

Introduction

Islam's recent arrival in Europe by means of migration, violence and media images has kindled a wave of interest in Europe's past and present relations with Islam. Publications on these subjects are prolific, so why another book on 'Islam in Europe'? There are three reasons: to provide the first comprehensive overview of the entire thirteen-century history of Islam in Europe from 700 CE until now (most existing literature covers only a part of this history); to identify the role of 'Islam' during this period; and to look into the impact of this long history on the current discourse and situation of Islam in Europe. My endeavour is to present a framework by which we can conceptualize the notion of 'Islam in Europe' in time (the eighth to the twenty-first centuries CE) and space ('Europe'), and that will allow us to sample and interconnect the enormous corpus of existing knowledge on Islam in Europe and to put it in chronological and thematic order. This framework should provide the reader with novel insights into the history of Islam in Europe.

Given the comprehensiveness of this book, its approach is by default multidisciplinary. The secondary literature used to write it is that of specialists of regions (Europe, Spain, Sicily, the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire, the Mediterranean), periods (Middle Ages, Renaissance, colonial period, modern Europe), and specific disciplinary subjects (religion, economics, social sciences, political sciences, law, art, agriculture). The ambitious set-up that squeezes thirteen centuries into a single volume requires a clear perspective on what story this book wants to tell, how that story is told, and why it needs to be told in the first place. These questions will be addressed in the following.

1. The Link to Today

In discussions nowadays on the role of Islam in Europe, direct or indirect references are often made to events of the past that allude to a history of perpetual conflict whereby 'Europe' and 'Islam' stand for entities that collide because, according to some observers, they represent different value systems or, in the eyes of others, because Islam is by nature aggressive and has put Europe on the defensive ever since

the Arab Muslims rode out of the Arab Peninsula in the seventh century in search of conquest. To the proponents of these views the current presence of large numbers of Muslims in Europe is a reason for concern, and they justify their anxieties with references to history.¹ There are also other observers, however, who hold a much more positive historical view on Islamic-European relations, referring to the knowledge that has passed on from the medieval Islamic civilization to Europe: their emphasis is on the intellectual interaction between the two realms rather than on their belligerent relations.²

Such opposing views are not reserved for political debates, but have also permeated academic discussions. Two eminent contemporary scholars of Islamic history, the American professors Bernard Lewis and Richard Bulliet, provide a case in point.³ Bulliet argues that Islam and Christianity share the same cradle of a common civilization from which they parted “as siblings” in the sixteenth century, while Lewis asserts that the two civilizations have always been at loggerheads. Bulliet stresses the similarities in the developments and experiences of the two civilizations, while Lewis emphasizes their differences. Bulliet refers to religion as only one of the many factors that shaped Muslim identity, while Lewis puts religion at centre stage for understanding the Muslim. And Bulliet argues for a legacy of a Christian-Islamic heritage, while Lewis differentiates between an Islamic civilization, on the one hand, and a Judeo-Christian civilization, on the other. Lewis’ view has gained popularity since the attacks of 9/11 in 2001 and the subsequent terrorist attacks in Europe, and seems to be corroborated by the mounting reports on the apparent lack of integration of Muslim migrants in Western European societies. Bulliet’s view, on the other hand, is shared particularly by many historians of the Middle Ages who point to the parallels between the two civilizations and the ways in which Europe is indebted to Islamic civilization.

As every historian will confirm, history can provide source material that may lead to very different interpretations. In the case of Islam, however, historical facts and terminology are not always a source of academic interplay between rival historians, but are sometimes rewritten in public discourse or, worse, become a demagogic tool against Muslim Europeans. One example is the claim that Europeans are part of a ‘Judeo-Christian civilization’ (sometimes with the addition of ‘Humanist’) which, as we have seen, is used as a premise by Bernard Lewis but is a notion challenged by Richard Bulliet. In 2005, however, this academic debate spilled over into political reality when, in the final drafting phase of the new European Union Convention, known as the ‘EU constitution’, there was deliberation about introducing this term in the preamble.⁴ The implicit aim of this political manoeuvring was to put up a

wall against the alleged Islamicization of Europe by its expanding Muslim population. The proposed amendment did not come to pass, which was probably the smart thing to do, because such an identity-marker would not only deny the influences of Islamic civilization, but also the value of Greek, Roman, Ottoman and all other non-Judeo and non-Christian elements that have contributed to European civilization.

