portuguese, and their establishing of port cities along the southern Indian coast, deeply affected these local dynamics.

Studying tropical Asia poses an additional challenge, as the humid climate has had a consistently negative impact on perishable manuscripts. The only reliable sources available to us today for the study of Southeast Asia are those made in stone. Thus, even though we can assume that Muslim merchants had been landing on the shores of Southeast Asia possibly as early as the ninth century, the earliest evidence of a Muslim polity and local society there dates back only to the fourteenth century. In historical terms the peak of Southeast Asia's Islamization was

reached at the height of intra-oceanic commercial interactions, between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, what Anthony Reid has called "the age of commerce."[31]

But we also have an intermediate point, the Maldives, where we know that by the mid-twelfth century a Sultanate was established. These islands had been part of global trading networks for centuries, because of their strategic location in the Indian Ocean, their famed sailors, and the products they traded, including coconut fiber ropes (vital for ship operations) and cowry shells, almost exclusively sourced here and used as currency as far as China. A matrilocal society, much of the trade had been controlled by women for centuries; this fact might help contextualize Ibn Battuta's account of the Maldives, as upon his arrival there he found the place ruled by Sultana Khadija (1347–1379). Her three-decade rule – during which Ibn Battuta himself was appointed as *qadi* (judge of Islamic court) – was followed by another decade of female rule, as her daughter, Myriam (until 1383), and granddaughter, Fatima (until 1388) succeeded Khadija.

By the fourteenth century there are significant enough numbers of headstones populating the Muslim graveyard at Pasai (in contemporary Aceh) to determine that Islam had become a "local religion" in this port city on the western coast of Sumatra.[32] The role of Islam in Southeast Asia would continue to increase in the following centuries, intertwining with social, political, and economic dynamics.

Malacca was the first port of entry for Islam to Southeast Asia (see Map 3); its strategic location on the (homonym) Strait connected West Asia, India, maritime Southeast Asia, and China, making it a hub for traders from all these places, and thus a cultural entrepôt. As recorded in the Javanese chronicles, here *jawi* Muslims (i.e. Muslims from Southeast Asia) came to study, pilgrims boarded their ships to go to Mecca, and some – such as the sixteenth-century Sultan Mahmud – claimed that "Malacca was the right Mecca," erasing the need to go on *hajj* altogether (see Chapter 2 for more on substitute pilgrimages).[33]

Because of the flux of Muslim presence, and the absence of a single sovereign stretching his authority beyond his immediate environs, it is nearly impossible to draw the trajectory and chronology of the Malay Peninsula's Islamization, but the scattered sources available paint a picture in which by the fifteenth century, the king (*Raja*) of Malacca had taken on the title of Sultan, while also retaining a distinctively Hindu-Buddhist court ceremonial. Highlighting the latter factor, European observers argued that the early Islamization of Malaya had only left a mark through mysticism and other "folk" practices, with "the first task of the missionaries [being] to substitute for the Hindu epics tales of the

heroes of Islam."[34] In fact, both the local legal code and practices of kingship, while still rooted in pre-Islamic Malay culture, also integrated Islamic principles (see Chapter 2).[35]

But as the trading interchanges also involved the Spaniards and Portuguese – who by then had begun to make substantive incursions into Southeast Asia – Christianity was making converts too. Malacca was eventually conquered by the Portuguese in 1511, displacing the local Muslim polity and effecting an important shift in commercial (and religious) power-balances. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the new faiths of Islam and Christianity had left a lasting mark on the region's maritime rulers.

Following the account of Tomes Pires, an apothecary from Lisbon who traveled to Malacca between 1512 and 1515, we can sketch the history of the Islamization of the Indo-Malay Archipelago. By then, the rulers of Sumatra had for the most part become Muslim, although those in the southern part of the island still embraced local beliefs. In a similar pattern, the hinterland of Central and East Java, as well as the island's western region, were not yet Islamized, while the northern coast – often called the *pasisir* – had been converted as far east as Surabaya (as also narrated by *The Malay Annals of Semarang*, Source 1.2).

The King of Brunei on the Borneo coast and the island of Tidore embraced the new faith in the mid-1400s, Ternate followed suite in the late 1400s, but no other Muslim ruler was to be found in the archipelago, as an inverse pattern had affected most of the eastern islands: rulers had mostly remained faithful to their indigenous beliefs, while individuals – merchants involved in the spice trade – had turned to Islam, confirming the trading factor in early conversions. Sulu, today in the southern part of the Philippines, had seen the establishment of its sultanate at the beginning of the fifteenth century, whereas Islam would make a dent in Patani (coastal Malay Peninsula) in the early sixteenth century – with the establishment of a Sultanate, ruled by, among others, four "Queens," between ca. 1584 and 1718 – and on the southern coast of Sulawesi in the late sixteenth (Buton) and early seventeenth (Makassar) centuries.

