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Research and Writing Chapter 7

Looking back through time, it is clear to see that the recorded histories over the centuries were dictated by the people on "top." Social, cultural, and religious norms were established by the leaders of the dominating culture (conquering emperors or kings) and this is what has led us into the religious/cultural landscapes that we see in the world today.

History has dictated the prevalence of certain religions. As political empires rose and fell, religion was the underlying force which supported various government  systems. Much has happened over the course of time as a result of the rise and fall of empires: we could ask ourselves, how might the religious environment of the world look now if history had gone differently?

One example that comes to mind involves Islam. One key difference between Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, was that it was against the Muslim belief to force conversion. Much of the expansion of the other two religions was dependent upon pressure and inflicted force upon others to conform to their specific belief system. Islam did not ascribe to this belief, maintaining that salvation would only be granted to those who voluntarily submit to Allah. I wonder how the development and spread of this religion would have come about differently had their beliefs been similar to that of the other salvation religions. If muslims would have forced others to believe in Islam would they have received more converts at a faster rate? Suppose their reach stretched to a

king or emperor of the time – would he have converted also? Upon this conversion, would his influence be similar to that of Constantine and Ashoka? Although we see how this method of rising to influence caused many of these empires to implode, I believe an effect like this would have influenced the cultural screen in a way that we might be able to see reaching our modern age.