Collective Memory

The history (by which I mean the amalgam of transnational and transcultural, political, social, economic, intellectual and other forms and disciplines of history) of 'Islam in Europe' provides, from the perspective of current European affairs, therefore, an interesting example of what has been called 'collective memory.' This term received much attention from historians in the 1990s and consequently developed into multiple meanings, but for the purpose of this book we will use this notion to mean the ways in which people construct a conception of the past, and from which they derive an awareness of their present sense of unity and peculiarity.⁵ A collective memory provides a people with a common identity that can be traced back into history, regardless of the accuracy of the historical events or the causal connection of these events to the identity of the people holding the collective memory. The concept of a Judeo-Christian heritage to underpin European unity is a perfect illustration of this. In a similar vein Tony Judt analysed how the memory of the wartime experience in continental Europe was "distorted, sublimated, and appropriated, [and] bequeathed to the postwar era an identity that was fundamentally false, dependent upon the erection of an unnatural and unsustainable frontier between past and present in European public memory".⁶

An important aspect of this collective memory, therefore, is the distortion of history into mythology or imagery. Several contemporary medieval historians have made interesting compilations and analyses of the European medieval image of Islam as a threat, whether as a religion, a belligerent ideology or a dominating culture, and argued how this imagery has continued into the present age.⁷ The argument these historians by implication make is that present-day Western (and in particular West European) anxieties about Islam are related not only to the recent phenomenon of Muslim immigration and Islamic terrorism, but also to a perpetuating image that is centuries old, an image that often has little to do with reality but all the more with the perception of the Muslim as the embodiment of everything that the Westerner is not.

What, then, are the historical experiences that Europe has had with Islam, and, more importantly, in what form are they lodged in today's collective memory? An example is the Frankish victory at Poitiers against one of the many plunder raids conducted by Spanish Moors: in European collective memory this battle has acquired the historical significance of halting the Muslim onslaught on Europe and consequently saving Europe from Islamic domination. In chapter one we will discuss the historical evidence that proves this analysis to be incorrect. Equally interesting is the obverse of this same question: what are the 'memory holes', or those historical experiences that have been erased from or not admitted into European collective memory? An example is the ample study of the six centuries of Muslim life in Catholic Spain as opposed to the near lack of such interest in the six centuries of Muslim life in Catholic Poland and Lithuania.⁸ Another example is the European collective memory of the Barbary corsairs and the hundreds of thousands of Christian slaves they kept, while neglecting the fact that enslavement of Muslims by means of piracy was conducted on a similar scale by the Christian European side.⁹ This is not to say that such omissions in our collective memory or in our academic interest happen deliberately; but it is in itself interesting to note that one is selective when discussing 'Islam in Europe'. In this book we therefore want to provide a story of Islam in Europe that is as comprehensive as possible. The purpose is not to single out the distortions and the omissions in our current collective memory of Islam in Europe; the endeavour to give the full story will itself highlight these omissions as the reader may be surprised with events, facts and numbers that were hitherto unknown to him or her.

Of paramount importance when telling these stories and histories is to be aware of who told them then, who tells them now, and who they are addressed to, because the collective memory of a people will resonate with certain stories, but not with others. To Catholics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the 'Turk' was the great enemy, while many Protestants saw more similarities with Islam than with Catholicism and some Protestants even claimed to prefer Ottoman rule to that of the Catholics. Nowadays, on the other hand, most Protestants will feel closer to Catholicism than to Islam. In the seventeenth century, the fall of Vienna might have been a disaster for the Holy Roman Empire, but such event would have been applauded by the Empire's enemy France. Nowadays, on the other hand, Frenchmen may concur with the view that the breaking of the Ottoman siege of Vienna saved Europe from Islamic domination.

This coexistence of different collective memories in the past is recurring again in present-day Europe, not only because of different experiences in the various geographical parts of Europe, but also because of the presence of a relatively large num-

ber of immigrants of foreign origin, many of whom are Muslim. Even those among them who are born, raised and educated in Europe have inherited a collective memory that has stored different images, events and notions from that of their fellow Europeans. For instance, when mentioning the battles of Poitiers and Vienna where respectively Moorish and Ottoman armies were defeated, many of my students of Dutch origin nod their heads in recognition of these names, while my Dutch Muslim students of foreign origin will give me blank stares. Conversely, when I mention the battle of Hittin, where Saladin brought defeat to the Crusader armies, my Muslim students look up in recognition while the others do not. The different reactions are remarkable given the fact that all these students have taken the same Dutch state exams, and none of these historical events is part of the Dutch school curriculum. Collective memory, therefore, is powerful, perhaps even more so than acquired knowledge.

2. 'Islam' and 'Europe'

A Methodological Framework

Based on these considerations, the topic of 'Islam in Europe' is more than a story told by stringing together historical events. It is a story about us, Europeans, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, of native or foreign origin, and how we struggle with our past and our present in the continent called Europe, how we shape our identity and, particularly, the uneasy relationship between who we are and who we want to be. In the many years of studying this topic and engaging in public and academic debates on it, I became convinced that the only way to conceptualize the notion of 'Islam in Europe' is to apply a strict framework of notions set within certain timelines that allow us with each event in each epoch to ask ourselves the basic questions: What is the nature of the interaction between 'Europe' and 'Islam'? What do we mean by Islam in this particular instance? To what extent do Muslims or Islam play a role in the events before us? What is real and what is imaginary? The aim of this framework is, in short, to structure our thoughts and arguments when discussing 'Islam in Europe' and to avoid being drawn into the myriad of events and details of thirteen centuries of interaction between Europe and Islam.¹⁰

In brief, the structure of the framework is as follows: we limit ourselves to the European perspective on Islam, and from that perspective look at thirteen centuries of interaction between Europe and Islam, whereby we can divide this long period

into five periods, and for each period provide an analysis of that interaction based on certain categories of interaction and on a limited number (three) of approaches. This all sounds quite abstract, so let us elaborate these different composites of the framework.