At the peak of this "age of commerce," across the strait from European-controlled Malacca, the Sultanate of Aceh was holding its ground. The era of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636) has been dubbed Aceh's "golden age," as the port city had established itself as a "bulwark of Islam" and pepper trade in the region.[36] But upon the untimely death of his son in 1641, the reign's stability was at stake because of European incursions and possible domestic unrest. Safiatuddin Syah was then appointed "Great Sultan and Illustrious King" of Aceh (*sultan al-muazzam wa-l-khaqan al-mukarram*), her legitimacy harnessed to both

Box 1.3 Siam

Islam in what is today's Thailand arrived and developed along at least three different paths. First are the provinces of Patani, Yala, Satun, and Narathiwat: although today these are located in the "deep south" of Thailand, they used to be independent or part of northern Malaya. After a century of coastal incursions from the King of Siam who wished to assert his military presence there, the British officially ceded the provinces to Siam with the Treaty of Bangkok (1909). Second were the Chinese Muslims who descended from Yunnan in the regions of Chang Mai and Chang Rai in the nineteenth century, either to escape the so-called Panthay Rebellion (1855–1873), or to trade in salt.[37]

Third were "foreign Muslims," who arrived to Siam as seafarers and traders from the West. They first populated the Siamese capital Ayutthaya, and then moved to Bangkok following the Burmese–Siamese war of 1767. Whereas Malay Muslims lived in their own communities in the south of the kingdom, these foreigners – and especially the Persians who had been using Ayutthaya as an alternative port to Malacca as early as the 1440s – came into close contact with the Siamese population and the court. Their socio-economic standing as traders allowed them to penetrate, and even influence, Siamese culture, bureaucracy and architecture.

In the early seventeenth century two Persian brothers restructured the department of foreign trade (*phrakhlang*), and while descendants from one of the brothers came to be in control of "the westward trade" for decades to follow, the son of the other brother became an associate of the future King Narai (1632–1688), thus gaining intermarriage within the royal family.

Persian influences started in the realm of overseas commerce, but expanded much further, spilling out into culture and architecture. In Ayutthaya, "*Wat* murals, manuscripts, and [Buddhist] scripture cabinets were adorned with adaptations of the Persian tree-of-life motif, complete with flora and fauna unknown in Siam." And some of the most luxurious mansions – including the French embassy – were styled on Persian architecture, featuring bath houses and Islamic-style pointed arches.[38]

The connection between Siamese royals and the Persians re-emerged over a century later. After the capital moved to Bangkok, the (currently still ruling) Chakri dynasty took control of the Kingdom. The mother of King Rama III was a royal concubine and herself a Muslim of Persian descent. King Rama III elevated her to the rank of Queen and built a mosque in her honor. The Masjid Bang Luang is still today a testament to the interaction between Persianate and Siamese cultures.

Islam and *'adat* (customs), and with no reference to her being female. As the religious scholars (*'ulama*) were integral part of the court apparatus, it is quite certain that the decision of having a female ruler was debated, and eventually accepted; the "state advisor" *shaykh-ul-Islam* Abdu Ra'uf

al-Sinkili (see Chapter 2) recognized Safiatuddin as "deputy of God" (*khalifat Allah*), which she understood to mean the one

> [who] manifests Allah's wisdom and blessings, who upholds Allah's laws, who clarifies those that are in doubt, whose shine brings forth Allah's light and goodness, who exhorts people to Allah's path, who treats Allah's creations with mercy, who dispenses Allah's justice with utmost care, who hides that which is ugly and forgives those who have sinned, and whose words are gracious.

As she herself illustrates, Safiatuddin – as well as her three female successors – established a practice of "queenship," to borrow Sher Banu Khan's term, which contrasted the cruelty of their male predecessors' coercive and absolutist regimes, and was inspired instead by mercy, tolerance, moral force, consensus, loyalty, and collaboration. The record shows that this strategy well served Aceh's economic interests in the age of commerce, and its political independence at a time when the Europeans had begun to infiltrate the pepper trade.[39]

Archaeological remains, European accounts, indigenous narratives and scholarly analysis, all point at "Islamization" as a process that took centuries to reach deep and wide across the region, to the extent that Merle Ricklefs has suggested that this process is in fact still ongoing.[40]

The maritime trading routes that connected West, South, and Southeast Asia continued north to the southeast coast of China, and were consistently dominated by Muslim merchants – both Arabo-Persians and eastern Asians. Mosques' steles and gazetteers confirm that by the tenth century there were sojourning Muslim merchants who had established themselves in the city of Guangzhou, and across the province of Fujian, the island of Hainan and the Champa region (see Maps 2 and 4). These sojourners would gradually settle, partly assimilating and partly retaining their Muslim identity, as testified by their mono-syllabic names: "Ma" for Muhammad, "Li" for 'Ali, "Pu" for Abu.

