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Christopher Catherwood: A Brief History of the Middle East Study Guide

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CHRISTOPHER CATHERWOOD:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST
STUDY GUIDE, 2008
Steven Alan Samson

CHAPTER FOUR: MUHAMMAD AND THE DAWN OF ISLAM

Study Questions

1. **Arabia and the Life of the Prophet** Identify some of the early Arab civilizations. What are some of the likely religious influences on Muhammad's thinking? What was the political situation around 600 AD? How did Islam develop? What was the **hijra** (Hegira) and what role does it still play? Who were **Muhammad**'s successors? **Rashdun**=Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Ali. (66-70)

2. **The Evolution of the Quran** How do the Medina and Mecca passages of the Quran (Koran) differ? What are **sharia** and **fiqh**? What is the language of the Quran and how is it organized (arrangement of **suras**)? What are the **Hadith**? The **sunna**? How did Muhammad differ from Abraham and Jesus? How does the Quran differ historically and doctrinally from Christianity and Judaism? (70-75)

3. **Islam's Five Pillars and Jihad** What are the **five pillars** (Shahadah=profession of faith, Salat=ritual prayer, Zakat=alms-giving, Sawm=fasting during Ramadan, Hajj=pilgrimage to Mecca)? What are some of the disagreements over the meaning of **jihad**? What was the view of **Ibn Taymiyya**? (75-76)

4. **Islam: Wider Issues** Why is so little known about Muhammad? Why is speculation dangerous, especially in the Muslim world? What are some of the controversies of recent years? What is it about practice of Islam that makes it difficult for Muslims to live under non-Islamic rule? (76-81)

Review

Muhammad	Monophysites	hijra
Fatima	Ali	caliphs
Rashidun	Quran	sharia
fiqh	Hadith	sunna
five pillars	jihad	

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM

Study Questions

1. **Sunni and Shia** Ali was the fourth Caliph, the last Rashidun, and the first Imam. Why is this significant for the split between the Sunni majority and the Shiite minority? What two unjust defeats (at Najaf and Karbala), from the Shiite view, mar the leadership succession? Why is martyrdom a major part of Shiite thinking? What is Twelver Shiism? Who are the Ismailis? What is an **Ayatollah**? Why does *ijtihad* (interpretation) give Shiites more flexibility? How does the Shiite mentality differ from that of the Sunni? What did **Abd al-Malik** accomplish? What role was played by the **Berbers** in the spread of Islam? Who stopped the Muslim advance into Europe and when? What and where was **Al-Andalus** (where a branch of the **Umayyad** dynasty survived)? How was the **Abbasid** dynasty founded? [The Umayyads were massacred; the

capital moved from Damascus and **Baghdad** was built to house it]. What made the caliphates of **Harun al-Rashid** and his son **Mamun** so outstanding during the Golden Age of Islam? (82-89)

2. **From the Arab Renaissance to Fatimids and Turks** What intellectual role was played by Arab physicians and philosophers, such as Avicenna (**Ibn Sina**) and Averröes (**Ibn Rushd**)? What were some of the Arab contributions to mathematics and astronomy? What were some possible reasons for the end of the Golden Age? Who were the Buyids? The Mamluks? The Fatimids? The Khazars? The Seljuk Turks? Who sought to control Palestine during the 130 years before the Crusades?

Review

Twelver Shiism	Ismailis (Fiver Shiite)	Ayatollah
cult of martyrdom	Abd al-Malik	Berbers
Charles Martel	Battle of Tours (Poitiers)	Andalus
Umayyads	Abbasids	Baghdad
Harun al-Rashid	Ibn Sina	algebra
Mamluks	Fatimids	Seljuk Turks

CHAPTER SIX: MANZIKERT, CRUSADERS, MONGOLS

Study Questions

1. **Manzikert** What were some of the short-run and long-run consequences of the Byzantine defeat at Manzikert (1071)? What were some of the later consequences for the Balkans? What else happened to the Byzantines in 1071?

2. **The Crusades** When Caliph Omar entered Jerusalem in 638, why was he warmly welcomed by Jews and Christians? What happened to the Jews and Christians of the Arabian peninsula? What are **dhimmis**? [They also had to pay the *jizya* tax for the privilege of toleration]. How and when did the Crusades originate? What were some of the motivations at work? [The practice of **primogeniture** in family law was a factor]. How did the Frankish knights behave? What and where was the Albigensian Crusade? What were the **Crusader states**? Identify the chief Christian orders of chivalry. Who was **Saladin**, the founder of the Ayyubid [not Abbuyid] dynasty, and what were his accomplishments? When did Crusader rule come to an end? (98-104)

