

INTRODUCTION

The cosmopolitan, scholarly language of Islamic religious discourse cuts across multiple frontiers, constructing a universe of reciprocal benefit to those who master it. This religious discourse is at once flexible and transferable across time and space. Not only did it span the known world of the fourteenth century, but it also persisted across the vicissitudes of political and economic change that separated the premodern from the modern world system.

— *MUSLIM NETWORKS FROM HAJJ TO HIP HOP*,
ED. MIRIAM COOKE AND BRUCE LAWRENCE¹

Overall, the best historians of memory are like the ogre who looks for human voices and emotions. They capture the haunted images of the past that hover in a given society, the obsession with certain events, periods, or beliefs, and they attempt to understand how and why they made sense to people in the past.

— “HISTORY AND MEMORY,” ALON CONFINO²

WORKING AT THE Foreign Office in London, a British diplomat reviewed the stunning news emanating from Turkey on March 3, 1924. D. G. Osbourne had just learned of the legislative acts passed by the nascent Turkish Republic’s Grand National Assembly and updated the confidential file before him:

The Caliphate of the house of Osman is abolished and all members of the house are to follow the Caliph—and the late Sultan—into exile. Their property is to revert to the state. Justice and education are to be entirely purged of their religious associations. The policy of disestablishment or laicization is carried to its logical limit.³

For years, the Foreign Office had amassed thousands of files during the Great War out of fear of the Ottoman Caliphate’s capacity to stir the effuse sympathies of Muslims in British India, Egypt, and around the globe. And perhaps pondering the demise of this centuries-old institution and potent symbol for Muslim unity, Osbourne carefully penned in between the lines of his typed update, “This is an historical event of the first importance.”⁴

In France, a young doctoral student in law and political science sent by Egypt, at the wave of his country’s modernization efforts in education, was connected through Rashīd Riḍā’s Cairene Islamic modernist periodical *al-Manār* to a global readership of Muslims. Through its pages, he learned of the dramatic

INTRODUCTION

news, which would greatly shape the course of his doctoral thesis at the University of Lyon, published in 1926. For this young legal scholar, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sanhūrī, the 1924 disappearance of the Ottoman Caliphate was intimately connected with its historical precedent: the Mongols’ violent destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 1258. For the second time in the history of Islam, he wrote, Muslims, like himself, were left without a caliph to shepherd the temporal and spiritual interests of the community, even if only symbolically. And like his religious predecessors, al-Sanhūrī felt that resolving this dilemma of caliphal absence was among the most pressing issues of his age.⁵

Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History explores these complex constellations of meanings and networks that shaped Muslim reactions to the remarkably unexpected disappearance of an Islamic caliphate in the thirteenth and twentieth centuries. It probes the collective memories encircling the caliphate, as an institution enmeshed with the early history of Islam, which circulated widely across Afro-Eurasia and created a shared sense of community among disparate peoples at the same time as it gave rise to differing and competing visions of the community’s past, present, and future. *Longing for the Lost Caliphate* asks two essential questions: What did Muslims imagine to be lost with the disappearance of the Abbasid and Ottoman Caliphates in 1258 and 1924 respectively? And how did they attempt to recapture that perceived loss, and in doing so redefine the caliphate for their times, under shifting circumstances?

As a contribution of global Islamic history to the study of cultural memory, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate* pursues a challenging investigation of Islamic interconnectivities across Afro-Eurasia in both the thirteenth and the twentieth centuries. The traumatic disappearance of the Abbasid and Ottoman caliphates in 1258 and 1924 generated an outpouring of emotion far beyond the territorial boundaries of imperial domains and illustrates the limitations of conventional political and historiographical boundaries in investigating such phenomena. In the case of the Abbasids, this emotive response emanated from as far away as Spain in the west to India in the east, along with Egypt, western North Africa, geographical Syria, Mesopotamia, Yemen, and Persia—regions that had long been independent of Abbasid rule or even boasted of rival states and institutions. And in the case of the Ottomans, Muslims from Southeastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia expressed profound consternation—again beyond the political and territorial reach of the Ottoman Empire at the time of its demise. In analyzing these vivid materials, I explore the poignant sense of symbolic loss among Muslims across Afro-Eurasia to the disappearance of an Islamic caliphate in the thirteenth and twentieth centuries as well their various, and sometimes conflicting, attempts to reconstruct the lost institution and the religious communal bonds it represented. This fascinating circulation of ideas and debates in response to the dilemma of caliphal absence highlights exceptionally well the vivacity of transregional social and intellectual networks among Muslims in the premodern and modern eras.

INTRODUCTION

This revisionist enterprise also shifts the prevailing historiographic lens from focusing on the political developments associated with the caliphate at disparate junctures to bringing its deep-seated cultural associations to the fore. An earlier generation of scholars presumed a dearth of Muslim sentiment regarding the Islamic caliphate as a corollary to the institution's political deterioration and imperial decline. Continuously in print since 1950, Bernard Lewis's *The Arabs in History* downplays the shock of the Abbasid Caliphate's violent demise in 1258: "The Caliphs had long since lost almost all their real power, and military Sulṭāns, both in the capital and in the provinces, had begun to arrogate to themselves not only the powers, but even some of the prerogatives, of the Caliphs. The Mongols did little more than lay the ghost of an institution that was already dead."⁶ And in 2004, Patricia Crone acknowledged the scholarly lacuna in assessing Muslim reactions to the Mongol invasion of Baghdad but expected little expression of emotion to surface from the primary source material. As Crone writes, "In 656/1258 the Mongols sacked Baghdad and killed the last Abbasid caliph, al-Musta' sim. The reaction awaits a study, but the sources are not exactly brimming over with grief."⁷ Yet, as my first chapter illustrates, the poetry, music, historical chronicles, and other works that contemporaries and near contemporaries left behind tell another story, one of deep and abiding anguish.