By the eleventh century, it was the Fujian port city of Quanzhou – known to the Arabs as Zaytun – that saw a rise in mosques and Tamil, Manichean, and Nestorian temples, as the Song established there a trade tax collection office, and power shifts in West Asia increased demands for luxury items. It was the Ayyubid (1171–1250) and Rasulid dynasties of Egypt that funneled new energy in the oceanic trade. Supported by the Mongol founding of the port city of Hormuz, on the Persian Gulf, direct relations between West Asia and China were established via South and Southeast Asia, thus also leading to a surge in the Muslim presence in Quanzhou (see Source 1.3).

While China had been for centuries the destination of Muslim merchants' land journeys, with the emergence of the Ming dynasty in 1368,

Source 1.3

Ibn Battuta Travels through China (1345)

Ibn Battuta was a religious scholar from Tangier, Morocco who set out to undertake his pilgrimage to Mecca and ended up traveling through Asia and back. It has not been ascertained whether he actually traveled as far as Southeast Asia, hence his account might include firsthand observations as well as tales conveyed to him by other travelers. Either way, his recollections provide us with a unique window in the life of Muslims from North Africa to India, Central Asia, China, and maritime Southeast Asia. Ibn Battuta was able to capitalize on a thick and wide network of Muslim merchants and political elites to forge transregional relations and gain access to local Muslim communities and establishments.[41]

The Chinese themselves are infidels, who worship idols and burn their dead like the Hindus … In every Chinese city there is a quarter for Muslims in which they live by themselves, and in which they have mosques both for the Friday services and for other religious purposes. The Muslims are honoured and respected …

On the day that I reached Zaytun [Quanzhou, Fujian province] I saw there the amir who had come to India as an envoy with the present [to the sultan] … I received visits from the qadi of the Muslims, the shaykh al-Islam, and the principal merchants. Amongst the latter was Sharaf ad-Din of Tabriz, one of the merchants from whom I had borrowed at the time of my arrival in India … these merchants, living as they do in a land of infidels, are overjoyed when a Muslim comes to them. They say "He has come from the land of Islam" …

In one of the quarters of this city [Sin-Kalan, Guangzhou, Guangdong province] is the Muhammadan town, where the Muslims have their cathedral mosque, hospice and bazaar. They have also a qadi and a shaykh, for in every one of the cities of China there must always be a Shaykh al-Islam, to whom all matters concerning the Muslims are referred, and a qadi to decide legal cases between them …

A few days after my return to Zaytun … I chose to sail up the river … after ten days' journey we reached Qanjanfu [Fuzhou], a large and beautiful city … On our arrival, we were met outside the town by the qadi, the shaykh al-Islam, and the merchants, with standards, drums, trumpets and bugles, and musicians. They brought horses for us, so we rode in on horseback while they walked on foot before us. No one rode along with us but the qadi and the Shaykh al-Islam … [W]ithin the third wall live the Muslims (it was here that we lodged at the house of their shaykh), and within the fourth is the Chinese quarter, which is the largest of these four cities [in one] …

The land of China, in spite of all that is agreeable in it, did not attract me. On the contrary I was sorely grieved that heathendom had so strong a hold over it. Whenever I went out of my house I used to see any number of

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Source 1.3 (*cont.*)

revolting things, and that distressed me so much that I used to keep indoors and go out only in case of necessity. When I met Muslims in China I always felt just as though I were meeting my own faith and kin.

Similar accounts of merchants, qadis, and shaykhs are given for Hangzhou (which he calls Khansa), further north on the river, as Ibn Battuta was traveling toward Beijing, the capital of the Yuan Emperor. Leaving Hangzhou, Battuta noted:

There are no Muslims to be found in these districts [between Hangzhou and Beijing], except casual travelers, since the country is not suitable for [their] permanent residence.

In fact, Hangzhou was the northernmost port city trading with West Asia via South and Southeast Asia.

sea voyages and Islam became key tools to advance imperial interests in asserting political legitimacy. Between 1405 and 1435, the Muslim Admiral Zheng He was tasked with leading seven expeditions along the centuries-old Muslim maritime routes, with the explicit design that his religious affiliation could help garner local support. Muslims in coastal China never built any polities, but they integrated into the imperial structure, and Islam influenced Chinese culture, politics, and science. With established coastal Chinese Muslim communities in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou, this potential advantage was reinforced by enlisting substantial numbers of Muslim interpreters, pilots, soldiers, and seamen. Zheng He's armadas reached all the way to the east coast of Africa and succeeded in establishing trading bases as they went along.

