PAGANS BY COMPARISON: MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIN CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE PAGAN "OTHER"

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During the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries German and Danish clergymen and knights set off on a crusade to the lands of the eastern Baltic Sea into the modern day Latvia. Henricus Lettus, a young German priest joined the mission and wrote extensively about his experiences. The goal of the crusade was to conquer and convert the local pagan population to Catholicism and create an ecclesiastical state, thereby expanding the boundaries of Christianity.[1]

Three hundred years later and thousands of miles away, Emperor Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur led an army of Muslims from their central Asian homeland of Transoxiana into the Indian sub-continent. He planned to conquer "Hindustan" to establish his own empire and expand the lands of "Dar al-Islam" or the land of Muslims. As for the local Hindu population, Babur was indifferent to their religious beliefs and practices, so long as they did not interfere with his mission.[2]

These seemingly unrelated events do contain a common thread. Both efforts to expand religious powers were endeavors that constructed pagans as "others." Christian and Muslim societies of the Middle Ages have been the subject of much research, but usually standing alone or studied together in locations where they came into contact or conflict with

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1 Henricus Lettus, *Chronicles of Henry of Livonia*, trans. James A. Brundage (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), xi-xxv.

2 Babur, *The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*, trans. Wheeler M Thackson (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), xvii-xxix.

each other, such as the Holy Land during the Crusades. This type of research, while extremely important and informative, provides a limited perspective into these two distinct cultural realms. Few scholars have studied the way Christians and Muslims viewed and constructed pagans, a group they both fought against but each in their own distinct way. A comparative analysis of Christian and Muslim constructions of pagan people as inferior "others" has the potential to help historians to understand both Christian and Muslim cultures and societies of the medieval period.

The construction of a minority group, by a majority group as culturally inferior "others" has been the subject of much scholarship in the past thirty years. Edward Said began the discourse with *Orientalism* in 1978. Said focused on how western European nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries constructed Islamic people of Asia and North Africa as exotic, culturally backward, erotic, and inferior "others" as a justification for imperialist goals. He named this process "orientalism."[3] John Gillingham and Lisa Lampert consider the idea of culturally constructing the targets of imperialism and applied it to different eras. Gillingham argues that the cultural methods of English imperial policy did not just begin in the sixteenth century but had its roots earlier with the twelfth century conquest of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.[4] Lampert touches upon a similar idea and finds that it is necessary to look back to the medieval age to find the origins of racism, to "develop more sophisticated, historically informed, theoretical approaches to racism as cultural and religious differences come to play more prominent roles in shifting U.S. and global discourses on race."[5] These sources offer examples of historical constructions of the "other" and demonstrate how historians can examine historical periods to better understand our world today. However the scope of these scholars' work is usually limited to understanding one cultural or religious group rather than comparing and contrasting medieval Christians and Muslim cultures with each other.

This paper analyzes both medieval Christian and Muslim constructions of pagan people as inferior "others." By investigating both Christian and Muslim ways of creating lesser subjects we gain new insight into the similarities and differences between two distinct cultures.

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3 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1-4.

4 John Gillingham, "The Beginnings of English Imperialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 5 (1992), 392.

5 Lisa Lampert, "Race, Periodicity, and the (Neo-) Middle Ages," *Modern Language Quarterly* 65 (2004), 420-421.

We also improve our understanding of how Christian and Muslim societies viewed themselves and what aspects of culture they exploited to identify and isolate those outside of their culturally accepted norms.

This research draws distinctions between Christian and Muslim societies and cultures of the Middle Ages by scrutinizing their portrayal of pagans. The sources demonstrate that both Christians and Muslims manipulated religion as the primary method to identify those within and outside their cultural sphere. Both Christians and Muslims further differentiated themselves from pagan "others" by referring to them as uncivilized. However, each culture's sources defined civilization and the components of civilization quite differently. Finally, this research demonstrates that the greatest difference between the Christian and Muslim sources was the importance and effort Christians placed on converting pagans to Christianity.