Poets, in particular, utilized inherited literary forms to shape new and powerful expressions of loss and mourning. The first usage of elegies in Arabic poetry for entire cities, as opposed to individuals, had been inspired by devastation inflicted on Baghdad long before the Mongol invasions, during the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, the two sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd, as they vied for the caliphate following their father's death. Inhabitants of the city, and travelers as well, sought to evoke the golden age of the Abbasid Caliphate's luminous capital and to preserve its living memory.⁸ But in the aftermath of 1258, the elegiac form and its tropes gained new meaning. The level of destruction wrought by the Mongols was unparalleled in the city's long and sinuous history.⁹ And faced with the death of hundreds of thousands in the once-bustling metropolis, the classical poetic form of searching for the ruined dwelling of a beloved and mourning days past became chillingly appropriate.

The resulting articulations of grief over the catastrophe of 1258 were so potent and pregnant with meaning that they continued to be evoked by Muslims over the centuries as a cultural touchstone, especially during moments of distress. The British invasion of Egypt in 1882 found Muslim masses called upon to recite a "soul-stirring poem" written as a prayer to God when the Mongols took Baghdad in the thirteenth century; the Khedive's imam urged Muslims to recite the poem in public gatherings following their recitation of the blessed accounts of Prophet Muḥammad recorded in *Saḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*. The famed Muḥammad 'Abduh also published the moving poem in Egypt's *Official Gazette* so that the troops could read and benefit from it as well.¹⁰ Another powerful anecdote

INTRODUCTION

replete with stanzas reflecting on divine justice following the 1258 Mongol conquest that had been preserved in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century histories was widely disseminated via an early nineteenth-century text of theology and reproduced during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹¹ The collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 elicited its own neoclassical poems mourning the institution's premature passing, and this latter form of elegiac loss contributes to my fourth chapter tracing these cultural continuities into the new forms and contexts of the early twentieth century. More recently, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 also provoked journalists to deride marauding Americans as modern-day Mongols (including the satiric depiction of George W. Bush in Mongol attire) as an evocative illustration of their insensitivity and barbarism.¹² And in the throes of the Arab Spring and its ensuing counterrevolutions, the aforementioned stanzas composed in the thirteenth century and cited in works of history and theology even reached the Twittersphere when they were tweeted out on May 23, 2013 to over five thousand followers.¹³

Moreover, in another revision of prevalent scholarly assumptions, the first fall of Baghdad in 1258 did not signal an end to Islamic jurisprudential engagement with the concept of an Islamic caliphate and the active desire to reconcile contemporary circumstances with the ideals of Islamic political theory. This classical intellectual pursuit took shape during the abating of caliphal power in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and it continued as the idealized conception of the caliphate less and less mirrored reality. Even though histories of Islamic political thought typically end with the fall of the Abbasids in Baghdad in 1258, Mamluk-era scholars in Egypt and Syria continued to embrace and engage this vibrant intellectual heritage, as I demonstrate in my second and third chapters. The wide resonance of these interpretations, rooted in powerful communal memories, enhanced the religious authority as well as the social and political relevance of the Abbasid caliphs in Cairo. This analysis overturns the suppositions of academics like Sir Hamilton Gibb that "the setting up of a nominal 'shadow-caliphate' at Cairo made no difference, since few if any jurists of the period recognized it."¹⁴ Instead, I explore how Muslim jurists along with other religious scholars and social actors actively supported the reinauguration of the Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo and contemplated what it meant for Mamluk state and society over nearly three centuries. In the sixteenth century, Ottoman scholars, like the Grand Vizier Lütü Paşa, also marshaled this rich corpus of Islamic political thought and jurisprudence to legitimize the ruling dynasty's caliphate. And the quest for legitimate Islamic leadership did not end with the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924—far from it. In the aftermath of World War I, many Muslim intellectuals, activists, and politicians grappled with how to reconfigure a modern caliphate for their age, as I address in my fifth and sixth chapters.

The Abbasid and Ottoman Caliphates were not the only caliphates of Islamic history, nor were their dynasties the only ones to fall with dramatic conse-

INTRODUCTION

quences. One could point to the Isma‘īlī caliphate of the Fatimids in North Africa or the Umayyad Caliphate of Spain, among others. Indeed, the loss of Muslim Spain has remained a key cultural signifier similarly evoking pained nostalgia for its cosmopolitanism and brilliance.¹⁵ Yet among the Sunni majority, the Abbasids and Ottomans laid claim to a more broadly universal caliphate that was interwoven into a seamless narrative of Islamic leadership that traveled in general terms from the great centers of Medina to Damascus to Baghdad to Cairo to Istanbul. This storyline, as al-Sanhūrī indicated in the opening above, was only punctured by the worrisome absence of a caliphate following the calamities of 1258 and 1924. These two periods of disruption form the basis of my study because they surface and accentuate what was at stake for Muslim contemporaries and near contemporaries invested in the myriad meanings and extensive religious discourse of a universal Sunni caliphate. As a prelude to analyzing the successive waves of communal loss and aspirations for collective regeneration, the following pages present a contextualizing overview of the caliphate’s development.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CALIPHATE

The institution of the caliphate itself emerged upon the Prophet Muḥammad’s death in 11/632 when his close companions assumed leadership of the early Muslim community. Precisely what this new form of leadership and authority would entail was initially unclear, but the vision of a caliphate as temporal succession to the Prophet Muḥammad over the entire Muslim community’s affairs, and not merely those of one faction, tribe, or region, was quickly articulated and implemented by the Prophet’s close friend and father-in-law, Abū Bakr (r. 11–13/632–34). His election, as an upright leading Muslim figure descended from Quraysh, to follow the book of God and the example of God’s messenger in his stewardship established a number of important legal precedents and ideals for Islamic leadership and politics among the majority of the community. And Abū Bakr’s brief reign as caliph, or temporal successor to the Prophet Muḥammad, was critical in laying the foundations for a cohesive and expansive Islamic polity after the Prophet’s passing away.¹⁶

Abū Bakr and the first few righteous caliphs who followed him, for a period of thirty years until 41/661, are known collectively as the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*) in the Sunni tradition. Despite the array of problems and turmoil that surfaced during this period, particularly following the assassinations of the second, third, and fourth caliphs ‘Umar (r. 13–23/634–44), ‘Uthmān (r. 23–35/644–56), and ‘Alī (r. 35–40/656–61), Sunni Muslims view this era as a golden age with righteous individuals, closely affiliated with the Prophet Muḥammad and steeped in his teachings, at the helm of communal leadership. For affirmation of this view, Muslims have pointed to related *ḥadīths* on the topic, such as the Prophet Muḥammad’s instruction to follow the righteous