The success of this project, the undertaking of reverse-course voyages from East to West Asia, reinforced – and today bears witness to – the sense of an interconnected Muslim community around the Indian Ocean.

Conclusions

Islam traveled across the Asian expanse along land and maritime routes, as Muslims engaged in trade, proselytism, and conquest. While the territory and influence of Islamic political authority expanded, collapsed, and reached further once again, between the seventh and seventeenth centuries the realities and attributes of any given Islamic society varied greatly. This chapter has provided a bird's-eye view of the expansive movement of Muslims out of Arabia and into Asia, as Islam crossed the Oxus/Amu Darya river, following two main paths. First was the military expansion of the Arab Muslim Empire, which reached its

territorial apogee under the Abbasids, spreading as far as Transoxiana and northwest India. Second was the movement of pilgrims, scholars, soldiers, and mystics – whose functional identities melted one into the other – across continental and maritime Asia, along the centuries-old Silk Road and the Indian Ocean networks.

These trajectories and dynamics of Muslims' expansion in the first millennium since Islam's emergence provide us with invaluable data necessary to see Asia as a historically cohesive space of Islamized interaction. The movement of ideas, goods, and peoples, whether as individuals or parts of political institutions, point to the interconnectedness of the region; the embedded interactions – sometimes collaborative, sometimes antagonist – testify to the suggestion that Muslims across Asia have imagined themselves as part of a religious community, the *umma*.

Source 1.4

Baba Palangposh

Baba Palangposh (d. 1699) was a seventeenth-century Naqshbandi teacher from Ghudjuvan, near Bukhara (Uzbekistan) who traveled to India and accompanied the Mughul Ghazi al-Din Khan Bahadur in his expedition to conquer the Deccan. As narrated by his pupil, Baba Musafir:[42]

Baba Palangposh arrived after some days, and he stayed in the bungalow beside the stream. He was ill with gripes … I [Baba Musafir] submitted: "The enemies of Hazrat [polite circumlocution] have the illness gripes and the faqirs have been left behind at various places: and the rains are falling very heavily. You should stay here for a while. After the rains have finished, proceed in whatever direction your mind inclines!"

He said: "As you are pressing me to stay, listen! One dawn in Hasan Abdal [Punjab] I had a vision. The holy gathering of the leader of the Prophets [Muhammad] … appeared … I wished to kiss the feet of the Prophet, but he made a sign with his right hand and said in Arabic: 'First pay your respects to Sayyid Hamza!' … 'Take this sword,' [Sayyid Hamza] said, 'and go to the army of Mir Sihab al-Din [Ghazi al-Din Khan Bahadur] in the land of the Deccan!' He gave the sword into my hand, and following his command I set out for the Deccan …"

From the arrival of Baba Palangposh the star of /Mir Sihab al-Din's/ felicity was brought to the apex of fortune. In whatsoever direction he turned to confront the armies of the enemy, with /but/ a small body of men he was victorious over them … /When his forces/ went to war, they saw that Hazrat Baba Palangposh always went forward in front of the army of Islam and would loose arrows upon the army of unbelievers.

By the sixteenth century, Muslim rulers across Asia had begun to look at the Ottoman Caliphate (in today's Turkey) to see their titles recognized, or to receive support as they engaged with the Europeans. In the 1520s several Muslim leaders asked for help from, or offered trading collaborations with, the Ottomans (from the Vizier of Hormuz to Indian corsairs and Sumatran Sultans), with the result that by 1538 the Ottomans "had managed to construct an enormous transoceanic coalition, linking Istanbul with allies across the entire breadth of the Indian Ocean from Shihr and Gujarat to Calicut and Sumatra."[43] But the Muslim community did not construct itself just in terms of religious politics, or in connection to a putative center of religious authority (more on the Ottomans and Asia in Chapter 4).

The experience of the Ghaznavid dynasty's emergence and expansion has brought to light the importance of local dynamics, and the relationship between politics, culture, and community-building in a new frontier. Under Mahmud of Ghazni, Islamization meant attempted obliteration of previous religious and cultural traditions – the fate of the idol of Somnath being emblematic of this trend – but also the sponsoring of knowledge production about non-Muslims. The next chapter will explore how these elements all came together, as pre-Islamic practices (decorative, structural, literary, etc.) came to be integrated, adapted, and appropriated in Islamized contexts, leading to various processes of negotiation that highlighted the endeavor by Muslims to give meaning to their "negotiated" practices and beliefs in Islamic terms.

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