Four sources from the Middle Ages that contain interactions between Christian or Muslim forces and pagan populations are foundation of this research. The two sources from the Christian perspective are Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Henricus Lettus' *The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia*.[6] Bede was an eighth-century monk and historian working from the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow in northern central England. His masterwork, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* is the history of Christian encounters and conversion efforts with the pre-Christian Britons.[7]

Henricus Lettus was brought to life in James Brundage's excellent biography through his introduction to the 2003 edition of *The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia.* Lettus, also known as Henry of Livonia, a German-speaking priest came to Livonia to convert the pagans, but also to conquer and create a Christian Empire in the Baltic. The work was probably a report prepared by Lettus for Vatican officials to check on the progress of the crusade. The main focus of Henry's report is Albert's crusade against the pagans of the Baltic.[8] Both Christian sources exposed the expansion of Christianity into pagan lands and provided valuable perspective into Christian attitudes towards the constructions of the local pagans as inferior "others."

The two sources analyzed from the Muslim point of view are Ibn Khaldun's *The Muqaddimah* and Emperor Zahiruddin Muhammad

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6 Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ix-xx. Lettus, xi-xx

7 Bede, ix-xiii.

8 Lettus, xi-xxxiv.

Babur's *Baburnama*. Khaldun was a late fourteenth-century scholar, philosopher, and politician born in North Africa in what is today Tunisia. His career took him to the far edges of both the Muslim and Christian world, from Spain to Central Asia.[9] Khaldun's writings are a history of the start of human civilization and the rise of Islamic society to the early fifteenth century.[10]

The *Baburnama* is the autobiography of Emperor Babur from his early life in what is now Afghanistan to his founding of the Mughal Empire in India during the early sixteenth century. His conquest of India and dealings with the local Hindu population provide valuable insight into a Muslim ruler's mind that interacted with a large pagan population that was extremely different from his own.[11] Historian Lisa Balabanlilar points out that Babur brought with him to India many cultural practices and biases across the Islamic world from Syria to his native Transoxiana.[12] These two Muslim sources offer evidence into Muslim attitudes and treatment of the pagan populations.

Both Muslims and Christians defined pagans as special types of non-believers. The term pagan refers to any religion other than the three monotheistic religions, which considered Abraham as their founding prophet, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Many historians study pagans, their cultural practices, and their relationship with expanding Christian kingdoms during the Middle Ages.[13] There has also been extensive research into Christian and Muslim interactions and constructions of each other.[14] As both Christian and Muslim states extended their political power, they came into contact with pagan people. The manner in which each society viewed and treated pagans expands our understanding of Christian and Muslim biases, attitudes toward conversion, and general views on human nature.

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9 Ibid. vii-viii.

10 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), vii-xxv.

11 Babur, xvii-xxix.

12 Lisa Balabanlilar, "Lords of Auspicious Conjunction: Turko-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History* 18 no. 1 (2007), 2.

13 For more information on pagans of the Middle Ages see, Andrew Gillet, ed. *On Barbarian Identity* (Turnout, Belgium: Brespols Publishers, 2002), vi-265. Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xi-262. Edward Peters ed. *Monks, Bishops, and Pagans* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), vii-238.

14 [14]For studies of Christian and Muslim interactions see, Archibald Lewis, "The Islamic World and the Latin West, 1350-1500." *Speculum* 65 no. 4 (1990), 833-844 and Robert I. Burns, "Christian- Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth Century Dream of Conversion," *The American Historical Review* 76 no. 5 (1971), 1386-1434.

Both Christians and Muslims used pagan religious beliefs to categorize them as inferior "others." As Christian and Muslim influence and control increased, these expanding powers searched for tools to differentiate themselves from the native pagans since religion was the primary method of cultural identification. According to historian Robert Bartlett, "in a period like the Middle Ages…religion meant membership [in] a community."[15] Ritual acts such as baptism on the Christian side or outward signs of faith, such as daily prayer and dietary restrictions from the Muslim point of view, demonstrated their membership in the community. At a time of less centralized secular authority, small areas of linguistic unity, and little cultural homogeneity religion acted as a fairly quick and easy point of reference to determine if a person or group of people were culturally different and therefore an "other." Both the Christian and Muslim sources reveal religious distinctions that aided in drawing a clear boundary between themselves and those culturally different.