INTRODUCTION

and rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafā' al-rāshidīn al-mahdiyyīn*) who would come after him,¹⁷ along with other traditions that relate the sequential actions of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī in the lifetime of the Prophet in highly symbolic succession.¹⁸ Other important references in the ḥadīth literature indicate that a period of righteous successors emulating the prophetic model (*khilāfat al-nubuwwah*) would last for only thirty years.¹⁹ And others yet convey the Prophet's prediction that his grandson al-Ḥasan (through his daughter Fāṭimah and son-in-law 'Alī) would ultimately reconcile two great warring Muslim factions.²⁰

Bringing an end to the first civil war among Muslims that had plagued his father's reign, this grandson of the Prophet, al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī, ceded his right to the caliphate in 41/661 to his father's rival, Mu'āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80), who had been a latecomer to Islam towards the end of the Prophet's life. According to the primary sources cited by Wilferd Madelung in his *Succession to Muhammad*, al-Ḥasan had stipulated, among other terms, "that Mu'āwiyah should not be entitled to appoint his successor but that there should be an electoral council (*shūrā*)" to determine the next caliph.²¹ Such a return to earlier models of caliphal election was not, however, adopted by Mu'āwiyah, to the chagrin of many piously minded individuals.²² And instead, Mu'āwiyah sought to impose his son Yazīd (r. 60–64/680–83) upon the Muslim community as his heir through a mixture, typically attributed to Mu'āwiyah's political finesse, of enticement and potent threats of violence. In this instance, however, Yazīd's ascension to the throne provoked a second outbreak of civil war that was finally put to rest a long eleven years later by the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 65–86/685–705), who furthered the bureaucratization and Arabization of a specifically Umayyad imperial regime rooted in dynastic succession.²³

THE ABBASID CALIPHATE

Resentment over the despotic and dissolute ways of the Umayyads, not to mention their descent from the 'Abd Shams branch of Quraysh, boiled over into a series of revolts and rebellions during their reign seeking to establish alternative, and presumably more suitable, candidates as caliph. Ultimately one movement coalescing around an unnamed member of the Prophet Muḥammad's family was successful in overthrowing the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān b. Muḥammad b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam (r. 127–32/744–50), in the second/eighth century. After the untimely death of the original candidate in the midst of these revolutionary preparations, his brother Abū'l-'Abbās, who was also a descendent of the Prophet's uncle al-'Abbās, was openly proclaimed caliph in 132/749 in Kufah, over other possible candidates descended from the line of the Prophet's son-in-law 'Alī. A confluence of factors had brought the Abbasids to power: their noble lineage, promise of pious and just rule, and careful and pro-

INTRODUCTION

tracted political and military preparations, as well as ancestral, ethnic, factional, and regional rivalries.²⁴ The successful assumption by Abū'l-‘Abbās, inducted as al-Saffāḥ (r. 132–36/749–54), of the Islamic caliphate inaugurated a reign of Abbasids based in Mesopotamia that would last for over five hundred years until the fateful Mongol invasion of 656/1258.

The Abbasids had grown progressively weaker as rulers over the duration of their lengthy reign as caliphs, which itself was not immune from rebellions and riveting contests over power. Disputes over succession surfaced early and often, and the empire's expansive domains became increasingly autonomous. Hereditary governorships encouraged the decentralization of power within the empire's core provinces, while tributary rulers of peripheral regions assumed even greater independence. Within the capital, rivalries among the military regiments and among factions of the bureaucracy crippled the central government's efficacy and limited its reach. And with the establishment of the post of *amīr al-‘umarā* in 324/936, the Caliph al-Rāḍī (r. 322–29/934–40) conferred his power to govern upon a supreme military commander—an arrangement that would last throughout the sway of the Buyids and the Saljuqs down to the end of the sixth/twelfth century.²⁵ The Abbasid caliph al-Nāṣir (r. 575–622/1180–1225) sought to reassert meticulous control over governance during his lengthy reign, and his vigorous example is reputed to have been followed by his son and grandson who ascended to the caliphate in succession.²⁶ What happened next, during the reign of Baghdad's last Abbasid caliph, al-Musta‘ṣim (r. 640–56/1242–58), lays the stage for the Mongol conquest of the Abbasid capital.

Muslim contemporaries and near contemporaries in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries seek to lay the blame for the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols, in a number of quarters. Notably, the personal characteristics of the last caliph al-Musta‘ṣim come in for heavy criticism. He was reputed to have been pious, gentle, and easygoing but also, to his detriment and that of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, lacking vigilance, decisiveness, and high aspirations, and he was known for his weakness of opinion, inability to manage affairs, and inexperience.²⁷ Yet these individual flaws also point to some of the systemic problems that had developed over the course of the late Abbasid Empire. Was it not leading figures of the Abbasid state, including the *Duwaydār*²⁸ and the *Sharābī*,²⁹ who chose al-Musta‘ṣim over stronger and more suitable candidates because they thought he would be more susceptible to their control and influence? One contemporary historian, Ibn Wāṣil (604–97/1208–98), recounts how al-Musta‘ṣim's highly determined and courageous uncle known as al-Khafājī³⁰ used to declare, with great boldness and independent spirit, that if God placed him in power, he would eradicate the Mongols and wrest the lands away from them.³¹ And another early historian, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm Sunbuṭ Qanītū al-Irbilī (650–97 / ca. 1252–97 / 1317), relates how all of the Abbasid princes, except for one,³² initially refused to pledge their allegiance to

INTRODUCTION

al-Musta‘šim as caliph in 640/1242. Only after orders were issued and enforced to prevent food and other provisions from reaching them in their homes did the Abbasids ultimately relent.³³ The elaborate secrecy in which the preliminary transfer of the caliphate from al-Mustanšir to al-Musta‘šim was conducted appears as another measure designed to ward off anticipated resistance to his selection³⁴ and further reveals the imbalance of powers in the late Abbasid regime.

