Introduction
Islam and Latin Christendom to 1050

When the news reached Ṭāriq that Roderic was near, he rose up before his comrades, he praised and extolled God, and afterwards incited the people to the *jihād*, and made them crave martyrdom. Then, he said, "O People! To where will you flee with the sea behind you and the enemy before you? All that remains, by God, is resolve and perseverance. Verily, by truth, I shall be he who meets this tyrant myself, and will not waiver until I reach him or die first in the attempt!" (ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, the pre-battle harangue of Ṭāriq b. Ziyād (790–852)[1])

Contemporaries might be forgiven for regarding the meteoric rise of Islam in the seventh century as either miraculous or diabolical. Within the space of less than a century a people regarded as uncivilized and illiterate raiders – *sarakenoi* or *agarenoi* – would bring down the Persian Empire, conquer some of Byzantium's richest provinces, and extend their rule across the southern shore of the Mediterranean and over the Tigris and Euphrates to the banks of the Indus.[2] This was a conquest borne in part out of opportunity – the two great empires were exhausted after decades of struggle and plague, and their subjects dissatisfied and

[1] From the *Kitāb al-Ṭā›rikh* ("History Book"), O. Herrero Soto, "La arenga de Tariq b. Ziyad," p. 55. Ṭāriq led the invasion force that defeated Roderic, king of the Visigoths, at Wādī Lakku (Guadalete) in 711.

[2] "Hagarene" is not a reference to Hagar, the concubine of Abraham, as often presumed, but to *muhajirūn*, derived from *hijra*, meaning "a striving" or "going out." "Saracen" derives not from Abraham's wife, Sarah, another common assumption, but from either *sharqiyyin* ("Easterners"), or *saraqat* ("raiders"). By the fifth century Arabs were identified as "Ishmaelites" in Jewish writings, and in the early centuries of Islam the northern tribes of Arabia constructed geneaologies linking them to ʾAdnān, the son of Ishmael (Ismāʿil); for Christian writers "Hagarene" became a synonym of "Muslim." Christian chroniclers also referred to Muslims as "Moabites," "Chaldeans," and other Biblical peoples who were rivals of the Israelites. "Maurus" or "moro" was current in the Iberian Peninsula from the seventh century. Although some Christian writers associated certain of these names with specific ethnic groups (e.g. Berbers, or Persians), others used them interchangeably. The terms "Arab" and "Turk" were used somewhat more consistently, but they too were often simply generic synonyms for "Muslim." See F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, p. 86; I. Shahîd, *Rome and the Arabs*, pp. 130–38; I. Ephʾal, "'Ishmael' and 'Arab(s)'," pp. 233–34.

disillusioned. But it was also fruit of a religious revolution that had transformed Arabic society, galvanizing the divided nomadic tribes of the peninsula and aligning their ambitions with those of the local, sedentary, commercial elite. Islam was styled as the perfection of the faith of Abraham, the continuation of Judaism and Christianity revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad in Arabic. It embodied a moral certainty and universal mission typical of theologies of liberation, from Christianity to Capitalism, and its adherents imagined themselves as obliged by God not only to observe its precepts, but to extend the opportunity to all men to live in a just, divinely ordered world – whether by conviction or force. Like all successful revolutions it was one in which the higher moral good seamlessly coincided with the personal "goods" of those who led it.

Hence, when Ṭāriq b. Ziyād (if he ever existed) – the Berber client of Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, the Arab governor of Ifrīqiya – set out to topple Roderic (710–12), the weak Visigothic King of Spain, he did it with one eye towards Heaven and the other on the bottom line. The emergence of the Muslim Arabs and their irruption into the Romano-Persian world did not have the aim of destroying the old order, but of taking control of it. It was a movement for which the groundwork had been laid in centuries previous, as Arab kingdoms flowered along the peripheries of the two empires, warrior clans served as clients and proxies in the imperial wars, and settlers from the peninsula ranged northwards into Syria and Mesopotamia. The Arabs were in fact only the latest iteration of the "barbarian" peoples that had invaded and infiltrated the Persian and Roman worlds for centuries. What set them apart was not only their success, but the fact that they would not be subsumed religiously, linguistically, or culturally by the peoples they conquered.