Bede and Henricus Lettus provide valuable knowledge about early contacts between an expanding Christian world and the pagans they encountered. They present non-Christians in their narratives as immoral savages. Both writers focus on religious differences in their constructions of the non-Christians. To Bede and Lettus, the pagans' different religious convictions also separated them culturally and ethnically. As Bartlett elucidated, during the Middle Ages, there was "a sense in which one was born a Christian, a Muslim, or a Jew, just as one was born English or Persian."[16] The labels Bede and Lettus placed on pagans had twin purposes. First they were used to identify and dehumanize the pagan population subjects. They served as examples of how not to behave, in order to remain in good standing with their society, with God, and the Catholic Church. Secondly, these constructions demonstrated that even the most barbarous of savages could elevate their cultural status here on earth through Christian conversion.

Bede saw the pre-Christian Britons as a "barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation whose language they [St. Augustine and his companions] did not even understand."[17] He related stories of how Pope Gregory I turned "our nation [England], til then enslaved to idols into a

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15 Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Modern Studies* 31 no. 1 (2001), 42.

16 Ibid., 42.

17 Bede, 37.

Church of Christ."[18] Bede turned the non-Christians of Britain into idol worshippers, which carried with it a profoundly negative connotation for other Christians. An unbeliever in Bede's worldview not only violated church law and Bede's own personal religious beliefs, but also faced eternal damnation in hell for lack of faith. Idol worshipping contradicted the basic teachings of the Catholic Church and the Ten Commandments. Historian S. D. Church argues that to Pope Gregory, "paganism equaled the worship of idols, since that was the lesson he must have constantly drawn from his knowledge of the ancient world and of the Bible, and the theme repeatedly emerges in his letters."[19] To Bede and his readers, these pagans violated, out of ignorance, the most basic tenets of the Christian faith.

But Bede wrote his descriptions of pre- and non-Christian Britons over one hundred years after the events occurred and thus with the benefit of hindsight. As an eighth-century clergyman of the Church, Bede already knew that the Britons had converted to the Catholic faith. This knowledge surely influenced his chronicle. Other sources, such as Lettus' *The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia*, offered a more direct and immediate perspective on Christian attitudes and constructions of pagans and their religious convictions.

Lettus wrote *The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia* during a crusade in the eastern Baltic region. As an eyewitness and participant in the imperial project, Lettus wrote down events shortly after they took place, unlike Bede's historical reflection. We get a clear snapshot of a time and place where Christians encountered and constructed pagans as inferior "others" unfiltered by the passage of time.

Lettus wrote about the native pagan inhabitants of the modern Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Christian conquest and conversion efforts targeted various tribal and ethnic groups such as Estonians, Letts, Lithuanians, Livonians, and Karelians.[20] While Henry at times expressed positive qualities towards the local population, especially if they converted to Christianity in a heartfelt way, it is clear he viewed them as the "other." Like Bede, he constructed the local people as

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18 Ibid., 65.

19 S. D. Church, "Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* Reconsidered," *History* 93 (2008), 165.

20 For more on pre-Christian Baltic tribes see, Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and Catholic Frontier 1100-1525* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), x-273 and W.K. Matthews, "Medieval Baltic Tribes," *American Slavic and East European Review* 8 no. 2, (1949), 126-136.

"idolatrous Livonians," but this was only the start.[21] Lettus provided an interesting account of the beliefs and superstitions of the Livonians. For example, when an eclipse took place on the feast of Saint John the Baptist, the pagans "said that he [St. John] was eating the sun."[22] Henry makes this belief seem naïve and childlike, a trait shared by both Henry's and Bede's constructions of pagans. Both Christian sources infantilize the pagans by portraying them as simple, ignorant people, who have yet to learn the truth. Perhaps that is because these Christian authors viewed Christian emissaries as educators of the Catholic faith for these ignorant people. This type of language and depiction does not appear in the two Muslim sources.