Similarly, festering sectarian tensions among bureaucrats of the Abbasid Empire as well as among the general populace of Baghdad and its environs significantly exacerbated the system’s weaknesses. Contemporaries point to the recurring outbreaks of violence among Sunni and Shi’i Muslims in Baghdad as a major catalyst for the Mongol conquest of the capital. In response to a Shi’i attack on Sunnis, the Shi’i neighborhood of al-Karkh was plundered in retribution. Egyptian historical sources indicate that this raid was undertaken at the direct command of the caliph,³⁵ while Syrian historians explain that the aggrieved Sunnis of Bāb al-Bašrah had complained directly the *Duwaydār* Rukn al-Dīn and one of the caliph’s sons³⁶ who independently ordered the army to raid al-Karkh.³⁷ The retribution exacted, however, was egregiously excessive, as houses were looted, people were killed, and women were raped.³⁸ The caliph’s Shi’i vizier, Mu‘ayyad al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Alqamī,³⁹ is widely reported to have identified with his coreligionists in al-Karkh and, unable to stop the mortifying plunder, to have resolved secretly to exact his own revenge upon the caliph and his Sunni clique.⁴⁰

The details of Ibn al-‘Alqamī’s treachery vary slightly from one source to another, growing most colorful in later sources, but the basic plot remains essentially the same: that he wrote to the Mongol Hülegü and invited him to capture Baghdad.⁴¹ Some seventh/thirteenth- and eighth/fourteenth-century historians explain that Ibn al-‘Alqamī (d. 656/1258) was behind the reduction in the stipends and numbers of al-Musta‘šim’s troops, from the initial one hundred thousand or so he inherited from his father al-Mustanšir to less than twenty thousand,⁴² so that when the two armies finally met in Muḥarram 656 / January 1258, the caliph’s army was ultimately defeated.⁴³ When the Mongols then laid siege to the city of Baghdad, Ibn al-‘Alqamī is reputed to have gone out to assure his own position with the Mongols, under the ruse that he was seeking an amicable truce for all.⁴⁴ At this time, the inhabitants of Baghdad were instructed not to fire arrows back at the Mongols as that could potentially derail the crucial negotiations.⁴⁵ When the caliph was later asked to go outside the city to meet with the Mongols, some historians explain that Ibn al-‘Alqamī had deceived the caliph into believing that Hülegü wanted his daughter to marry the caliph’s son in order to seal their supposed arrangements.⁴⁶ And in seeking to absolve Ibn al-‘Alqamī from such accusations, the Shi’i historian Ibn al-Ṭiqṭaqā (660–709 / ca. 1262–1309) argues that Hülegü would not have reappointed the vizier over Baghdad once it fell to the Mongols, if had he in-

INTRODUCTION

deed betrayed the caliph—an argument which places primacy on loyalty in governance and assumes that Hülegü would not reward treachery undertaken on his behalf.⁴⁷ But a contemporary resident of Baghdad, Jamāl al-Dīn Sulaymān b. Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Abdillāh Ibn Raṭlayn, who was reputed to be a trustworthy witness, reported from his father, who was also deemed a trustworthy witness and was one of only seventeen people kept with the caliph inside the Mongol camp during the siege of Baghdad, that Ibn al-‘Alqamī had personally advised Hülegü to kill al-Musta‘īm rather than finalize an armistice or else Mongol rule of Mesopotamia would never be secure.⁴⁸ In the end, the Mongols killed the caliph, the other members of the Abbasid dynasty, and the leading figures of Baghdad, then indiscriminately plundered, raped, and murdered the city’s inhabitants,⁴⁹ and the former Abbasid capital became a provincial backwater in the newly rising Mongol Empire.⁵⁰

THE OTTOMAN CALIPHATE

Another Abbasid Caliphate was reestablished in Cairo (as I examine in chapter 2) only a few years after the destruction of Baghdad, and it was from this Cairene institution that the rights to the caliphate were allegedly transferred in the sixteenth century to the Ottomans in Anatolia.⁵¹ The first awareness Europeans gained of this tradition about the Ottomans inheriting the caliphate from the Abbasids of Cairo was through Georgius Fabricius (1516–71 CE) and Johannes Rosinus (c. 1550–1626 CE) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and later from Muradcan Tosunian (also known as Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson, 1740–1807 CE) in the eighteenth century.⁵² In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, certain Russian, British, and Italian orientalisks,⁵³ whose ideas have gained great traction, sought in collaboration with imperial administrations to frame the notion of a formal transfer of the caliphate to the Ottomans as a fabrication of the late eighteenth century designed to beguile European governments. The inconsistency of this dating aside, other more recent scholars like Naimur Rahman Farooqi and Azmi Özcan have convincingly demonstrated critical weaknesses in the earlier arguments aimed at undermining Ottoman claims to the caliphate, including the acknowledgment that holding an official ceremony had never been a prerequisite to transfer the caliphate from one dynasty to another and that the Ottomans relied primarily on other approaches to bolster their caliphal legitimacy.⁵⁴ In the sixteenth century, the Ottomans commissioned legal works explicating their claims to the caliphate despite their non-Qurashī lineage, such as the *Khalāṣ al-Ummah fī Ma‘rifat al-A‘immah* of the Grand Vizier Lütfi Paşa (d. 970/1562), and utilized the titles caliph (*khalīfah*), commander of the faithful (*amīr al-mu‘minīn*), and the preferred juristic term *imām* in official documents, along with a panoply of other titles legitimizing and glorifying their reign. As early as 923/1517, the same year that the Ottomans conquered Mamluk Egypt and took custody of its Abbasid

INTRODUCTION

caliph, the Ottoman sultan Selim I officially proclaimed that he alone possessed the right to be called caliph.⁵⁵ J. W. Redhouse, another British scholar of the late nineteenth century, sought at length to dispel his contemporaries' assertions that the Ottoman sultan's status as "the Caliph of the world of Islam" was a new and baseless pretension as being "erroneous, futile, and impolitic."⁵⁶ And indeed, Muslims of the early twentieth century were far from dissuaded from rendering material and moral support to the Ottoman caliphs on the grounds of politicized foreign scholarship.

