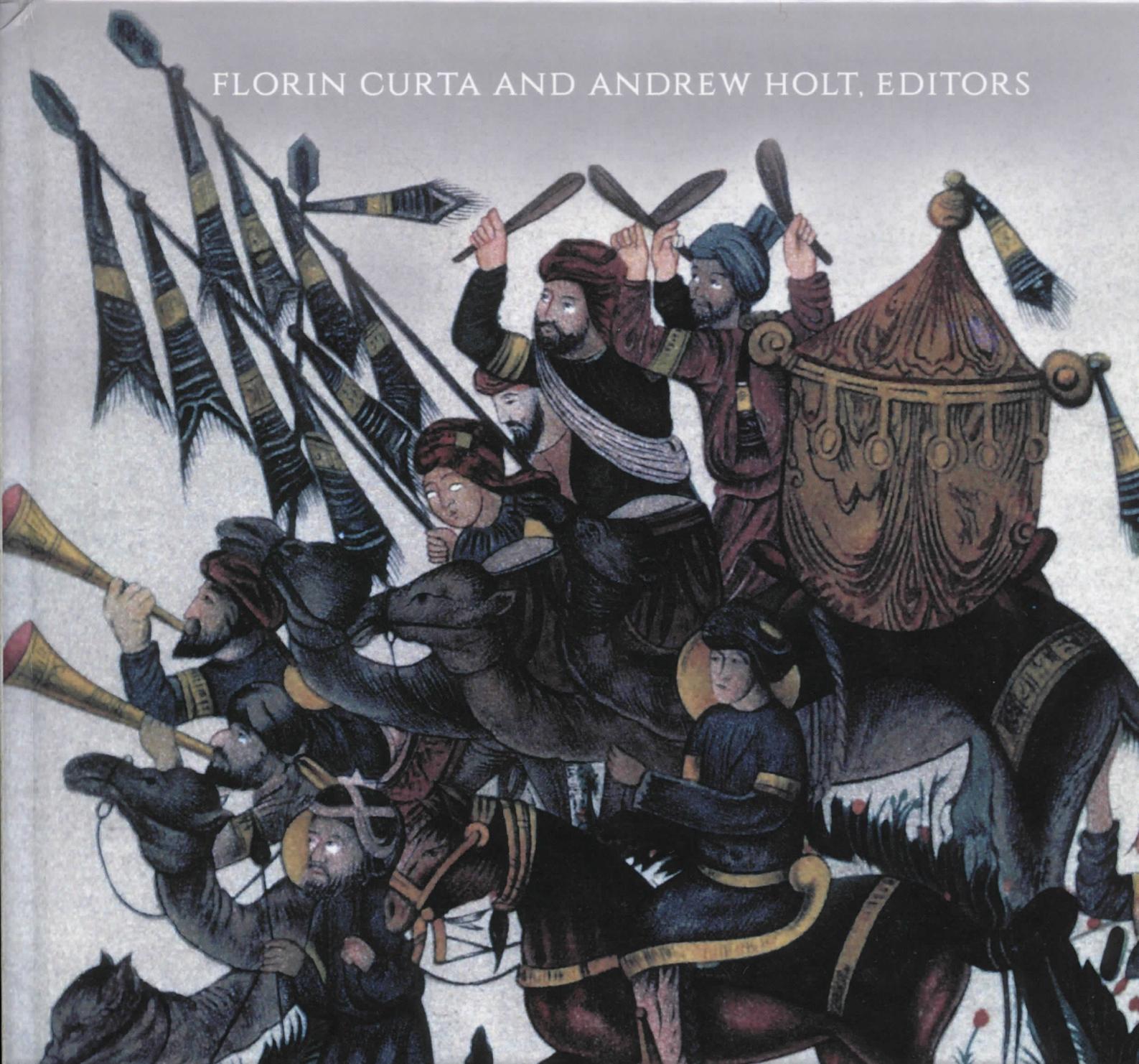


FLORIN CURTA AND ANDREW HOLT, EDITORS



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# GREAT EVENTS IN RELIGION

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PIVOTAL EVENTS IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

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VOLUME 2

AD 600 TO 1450

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Curta, Florin, editor.