In examining how Muslims viewed and constructed pagans, the two Islamic sources demonstrate a strong similarity with the two Christian sources in the use of religion as the most important aspect of cultural construction. *The Muqaddimah* most clearly detailed the pre-Islamic Bedouin tribes of the deserts of North Africa, the Middle East and unspecified black tribes from sub-Saharan Africa.[23] Babur chronicled his conquest of India, his contact with the Hindus of the sub-continent, and his construction of the local Hindu population.[24] When compared to the two Christian sources, it is clear all four sources construct the pagans as misguided infidels, who either never learned the righteous path or rejected it. Once both Christians and Muslims used religion as the primary tool for constructing these people as "others" they examined various aspects of the pagan cultures, identifying differences with their own culture as further evidence of the pagan's otherness.

As Michael Brett explains, "[i]ts [*The Muqaddimah's*] analysis of state, society, and culture by a native North African, looking back over its history since the rise of Islam, remains a starting point for the reconsideration of that subject today."[25] In *The Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun described the pagans in a general way. As a fourteenth-century Muslim scholar of a widely circulated work, his portrayal of non-Muslim pagans demonstrated a Muslim who clearly looked down on pagans, but also had the intellectual capacity to overlook occasionally religious convictions as he investigated other aspects of civilization.

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21 Lettus, 25.
22 Ibid., 28.
23 Khaldun, 97.
24 Babur, xvii-xlvii.
25 Michael Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1999), vii.

One excerpt from *The Muqaddimah* clearly demonstrated Khaldun's attitude about people who did not have any religious beliefs, "[e]vil is the quality that is closest to man when he fails to improve his customs and when religion is not used as the model to improve him."[26] While this would seem to paint Khaldun as religiously intolerant, his caveats make it more difficult to label him. Khaldun used the teachings of Muhammad to explain how religious belief was more an individual responsibility and less a responsibility of the state; Muhammad said, "[e]very infant is born in the natural state. It is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a heathen."[27] While religion influenced how Khaldun saw people, he takes a more complex perspective on the subject by avoiding blanket condemnations of most groups, creating a well-nuanced narrative that struck a balanced religious belief and intellectual curiosity.

Khaldun explained the inferiority of non-Muslims Bedouins "because of their savagery, the Bedouins are the least willing of nations to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be leaders."[28] Conversely, he argued the Bedouin lack of civilization and savagery allowed them and other nomadic peoples to conquer and dominate sedentary people because "they do not possess conveniences and luxuries" which hardens them as warriors.[29] This praise of the nomadic pagan tribes served as a warning to leaders across the Islamic world. He viewed civilized life as pampered and soft, making them ripe for conquest by people not used to an easy life. We can see his sophisticated mind at work when he expressed admiration for "the fine temples of the [pre-Islamic] Persians and the temples of the Greeks and the houses of the [pre-Islamic] Arabs in the Hijaz."[30] While he definitely constructed pagan peoples in mostly negative terms, he drew distinctions between religious practices and other aspects of life, which was unique compared to the more one-sided narratives of Bede, Lettus, and the fourth source, Babur.

When exploring the autobiography of the founder of the Muslim Mughal Empire of India, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, to see how he constructed the Hindu populations of India as "other," one encounters a serious contradiction in the way he portrayed the non-Muslims of India.

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[26] Khaldun, 97.
[27] Ibid., 94.
[28] Ibid., 120.
[29] Ibid., 92.
[30] Ibid., 270.

His first descriptions of the native population of India typified his attitude; "Most of the people of Hindustan are infidels, whom the people of India call Hindus."[31] His hostile attitude towards the Hindu population increased, especially while referring to a rebellion of a Hindu ruler of Mewar state Rana Sanga.[32] This rebellion against his rule obviously enraged Babur and enhanced his construction of the Hindus as evil non-believers. He constantly referred to Rana Sanga as "the Infidel," demonstrating his belief that "the cursed infidel-abandoned," would spend eternity in hell.[33] These strong sentiments only worsened after "an assassination attempt on Babur's life by these people" took place.[34] This turned his battle with Rana Sanga for control of Hindustan into a personal matter. His harsher descriptions of the Hindus intensified and he looked for outward signs of "some of whom bore the accursed band of the *zunnar (*unbeliever)."[35] Babur also started to view this uprising as a religious war between Muslims and Hindus for control of India. He even composed a poem to explain his motivation; "For the sake of Islam I became a wanderer; I battled infidels and Hindus. I determined to become a martyr. Thank God I became a holy warrior."[36] These types of references escalated throughout the narrative until Babur finally defeated Rana Sanga and his forces.