For millions of them, both within and without Ottoman imperial domains, the Ottomans were perceived as the rightful guardians of this venerable Islamic tradition of the universal Islamic caliphate before its eventual obliteration in 1924. The Ottoman sultan-caliph who ascended the throne in 1876 and reigned for over thirty years, Abdülhamid II, actively cultivated these Islamic loyalties as a means to consolidate his increasingly Muslim-populated and Asiatic, yet ethnically diverse, empire and stave off the threat of alternative ideologies like separatist nationalism.⁵⁷ By highlighting his caliphal role as the spiritual guardian and temporal protector of all Muslims, Abdülhamid II also succeeded in developing a powerful counterweight in his relations with other European empires, whose sovereigns and administrators were mindful of his ability to persuade, or even incite, the millions of Muslims under their imperial rule. More than once did they call upon Abdülhamid II's help in quelling potential Muslim resistance, and the possibility that he could alternatively ignite it also figured into their calculations.⁵⁸ For as Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski have articulated:

In much of the Islamic world by the beginning of the twentieth century, identity as a Muslim had come to mean political solidarity with the Ottoman Empire and manifested itself in declarations of allegiance to its Sultan/Caliph, acceptance of its theoretical authority as an alternative to final subjection by Europe, and support for it in the international crises in which it was involved.⁵⁹

Even after Abdülhamid II's deposition in 1909 by the Young Turks, Muslims in places such as Egypt and India, although initially concerned, continued to display their religious loyalty to the Ottoman state, often translating adoring rhetoric into concrete action. Coming to a fever-pitch in the 1911–12 Italian-Ottoman conflict over Tripolitania (modern-day Libya) and the 1912–13 Balkan wars, Muslims in a number of countries raised immense sums of money to assist the Ottomans through public fundraising drives, actively espoused the Ottoman cause in the press and literature, organized hundreds of meetings as well as boycotts, sent medical missions, and even arranged for the dispatch of military volunteers.⁶⁰

Yet the termination of the Ottoman Caliphate ultimately came from within its own domains, acutely ravaged by World War I,⁶¹ as the unpredictable culmination of several significant intellectual and socio-political trends. The push to

INTRODUCTION

modernize the Ottoman Empire emerged in the eighteenth century in order to save the empire from military defeat at the hands of its European counterparts. Yet the attempt to establish new military schools and Europeanize the army led to the deposition of one sultan in 1807 by the traditional Janissary corps, who were later eliminated by his successor, the Sultan-Caliph Mahmud II, ⁶² in 1826. The imbalance in political powers that this created, with the removal of a main check upon the central government and the concurrent weakening of other traditional elites, like the *'ulamā'* (religious scholars or learned class), paved the way for more reforms throughout society. On the one hand, during the remainder of Mahmud II's reign and the subsequent era of Tanzimat (1839–76), schools like the Royal Medical Academy (*Tıbbiye*), where an early version of the influential Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) would emerge in 1889, were established and exposed new generations of young Ottomans to European instructors, texts, and philosophies.⁶³ Yet on the other hand, the growing concentration and centralization of power in the palace and, increasingly, the imperial bureaucracy, over the next several decades, also fostered the desire for a constitutional and representative rule of law, among emerging secular as well as disempowered traditional elites. Ottoman constitutionalism, highly conservative and Islamic, was created by the amalgam of diverse groups and interests that broadly sought to establish parliamentary and constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴

Yet ironically, the subsequent Hamidian, Unionist, and Kemalist eras of late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican history were all dominated by authoritarian reformers, who, after brief experimentations with constitutional and parliamentary democracy, sought to consolidate power into a single-party or single-person rule, in order to implement a particular vision of Europeanized modernity. The Unionists, or the CUP forming the major umbrella organization of the Young Turks, were able to wrest control of the empire from Abdülhamid II in 1908, restore the constitution of 1876 and the parliament he had prorogued in 1878, and ultimately facilitate what Şükrü Hanioğlu notes is the most significant sociopolitical legacy of the Second Constitutional period, “the emergence of an intellectual nationalist vanguard at the expense of the traditional religious and propertied elites.”⁶⁵ In the waning days of World War I, the Unionists also laid down the foundations for a nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia against the Allied Powers to preserve Ottoman territory and sovereignty, by storing, sending, and later smuggling officers, arms, ammunition, money, and supplies, establishing key organizations to continue the armed and public defense of Turkish Muslim rights, and mobilizing Muslim public opinion for the nationalist cause.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, this Anatolian-based nationalist struggle was markedly religious in tenor.⁶⁷ Although the Unionist deputy in these plans for nationalist resistance, Mustafa Kemal Paşa (1880 or 1881–1938), grew increasingly independent and irksome, he was able to maintain his position through the continued loyalty of the armed forces, including Kazım

INTRODUCTION

(Karabekir) Paşa (1882–1948), the deportation of prominent Unionist leaders to Malta by the British in March 1920, the Bolsheviks' deluding and delaying another eminent Unionist Enver Paşa (1881–1922) from action, and Mustafa Kemal's ultimate military victory over the invading Greek army in September 1922.⁶⁸ Over the next few years, Mustafa Kemal Paşa, later known as Atatürk or the Father of the Turks, skillfully and ruthlessly outmaneuvered his fellow nationalists and war heroes in accumulating the reigns of power and political influence in the fluid post-war environment.⁶⁹

The ultimate push to abolish the Ottoman Caliphate as a rival source of power in March 1924 came from Mustafa Kemal, who had already secured his appointment as president of a Turkish Republic a few months earlier, in October 1923. Yet this was by no means the only or the most logical outcome of the Turkish War of Independence, which had been waged to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate.⁷⁰ The Grand National Assembly was established in Ankara on April 23, 1920 to continue the work of the Ottoman Parliament that had been impeded by the British occupation of Istanbul on March 16, 1920.⁷¹ And approximately two years of nationalist struggle later, the assembly's representatives were annoyed that the Grand Vizier Ahmet Tevfik (Okday) Paşa (1845–1936) in Istanbul seemed to insist pretentiously on sending a joint delegation to the peace negotiations at Lausanne, despite the negative reply sent from Ankara, which, unbeknownst to the assembly delegates at large, he had never received. Sinop Deputy, Rıza Nur (1879–1942), introduced a motion that the assembly separate the sultanate and caliphate from one another, in order to isolate and eradicate the temporal power of the imperial bureaucracy associated with the former (and thereby get rid of presumptuous grand viziers once and for all), while still preserving the high spiritual office of the caliphate. The modified resolution finally adopted in the early hours of November 2, 1922, declared that the sovereignty of the sultanate was formally incorporated and executed by the government of Turkish Grand National Assembly alone, and it also preserved the caliphate for the Ottoman Royal House.⁷²