First and foremost, it must be emphasized that the object of inquiry in this book is the European perspective on its history with Muslims and Islam. We will, so to speak, pitch our camera on the European continent and from that angle look at European interactions with Muslims and Islam. The Muslim reactions and experiences with Europeans, although equally interesting, will be a story left for others to tell.¹¹ Also, we will take the 'in' of Islam in Europe quite literally: European relations with Muslims and Islam will be discussed only insofar as they take place on the European continent. European experiences during colonial times with Muslim societies in North Africa or Asia will play only a minor role in this book.

Next we need to be very clear on the terminology that we will use. So far we have used the terms 'Islam' and 'Europe' because they have become quite common in political and public debates of today: 'Europe' is under threat of 'Islam', 'Islam' is an obstacle to integration, 'Islam' is anathema to 'European culture', 'Europe' is indebted to 'Islamic civilization', etc. Even the title of this book alludes to a self-evidence that is actually unwarranted, because the use of the two terms 'Europe' and 'Islam' as individual entities or notions is a highly problematic representation of the interaction (or confrontation) between the two. A clarification of these two terms is therefore in order.

Europe

Defining 'Europe' is the typical headache hurdle for every politician or academic. If one conceives Europe as the heir to the Christian commonwealth of the later Middle Ages, then the question arises how one is to consider Christian Orthodoxy and its geographical realm that extends into Russia and the Middle East. If, on the other hand, one is to conceive of Europe in a modern setting, one may consider an economical-legal entity like the European Union or the geographical and political-legal Council of Europe. Both have their disadvantages for what we want to do here, however: the European Union is geographically too narrow as it does not contain countries like Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Albania, Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina; and the Council of Europe as a frame of reference for 'Europe' is geographically too wide because it includes countries as far east as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation.

For the purpose of this book we will first define Europe in accordance with the geographical area bordered by waterways, that is the Polar Sea in the north, the Atlantic in the west, the Mediterranean in the south and the Black Sea and the rivers Dnieper and Volga in the east. We will further use terminology like ‘western’ or ‘south-eastern’ Europe with the explicit mention that these are not political but mere geographical indications.

This definition has as a result that, on the one hand, we will restrict our discussion of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires to their dominions in south-eastern Europe (the ‘Balkans’) and not those in the Middle East and, on the other hand, that we will include in our account the stories of north-eastern European countries like the Baltic states. These and other eastern European countries have had long encounters with Islam and Muslims, as we will see later, and we have already observed that these interactions have received little academic attention from Western historians. This shows that ‘Islam in Europe’ is mostly studied and reflected upon from a western Euro-centred point of view – a perspective that is in need of revision if we truly want to do justice to the concept of ‘Islam in Europe’.

In addition to Europe as a geographical area we will also consider Europe in its capacity as a single civilization, or a unity of values, or any other uniform identity for its inhabitants. However, as we will see in the following chapters, the unity of these values or identities was not always concrete, let alone existent, as they changed through the centuries. Europe has been perceived in the eyes of its inhabitants as a Christian Commonwealth, gradually transformed into the notion of a ‘European Commonwealth’ (a term coined by Edmund Burke in the late eighteenth century), and from the nineteenth century onwards Europe was equated by its inhabitants with the highest form of civilization in any sense if its meaning – legally, politically, culturally, technically. Rather than trying to come here to a definition of European identity, we will regard the situation and state of mind of ‘Europe’ in accordance with each epoch.

Islam

The term ‘Islam’ is as problematic as ‘Europe’, as it often includes several representations of Islam that may be different or even mutually exclusive. In this book we conceptualize the term ‘Islam’ in four meanings: its adherents, the Muslims; Islam as a culture and civilization; Islam as a religion; and Islam as an image.

First, Islam may represent its adherents, the Muslims, either as powers or as individuals and communities. The presence of Muslim powers within Europe has

been longstanding: 800 years in Spain, 500 years in Greece, 300 years in the Balkans, and more than a century in countries like Sicily, Hungary, Romania. Muslim people have sometimes been present longer, for they often stayed on even when Muslim sovereignty had ended. As subjects under non-Muslim rule, Muslims lived in Spain for 800 years (and an additional 100 years in secrecy) and in Sicily 400 years, and they still live in Lithuania and Poland where they have been for over 600 years, as they do in most Balkan countries where they have lived for more than 500 years. In other places, such as Sicily and Spain, on the other hand, the entire Muslim populations have been expelled or forced to convert, while certain elements of their civilization and culture have remained after their disappearance (think of architecture, language, music, customs, food). Since the late sixteenth century very few – if any – Muslims have resided in the European region west of the line Warsaw-Vienna-Trieste (a region that we will hereafter refer to as ‘western Europe’). This changed with the large-scale immigration of Muslims in the twentieth century, particularly from the 1970s onwards.