All four sources used religion as a vehicle for delineating themselves from pagans as "others" thus connecting them in interesting ways. While differences do emerge in the tone and purpose of the criticism, it is clear that all used religion to distinguish themselves between "us" their co-religionists and "them" the pagan "other." All four employed pagan group behavior and cultural traits to elevate themselves and their people from pagans, particularly cultural practices that the four men saw as uncivilized.

Both, the Christian and Muslim sources, used the idea of civilization as a wedge to distinguish themselves from the pagan "others." The practice served a dual purpose. First, it separated the writers from those who did not share their religious convictions by attempting to construct them as "infidels" or "heathens" and culturally inferior. Second, it also served as a tool for dehumanizing the subject of the critique. When

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31 Babur, 352.
32 Ibid., 369.
33 Ibid., 387.
34 Ibid., 374.
35 Ibid., 375.
36 Ibid., 394.

done effectively, this dehumanization process would then justify conquering or controlling these sub-human savages.

None of the four sources provided a definition of what constituted a "civilized society." Instead they identified actions or beliefs as uncivilized. Their critiques of these "uncivilized pagans," however, reveal clues to their perceptions of civilization. Christians and Muslims differed in their concept of civilization. Christian narratives focused on behavior, attitude, and belief as the qualification for civilization, while the two Muslim sources included additional items such as legal systems, agricultural practices, and the arts as part of their definition of "civilized." This expanded Islamic concept of civilization is an important distinction between the two societies of the Middle Ages.

Both Bede and Lettus often referred to pagan people as uncivilized, violent, ignorant, lazy, deceitful, cowardly, savages, enemies of Christianity. One example from Lettus demonstrates several of these characteristics in one sentence. "But God sent such a fear of the enemies of Christianity) into the Lithuanians (pagans) and they were so dazzled (ignorant) by the brightness of the German arms that they turned away on all sides (cowardly)."[37] The dominant theme from Lettus was of pagan people who could not be trusted. He provided examples of pagans who made promises to the Christians in order to avoid annihilation only to break those vows repeatedly when the opportunity presented itself. He believed this in matters of war and peace, as we see when "…the Livonians broke the peace and violently attacked them [Christians]."[38] He demonstrated a similar attitude towards pagans in regard to their religious convictions. As the German crusaders engaged in war with the native Baltic population, many pagans often accepted baptism or promised to accept it at a later date in order to avoid a severe military attack. But in one instance "after a second [pagan] fort had been completed, in their iniquity they forgot their oath and perjured themselves for there was not even one of them who accepted the faith."[39] The picture that emerged from Lettus was of a people with no real sense of honor. But the medieval definition of honor differs from its modern meaning. As Donald Ward explains, "honor did not convey the abstract and internal notion of one's integrity and worth that one associates with the term today. It referred instead to the outer world and thus meant essentially 'recognition,'

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37 Bede, 49.
38 Lettus, 36.
39 Ibid., 27.

'respect,' and even power.[40] This emphasis on outward behavior as a central component of honor was used throughout *The Chronicles of Henry of Livonia* to construct the pagans as uncivilized "others."

A similar image emerged from Bede's narrative even though he knew the pagans became Christians. Bede focused on the negative attributes of the Britons and other tribes of Britain prior to their conversion, but always with an eye toward the future when he knew they would be saved. An important portion of *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* relates how the Picts and Irish constantly harassed and plundered the Britons. As Bede stated, "[t]he wretched Britons were torn in pieces by the enemies like lambs by wild beasts."[41] This implied that the weakness and timidity of the Britons would continue unless they found the true path of Christianity.

This leads to a critical theme from the two sources: their ideas of civilization itself. Both Lettus and Bede, did not define civilization; they only described uncivilized societies. It is clear that both authors equated civilization with the Christian faith. Bede discusses the Britons, their lack of proper Christian faith, and the sustained attacks they are suffering at the hands of the Picts and Irish when he writes, "[f]or this reason [their lack of faith] a still more terrible retribution soon afterwards overtook this sinful people for their crimes."[42] This implied their sinful lives and lack of faith directly impacted their physical and spiritual wellbeing. Both men made clear that neither the people living in Britain or the eastern Baltic could become civilized until they accepted Christianity. They focused on the pagan's lack of Christian faith and outward behavior and not on other ideas of civilization such as legal systems or technological skills. This differs substantially from the two Muslim sources, which also highlight religious belief as evidence of civilization, but with broader criteria from which to judge if a society was civilized or not.