Title: Great events in religion : an encyclopedia of pivotal events in religious history / Florin Curta and Andrew Holt, editors.

Description: Santa Barbara : ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2017 | Includes bibliographical references and index. Contents: Volume 1. Prehistory to AD 600 — Volume 2. AD 600 to 1450—Volume 3. 1450 to the Present.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016040890 | ISBN 9781610695657 (set) | ISBN 9781440845987 (volume 1 : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781440845994 (volume 2 : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781440846007 (volume 3 : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: History—Religious aspects—Encyclopedias. | Religion—History—Encyclopedias.

Classification: LCC BL65.H5 G74 2017 | DDC 201/.69—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016040890>

ISBN: 978-1-61069-565-7 (set)

ISBN: 978-1-4408-4598-7 (Volume 1)

ISBN: 978-1-4408-4599-4 (Volume 2)

ISBN: 978-1-4408-4600-7 (Volume 3)

EISBN: 978-1-61069-566-4

21 20 19 18 17      1 2 3 4 5

This book is also available as an eBook.

ABC-CLIO

An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC

ABC-CLIO, LLC

130 Cremona Drive, P.O. Box 1911

Santa Barbara, California 93116-1911

[www.abc-clio.com](http://www.abc-clio.com)

This book is printed on acid-free paper 

Manufactured in the United States of America

The Lollard or Wycliffite movement developed quickly and spread beyond England, but it was not a large-scale, successful revolution against the Catholic Church of that era. Under Richard II (r. 1377–1399), the persecution of heretics in England increased, including numerous Lollard arrests. The year 1401 saw a new statute known as *De Hæretico Comburendo*, which authorized the public burning of heretics; the Wycliffite Bible was banned in 1407 under the reign of King Henry IV (r. 1399–1413); and teaching Wycliffe's writings was forbidden by the constitutions of the archbishop of Canterbury in 1409. By Henry V's reign (r. 1413–1422), the monarchy worked closely with the church to persecute and diminish the Lollards and suppressed the 1414 revolt organized by Sir John Oldcastle. Soon thereafter, Pope John XXIII condemned both Wycliffe and his writings at the Council of Constance (1414–1415). But as authorities were closing in on the Wycliffites in England, his ideas had spread as far as the Hussites (also known as the Prague Wycliffites) in Bohemia. As followers of Jan Hus, who was executed as a heretic in 1415, the Hussites had studied Wycliffe's writing, which had become available in Prague due to the university exchanges occasioned by the union of Anne of Bohemia and Richard II of England in the 1380s.

Wycliffe died of a stroke in December of 1384, but in 1428 Pope Martin V ordered Wycliffe's bones burned and thrown into the Swift River at Lutterworth, Leicestershire. Though this display was a final gesture of condemnation directed at the Lollards by the Catholic Church, later Protestant views have seen the dispersal of Wycliffe's remains as symbolic of the unstoppable flow of scripture to the people of England and beyond. The Lollards were eventually driven underground, and the true English Reformation was still a century away; but Wycliffe is sometimes called the "morning star of the Reformation" for his early efforts to make scripture available to laypeople and to limit the powers of the church. Scholars have noted the presence of several essential tenets of the Reformation in ideas first expressed by Wycliffe and his followers, though recent studies suggest that the Reformation was inevitable by the time Wycliffe began his work in the late 1370s.

It would be a mistake to think that the Wycliffite Bible made private access to the scriptures common. In the early 15th century, literacy levels in England were still below

10 percent, and the printing press had not yet come to England to facilitate the production of many copies. Nevertheless, until William Tyndale's 1526 partial English translation and Miles Coverdale's 1535 complete printed English Bible, the Wycliffite Bible was the only substantial English Bible available, and the survival of more than 250 manuscripts produced before 1450 attests to its importance among the people of England. Though these translations are not as easily readable as the 16th-century English Bibles, in notable instances the King James Bible translators (1611) used language from both Wycliffite versions, including about 100 important word choices from the Early Version. In modern times, the continued significance of the name is seen in a Florida-based company called Wycliffe Bible Translators, currently among the world's largest producers of Bible translations.

