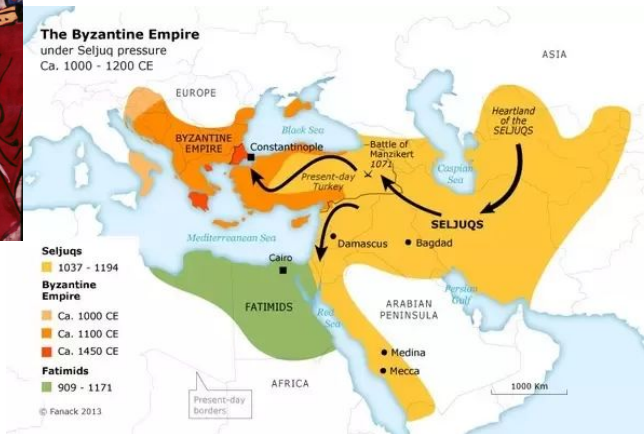


The Crusades: Are We Prisoners of Our Interreligious History?

Session 2

“Holy Land”



Questions for Today

Why do we call a certain part of the Eastern Mediterranean “the Holy Land”?

Is this a biblical conception? Is this a theological principle?

In what sense is this land “holy”? What makes it holy?

What are the boundaries of “holy land”?

Where did we get these ideas?

HINT: A lot of this goes back to the Crusades.





The Crusades and Their Origins: A Geographical Timeline

Keep an eye on the Eastern Mediterranean.

- How do the borders of empires and religions erratically pass over it?
- Who “owns” it when?
- How do they perceive it geographically and theologically?

~ 300 C.E.

The Jewish Diaspora



Jews in the Roman Empire (c. A.D. 300) ▲

~ 600
C.E.