Khaldun's investigation focused on the cultural and social reasons why civilizations rise and fall. In his analysis of the Bedouin people of the desert, he saw a nomadic lifestyle as uncivilized, and "furthermore, the Bedouin are not concerned with laws or with deterring people from misdeeds or with protecting some against others."[43] This critique demonstrated that Khaldun viewed a legal system and law enforcement as

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40 Donald Ward, "Honor and Shame in the Middle Ages: An Open Letter to Lutz Rohrich," 27. Jahrg., *Festschrift für Lutz Röhrich zum 60. Geburtstag* (1982-1983), 2.

41 Bede, 24.

42 Ibid., 26.

43 Khaldun, 119.

a key element to civilization, which the Bedouin clearly lacked. Khaldun goes further when he argued, "[u]nder the rule of the Bedouin their subjects live as in a state of anarchy, without laws."[44] To Khaldun, a civilized society offered basic protections for the individual and obtaining justice.[45]

Since Khaldun wrote to examine why civilizations rise and fall he argued that the difficult lifestyle of the savage nomad allowed them to conquer and supplant the softer settled people of the Islamic world. This provided clues into additional qualifications for a civilized society. Much of Khaldun's study focuses on the Bedouin that he was more familiar with as a native of North Africa, where the Bedouin lived on the outskirts of the urban areas.[46] But the Bedouin did not really endanger Islamic civilization. The real threat came from Central Asia, with the invasions Tamerlane and his forces from the Eurasian steppe. He had defeated the Ottomans and destroyed all who stood in his path.[47] In fact Tamerlane's conquest and subsequent empire did much to prove the theories of Ibn Khaldun correct as his nomadic forces conquered the settled lands from Syria to India.[48]

Khaldun considered another prerequisite to a civilized society besides the law when he claimed that, "sedentary people are much more concerned with all kind of pleasure."[49] "They are accustomed to luxury and success in worldly occupations and to indulgences in worldly desires."[50] Therefore Khaldun provided a fairly clear definition of civilization. Civilization was not just concerned with survival; it was also about the pleasures in life. Evidently, his construction of civilization was not entirely positive. He viewed civilized society as overly indulgent and corrupted, leaving societies complacent and ripe for conquest. Khaldun believed that a strong civilization lasted only about four generations before corruption, complacency, and entrenched power structures conspired to bring about its decline, which then left it vulnerable to outside invasion.[51]

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44 Ibid., 119.

45 For more information on urban center in the Islamic world see, Ira Lapidus, "The Evolution of Muslim Urban Society," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15 no. 1 (1973), 21-50.

46 Khaldun, xli-xlii.

47 Beatrice Rorbes Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses," *Journal of World History* 13 no.1 (2002), 1.

48 Khaldun, ix.

49 Ibid., 94.

50 Ibid., 94.

51 Ibid., 105.

Khaldun warned the civilized states of growing lazy and weak because the "governable educational laws destroy fortitude" and open up civilized locations to conquest by the savage people.[52] He pointed out "the [nomadic] members of such a [savage] nation have the strength to fight other nations and they are among human beings what beasts of prey are among dumb animals."[53] While civilization was something all men should strive for, Khaldun warned of the corruption and complacency that arise from civilization that ultimately could lead to its own destruction.