In the West, *Hispania* was effectively the end of the line for the Muslims; even with the reinforcements provided by the pagan Berbers who converted to Islam (often merely nominally) and swelled the ranks of the victors, the Arab-led forces were overstretched. As they pushed forward, the obligation to leave even a skeleton garrison in conquered territories depleted the Muslims' numbers, and led to the risk of revolt. Still, once they had overrun the peninsula, they advanced over the Pyrenees and into the vacuum left in Septimania by the defeat of the Visigoths. But southern Gaul was not Egypt or Persia – it was a poor, depopulated land with little to offer the conquerors. As the Muslims raided further into the inhospitable Frankish north, the risks grew and the returns diminished. When in 732 a raiding party led by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ghāfīqī, the Governor of al-Andalus, set out to sack the cathedral of Tours, its defeat by the Merovingian palace mayor, Charles

Martel, claimed the lives of many Muslim warriors, including the governor himself. But this battle, inflated to epic proportions by Gibbon and his modern imitators, did not signal the salvation of "Europe" from the ambitions of a ravenous Islam; rather it heralded the subjugation of Aquitaine and the usurpation of the Frankish throne by Martel. There was not yet a "Europe" to covet or conquer, and what there was was too underdeveloped and poor to tempt the Muslims. The Oxford University that Gibbons fantasized might have fallen prey to that "circumcised people" did not yet exist, and London was, as of yet, nothing more than a huddle of shacks scattered among dilapidated Roman ruins.[3] Sporadic Muslim raids would continue on the continent through the 900s, but there was nothing of sufficient value in Frankish Europe to merit a campaign of conquest. Constantinople, by contrast, was a wealthy prize close at hand, but the last serious attempt by the Arabs to conquer it had taken place in 718.

Nor was the establishment of Islamic dominion over the Mediterranean the interruption of Western history that historians since Pirenne have often imagined it.[4] The collapse of the world of Antiquity provoked the expansion of the Muslim Arabs, not the reverse. Quite to the contrary, the establishment of *pax Islamica* re-established Mediterranean unity and trade, and set the course for the re-emergence of wealthy urbane societies here. It was not a unity derived from a functioning imperial authority, as had been the case with Rome; rather, Islamic unity was derived from the use of a common language, a common religio-intellectual framework, compatible institutions, and a moral and social consensus that emerged organically out of the overlapping economic and political relationships that held the *dār al-Islām* – the "abode" or "world of Islam" – together. Hence, when the Umayyad Caliphate was overthrown in the mid eighth century, and when in the early 900s two rival Caliphates challenged the authority of the ʿAbbāsids of Persia, Islamic civilization did not collapse – paradoxically, it was strengthened by its disunity and diversity.

[3] Gibbons summed up Martel's accomplishment as follows:

> A victorious line of march had been prolonged above a thousand miles from the rock of Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire; the repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens to the confines of Poland and the Highlands of Scotland; the Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or the Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat to the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Muhammed . . . (E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. v, p. 389)

[4] This was the thesis of H. Pirenne's *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

Latin Christendom and Islam to 1000 CE

Having accomplished in [Gascony] whatever opportunity and usefulness dictated [Charlemagne] decided to contest the difficulty of the Pyrenees mountains, go to Spain, and with Christ's aid bring help to the Church, which was laboring under the extremely hard yoke of the Saracens. ("The Astronomer," *Vita Hludovici Imperatoris* (*c.* 840)[5])

Nor did "Christian Europe" conceive of Islam and the Muslims as constituting an existential threat. Indeed, neither the kings nor the Church of the Latin West gave much consideration at all to Islam prior to the mid eleventh century. Obviously, there was an awareness that Christian *Hispania* had been conquered, and that the Holy Land was under the rule of "pagans." The raiding of "Saracens" along the Mediterranean coasts and their occasional incursions deep into the Frankish hinterland were cause for alarm, but beyond the Iberian Peninsula, Muslims remained for the most part a vague and distant concern. In the 800s the storied ʿAbbāsid Caliph, Hārūn al-Rashīd (766–809), and the Emperor Charlemagne (768/800–14) would exchange embassies and gifts, and in the 900s the Umayyad Caliph of Cordoba (Qurṭuba), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (912/929–61), and the Emperor Otto the Great (936/62–73) could rattle sabers at each other – but all to little effect. For the rulers of Latin Christendom there were more pressing threats closer to home: the pagan Norsemen, the Magyars, and their own perennially rebellious aristocracies.