3. **The Crusades: Effects and Interpretations** Although Catherwood is impressed by the 461 year gap between the loss of Jerusalem and its recapture, arguments based on historical precedent are always hazardous. The Scotch-Irish claim close to as many years of residence in Ireland. The Germans lived in Russia about as long until forced out after WWII. The 11C Papal Revolution sought to restore the Church back to its earlier autonomy under Gregory the Great. What makes the Fourth Crusade so memorable? What was the Latin Empire? What made the Crusades more of a sideshow even in their day? What then was the real epic struggle over the ***Dar-al-Islam*** (House of Islam)? Why do the Crusades really matter in our time? (104-08)

3. **Mongols** When did the Mongols reach the Middle East? Who was Prester John? William of Rubruk? Who and where were the Nestorians? When was Baghdad destroyed? What spared the Middle East? How did the Mamluks take over? Why can the political decline of the Islamic empire be traced back to this period? How was Islam itself changing, as witness the career of the Hanbali scholar, **Ibn Taymiyya**? What happened to the Mongol Il-Khans? What innovation by Ibn Taymiyya has caused much political mischief by likening unrighteous Muslims (apostates) to infidels belonging to the ***Dar-al-Harb*** [House of War]. What is the intellectual genealogy from Ibn Taymiyya to al-Qaeda? (108-16)

Review

Battle of Manzikert
capture of Jerusalem
Pope Urban
Simon de Montfort
Templars
Fourth Crusade
Perceptions of the Crusades
Prester John
Marco Polo
Il-Khans
ijtihad
Sultan Alp-Arslan
dhimmis
motives for the Crusades
Godfrey of Bouillon
Hospitallers
schism within the Caliphate
Napoleon's capture of Egypt
William of Rubruk
Mamluks
Dar al-Harb
Caliph Omar
expulsions from Arabia
Albigensian Crusade
Kingdom of Jerusalem
Saladin
Dar al-Islam
Hulagu
Nestorians
Ibn Taymiyya
Sayyid Qutb

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: THE TRUE STORY OF AN ISLAMIC SUPERPOWER

Study Questions

1. **Imperial Expansion in Europe and Asia** How did the Ottoman Empire originate? How did the Ottomans expand their territory? What were the short-term and long-term consequences of the **Battle of Kosovo** (1389) and the **Battle of Nicopolis** (1396)? How were the Ottoman Empire nearly toppled, as well as Egypt's Mamluk regime? Why were they spared? Sultan Murad's successor Bayezid I [not II] was captured by Timur (Tamerlane) and probably committed suicide, which led to a bloody succession crisis with Mehmed I gradually eliminating his brothers (1402-1413). Please note that here are errors and inconsistencies on pages 121-22. How did the Mughal Empire in India originate? How did Constantinople fall in 1453 and what were some of its consequences? Hagia Sophia, converted into a mosque, was turned into a museum in the 1930s. How did Selim expand the empire and when did he claim the caliphate? What did the Protestant Reformation owe to the Ottomans? The two sieges of Vienna (1529 and 1683) appear to have been partially conflated. The earlier siege took place in 1529 but the *croissants* may not have been rolled out at that time despite the story on page 124. What made the Battle of Mohacs in 1526 so important? Why did Transylvanian Protestants prefer Turkish rule? (117-24)

2. **Problems in East and West** What was the character of the Safavid dynasty that Ismail establish over Persia? I what ways did it reflect older rivalries? What is the significance of Don John's victory at Lepanto in 1571? How did Shah Abbas change the character of the region? Who were the Grand Viziers? [The correspond somewhat to the majordomos of the Frankish kingdom and the shoguns of Japan]. *Devşirme*, or more commonly *devshirme* (not *dervishme*), was the Ottoman "blood tax" established by Sultan Murad I (who was killed at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389) to create a caste of dependable administrators and warriors. Christian boys (but not Jews or Armenians), primarily from the Balkans, were conscripted before adolescence, converted to military (*Janissaries* and other corps). The practice of "tax-farming" used by the sultanate recapitulated a common earlier Roman practice. The late Roman Empire even made some offices hereditary to ensure greater accountability and make sure that the taxes were collected (any shortfall had to be raised by the provincial officials). The second Siege of Vienna was one of the great events of the last millennium. Two months after it began, Poland's King Jan III Sobieski (elected in 1674) led his heavy cavalry (the Hussars) into battle on September 12, broke the siege, and defeated the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa at the gates of Vienna. The *Hörnchen* (*croissant*) is the crescent-shaped roll created to celebrate the victory that saved Western civilization. After that, the empire began its long decline. What was significant about the treaties of Carlowitz (1699), Passarowitz (1718), and Küçük Kaynarca (Kuchuk Kaynarji, 1774)? The *millet* system of community-based law gave Russians the right to intervene on behalf of Orthodox

subjects; later the French were given the right to intervene on behalf of other Christians. What is meant by the Eastern Question? The independence of Greece, Crimean War, the carving off of Ottoman territories by Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and others represent some of the actions and confrontations that grew out of it. (124-30)