It must be kept in mind that the notion of Muslim as used here is nothing more than an identity marker used by either the European or the Muslim, and does not necessarily relate to the degree of religiousness of that particular person. This brings us to yet another problem of terminology, since from a historical point of view the term ‘Muslim’ is a novelty. During the Middle Ages reference was made to Saracens, and in Spain more specifically to Moors.* Europeans in the Middle Ages also used names like ‘Hagarenes’ or ‘Ishmaelites’, referring to the Arab-Muslim claim to be Abraham’s offspring through the line of Hagar and her son Ishmael. Later, with the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the commonly used term was ‘Turk’ (‘turning Turk’ was the expression for conversion to Islam). During colonial times, Europeans sometimes referred to Muslims as Musulmans, but more often as Mohammedans, or followers of Mohammad, erroneously analogous to the term ‘Christians’ as the followers of Christ. And until twenty or thirty years ago, Muslims in Europe were spoken of, and spoke of themselves, in ethnic and national terms: Arabs and Asians, Turks and Pakistanis, Kurds and Berber. The term ‘Muslim’ is only of very recent date, and it is therefore historically awkward to use twenty-first century terminology to describe people five, ten or thirteen centuries ago, when in those times different, and

* While the etymology of Moors is ‘dark people’, the name Saracene has been given different origins, ranging from the Arabic ‘sharqiyyin’ (‘Easterner’) to the Greek ‘skene’ (‘tent dweller’) or the Greek ‘sara kene’, meaning ‘empty Sarah’, referring to Abraham’s wife Sarah who gave birth to Isaac, the founding father of the Israelites, and who was therefore not related – ‘empty’ – to Ishmael, who was fathered by Abraham with his slave woman Hagar, and who is claimed by the Arabs as their founding father.

mostly non-religious, terminology was used. Still, even though we might try to be historically true in terminology, references to 'Muslims' cannot be avoided.

The second representation of 'Islam' is that of a culture and civilization. We can observe this in the institutions of typical Islamic nature, either as physical buildings like mosques, hospitals and *caravanserais*, or as non-physical institutions such as forms of government, judiciary, or a legal or social system. In addition to these institutions, Islam as a culture or civilization can be found in the cultural and scientific achievements of the Muslims, such as irrigation and navigation techniques, sciences, arts. Islam in this sense can also exist long after Muslim presence has disappeared, either as a heritage of forlorn times, as is the case in Spain and Sicily where tour guides advertise 'Islamic civilization', or as a legacy of arts, sciences and technologies that over the centuries have been adopted and assimilated by Europeans.

The third representation of 'Islam' is that of the religion itself, meaning the theological doctrines that can be found in scripture and texts, and the religious practices of Muslims. The historian Hudgson in his seminal *Venture of Islam* had introduced the term 'Islamdom' and the adjective 'Islamicate' to denote Islam as a culture and civilization, separate from the notion of 'Islam' as religious doctrine.¹² Unfortunately, this useful distinction never really caught on. And indeed, one of the unfortunate effects of post-9/11 developments is that the understanding of 'Islam' and the way it is being discussed has become reduced to that of religious doctrine – not only in the West, but also in the Muslim world. By consequence, the religion of Islam is by many considered essential to understanding the Muslim, disregarding all the other aspects that have shaped the identity, character and mind-set of this same Muslim. Equating Muslims with the theological tenets of Islam is even more problematic if we want to make sense of the past thirteen centuries of European interaction with 'Islam', as we will see in the coming chapters.

Finally, there is a fourth notion of Islam, which is its imaginary representation in the minds of either Muslims or Europeans. Such representation may be emanant, in that it reflects something 'out there' like a historical civilization, an apocalyptic threat or a great religion. But more often the representation is immanent in that it reflects a notion of Islam that relates to people personally. For Muslims such immanent representation may take on the form of identity: being a 'Muslim' makes one part of a greater identity called 'Islam', which may take on all kinds of forms, ranging from a great civilization to a global religious community. For non-Muslim Europeans, on the other hand, 'Islam' often takes on the representation of a photo negative of themselves and as such constitutes what is also called the European Other. We will elaborate on this below, since the concept of 'Othering' is one of the central themes in this book.

3. Europe's Interaction with Islam

While these descriptions of the terms 'Islam' and 'Europe' may give us a fair impression of what we are talking about, we must now address their interaction, because that is the main focus of this book: Islam in Europe is not a static situation, but an interaction of the two. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapters, from a European perspective much of the interaction with 'Islam' took place on the level of knowledge, ideas or images, and this was mostly done without any physical Muslim counterpart. In other words, talking and writing about 'Mahomet' and the 'Turk' was mostly done by Europeans who had had no encounters with Muslims themselves. In modern times we see a similar phenomenon, with Europeans conducting heated discussions about Islamic theology or the presence of mosques or Muslims' integration in European societies, but engaging remarkably little with the Muslims themselves, even though they are now physically present. The distinction between the physical encounter with 'Islam', on the one hand, and talking and thinking about Islam, on the other, is therefore essential when discussing Islam in Europe. In the framework of this book we will treat these two forms of interaction separately under the titles of what I suggest calling 'physical' and 'virtual' Islam, respectively.