Yet, as Michael Finefrock has argued, by not simultaneously delineating the precise form of the state that was to replace the Ottoman Sultanate, these moderate and conservative nationalists placed themselves at a distinct political disadvantage. Although liberals and conservatives alike in the assembly increasingly argued "in favor of the Caliph playing an important role in whatever political system ultimately was established,"⁷³ they were undermined by political intimidation (for example, the brutal murder of a vocal pro-caliphate assembly member⁷⁴ in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal's lead bodyguard), Mustafa Kemal's modification of the 1920 High Treason Law on April 15, 1923, (making it a crime to campaign for the return of the sultanate broadly defined, i.e., any form of temporal power for the caliph),⁷⁵ and his adroit arrangements for a more loyal second assembly.⁷⁶ Following the isolation of the army politically⁷⁷ and during

INTRODUCTION

an absence of highly regarded opposition figures from Ankara,⁷⁸ the rest of the personally vetted assembly moved on March 4, 1924, to abolish the Ottoman Caliphate along with the religious foundations of law and education. The centuries-old institution was struck down by a legislative act of the Grand National Assembly, and all members of the Ottoman dynasty were expelled from the newly formed Turkish Republic.⁷⁹

DIACHRONIC REFLECTIONS ON SYMBOLIC LOSS, DESTRUCTION, AND RENEGOTIATION

Juxtaposing this disappearance of the caliphate in the twentieth century with its brief absence in the thirteenth century also raises certain questions about the commonalities between such seemingly different scenarios. The two events are separated by nearly seven centuries, their capitals in Baghdad and Istanbul are lands apart, their territories do not fully converge, and one institution was obliterated by a foreign army whereas the other was swept away through the internal act of an assembly. Yet what binds these two scenarios together is the abiding significance of the caliphate within the Islamic context and the elusive desire for a righteous locus of central authority and leadership grounded in the Islamic tradition. Even so, certain contextual similarities facilitated Muslim contemporaries' heightened emotions at the point of the caliphate's demise in the premodern and modern eras. The territories of both the Abbasid and the Ottoman Empires had greatly dwindled and the political power of the nominally supreme ruler in both instances had ebbed, fomenting a greater sense of loss and nostalgia for their glorious pasts. And in both cases, individual caliphs, the Abbasid al-Nāṣir li-Dīnillāh (who ruled 1180–1225 CE) and the Ottoman Abdülhamid II (who ruled 1876–1909 CE), sought to rejuvenate the institution of the caliphate as a means of augmenting their dynasty's political position and power at a time of weakness and intentionally enhanced the spiritual claims of the caliphate upon Muslims across Afro-Eurasia. Transregional networks of literary and cultural elites in both eras facilitated the circulation of such caliphal claims to spiritual and moral, if not functional political, authority, which strongly resonated with deeply ingrained religious traditions as well as the particularities of various local contexts.

The symbolism of the caliphate, augmented by the often romanticized memory of what the institution represented and what it could still represent in the lives of contemporaries and their progeny, was potent. For many Muslims, the caliphate even constituted a symbol of Islam itself, one deeply embedded in a rich intellectual and cultural discourse that could readily evoke a sense of the wider community's glory, righteousness, and esteem. For some, harkening back to the earliest caliphal models, it signified the potential of the Muslim community to live up to the best interpretations of the Prophet Muḥammad's teachings, to constitute a model and mercy for the rest of humanity, and to assume a

INTRODUCTION

position of virtuous leadership and benevolent guidance. Mandated by Islamic law as necessary to safeguard the Muslim community's temporal and spiritual affairs, the caliphate was enmeshed with numerous jurisprudential rulings that had developed over centuries of vibrant discussion and debate. As an institution with its genesis in the early days of Islam, the caliphate offered a potent mode of connectivity with the Muslim community's cultural, religious, legal, and historical heritage as well as with its ideals of solidarity. Therefore, its absence seemed inconceivable and created an aching void for many.

In probing this complex constellation of meanings and sensations, I have necessarily had to establish what I hope are some meaningful and feasible, if not exhaustive, parameters for analysis. The premodern portion is roughly demarcated by the first geographical zone identified by Marshall Hodgson for what he calls the High and Late Middle Ages where "Arabic continued to predominate as [a] literary tongue even where it was not the spoken language," with Cairo functioning as "the intellectual capital of this zone." Encompassing Arabia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, western North Africa, and Spain, these territories loosely correspond to the former western territories of the Abbasid Caliphate, and hence this delineation allows us to assess the reactions to its disappearance in lands where its cultural imprint was both deep and lasting, bearing religious meaning and significance long past its gradual political disintegration and ultimate destruction. Yet we should also acknowledge that this delineation does not fully encompass Hodgson's second geographical zone from "the Balkans east to Turkestan and China and south to southern India and into Malaysia" where Persian matured and flourished as another significant "language of culture." Nor does it address all of the many regions to which Islam was rapidly and remarkably expanding after the fourth/tenth century, including Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Eurasia, South Asia, and China.⁸⁰ Although it would make for another intriguing study to analyze in full the reactions in Persian literature to the demise of the Abbasid Caliphate (especially recognizing that many of these territories came to be ruled by Turkic-Mongolic sovereigns who continued to derive prestige from their lineage even after their Islamization) as well as perceptions of it among newly Islamized populations across the world (and specifically what, if anything, was culturally transmitted to them about the Abbasid Caliphate at various points in time and how), both sets of these dynamics lie beyond the scope of this current manuscript.