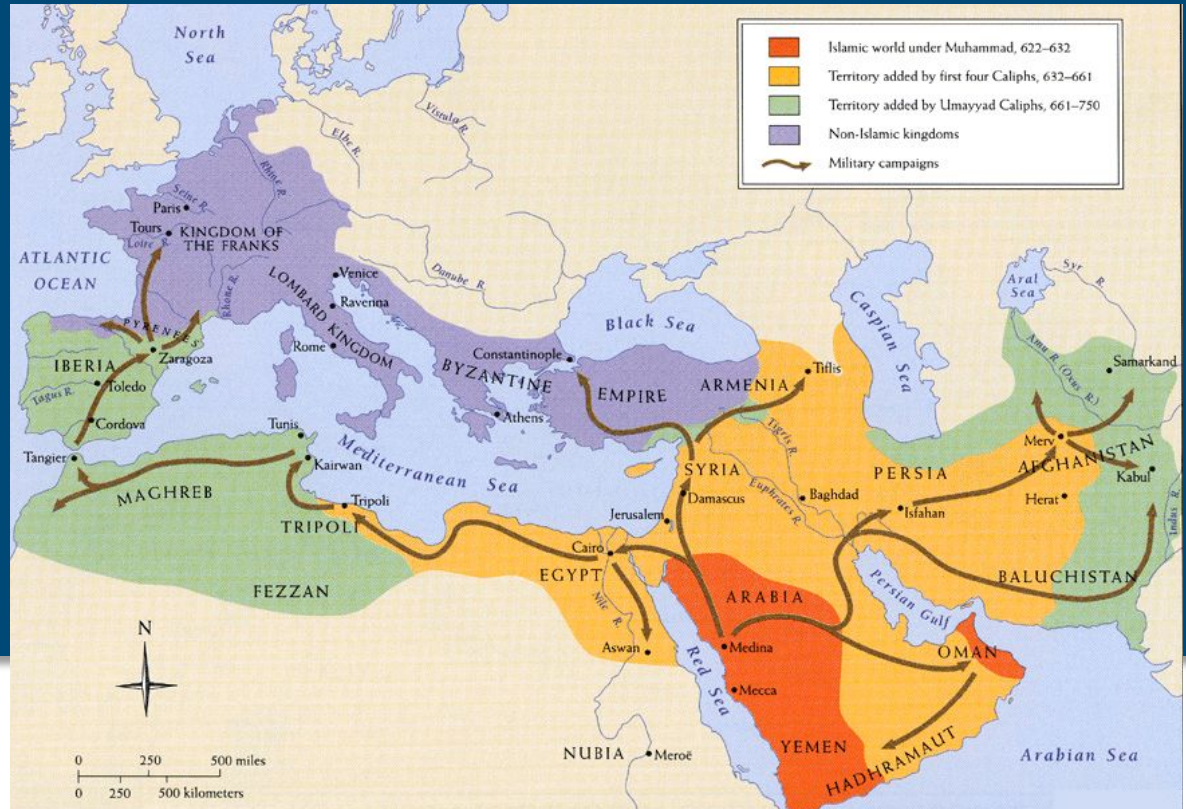


Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and
Sassanid (Persian) Empire (~600 C.E.)

632-750
C.E.



Dome of the Rock, built 691-692



The Arab (Islamic?) Conquests

1054
C.E.



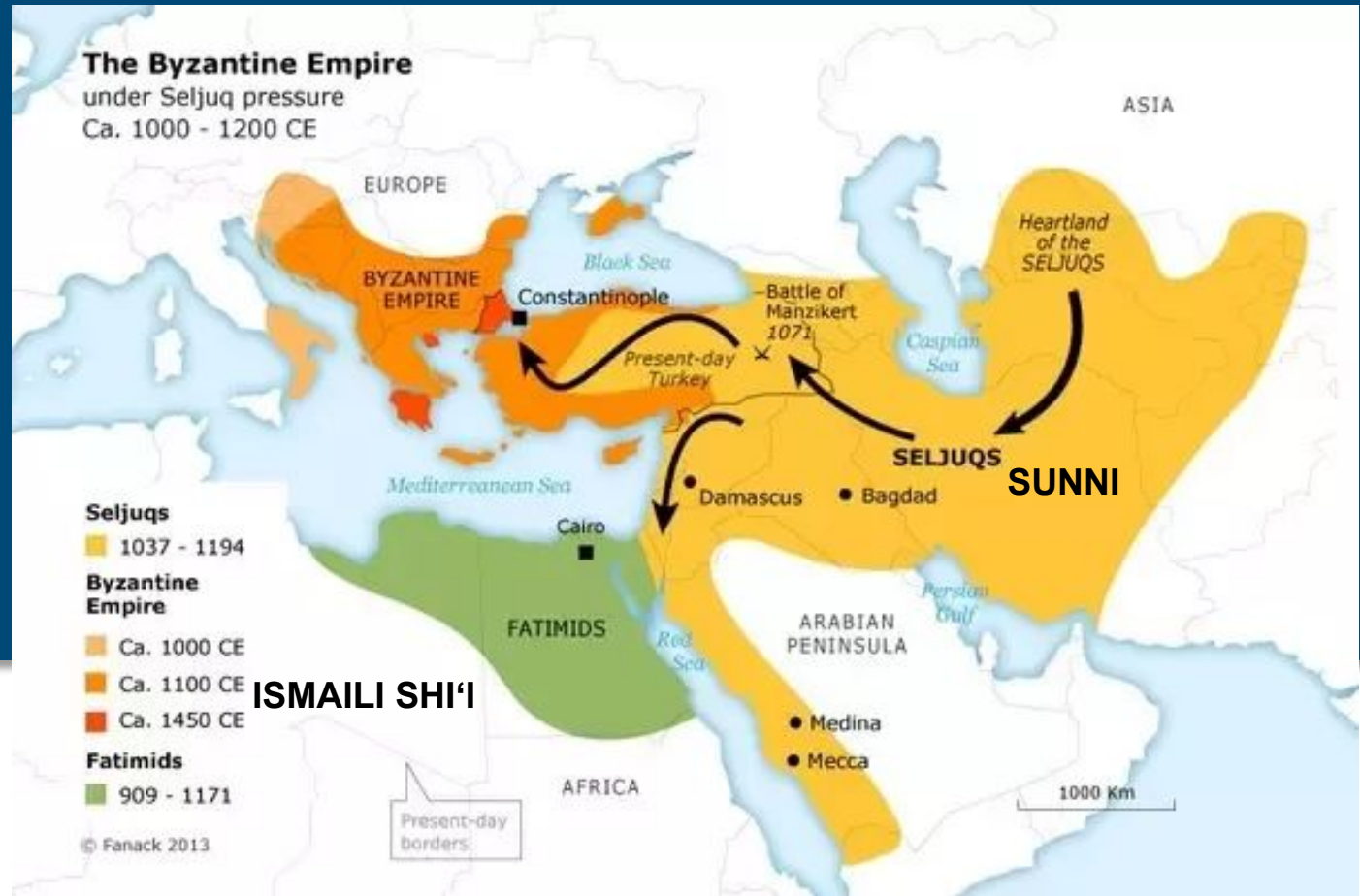
The greatly reduced Byzantine Empire and the East-West Church Schism