'Physical' and 'Virtual' Islam

'Physical Islam' is represented by the mere presence of people called Muslims, on the one hand, and the visibility of their presence that can be identified as 'Islamic', on the other. The visibility shows in behaviour of Muslims that can somehow be denoted as, to use Hodgson's terminology, either religiously 'Islamic' or culturally 'Islamicate'. The visibility further shows in the Muslim's material expressions of his or her Islam, such as clothes, arts and buildings, but also the records of intellectual and cultural life and ideas, ranging from the medieval philosophical texts to modern rap clips on youtube. To bring some order to the many manifestations of physical Islam over a period of thirteen centuries, we will limit ourselves in this book to the following forms of interaction: armed conflict like war, raids, piracy; trade and diplomacy; government and rule; and coexistence within a single society (including discrimination and persecution). Interestingly, travel and exploration is not one of these categories: whereas Europeans have travelled extensively into Muslim countries for a variety of reasons, Muslims have done almost no travelling into Europe, for reasons that will be explained in due course.

‘Virtual Islam’ comprises all immaterial or non-physical aspects of Islam, such as the tenets of Islamic orthodoxy and the culture, ideas, messages and knowledge. Put differently, virtual Islam is all manifestations of Islam that are transmitted by the physical forms of Islam. Virtual Islam therefore also includes the images and visions of what is considered ‘Islamic’, by Muslims as well as non-Muslims, including imagined or real notions of conflicts between what is considered ‘Islamic’ and ‘European’. For example, a mosque pertains to physical Islam, while the different meanings it may convey – religious grandeur, Muslim domination, symbol of piety – are what we call virtual Islam. In this book we will discuss the following domains of interaction related to virtual Islam: culture (including science and scholarship); the study of Islam; and issues of imagery and identity.

The merit of the distinction between physical and virtual Islam is that it allows us to distinguish between the neutral observation of physical appearances, behaviour and expressions of Muslims, on the one hand, and the assessment of the interpretations, meanings and values thereof, on the other. For instance, the presence of Muslims in contemporary European societies is often expressed in terms of numbers, with the implicit warning that these numbers may reach dangerous levels: “[b]y 2050, the number of Muslims in Europe will reach 20 per cent!”¹³ Similarly, the building of mosques, and in particular their height and ‘Oriental’ architecture, has received severe criticism in contemporary Europe. The distinction between physical and virtual Islam allows us to deconstruct the multiple issues that are condensed in these controversies. From the perspective of physical Islam, we may observe that there is the physical presence of a certain number of people called Muslims that live and work in European societies, manifest their religious beliefs by means of dress or behaviour, and establish certain institutions like a mosque or a *sharia* council. From the perspective of virtual Islam, on the other hand, we will be able to attribute meaning to these manifestations: on what basis are people identified by themselves or others as ‘Muslim’, how do Europeans form their opinions about these ‘Muslims’, what are the reasons for supporting or criticizing an ‘Oriental’ style in modern European mosque architecture?

We have seen that there is already a considerable volume of academic literature on European writings and representations about Muslims and Islam. I will gratefully make use of their findings, but will widen the scope of ‘interaction’ by posing the question how the themes of this European discourse relate to the practices and experiences of Europeans with Islam and Muslims. The long European history of talking and writing about Muslims, their civilization and their religion is one thing, but the history of Europeans interacting with Muslims through war,

diplomacy or by living in the same city is quite another. The two influence each other, of course, but also very often do not. We will see that interaction with Muslims themselves ('physical Islam'), on the one hand, and images and discussions of Muslims and their religion ('virtual Islam'), on the other, often run on parallel but separate tracks.

In addition, rather than looking into a specific period, we will look into these interactions over a timeline of thirteen centuries, to see if there are any patterns that reflect on the situation of today. To do so, we will make use of a chronological narrative, so that we can see whether there is a continuation, accumulation or discontinuation of certain kinds of interactions, images, and the like.

Five Periods

We will see in the next chapters that the position of the Muslim as well as the image of Islam has undergone all kinds of metamorphoses during the thirteen centuries of interaction with Europe. The Muslim has acted on the European stage as a ruler and as a subject, as the antichrist and as an ally, corsair and tradesman, slave and master, terrorist and fellow citizen. The image of Islam has varied accordingly, as a religion that was feared as an enemy or embraced as a partner against heretic Christians, despised as an abomination or admired as a civilization, as a source of violence and of social civility, and studied for missionary, academic, colonial or security purposes. Whether we can speak of a continuing story of Islam in Europe that can be extrapolated into our present age is a question we will leave for discussion in the epilogue.