Even the Latin Church, localized, institutionally primitive, and dogmatically underdeveloped, had scarcely any sense of who these infidels were that had risen up in Arabia and had brought so much of Christendom under their dominion. The papacy – only tentatively emerging as a functioning authority in the western lands – was focused on the conversion of European pagans, the proprietary attitudes of the landed nobility, the worldly corruption of it own clergy, the specter of Judaism, and the establishment of its independence from the authority of the Byzantine emperors. Islam remained a distant and vague abstraction. Latin Christianity itself was only groping towards self-realization and self-definition.

Real engagement with the *dār al-Islām* was established gradually as the Christians of the northern shores of the Mediterranean intruded into and were drawn into the commercial, intellectual, and cultural milieux of a prosperous and populated Islamic world that stretched from the Pillars of Hercules to the remote passes of Bactria and beyond the Horn of Africa.

[5] "The Life of Emperor Louis," pp. 226–302, in T. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, p. 229.

The export of slaves, timber, and salt, and the ingress of silk, spices, and gold introduced Latin Europeans to the wealth and possibilities that this world embodied precisely at the time that theirs was beginning to stabilize, consolidate, and to develop the infrastructure and markets that would create, from the year 1000 forward, both the potential for engagement with, and the conditions for expansion into, an increasingly fragmented and vulnerable Islamic Mediterranean.

While there was certainly a sense that the Islamic world was a distinct place from Christendom, and Islam a rival of Christianity, the closer one approached the supposed frontier, the more elusive it became. Local princes and potentates made alliances, fought against each other, and even intermarried, with little regard for their religious identity. Common folk innocently and intuitively mixed the religious and magical beliefs they were exposed to in ways that caused no small amount of consternation to the arbiters of orthodoxy among them. Even the clergy who served them were often woefully unfamiliar with their own religious dogma. On the other hand, by the 1050s Latin pilgrims, both clergy and lay, were journeying in increasing numbers either to the Holy Land, in the name of redemption, or to al-Andalus in search of knowledge, and were becoming aware in a personal sense of the tremendous wealth and complexity of the *dār al-Islām*. Through all of this the Latin approach to the Muslim world remained open, pragmatic, and largely unburdened by ideology. Even Charlemagne, whose ancestor, Charles Martel, has been risibly credited with stopping the Muslim conquest of "Europe," and whose own campaigns on his southern frontier were framed in terms of religious struggle, regarded Muslim princes as his legitimate counterparts. As Charlemagne's biographer, the "Astronomer," would relate:

> [Charlemagne] ordered his people to convene in a general assembly in the autumn, in the royal estate at Thionville. In that place there appeared three envoys of the Saracens beyond the sea, two of them Muslims and one a Christian, bearing vast gifts from their land, different kinds of perfumes and textiles. After they had sought and received peace, they departed.[6]

Hardly a proto-Crusader, the emperor's ill-fated mission to *Hispania* to overthrow the Umayyads in the 780s had been undertaken in collaboration with the Muslim ruler of Zaragoza (Saraqusṭa), and his defeat at Roncesvalles had not been at the hands of Marsilia's "panyims," as in the eleventh-century "Song of Roland," but at the hands of nominally Christian Basques.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

Islam and Christian minorities

This is a written agreement from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Mūsā b. Nuṣayr to Tudmīr [Theodimir] son of Ghabdūsh, affirming that [the former] has entered into a peace whereby [the latter] shall be under the peace and protection of God, as well as under the protection of His Prophet, may God bless Him and grant Him peace! No evil shall be done to him or to his followers of any kind, nor shall he be removed from office. They shall not be killed or taken captive, nor shall they be separated from their children and their wives. They shall not be coerced in matters of religion; their churches shall not be burned down; and their objects of worship shall not be taken from his domain. This shall be done providing he acts in good faith and complies with the following conditions ... (ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Mūsā b. Nuṣayr, "Pact of Tudmīr" (April 713)[7])