~1095 C.E.

“Europe”



~ 1095 C.E.



Islamic Empires and the Byzantines

1095
C.E.

Pope Urban II and the Council of Clermont



New Ideas:

- A plenary indulgence (removal of temporal punishment for all sins) to those who fight the Turks to retake Jerusalem.
- The presence and rulership of non-Christians in “holy Jerusalem” and other sacred sites are desecrating Christianity.

Urban II's Speech (varying accounts)

"O, race of Franks, race from across the mountains, race chosen and beloved of God... A race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race... has invaded the lands of the Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage, and fire.

"Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights. This the Redeemer of the human race has made illustrious by his advent, has beautified by his presence, has consecrated by his suffering, has redeemed by his death, has glorified by burial. This royal city, therefore, situated at the center of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathen."

-Robert the Monk

"The Turks, a Persian people, have attacked [your brethren dwelling in the East]... By seizing more and more of the lands of the Christians... they have killed and captured many, have destroyed the churches, and have devastated the kingdom of God.

"Men of all ranks, knights as well as foot-soldiers, rich as well as poor... hasten to exterminate this vile race from the lands of your brethren... Christ commands it."

-Fulcher of Chartres



1096-1102
C.E.

Massacres
of Jews on
the way to
the 1st
Crusade

◆ Massacres of
Jews
1096 - 1102

~ River



a.k.a. “The Rhineland Massacres”

1096-1099
C.E.

Routes of the 1st Crusade



Ironically, the Egyptian Fatimid (Shi'a) Empire had just conquered Jerusalem in 1098 from the Seljuk Turks (Sunni) Empire, so the Crusaders conquer it from the short-lived Fatimids' rule.

Our leaders decided to beleaguer the city with siege machines, so that we might enter and worship the Saviour at the Holy Sepulchre... the pilgrims entered the city, pursuing and killing the Saracens up to the Temple of Solomon, where the enemy gathered in force. The battle raged throughout the day, so that the Temple was covered in their blood... our men seized great numbers, both men and women, either killing them or keeping them captive, as they wished...

1099 C.E.



Later, all of our people went to the Sepulchre of our Lord, rejoicing and weeping for joy, and they rendered up the offering that they owed.