What we can say beforehand, however, is that the European attitudes and experiences vis-à-vis Muslims and Islam were being shaped by internal European experiences rather than by external Islamic influences. This is in no way meant to argue that Muslims and Islam were mere passive objects of European actions and experiences. On the contrary: Muslims in many instances played a very active role and at times determined the agenda of European history, driven by religious, belligerent or cultural motives. These facts obviously are of huge importance and will be given due attention, but the main objective of this book is the analysis of the interaction by Europeans with the manifestations of Islam in Europe. From that perspective it is my contention that these interactions can be mostly explained by the state of affairs within Europe and the ensuing European mind-set at a given time in its history.

Based on that premise, we can discern five periods, each characterized by specific European relations with and attitudes toward Muslims and Islam: Uncivilized Eu-

rope (700–1000), Crusading Europe (1000–1500), Divided Europe (1500–1700), Powerful Europe (1700–1950), and Struggling Europe (1950–now). These periods are admittedly artificial and simplistic, and their names are rather provocative, but it serves our purpose of highlighting how the situation of Europeans at certain times shaped their relations with Islam. We will use this periodization to structure this book, by describing each period in a separate chapter. The chapters will be further divided into three sections: the first will ‘set the stage’ with a brief overview of the major events and characteristics of that period, followed by a section on European interaction with physical Islam and one on European interaction with virtual Islam.

Three Themes: Religion, Toleration, Othering

So far, we have made the discussion of the thirteen centuries of Islam in Europe manageable by dividing it up into periods, and further into the domains of physical and virtual Islam. The final part of this book’s framework is the use of a specific scope to discuss the historical material. We will do so by using three interrelated approaches that will form the themes of our narrative. Given the subject-matter of this book – ‘Islam’ – we will raise the question of the religiosity of events and actions relating to ‘Muslims’ or ‘Islam’. Religion is therefore the first theme. The other two themes are related to the notion of interaction: in the case of physical interaction of people we will face the question of (in)tolerance, while in the case of virtual interaction we deal with what has become known as the process of ‘Othering’. We will see that in the specific case of Islam in Europe the notions of (in)tolerance and Othering are intrinsically related to religion. These three themes must be briefly introduced to get a firmer grip on the historical narrative in the following chapters.

Religion. We have already remarked that not all that Muslims do can be considered Islam, just as not every act by Europeans can be considered an expression of Christianity. A recurring question in this book will therefore be: to what extent was a particular situation or action related to religion? For instance, modern historians of the European Crusades and of Arab and Ottoman jihads have questioned the religiousness of these wars, arguing that the call for a ‘holy war’ often served practical rather than religious purposes. On the other hand, religious discourse has always been important to some degree in most wars in Europe, up to the Yugoslavian civil wars of the 1990s. One of the issues raised and discussed in the following chapters will therefore be whether it is valid to speak of the presence or absence of religion, as well as the use, misuse or abuse thereof.

But even if at times we are going to dismiss the religiousness of certain actions, our point of departure is to look into interactions that are *prima facie* of a religious nature or justified by religion. We will use the notion of religion in two ways: as a doctrine and as a cultural system. Religion as a theological doctrine claims to be fixed and eternal and in the cases of Islam and Christianity is recorded in Holy Scripture and in the theological manuals of the scholars. Religion as a cultural system consists of the patterns of symbols and power structures produced by the faithful and the ways that this system motivates people to conceptualize their social environment and to move them into action in accordance with that worldview.¹⁴ The two notions of theological doctrine and a cultural system should ideally overlap, but often do not.

From this perspective, religion is not considered absolute in the trans-historical and transcultural sense, but subject to historical and cultural differences. In other words, when we speak of 'Christianity' or 'Islam' it is with the understanding that these notions and their interpretations are specific to their time and place, whether as a doctrine or a cultural system. This is not as self-evident as it may seem. Modern Christians may still identify with their Christian heritage (for instance, when they speak of Christian democracy or the Christian duty to give development aid), but may at the same time be very critical of certain interpretations or dismissive of certain practices that are part of that heritage (such as the persecution of heretics or slavery). The same holds for Muslims. If we want to understand their heritage and presence in Europe, now and in history, we must understand the dynamics of the historical narrative of religion.

An issue that is important to many social scientists who study religion is its meaning to the individual, and how that meaning is expressed in symbols, rituals and societal structures, on both an individual and a communal level. Although interesting in the case of Islam in Europe, this is too wide a range of aspects to be covered for a period of thirteen centuries. Since the purpose of this book is to understand the interaction between 'Islam' and 'Europe', we will conceive the history of European and Christian interaction with the Muslim and Islam as a continuum of delineating each other's space and position. Religion, with its claims on the ultimate worldview and its resulting directives on human behaviour, plays an important – at times the most important – role in this ordering process. Both the conceptualization and the means of ordering society and relationships are rooted in a worldview that is translated into a political, legal and cultural system. In this particular process religion serves as an instrument of power.¹⁵ The stronger party – not necessarily the majority, as we will see – will apply a certain religiously founded logic or conceptualization to how society should be ordered, or how trade or war is to be conducted. These power

structures yield questions that are reflected in the other two themes: how to live with others (the notion of tolerance) and how to reflect on those who are ‘not like us’ (the notion of Othering).