Khaldun believed that only religion held civilization together and allowed it to function because it helped to restrain "the blameworthy and evil" qualities of men.[54] As Khaldun warned, "when the Muslims got their religion from Muhammad, the restraining influence came from themselves, as a result of the encouragement and discouragement he gave them in the Qur'an."[55] Religion's power as a civilizing tool was so great that even the Bedouins, about whom he thought, "savagery has become their character and nature," could take steps towards civilization if they found religion.[56] Khaldun argued that once some of the Bedouin tribes accepted Islam, "then they have some restraining influences in themselves," and therefore obtained more civilization than those tribes who had not.[57]

In *The Baburnama,* we see religion as the primary way Muslims isolated pagans from the rest of civilization. Through Babur's description of the land he calls "Hindustan," we learn of his factors that determined if a location or people were civilized or not. The text demonstrates a concept of civilization focused more on infrastructure and technology than *The Muqaddimah*. He used the term "daru'l-barb," meaning the "abode of war" which was an Islamic term for non-Islamic countries, most likely because military conflict often took place as a result of differences in religion.[58]

The non-religious depictions of India provided the keys for understanding Babur's view of civilization. He made several observations of cultural institutions that he defined as essential for civilization, which he did not encounter in India. For example, he pointed out that, "there are

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52 Ibid., 96.
53 Ibid., 114.
54 Ibid., 94.
55 Ibid., 96.
56 Ibid., 118.
57 Ibid., 120.
58 Ibid., 332.

no baths or madrasas [Islamic schools]."[59] These institutions would have been important elements to his idea of civilization because proper hygiene and religious upbringing were vital elements in Islamic tradition. He also disliked the construction of Indian population centers because "all cities, all locales are alike. The gardens have no walls and most places are flat."[60] Babur passed judgments on Hindustani society based on his own Central Asian preconceptions of civilization. He complained several times about the lack of running water and irrigation. In one passage he lamented, "the only running water is in the large rivers. There are still waters in some places and even in cities that have the capability of digging channels for running water they do not do so."[61] These complaints about daily life in India highlight aspects of civilization Babur expected because they were engrained into the culture of his Central Asian homeland. To Babur, coming from the arid lands of modern day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan irrigation equated society because of its importance in the harvesting of crops and therefore a central pillar of civilization.[62] But India's tropical climate and heavy rains made irrigation unnecessary in some regions. This cultural difference born out of geographic particularities is crucial for Babur and a key method of his construction of India as an uncivilized location.

Babur's most interesting insights on civilization stem from a passage concerning the people and their social skills. He wrote, "Hindustan is a place of little charm. There is no beauty in its people, no graceful social intercourse, no poetic talent or understanding, no etiquette, nobility, or manliness."[63] Babur's cultural biases led to his criticism about Indian's lack culture. India possessed rules of etiquette, poetic talent, and other aspects of culture. They differed dramatically from what Babur knew and viewed them as inferior. Babur was either unwilling or unable to take the time to understand them. As a conquering emperor, Babur wanted to impose his version of civilization on India, rather than have India impose its civilization on him.

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59 Ibid., 352.

60 Ibid., 335.

61 Ibid., 334.

62 For more information on Central Asian Islamic societies see, Lisa Balabanlilar, "Lords of Auspicious Conjunction: Turko-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History* 18 no. 1 (2007), 1-39. Stephen F. Dale, "Steppe Humanism: The Autobiographical Writings of Zahir Al-Din Muhammad Babur, 1483-1530," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22 no.1 (1990), 37-58.

63 Babur, 352.

The exploration of how Christians and Muslims used religion and other cultural practices to construct the pagans as uncivilized leads to one final topic regarding Christian and Muslim attitudes towards pagans during Middle Ages: conversion attempts. Christian sources emphasized the conversion of pagan people while the two Muslim works entirely ignore the subject. By exploring the importance and the evolving nature of Christian conversion efforts and its absence from the Muslim sources we gain a better understanding of both cultures.

Earlier attempts by Christians to convert pagans utilized preaching and good works to win over pagan leaders. An examination of earlier conversion techniques found in Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and comparing it with later conversion tales from Bede and Lettus reveals the fluid nature of the conversion techniques. One story from Bede related the conversion of the Ethelbert of Kent by Augustine from the late sixth century. It demonstrated a Catholic Church eager for converts only if they came of their own accord. After the king's acceptance of Christianity and that of some of his people "compelled no one to accept Christianity."[64] But this practice changed with the election of Gregory I to the Papacy. In a letter written by Gregory to King Ethelbert, the Vatican urged more forceful techniques to accrue more converts. Gregory asked Ethelbert to "increase your righteous zeal for their conversion; suppress the worship of idols; overthrow their buildings and shrines."[65] While Gregory did not advocate actual violence towards non-Christians, he certainly wanted Ethelbert to use more aggressive conversion methods towards the pagan populations.