- Gesta

**“Taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders,
15th July 1099”**

by Émile Signol (1847)

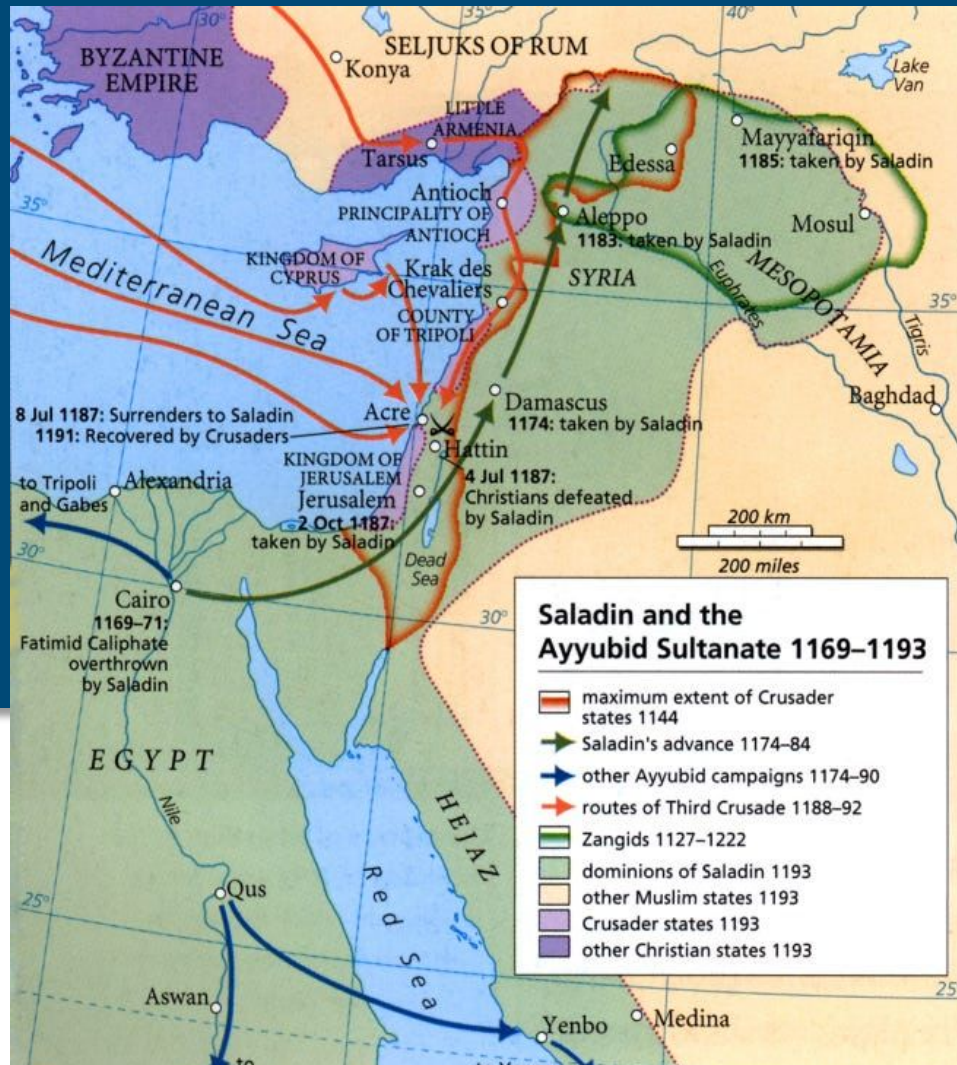
1099-1187 C.E.

The Crusader Kingdoms



1169-1189 C.E.

Saladin's Reconquest and New Empire



1190 C.E.

Crusader Kingdoms after Saladin's Reconquest





1202-1204 C.E.

1291 C.E Acre falls ending
the Crusader States

FOURTH CRUSADE

Chaos
Ensues



LATER CRUSADES

Discussion Guidelines

- We value everyone's voices, so please speak up and allow space for others to do the same.
- Speak from your own experiences; don't try to tell someone else's story.
- Listen to learn, not to respond.
- Remember that we all come from different identities and backgrounds, so please expect a difference of perspective and respect others' rights to have opinions and views that differ from your own. Don't invalidate others' experiences.
- In order to promote an open, honest exchange, please respect confidentiality within the small group. Identifying stories should stay, but lessons can leave.
- This is a learning space, so ask questions and feel free to participate even if you don't have all the answers.