For all of Ṭāriq b. Ziyād's fiery rhetoric, the Arabo-Islamic conquest of *Hispania* was neither unremittingly bloody nor overly idealized. After the initial rout of Roderic's forces and a few skirmishes, it was accomplished largely by intimidation and negotiation – along the same pattern as the Arab conquests from Syria to Khurāsān, and from Egypt to the Atlantic coast. It is striking how little ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, the son of the conqueror of the Visigothic kingdom (and the new husband of King Roderic's widow, Egilona), demanded in return from Theodimir, lord of Auroriola, in exchange for his protection. The former lieutenant of the vanquished Visigothic King was not to shelter any rebels, nor succor any enemies of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, nor conceal any important information from his new lord. In addition, every freeman in his province was to yield an annual tribute of one *dīnār*, four bushels of wheat, four of barley, four measures of wine and of vinegar, and two of honey and oil. Slaves were to pay half.

As such, the treaty epitomizes the pragmatic approach Muslims had taken towards religious minorities since the time of the *hijra* and the establishment of the first Islamic community at Madīna under the authority of the Prophet. Legitimate non-believers (originally including only Christians and Jews) were to be fought into submission, but once they had yielded, were to be protected and respected in exchange for the payment of tribute, under the arrangement known as *dhimma*. Pagans and idolators were to be forced to convert. Later, as Islamic jurists articulated a formal and detailed legal position for *dhimmī*s they attributed the policy to the Caliph ʿUmar (634–44) and extrapolated the "Pact of ʿUmar" – a document they claimed he wrote for the Christians of Syria as a blueprint

[7] R. I. Burns and P. Chevedden, *Negotiating Cultures*, p. 231. This version of the pact appears in Aḥmad al-Dabbī's twelfth-century biographical dictionary, *Bughyat al-multamis fī ta'rīkh al-rijāl ahl al-Andalus*. The province of Tudmīr has been identified as Aurariola. The capital of the province appears to have been Orihuela.

for such arrangements. In reality, these agreements were made *ad hoc* at the discretion of field commanders, like ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, in response to practical conditions. The "Pact of ʿUmar" was a *post factum* juridical fantasy.[8]

In the tradition of nomadic, pastoral warriors, the early Muslim Arabs regarded their subjects essentially as a form of livestock. Despite the universality of the message of Islam, there was little will to allow non-Arabs to enjoy its spiritual or material benefits; the conquerors lived quarantined in camp-cities they set up alongside existing settlements, and did not actively encourage conversion (indeed, sometimes they forbade it). Nevertheless through intermarriage, clientage, and slavery, significant numbers of native peoples soon became Muslims, and came to identify with Arabic culture. Historians debate the pace of this process, but by 1000, a substantial proportion of the population of Syria, Palestine, and Sicily, and the overwhelming majority of al-Andalus, were Arabic-speaking Muslims. This is remarkable because there were so few conquerors; for example, according to tradition, ʾAmr b. al-ʾĀṣ invaded and conquered Egypt with only one thousand men. Even when one takes into account the Berber converts and clients who soon comprised the bulk of the Muslim forces that moved westwards, the invaders were never more than a tiny minority.

In sum, the great majority of Muslims who lived in formerly Christian-ruled lands were not "foreigners," but indigenous. And doubly so; not only were they descended from the pre-conquest inhabitants of their regions, but through their conversion they had transformed local Islamic culture. This came about as the result both of passive acculturation, and active advocacy, notably the *shuʿūbiyya* movement – a reaction against Arabic socio-cultural hegemony that peaked in the ninth century, and staked a claim for local Islamicate cultures. In Hungary, on the other hand, the Muslims were certainly newcomers, but no less so than the pagan Magyars, who became Hungary's Christians and from whom they were largely indistinguishable prior to 1000. In other words, it is less appropriate to think of the Arabo-Islamic expansion merely in terms of invasion (although it certainly involved invasions) as much as a process of transformation.