Non-violent Christian methods to convert pagan people underwent a major transformation during the seventh century as Christian rulers employed violence and war. Conversion efforts clearly turned more violent in Northumbria when their early seventh century king Æthelfrith took on the task of conversion. He wrote, "if they [pagans] are praying to their God against us, even if they do not bear arms, they are fighting against us" when he began to worry about pagans preparing to attack his lands both physically and spiritually. This was an early example of a Christian leader understanding the prayers of non-Christians as a direct threat to Christianity and his kingdom. In response to this perceived threat, "he ordered them to be attacked first and then he destroyed the remainder of their wicked host."[66]

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64 Bede, 41.
65 Ibid., 59.
66 Ibid., 74.

But this escalation in violence to win converts expanded beyond England in the seventh century. In fact, violence against the non-Christian peoples of Europe rose rapidly as more of the temporal leaders and kings of Europe took on the cause of converting their pagan populations. German and Danish clergy and soldiers targeted the eastern Baltic in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries to conquer and convert the local populace. Lettus retold one example from this mission and it demonstrated how the Germans and their local allies, the Letts, who had already converted to Christianity, felt about the local pagans resistant to conversion. The local Lettish king announced, "[n]either can there be one heart and soul nor a firm treaty of peace between Christians and pagans unless you [pagans] accept with us the same yoke of Christianity and of perpetual peace and serve the one God."[67] So the German Christians and their local Christian allies proceeded to wage war against the non-Christians, "and all rejoiced since they could now more securely wage war against the Estonians and the other pagans."[68] This demonstrates how conversion efforts, which had begun using non-violent methods, had evolved and by the thirteenth century, violence was a commonly used tool.

So what accounts for the emphasis Christians placed on converting pagans to Christianity and the almost complete absence of conversion attempts from the Muslim sources? The only mention of conversion to Islam in the two sources is when Ibn Khaldun mentioned some Bedouin tribes became partially civilized when they accepted Islam.[69] But why did Islamic societies take such a passive role in converting non-Muslims? Historian Jessica Coope points out that, "Islamic law allowed most conquered people to retain their religion."[70] But over the long run, most eventually converted due to the economic and social benefits they received with conversion.[71] This difference between Christian and Muslim conversion efforts signifies the need for a more detailed study on this subject.[72]

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67 Lettus, 85.

68 Ibid., 103.

69 Khaldun, 120.

70 Jessica Coope, "Religious and Cultural Conversion to Islam in Ninth Century Umayyad Cordoba," *The Journal of World History*, 4 no. 1 (1993), 48.

71 Ibid., 48-49.

72 For more information on Christian and Muslim Conversions see, Jessalynn Byrd, " Crusade and Conversion after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), Oliver of Panderborn's and James of Vitry's Mission to Muslims Reconsidered," *Essays in Medieval Studies,* 21, (2004), 23-48, Aptin Khanbaghi, "De-Zoroastrianization and Islamization: The Two Phases of Iran's Religious Transition, 747-837 CE," *Comparative Studies of South Asia,*

As expanding cultural powers, the two religious groups shared many of the same prejudices and methods that turned pagan people into inferior sub-humans. They utilized the concepts of civilized and uncivilized to differentiate between themselves and the pagans. By comparing themselves to the pagans, both Christians and Muslims identified cultural traits the pagans practiced which they found offensive or the lack of pagan participation in cultural practices they found essential. In this way, both Christian and Muslim societies gained a better understanding of their own cultures and what they stood for. For Bede and Lettus, Christianity equaled civilization. For Babur and Ibn Khaldun, Islam defined civilization as well as other aspects of culture such as legal systems, the arts, and cultural practices. Finally, the Christian preoccupation with converting pagans to the faith through violence coupled with the Muslim's limited conversion efforts highlights a major difference between Christian and Muslim medieval societies.

Africa, and the Middle East, 29 no. 2 (2009), 201-212, and David Nirenberg, "Conversion, Sex, and Segregation: Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain," *The American Historical Review*, 107 no. 4 (2002), 1065-1093.