Breakout Room 1

Why do you think that the idea of “The Holy Land” became so important?

What does it mean to own “holy land”? Does it become less holy if the wrong people own it?

When is land more valuable than people and vice versa?



Different Conceptions of “Holy Land” - Jews, Christians, & Muslims

“Holy Land” - A Jewish View

Promised or Holy?

וְנָחַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדָמַת
הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

The LORD will take Judah to
Himself as His portion in **the Holy
Land**, and He will choose
Jerusalem once more.

Zechariah 2:16

The Three Oaths (*Ketubot* 111b):

What are the Three Oaths? One, that Israel should not go up [to the land] in a wall [בְּחוֹמָה]; two, that Israel should not rebel against the nations of the world; three the Holy One adjured the nations that they would not oppress Israel too much [יִתְרַם מְדַאֵי].

!
רַץ הַזֹּאת אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:

At length, Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. God will surely take notice of you and bring you up from this land to the land promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

Genesis 50:24



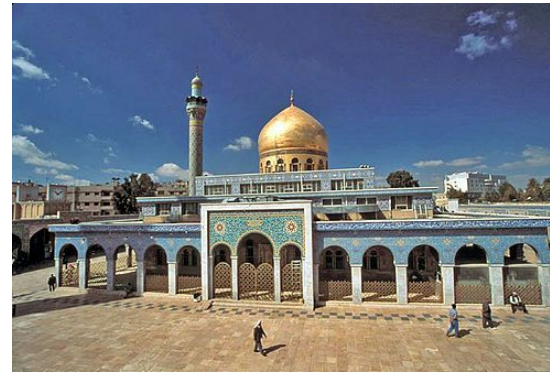
“Holy Land” - A Christian View

- The phrase “holy land” does not occur in the New Testament, and the early church (much of which was living in Israel & Judea) did not seem to consider that land particularly holy.
- The Gospels render the stories of Jesus living in Galilee/Israel without much sense of the geography being sacred.
- The Book of Hebrews encourages Christians to be like Abraham’s family and “desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” where God “has prepared a city for them.” (ch. 11)
- Christian use of the phrase/concept “holy land” tends to emerge the more detached Christianity becomes from Judaism.
- Christian reverence for the land, from the start, has little to do with geographical boundaries or with promises to Abraham or Moses, and almost everything to do with Jesus - he sacralized the land, and the shrines and memories of him reflect his holiness.

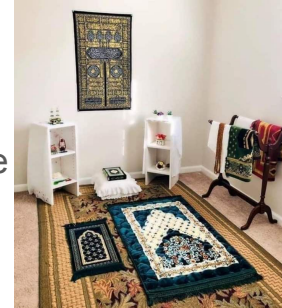


Interior - Church of the Holy Sepulchre

“Holy Land” - A Muslim View



- Islam values Jerusalem as a sacred space, but there is no evidence within Islamic texts and traditions that Muslims were concerned with living there.
- The term “Jerusalem (*al-Quds*)” does not appear in the Qur’an. The Qur’an makes references to the concept of a “holy” space, but in a way that is ambiguous; it does not specify a geographic location.
 - “And when he came to it (the burning bush), we called him, “O Moses, I am your Lord. Take off your shoes for you are in the holy valley of Tuwa.” (Q 20:11-23)
- The Muslim traditions (Hadith) reference Jerusalem in texts concerned with religious ritual and devotion—not about physically being there.
 - “The Holy House (*al-bayt al-maqdis*) and Qibla
- “Holy Land” is a fluid concept within Islam and in Muslim practice. There is a broad idea of what constitutes a sacred space.



Breakout Room 2

Who decides what makes a land holy?

What happens if we have different conceptions of a land as holy?

Are there interreligious possibilities to reimagine our notions of "holy land?"