Similarly faced with the sheer unfeasibility of studying the reactions of all Muslim nations in the modern era to the demise of the Ottoman Caliphate, I have selected a few particular sites for investigation, with an eye to their varying relationships with the Ottoman Empire and experiences of European colonialism. The histories of Anatolia, geographical Syria, Egypt, and India present different forms of interaction with the Late Ottoman Empire. While Anatolia represented the birthplace of the Ottomans and remained a central province

INTRODUCTION

for the duration of their rule, geographical Syria was conquered in the course of the sixteenth century and remained a provincial part of the empire until its dismemberment in the early twentieth century. Although Egypt had been acquired during the sixteenth-century campaigns of the Ottoman sultan Selim I (r. 918–26/1512–20), by the nineteenth century it had become a semi-autonomous state under its Ottoman Albanian governor Mehmed Ali Paşa, never to be fully reintegrated into the empire. India, on the other hand, was never an official part of the Ottoman Empire, to begin with. Yet there, the British established a strong commercial then imperial presence, ultimately overcoming the remnants of the Mughal Empire. And in Egypt too, first Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) led a French expedition in 1798, followed nearly a century later by British military occupation and administration. Meanwhile, geographical Syria and Anatolia faced the prospect of European colonization much later, during the course of the First World War. These different variables help contextualize and elucidate the various reactions of Muslims in the early twentieth century to the unforeseen abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

Longing for the Lost Caliphate examines the profuse reflections of Muslims in the premodern and modern eras upon these dramatically unexpected disappearances of an Islamic caliphate. The premodern materials include predominantly Arabic as well as some Persian poetry, historical chronicles, legal treatises, commentaries on prophetic narrations, works of Qur'anic exegesis, topographical surveys, musicological compositions, and eschatological works, in both manuscript and published formats. The modern source materials expand to include Arabic, English, French, Ottoman Turkish, and Turkish archival documents, memoirs, poetry, periodical literature, and specialized treatises. This wide range of materials helps provide insight into the world of Muslim literary and cultural elites (jurists, exegetes, traditionists, theologians, historians, musicians, poets, intellectuals, bureaucrats, activists, and journalists) at the same time as it provides a tantalizing, if elusive, glimpse of their interactions with broader Muslim populations. Poetry regularly recited in public in the premodern world or disseminated through newspapers in the twentieth century, folk musical performances seeking to preserve forms inherited from the thirteenth century, premodern processions and ceremonies, and modern mass rallies and petitions, all illustrate the vibrant and myriad means of transmitting collective memories of the Islamic caliphate.

Yet, in *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, I would also like to suggest that this fascinating intertwining of faith, community, and politics is not exceptional to the Muslim religious imaginary. In many ways, it parallels the experiences of other religious communities amid poignant moments of symbolic loss and reconstruction, such as the destruction of the Second Temple, the fall of Rome, and the capture of Constantinople, as well as the renegotiation of transregional religious identities and institutions amid the modern world system of nation-

INTRODUCTION

states, such as the rearticulation of the papacy and the global rise of politicized religious movements and parties. These allusions to the comparative religious experiences of other communities are integrated into the body of book, where I hope they will most effectively illuminate Muslim engagement and entanglement with the notion of a vanished caliphate, irrevocably lost in its past forms, and passionately desired in potential new configurations (whether political, spatial, spiritual, or communal).

In exploring how premodern and modern Muslims conceptualized the past and reimagined a collective future, I begin with the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258 and its ramifications before delving into the later aftermath of the Ottoman Caliphate's abolition in 1924. I analyze the cultural, political, and intellectual dimensions of Muslims' multiple engagements with the idea of an Islamic caliphate at these historic junctures through chapters that are thematically, rather than chronologically, structured around analytical arguments. In painting these broad strokes, I also pay attention to the importance of local context as well as personal and professional formations in the shaping of regional and individual perspectives. And by focusing on different angles through each of my chapters, I strive to illustrate the multifarious refractions of Muslim cultural memories of the caliphate: in poetic and prosaic descriptions as well as musical resonances, but also in the realms of social, political, and intellectual engagement, activism, and debate. These cultural memories pervade both discursive language and the social sphere; they inform the movements of peoples' tongues and pens as well as their hands and feet. As such, I hope that this book elucidates some of the ineffable ways that Muslims have vividly imagined their past in relation to the caliphate and striven to reconfigure their political and intellectual constructs as part of a living and dynamic cultural memory.

Beginning with a striking dream and travel narrative, the opening anecdote of chapter 1, "Visions of a Lost Caliphal Capital: Baghdad, 1258 CE" establishes the intense desire and nostalgia for Baghdad as the Abbasid Caliphate's cosmopolitan capital and its centrality in the Muslim imaginary, among the near and the far. Poetry, historical chronicles, and scholarly literature from Muslim Spain in the west, Yemen in the south, and Egypt, western North Africa, geographical Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, and India further east richly illustrate a shared perception among interconnected literary elites about the Abbasids' temporal and spiritual preeminence, despite all of their political reversals. Poetic elegies and moralizing tendencies over the destruction of the Second Temple and the fall of Rome suggest similarities. Yet the world without a caliph was so unimaginable for many premodern Muslims that it boded the imminent end of time itself—an eschatological interpretation that reverses contemporaneous Christian views of empire.

Chapter 2, "Recapturing Lost Glory and Legitimacy," opens with a prominent Islamic scholar refusing to pledge allegiance to the Mamluk ruler, intimating his slave status, in order to highlight the intensely problematic questions of

INTRODUCTION

political and legal legitimacy for premodern Muslim states in the wake of the Abbasid Caliphate's demise. Similar to the self-image of Byzantium as a Second Rome or the way that medieval rulers in western Europe appropriated Roman symbols, the Mamluk State reinvented the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo through elaborate rituals and ceremonies reminiscent of a glorious past, and legal scholars articulated creative jurisprudential solutions. Within Mamluk domains, the dilemma of caliphal absence was thus resolved by resurrecting the Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo as a doubly political and spiritual institution, where the caliph delegated his authority to govern to the sultan and radiated metaphysical blessings through his continued physical presence. This fraught relationship between caliphal authority and the wielding of power notably continued to surface as a magnet for political activity and debate, including the ever-potent threat of rebellion, over the centuries of Mamluk rule. Other premodern polities, however, adopted different solutions, and in South Asia, the Delhi Sultanate clung to the remaining legitimizing vestiges of the last Abbasid caliph of Baghdad, by propagating his name on its coinage and during Friday sermons, for decades. It was only much later that ambitious military leaders began to seek official delegation of rule in South Asia from the Abbasid caliph in Cairo and interject his legitimizing authority into local politics.

