

The
HUMAN
RECORD

SOURCES OF GLOBAL HISTORY

SIXTH EDITION / Volume I: To 1700

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QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. When the armies of Islam initially conquered regions that formerly had been part of the Sassanian and Roman empires, Muslims were a small minority in seas of Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Over the centuries that followed, large numbers of non-Muslims converted to Islam. What evidence is there in the two pacts, or dhimmas, to support the first statement and to help explain the second?
2. The introduction to Benjamin of Tudela's account suggests that Benjamin might have had reason to exaggerate the position and status of the Jews of Baghdad. Which elements in his account strike you as believable? Which strike you as unbelievable or suspicious? In addressing these two questions, analyze Benjamin's account in light of the other three sources.
3. Compare Firuz Shah's treatment of Hindus with the way in which he dealt with Shias. What conclusions follow from this analysis?
4. Compose an essay on the issue "Islam and Its Dhimmis over the Centuries." Always cite specific evidence to support your conclusions, and do not neglect to consider the ambiguities, tones of gray, and complexities of this or any other historical phenomenon.

I ▼ THE PACT OF IBN MUSLAMA (ca. 653)

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is a statement from Habib ibn-Muslama to the inhabitants of Tiflis, . . . securing them safety for their lives, churches, convents,¹ religious services and faith, provided they acknowledge their humiliation and pay tax to the amount of one *dinar* on every household.² You are not to combine more than one household into one in order to reduce the tax, nor are we to divide the same household into more than one in order to increase it. You owe us counsel and support against the enemies of Allah and his Prophet to the utmost of your ability, and are bound to entertain the needy Muslim for one night and provide him with that food used by

"the people of the Book" and which it is legal for us to partake of.³ If a Muslim is cut off from his companions and falls into your hands, you are bound to deliver him to the nearest body of the "Believers," unless something stands in the way. If you return to the obedience of Allah and observe prayer, you are our brethren in faith, otherwise poll-tax is incumbent on you. In case an enemy of yours attacks and subjugates you while the Muslims are too busy to come to your aid, the Muslims are not held responsible, nor is it a violation of the covenant with you. The above are your rights and obligations to which Allah and his angels are witness and it is sufficient to have Allah for witness.

¹Places that house religious communities, such as monks.

²The *jizya*.

³Islam prohibits the consumption of certain foods and drink, most notably pork and alcohol.

2 ▼ THE PACT OF UMAR (mid to late 600s)

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate! This is a writing to Umar from the Christians of *such and such a city*. When you¹ marched against us,² we asked of you protection for ourselves, our posterity, and our co-religionists; and we made this stipulation with you that we will not erect in our city or the suburbs any new monastery, church, cell, or hermitage;³ that we will not repair any of such buildings that might fall into ruins, or renew those that might be situated in the Muslim quarters of the town; that we will not refuse the Muslims entry into our churches either by night or by day; that we will open the gates wide to passengers and travelers; that we will receive any Muslim traveler into our houses and give him food and lodging for three nights; that we will not harbor any spy in our churches or houses or conceal any enemy of the Muslims.

That we will not teach our children the Quran; that we will not make a show of the Christian religion or invite anyone to embrace it; that we will not prevent any of our kinsmen from embracing Islam, if they so desire. That we will honor the Muslims and rise up in our assemblies when they wish to take their seats; that we will not imitate them in our dress, either in the cap, turban, sandals, or parting of the hair; that we will not make use of their expressions of

speech⁴ or adopt their surnames; that we will not ride on saddles or gird on swords or take to ourselves arms or wear them or engrave Arabic inscriptions on our rings; that we will not sell wine; that we will shave the front of our heads; that we will keep to our own style of dress, wherever we might be; that we will wear belts around our waists.⁵

That we will not display the cross⁶ upon our churches or display our crosses or our sacred books in the streets of the Muslims or in their marketplaces; that we will strike the clappers in our churches lightly;⁷ that we will not recite our services in a loud voice when a Muslim is present; that we will not carry palm-branches⁸ or our images in procession in the streets; that at the burial of our dead we will not chant loudly or carry lighted candles in the streets of the Muslims or their marketplaces; that we will not take any slaves who have already been in the possession of Muslims or spy into their houses; and that we will not strike any Muslim.

All this we promise to observe, on behalf of ourselves and our co-religionists, and receive protection from you in exchange; and if we violate any of the conditions of this agreement, then we forfeit your protection and you are at liberty to treat us as enemies and rebels.

¹Muslims.

²The Christians of Syria.

³The dwelling of a Christian hermit or monk.

⁴Muslims greet one another with certain quranic verses and other affirmations of their faith.

⁵Dhimmi wore leather or cord belts; Muslims wore silk and other types of cloth belts.

⁶Although they greatly revere Jesus as the Messiah, Muslims deny he died on the cross.

⁷Christian churches could not ring bells; the faithful were summoned to prayer by wooden clappers.

⁸On Palm Sunday, the Sunday that precedes Easter. This public procession commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.