LAURA JEFFRIES

#### See also

Establishment of the New Testament Canon (1st–4th Centuries AD); Athanasius's Easter Letter Recognizes the Current New Testament Canon (AD 367); Jerome's Translation and Publication of the Vulgate (AD 405); Council of Constance (1414–1418); Erasmus of Rotterdam's Translation of the New Testament (1516); Martin Luther's Translation of the New Testament (1522); Publication of the King James Bible (1611)

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## TARMASHIRIN KHAN'S CONVERSION TO ISLAM (CA. 1330s)

Tarmashirin Khan (r. 1331–1334), born a Buddhist, ruled over the Chaghataid Khanate, a successor state that split from the Mongol Empire in 1259 and spanned the area from the Caspian Sea to the frontiers of western China. Scholars

used to believe that Tarmashirin Khan rose to power shortly after the death of his older brother Kebek (r. 1309–1310, 1318–1326), but Chinese sources and numismatic material convey that two other brothers possibly ruled for brief periods before him. Within 50 years of Tarmashirin Khan's death, the Chaghatayid Khanate split further between eastern and western regions, which was one of the factors that paved the way for the rise of the great warlord conqueror Timur, or Tamerlane the Great (r. 1370–1405). However, Tarmashirin Khan's short-lived reign and his acceptance of Islam left a lasting influence on the Chaghatayid Khanate and were especially critical in its continuing Islamization.

Due to the paucity and contradictory nature of extant sources, little is known about the life and reign of Tarmashirin Khan. Specifically, scholars do not know when and why Tarmashirin Khan converted to Islam. Unlike other Mongol rulers, such as Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) in the Il-Khanate and Uzbek Khan (r. 1313–1341) in the Golden Horde, the reign of Tarmashirin Khan does not seem to have inspired conversion stories or legends. If conversion narratives were written at one point in history, those manuscripts have not survived to the present day.

Tarmashirin Khan's conversion is dated to 1326 on the basis of the information in Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab al-Ibar* ("Book of Lessons"), written in 1377. However, the conversion may in fact have taken place in 1328–1329; the contemporary correspondence of the sultan of Delhi referred to the Chaghatayid ruler as an infidel, thus showing that Tarmashirin Khan converted later than Ibn Khaldun believed.

Several theories have been posited to explain Tarmashirin Khan's conversion. Traditional Islamic sources stress his piety and devotion to Islam, but strong evidence highlights political and economic factors. The letters that the sultan of Delhi exchanged with the Mongol Il-Khan ruler Abu Sa'id (r. 1316–1335) may have caused Tarmashirin Khan to view his Buddhist origins as detrimental to his relations with neighboring powers. His previous incursions into India had left the sultan of Delhi anxious for retaliation against his "infidel" rival, prompting Tarmashirin Khan to adopt Islam as a means of regularizing relations with other Muslim powers. Also worth considering is that more than 50 percent of Tarmashirin Khan's commanders bore Muslim names, suggesting that he might have been attempting to identify more with his Muslim commanders.

Upon converting, Tarmashirin Khan took the name Ala al-Din Muhammad and began promoting Islam and *sharia* (Islamic law) within his realm. His Islamic policies accelerated the transformation of the Chaghatayid Khanate from a largely diverse society into an Islamic one, particularly in its western region. He called on all of his commanders to convert to Islam, often favored Muslims, and prevented the construction of non-Islamic places of worship. According to Ibn Battuta, who spent two months at Tarmashirin Khan's court in 1332–1333, Tarmashirin Khan's successors reversed his policies toward non-Muslims.

Tarmashirin Khan's conversion had lasting impacts on the society and policies of the Chaghatayid Khanate. His conversion and subsequent rise to power improved economic relations with the Mamluk and Delhi Sultanates—thanks to his prohibition of non-Islamic commercial duties, which promoted greater trade relations between the Chaghatayids and their neighbors.