Chapter 3, "Conceptualizing the Caliphate, 632–1517 CE," begins with a discussion of how the embodied practice of the earliest generations of Muslims was essential in consolidating a nearly universal Islamic consensus upon the obligation of appointing a leader for the Muslim community. As such, the caliphate was incorporated into Sunni Islamic law as a legal necessity and a communal obligation, and Muslim scholars attempted to address the institution's increasing divergence from ideals over time. Following the destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 656/1258, Muslim scholars of Mamluk Egypt and Syria drew from this rich tradition of Islamic political thought and jurisprudence to articulate creative solutions that bolstered the socio-legal foundations of the reconstituted caliphate in Cairo. As intellectual predecessors, teachers, disciples, colleagues, rivals, and adversaries, these premodern scholars were connected to each other through intricate social webs that traversed the centuries of Mamluk rule from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. In the works of these authors, the issue of the caliphate builds upon the legal scaffolding of past scholarship while reflecting contemporary social contexts and the relevant issues of their day.

In chapter 4, "Manifold Meanings of Loss: Ottoman Defeat, Early 1920s," a protracted poetic debate between one of the last Ottoman *şeyhülislams* Mustafa Sabri and the Egyptian Prince of Poets Aḥmad Shawqī, conducted through the Egyptian press in the 1920s, aptly illustrates how modern regional contexts and professional affiliations created divergent interpretations of the Ottoman Caliphate's significance, even among those Muslim elites who shared an intense devotion to defending its legacy. For Mustafa Sabri, who hailed from the

INTRODUCTION

Ottoman religious hierarchy, the abolition of the caliphate meant a loss of the primacy of Islamic law, whereas for Aḥmad Shawqī, who assailed the British with his poetic pen, it meant the loss of the last great Muslim power in an age of colonialism. More broadly, Anatolia was home to the Turkish War of Independence waged to save the Ottoman Caliphate from foreign occupation yet overtaken by a gradual and strategic Kemalist revolution. Egypt and India, chafing under British colonialism, idealized the Ottoman Caliphate as the last great Muslim empire and a rallying symbol for local nationalist movements. And geographical Syria, agitated by the centralization policies, often castigated as Turkification, of the CUP while an Ottoman province, leaned towards a more vocally independent Arab nationalism and the competing caliphal claims of the Hashemite Sharif Ḥusayn. Wary of the political implications of these contending claims and religious debates for their overseas holdings, the British and French imperial bureaucracies closely watched and documented any developments through their global network of officials and informants.

Chapter 5, “In International Pursuit of a Caliphate,” analyzes the vibrant discussions of the early twentieth century over how to revive a caliphate best suited to the post-war era. While some advocated preservation of a traditional caliphal figurehead, many Muslim intellectuals were greatly persuaded by new models of internationalism embracing the nation-state and proposed international caliphal councils and organizations, similar to the League of Nations, or other purportedly spiritual institutions, similar to the refashioned papacy, to preserve the bonds of a transregional religious community. To varying degrees, all the participants in the debate over reviving a twentieth-century caliphate were influenced by an intriguing confluence of both the historic tranregionalism of the Muslim community as well as the modern thrust of the new age of global internationalism.

Chapter 6, “Debating a Modern Caliphate,” explores the contentious debates among modernist and traditional Muslim scholars in the Turkish Republic and Egypt over the future of the caliphate. Scholars and intellectuals on both sides of the divide faced serious consequences for their positions: İsmail Şükrü’s publisher was brutally murdered by Mustafa Kemal’s lead bodyguard, Seyyid Bey was sidelined from power after justifying the new Turkish regime, the Head of the Istanbul Bar Association Lütfi Fikri was put on trial for treason, ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Rāziq was expelled from the ranks of Egypt’s illustrious Azharite scholars, and Mustafa Sabri lived for a while in double exile in Egypt. And although not directly instigated by his intriguing views on the caliphate, Said Nursi survived multiple poisonings, imprisonment, and exile within Republican Turkey for his charismatic potential and activism. The separation of the caliphate from the Ottoman Sultanate followed by the Ottoman Caliphate’s abolition had opened up the possibilities for new and passionately contested configurations of power.

INTRODUCTION

The book's epilogue, "The Swirl of Religious Hopes and Aspirations," presents the later birth and development of Islamist movements of widely divergent strains, contrasts their stances with those held by the majority of Muslims, and further contemplates some of the book's central themes. It emphasizes broader patterns regarding the dynamic intersection of faith, community, and politics across time and space and also highlights differences among the pre-modern and modern contexts of religious communities and their imaginaries.

As *Longing for the Lost Caliphate* reveals, the caliphate signifies a pivotal cultural symbol that Muslims have imbued with different meanings according to their particular social contexts, bound by distinct parameters of time and space. It constitutes a cultural grammar that people readily identify and utilize to create new meanings. Building on the insights of Émile Durkheim, Maurice Halbwach's notion of collective memory, shorn of his positivist understanding of history, is particularly useful in understanding this phenomenon. His emphasis on the power of social frames in shaping memories reveals their immense fluidity and malleability on the one hand and their woven threads of connectivity with the past on the other. Elizabeth Castelli observes:

Religion, in Halbwach's account of it, is in essence a form of cultural memory work. What makes it different from the cultural memory work of other collectivities or modes of social life is the heightened importance attached to religion's complex and potentially paradoxical relationship with the past. This is particularly amplified at moments of ideological and institutional stress or change.

This interpretative framework underscores that people's memories, including those of religious communities, are shaped by their social affiliations and interactions and that the strength of their identification with particular groups may change, wane, or present different reflections on past events and emotions. It further recognizes the idealization and distortion of specific recollections, as their particularities dissolve over the passage of time, into tradition and collective imaginaries. Or to utilize another metaphor, it slowly irons out the wrinkles of the past. As Patrick Hutton elucidates in his *History as an Art of Memory*, "Only an historian scanning particular representations of a tradition at intervals over a long time is in a position to observe the change."⁸¹ The clearly different conceptual spaces of 1258 and 1924 help illuminate this gradual process of transformation among Muslims while simultaneously revealing lasting and recognizable cultural resonances associated with the notion of an Islamic caliphate. In short, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate* probes Muslim understandings of the caliphate, dramatically accentuated by its absence in the thirteenth and twentieth centuries, and reflects upon the broader implications of symbolic loss in the cultural memories of religious communities across the *longue durée*.