Toleration. Tolerance literally means to bear something, implying that it is something one would prefer not to do. In contemporary Western literature, tolerance has been defined as “a deliberate choice not to interfere with the conduct of which one disapproves”.¹⁶ Or, in other words, tolerance is an attitude of putting up with that which one opposes, even when it “shocks, enrages, frightens, or disgusts.”¹⁷ The key notion is the verb ‘putting up with’, which consists of two elements. First, tolerance is mainly exercised in matters involving firmly held beliefs. It implies that the tolerator strongly objects to a certain behaviour or opinion, but decides to accept it.¹⁸ The second element of tolerance is its exercise by someone who has the power also not to tolerate the conduct of which he or she disapproves. In other words, when certain behaviour is tolerated or rights are granted, the tolerator merely indulges him- or herself. The important feature of this aspect of tolerance is that it puts tolerance in the context of a power balance. Tolerance is by definition a quality – and often perceived as a virtue – of those in power. Only those holding power have the luxury of being benevolent and tolerant.¹⁹ Those who are subjected to the dominant power do not have the chance to be tolerant, for the simple reason that they are not in the position to decide whether or not they are willing to accept unwanted behaviour by those in power.

An important question is why one would tolerate unwanted behaviour in the first place. The two main arguments used in Western literature when answering this question are pragmatism and moral principle. The pragmatic view holds that the alternative to tolerance is conflict or war. A more cynical variation on this pragmatic view is that, even if those in power are willing to risk violent conflict in order to get rid of an unwanted people or community (and we will see many examples of such desires), the impossibility of such cleansing operation might prompt those in power to settle for second best, which is some form of tolerance, even if it were oppressive. Tolerance, in other words, is the only way to maintain a peaceful coexistence.²⁰ The principled view, on the other hand, holds that tolerance arises, or should arise, from a moral principle.²¹ Tolerance is then a virtue or moral obligation that goes beyond the indifference of merely accepting disagreeable differences, but should engage in a form of recognition.

Religion and toleration make for an interesting concoction. Typical for religions like Christianity and Islam is that they have universal claims (salvation is only

for those who embrace that faith) and are exclusive (the world is divided between believers and unbelievers). While many observers explain the alleged confrontation between the two by their universal claim,²² I would argue that the main conflict is in their exclusive nature, for it divides the world (and the Afterworld, for that matter) into believers and unbelievers, us and them. Even the most tolerant Muslim or Christian will, as a believer, come to the point where he needs to acknowledge that the unbeliever may be a great colleague or friend but nevertheless is missing out on a world view that is essential to him, the believer. During the centuries, as we will see, this acknowledgement has been a reason for war and bloodshed at worst, and tolerant segregation at best. Europe has a long history in this respect with regard to Judaism, Christian heresies and denominational factions, but also in its relation with Muslims and Islam.

We will see in the following chapters that in the case of coexistence – i.e., different communities sharing a single territorial space – Muslims and Christians structured most of their legal, political and social interactions on the basis of religious categories. The exclusive nature of both Islam and Christianity created ‘natural’ demarcation lines between communities. Only under certain circumstances were deviations from and exceptions to these structures allowed. For instance, Christian and Islamic law does not allow for the non-believer to be in a position of authority over a believer, but there have been Muslim and Christian palace courts where infidels held high positions. Outside the courts, religious differences were often of little consequence and religious communities lived, worked and socialized together. But whenever there was social change or upheaval, the underlying structures prompted people to identify with a religious label, because that label marked their social, political and legal status.²³ And even when the religious categorization was formally abandoned by the Ottoman Empire and European states from the late eighteenth century onwards, we will see that religion remained an important factor of demarcation, whether culturally (Jews, and later Muslims, were not considered by everyone as belonging to the ‘Christian’ civilization of Europe), or as the schism between the religious and the secular.

Othering. The division between believers and unbelievers in the case of the interaction between Europe and Islam is more than a theological, political, social and legal construct that may be considered discriminatory or tolerant or otherwise. In addition to these practical and theoretical distinctions, there is also a cognitive dimension that gives rise to a perceived division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is what in the social sciences is known as the process of ‘Othering.’ The Other is not merely an

indication of a category of persons who are different, but primarily serves as a process to identify and profile oneself as opposed to that other. The Other embodies everything that We are not, and as such represents everything that We scorn or deny or, to put it more mildly, prefer not to be. As we will see in the next chapters, the notion of Othering is very helpful to describe the relationship between Islam and Europe. From a European perspective, Muslims and Islam represented more than a false religion or incidental interactions of warfare, commerce or science; they represented a permanent European Other.