Through all of this, numerous non-Muslim communities persisted in these lands: Mozarab Christians in the Iberian peninsula, Greek Orthodox in Sicily, Egypt and the East, Coptic Christians in Egypt, Syriac Monophysites and other Christian denominations in the Levant, and important communities of Jews (including Rabbinical Jews, Karaites, and Samaritans) throughout these lands. This was a consequence not so much

[8] See A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects*, and M. Cohen, "What was the Pact of ʿUmar?"

of the "constitutional" rights *dhimmī*s enjoyed thanks to their status in the Qurʾān and Tradition, but because of the roles they played in Islamic polities and societies. Non-Muslim subjects were subject to special taxes and did not have the same rights as Muslims. Their services were provided and paid for by their own religious administrations, which were themselves under the control of the Muslim sovereign – a situation that the collaborationist *dhimmī* elite was quite comfortable with. Members of the non-Muslim elite were often placed in positions of great authority and power, in which they could not only assure the stability of their community, but their own prosperity. This was advantageous to Muslim rulers because, on the one hand, the minority officials had almost no capacity to rebel and were entirely dependent on their patron, and on the other, they provided a cover for unpopular policies that Muslim rulers might want to implement.

There may have been occasional bouts of persecution, and episodes of popular tension were sometimes expressed in the form of anti-Christian violence, but this was rare prior to the year 1000. If humor is any indication, even ordinary Muslims appreciated the advantages that diversity provided the societies they lived in. Hence, the thirteenth-century Persian joke: "In the month of Ramaḍān someone said to a shopkeeper, 'There's no business this month.' He answered, 'May God give long life to the Jews and the Christians!'"[9] True, the ethno-religious diversity of the Islamic world was not based on equality, and it should not be imagined nostalgically; but it functioned – at least until the second half of the eleventh century, when economic and social forces threatened the stability of the Islamic world, and when political control of the Caliphates and their successor states came increasingly into the hands of peoples from the peripheries of the Islamic world – the Saljūqs, Almoravids, Almohads and Franks – who had little patience for, or understanding of infidels, or the advantages of ethno-religious diversity.

A new world, 1000–50

And just as the our wise predecessors indicated to us, after seven hundred years having passed, the sect of Maomat, borne by the Saracens, would cease and be destroyed... (Anonymous, *Fuero* of Jaca (twelfth century)[10])

If in the 900s the three Caliphates of the Islamic world had reached their apogee, soon after the year 1000 they were all clearly in disarray. The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, the oldest, most prestigious and venerable, had been

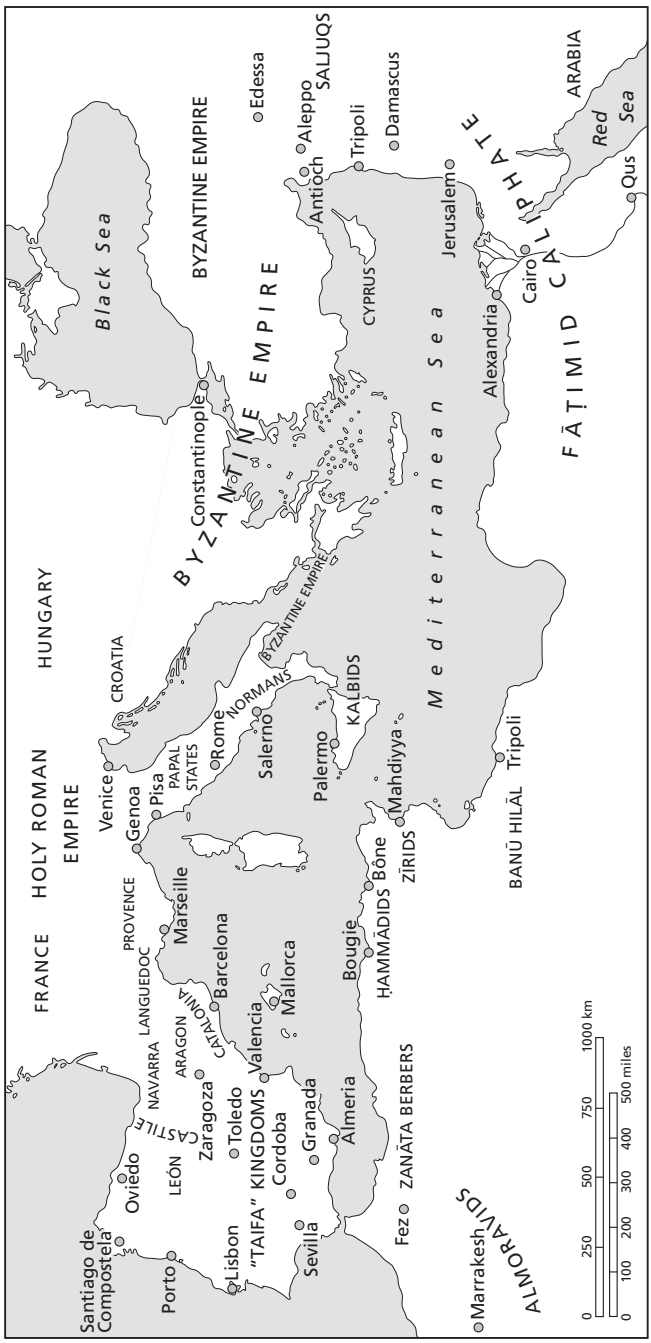
[9] B. Lewis, *Islam*, p. 282; see also B. Lewis and B.E. Churchill, *Islam*, p. 28.
[10] M. Molho, *Fuero de Jaca*, p. 174 {O: 19}.