3. **Wahhabi Islam** What is the intellectual ancestry of Wahhabism and how did it become such a powerful religious force in Arabia? How do Wahhabis regard *jihad*? (130-34)

4. **The Nineteenth Century: Western Expansion, Ottoman Retreat** Who was Mehmet Ali? By the way, at one point he massacred the Wahhabis. What was the chief threat to the Ottoman Empire in the early part of the nineteenth century? What finally doomed the Ottomans? Who were the Young Turks (CUP)? The Young Turks took control of the Empire in a 1913 coup. The war minister and chief leader, İsmail Enver (Enver Paşa or Pasha), who admired Germany, arranged the German-Turkish alliance that brought the Ottoman Empire into the First World War in October 1914, but he proved to be an ineffective commander and strategist. Later Enver collaborated with the Bolsheviks, sought to restore Ottoman territories from Russian control, pursued his pan-Turkic dreams (Turanism), and was killed in a Russian attack at Dushanbe (Tajikistan) in 1922. By contrast, Mustapha Kemal (Atatürk), who was the Turkish commander at Gallipoli, was a nationalist who later founded the new state of Turkey. (134-45)

5. **The Decline of the Ottoman Empire: Orientalism and After** Who is Bernard Lewis and what does he believe "went wrong" with the Middle East? How did Edward Said rebut his argument? What did Said mean by "Orientalism?" How has their dispute been drawn into the American culture wars? (145-53)

Review

Osman	Battle of Kosovo	Murad I
Bayezid I	Battle of Nicopolis	Timur the Lame (Tamerlane)
Mughals	fall of Constantinople	Hagia Sophia
Charles V	siege of Vienna, 1529	Suleiman the Magnificent
Safavid dynasty	Shah Abbas	Don John
Battle of Lepanto	Grand Viziers	Koprulu dynasty
devshirme	Treaty of Carlowitz	Treaty of Passarowitz
Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca	*millet* system	Eastern Question
Abd al-Wahhab	al-Saud clan	*jihad*
syncretism	Crimean War	Young Turks (CUP)
Edward Said	Orientalism	Bernard Lewis

CHAPTER EIGHT: FALL OF THE OTTOMANS AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW MIDDLE EAST

Study Questions

1. **Turkey's Choice** What are some of the disasters that can be attribute to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the Caliphate? What circumstances led to its demise? What diplomatic blunder was made by Winston Churchill? What other factors might have worked in the Empire's favor even after it sided with Germany? What is wrong with the view of the Desert Revolt propagated by T. E. Lawrence? (154-58)

2. **War Against the Ottomans: Gallipoli and Iraq** Although Gallipoli is usually regarded as a military disaster, what might have been gained had it succeeded? Who was Mustapha Kemal?

What happened at Kut? As for the genocide, more than one million Armenians were killed in 1915 and another million expelled. (158-63)

3. **Carving Up the Middle East: the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration** What two major problems did the British face? Who are the Hashemites? What was Sharif Hussein's dream? Why did the British Raj in India differ with authorities in London and Cairo? What was Italy promised for switching sides? What were some of the promises the British made and with whom? What happened as a result of the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in Russia? Why did Lloyd George want Mosul? (163-74)

4. **The Arab Revolt and Its Aftermath** What were the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres? What were some of the adverse consequences of Mustapha Kemal's uprising and victories? How was Iraq created? Who were the winners and losers from all these events? (174-82)

5. **New Rulers, New Dynasties: Turkey, Iran, Arabia** What were some of Kemal Ataturk's reforms? How was Saudi Arabia created? How did Sharif Hussein play into Ibn Saud's hands? What changed with the Treaty of Lausanne? What happened to the Arab world? (182-88)

Review

Winston Churchill	Desert Revolt	T. E. Lawrence
Gallipoli	Mustapha Kemal	Kut
Armenian genocide	Suez Canal	Sultan's fatwa
Sharif Hussein	Britain's two voices	bribing Italy
Sir Mark Sykes	Sykes-Picot agreement	Henry MacMahon
Lord Curzon	Alfred Balfour	Lord Rothschild
(David) Lloyd George	Treaty of Sèvres	Michel Aflaq
Ba'ath Party	Gertrude Bell	Feisal
creation of Iraq	Abdullah	Ataturk's modernization program
Kemal Ataturk	Qajar dynasty	Abdul Aziz al-Saud (Ibn Saud)
Nejd	Hijaz	Treaty of Lausanne
how the Arab and Turkish worlds differed		culture of shame