In social sciences, the process of Othering is researched on numerous levels: man versus woman, white man versus black man, sane person versus madman, civilized person versus barbarian, occidental versus oriental, etc. In the context of this book, we find that most relevant research in this context has been conducted in the discipline of International Relations where the notion of Othering is discussed as a factor of interaction among European nation-states as well as the interaction between those states and non-European states.²⁴ An interesting point made by most of these scholars is that the centuries of Othering within Europe – that is, among European nations – have never undermined the prevailing sense of a single and unified European identity. Tony Judt notes the ‘curious’ characteristic of Europeans that emphasizing their mutual differences is precisely the factor that binds them: “Indeed, drawing distinctions among and between themselves has been one of the defining obsessions of the inhabitants of the continent.”²⁵ This notion of a Europeanness as a diversity-in-unity has resulted in a process of Othering that was mainly directed outward, towards the non-European Other, pitting the ‘West’ against ‘the Rest’.²⁶ Here, the Other was the primitive or savage, as opposed to the ‘civilized’ world of Europe. Europe perceived itself as rational, organized and cultured, characteristics that had propelled it into its state of power and prosperity. The notion of the uncivilized Other not only had a “reinforcing effect on the collective of Europe”²⁷ but has also been elaborated by postcolonial scholarship as “critical for the formation of Western modernity – without it, the West would not have been able to recognize and represent itself as the summit of human history”.²⁸

In addition to European Othering in terms of nation-states and civilizations, religion played a key role from the early Middle Ages onwards. European Christians divided the world into three categories: Christians, heretics (Christians who had to be brought back into the fold of the true Church) and infidels (non-Christians). This categorization may explain the unity-in-diversity among Europeans: they might fight and hate each other, but would always share the same Christian roots. The real Other was the infidel non-Christian. Christian scholars came to accept the notion of

other religions as more or less equal belief-systems only in the eighteenth century, when Enlightenment prompted them to be critical of their own religion and to open their eyes to the world. And even though centuries of religious conflict and religious wars, culminating in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), appear to argue the opposite of the unity-in-diversity, the notion of Europe-as-Christendom has been called the 'grand narrative' of European identity: this narrative "possesses a sufficient degree of continuity and coherence to be a powerful factor both in intellectual history and in the collective unconsciousness of contemporary Europeans."²⁹ Indeed, such grand narratives can hardly be challenged "partly because their greatest power is at the level of the unconscious mind, collective and individual."³⁰ So powerful is this narrative that it has even survived the secularization of Europe since the nineteenth century. From that moment onwards, the Other was mostly defined in terms of culture and civilization, but Christendom was still considered an intrinsic part, and to some even the main propellant, of that European superior civilization.³¹

The question we want to address by using the approach of Otherness is: does Islam function as the European Other and, if so, how, when, and why at that particular moment, in that place? We will see that the image of Islam as the Other transforms through time, subject to the transformations that Europe is undergoing. And that brings us to another question: is Islam merely another Other in European self-identity, or does it play a special role in European history? At first glance, Islam does not appear to be very different from the other Others: Muslims as well as Islamic civilization have served as the anti-Christian archetype in medieval times and as the uncivilized Other during colonial times, and nowadays Islam is often perceived as the antithesis to modernity and its products of Enlightenment, freedom and democracy. In this respect, Islam is not an exceptional Other compared to the barbaric pagans of medieval Europe, the savages in foreign lands during colonial times, the Soviet Union during the Cold War, or any other form of social or political Othering. However, I would argue that within the notion of European Otherness, Islam takes a special position in several respects. First, its interaction with Europe has not been incidental or contingent, like the Communism or colonialism, but continuous, albeit in different forms for a period of thirteen centuries. Second, as a civilization, Islam has for several centuries been superior to Europe in numerous ways – militarily, economically, technically, intellectually, culturally – and consequently had a position different from that of the conventional Other who is to serve as the lesser alter ego. Third, Islam as a religion has always been a topic of discussion in European polemics, unlike other religions such as Judaism, Hinduism or animism. Moreover, these polemics did not confine themselves to theological dogma, but extended freely

into the Islamic ‘mind’, ‘nature’ or ‘culture’ of its believers. The combination of these factors, through a period of thirteen centuries, has given Islam its special position as the European Other.

The aforementioned scholar Bernard Lewis also observes distinct characteristics of Islam that distinguishes it from “the European images of the Chinese or Indian,” but for different reasons from those I have just mentioned. The difference, Lewis argues, is that the “Indians, after all, have never invaded Spain or crossed the Pyrenees; the Chinese had never conquered Constantinople or besieged Vienna”, they never made attempts to convert Christians to their religious beliefs, and never had they condemned the Bible as obsolete and offered a new scripture to take its place; Europe and Islam, Bernard states, “were old acquaintances, intimate enemies”.³² This imagery represents a widely held European view of Islam but, as the next chapters will make clear, Lewis takes liberties with history, in particular by attributing the Muslims (and hence Islam, for he uses the two terms interchangeably) with an aggressive agency that is not always consistent with the facts.