However, his Islamic policies exacerbated a problem that he and many other rulers of Mongol descent had to face—balancing the *sharia* and the *yasa* (Mongol traditional law). Islamic and Mongol laws coexisted throughout the region but were often in conflict. From time to time, rulers attempted to legitimize their rule by restoring the *yasa*, yet Tarmashirin Khan preferred to dispense with it in favor of Islamic law. According to Ibn Battuta, Tarmashirin Khan abrogated core aspects of the *yasa*, including the annual meeting of princes and nobility. His neglect of the *yasa* ultimately led to a rebellion by one of his nephews who championed Mongol traditions. Supported by commanders in the eastern part of the Chaghatayid Khanate, his nephew successfully deposed and killed Tarmashirin Khan in 1334.

AUGUST SAMIE

#### See also

Kublai Khan's Conversion to Tibetan Buddhism (13th Century); Ilkhan Mahmud Ghazan Converts to Islam (1295); Uzbek Khan's Conversion to Islam (ca. 1313)

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## GREGORY PALAMAS'S DEFENSE OF HESYCHASM (MID-14TH CENTURY)

Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) was a monk of Mount Athos, and later the archbishop of Thessaloniki. He is best known for his contributions to the acceptance of the teaching of *hesychasm*; in particular, his teachings defended hesychasm against the attacks of the Calabrian philosopher Barlaam. From 1337 to 1341, Barlaam ridiculed the breathing technique used by some hesychasts in Thessaloniki and Constantinople. Although Barlaam did not condemn all the hesychasts, Palamas believed that Barlaam's attacks were directed against the broader idea of hesychasm and its spiritual traditions.

The term *hesychasm* refers to a particular spiritual practice, fully developed by the 13th century, which enjoyed great popularity among Late Byzantine monks. This practice contained the "prayer of the heart" or "prayer of Jesus," a psychosomatic method of monastic prayer designed to achieve communion with God and the vision of the divine light, the same light that the apostles had seen on Mount Tabor at Christ's Transfiguration. In the second half of the 1330s, Palamas published his *Triads for the Defense of the Holy Hesychasts*—referred to as the "Triads" because the work was organized as three sets of three treatises. The first set is based on discussions between Palamas and Barlaam, although Palamas never mentions the name of his opponent. Barlaam took exception to hesychastic doctrine on the uncreated nature of the light, regarding the doctrine as heretical because it postulated two eternal substances: a visible God and an invisible God. Barlaam claimed that the use of Christ's prayer was a practice of Bogomilism, and he questioned the God–man relationship as advocated by

practitioners of hesychasm. In response to Barlaam's concerns, Palamas reconsidered the question of whether man is really destined to communion with God. Can the human body itself be involved in the reality of deification? What is the nature of the vision of divine light? Is communion real, and if not, are the "energies" equal to God and "uncreated"?

These questions constitute the Palamite theology, and they form the debate that followed at the Fifth Council of Constantinople held in 1341. At the beginning of 1341, the monastic communities of Mount Athos wrote the *Hagioritic Tome*, an explanation of the new doctrine inspired by Palamas's teaching. The *Tome* provides systematic explanations of Palamas's teaching, and it represents a substantial textbook for Byzantine mysticism of the 14th century. Palamas's doctrine theorized that if God has a nature, he must therefore have an activity, since every nature is known by the things that it does in the world.

Through Christ, according to Christians, humans have come to know God; and in Palamas's view, this has occurred most prominently through hesychast prayer and the purification of the passions and the essence/energies distinction. The energies possess no *hypostasis* of their own, and they are never a mediator being between creator and created. Palamas writes that that which is manifest—that which makes itself accessible to the intellect or participation—is not a part of God, for God is not thus subject to partition for our benefit. Personal relation, divine participation, and the preservation of unique personhood and respective created/uncreated natures all become possible. This, for Palamas, is an essential step in theological doctrine: humans must affirm the essence/energies distinction not only for their understanding of *theosis* ("divinization") but also for the entire concept of theodicy, prayer, and real relation with God. On this particular point, Palamas was supported even by former critics like Akindynos, who had led an anti-Palamite party in Constantinople from 1341 to 1347.

Debate between Palamas and Barlaam involved all social groups. A majority of monks supported Palamas, but there were prominent monastics, including Eulogia Choumnaina, who supported Barlaam. Gregory Palamas, however, was supported not only by John Cantacuzenos, the former patron of Barlaam, but also by a clear majority of public opinion, which led to the elevation of his views on the issue.

JASMINA S. ĆIRIĆ