drifting into decadence for some time, as its provinces, both far and near, gradually shook off the power of Baghdad, even if they maintained the pretense of its authority. Through this time the Caliphate presided over an incredible cultural, scientific, and technological *élan*, which drew together and transformed regions as diverse as Central and South Asia, the Mediterranean, and the southern fringes of the Sahara. By the late ninth century, however, the dynasty was in crisis, and the empire would only be saved by the ascent of the Būyid dynasty – Persian Shīʿī *condottieri* who seized power and ruled behind the façade of the now powerless caliphs. As it was transformed, the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate had effectively abandoned the relatively poor West, and reoriented itself towards Central and South Asia and beyond.

The Fāṭimids, the schismatic Ismāʿīlī dynasty that had seized Egypt in 969 and challenged ʿAbbāsid domination of the Arab heartlands, had built a prosperity based on its tremendous domestic output together with trade down the Nile corridor and into the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. However, Egypt too was in decline, having suffered under the misrule of the messianic al-Ḥākim (996–1021) and the incompetent al-Mustanṣir (1036–94), and was becoming increasingly dependent on foreign, slave soldiers. By the end of the century, both Ifrīqiya and Sicily had fallen away from Cairo.

In al-Andalus ("Islamic Spain"), the resolutely Sunnī Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba, which had been declared in 929 as a response to that of the Fāṭimids twenty years earlier, enjoyed a primacy that would scarcely outlive its founder, ʿAbd al- Raḥmān III. Under this first Caliph of the revived Umayyad dynasty, Córdoba established its hegemony over the Maghrib and commanded the lucrative gold trade originating beyond the Sahel and the Niger Delta. This funded a military that became the unrivaled power of the Western Mediterranean and kept the Christian fringes of the Iberian Peninsula firmly under its sway. By 978, however, real power was in the hands of al-Manṣūr – Muḥammad b. Abī ʿĀmir – a brilliant and unprincipled *parvenu* who ruled as dictator under the title of *ḥājib* ("chamberlain"), and brought ever-greater numbers of Berber tribesmen into al-Andalus to strengthen the military and undermine the Arabo-Andalusī elite. However, the center of this increasingly polarized society could not hold, and in 1008, only six years after his death, al-Andalus was plunged into *fitna*, or ethno-political civil war. It would be a generation before al-Andalus would re-emerge, now shattered into a score of petty sectarian principalities, the *taifa* kingdoms, each at war with each other, and most enjoying only the most tenuous authority over their subjects.

The mid eleventh century would bring the next stage of decadence and decline to the Caliphal world, in which political and military power across the *dār al-Islām* would be seized by "barbarians" from the fringes of the



Map 1 The Mediterranean, *c.* 1050