

***ISLAM: CRUSADES  
AND MONGOL ATTACKS***

**2009**

## *Outline*

1. Introduction: Islam rebutted
2. Crusades: the impact on the Islamic empire
3. “The Mongol disaster”
4. Conclusions
5. Bibliography

**Thesis statement:** The confident tread of Islam on the globe had once faced difficult obstacles posed by crusades and, later, the Mongol attacks, which sent the echoes of the confrontation into centuries, contributing much to the relations between the East and the West of the following millenium and leaving a visible lasting mark of the period even on the world of today.

### ***Introduction: Islam rebutted***

The historical perspective on the events to be discussed in the present paper is versatile. Crusaders and Mongol invaders are excused by some and panned by others as ruthless wrongdoers. The attacks on the Muslim domain, however, can well be explained as such that did not arise out of greed or folly, but were done based on the need of protection and prevention (Madden, 1999).

### ***Crusades: the impact on the Islamic empire***

From the whirlwind of facts, legends, and attitudes in which the theme of crusades seems to have spun ever since historians first tried to present its credible historical image (Hillenbrand, 2004, pp. 202-204), a curious eye can still draw some conclusions that can help understand what Crusades accomplish and what they did not. Surely, the primary goals were of wining over “the enemies of Christ” were failed (Riley-Smith, 2000). Yet, the two hundred years of the “Franks” presence in the Near East region could not, and did not, go unnoticed, and not only for Islamic peoples, by the way. In their book, *Islam at War*, G. Nafziger and M. Walton (2003) claim that “Crusades left few physical marks on the Islamic world” (p. 48). In terms of culture, the degree of impact seems to be bigger with respect to Europe, since Islamic world had more to offer than to borrow. Since the Crusades were not evangelical, they did not increase Christian presence among the local Muslim population (ibid.). In fact, the authors contend that the invaders from the West influenced Arabs “to the detriment of the local Christians” (ibid.). Another great impact of the crusades on Islam was emotional. Contend Nafziger and Walton: “The Crusades shattered the myth of the invincibility of Islamic armies and traumatized a people who saw God as being on the side of the victors” (ibid.). Thus, this shock produced hatred in Muslim nations towards the West, the effects of which are still felt today. Many historian see the main effect of the Crusades in that they “slowed the pace of Islam” (Madden, 1999) and hindered the unification of Muslim powers

into one Islamic state. After all, one thing is certain: crusades were the epitome of the growing Muslim-Christian confrontation, which history has not rid itself of to this day.

### ***“The Mongol disaster”***

In its own time, the name of Chingiz Khan, and, later, Hulagu sounded to Muslim rulers just as intimidating as to the rest of the world. We know of the plans of the Mongols to crush the Islamic world and to establish their own empire. History says these plans were near to being fulfilled (Saunders, 1965).

Surely, Mongols were detrimental in their attacks on Arabian lands. Yet no matter what the degree of devastation was brought by the invaders to Islamic regions, the spirit of the land was not subdued. Instead, Mongols settling on the conquered lands submitted themselves to Islam, which really strengthened the positions of the latter. As D.W. Brown stated, “the Mongols were religiously and culturally conquered by Islam”; in the long run, “Islam won the war” (Brown, 2004, p. 187). And the Muslims not only outlived Mongols, but also “absorbed, coopted, and utilized their strength” (ibid.). The religion of the land Mongols tried to conquer really suited them. Once converted, they became its very important contributors: the new “Islamic-Mongol synthesis [...] was a seed of a significant renewal within Islamic culture”(ibid.); Mongols brought back military power into Islam; they prepared platform for the three great Islamic empires (the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals); and the age following the invasion was marked by flourishing in the spheres of culture and science across Muslim territories (ibid., p. 188). All in all, as Brown put it, the aftermath of Mongol invasion bore witness to how “resilient Islam turned out to be”(ibid., p. 187).

### ***Conclusions***

The period in the history of Islam, marked by the Crusades and Mongol invasion, touched upon in the work, proved not only interesting but also important to understanding the medieval history and to interpreting the present geo-political situation in the world.

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