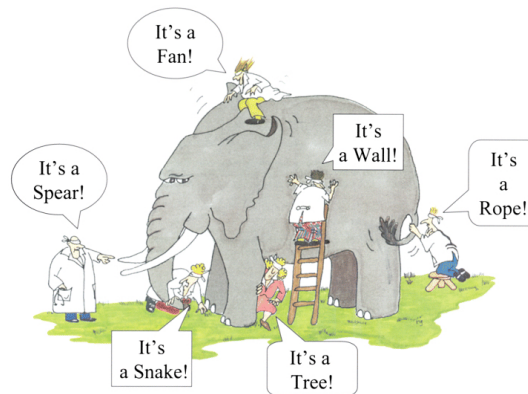


## **V. Islamic Culture and the World We Live In**

### A. Organizing *World* History

1. A famous and amusing fable that originated in India is known as “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” It captures the problem of understanding something big and complex.
2. As the story goes, a group of blind “wise men,” never having witnessed an elephant before, resolved to encounter one. As each of them grabbed a part of it, they came to very different assessments of what an elephant is.
3. By touch alone, each was able to grasp only part of what an elephant is, but they didn’t know how to combine their separate experiences into an understanding of what an elephant actually is.
4. History is like an elephant that people can’t see. People learn about a piece here, and a piece there, and all they end up with is a “spear-snake-fan-tree-wall-rope.”



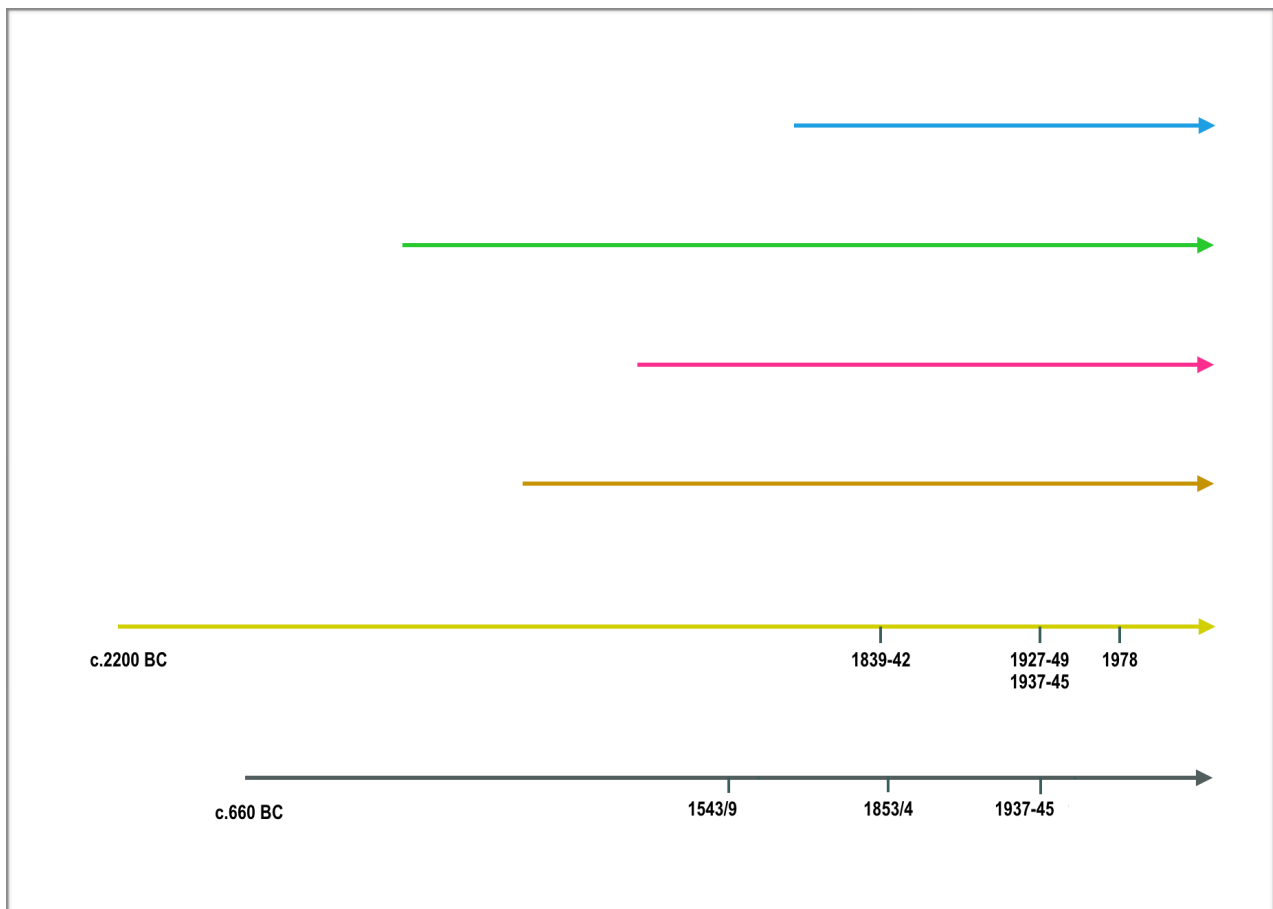
5. Now that we have studied the history of China and Japan, and we are preparing to study the history of yet another major culture, we need to combine their stories (the “spear,” and the “snake”) and prepare to the other separate pieces together as well.
6. The method we will use is a visual outline.
7. In the basic version of this timeline we will represent the histories of the five most important cultures—the “cardinal cultures”—as color-coded lines. They are (from top to bottom) America, Europe, Russia, the Islamic World, and China. On a blank sheet of paper turned on its side, it looks like this:



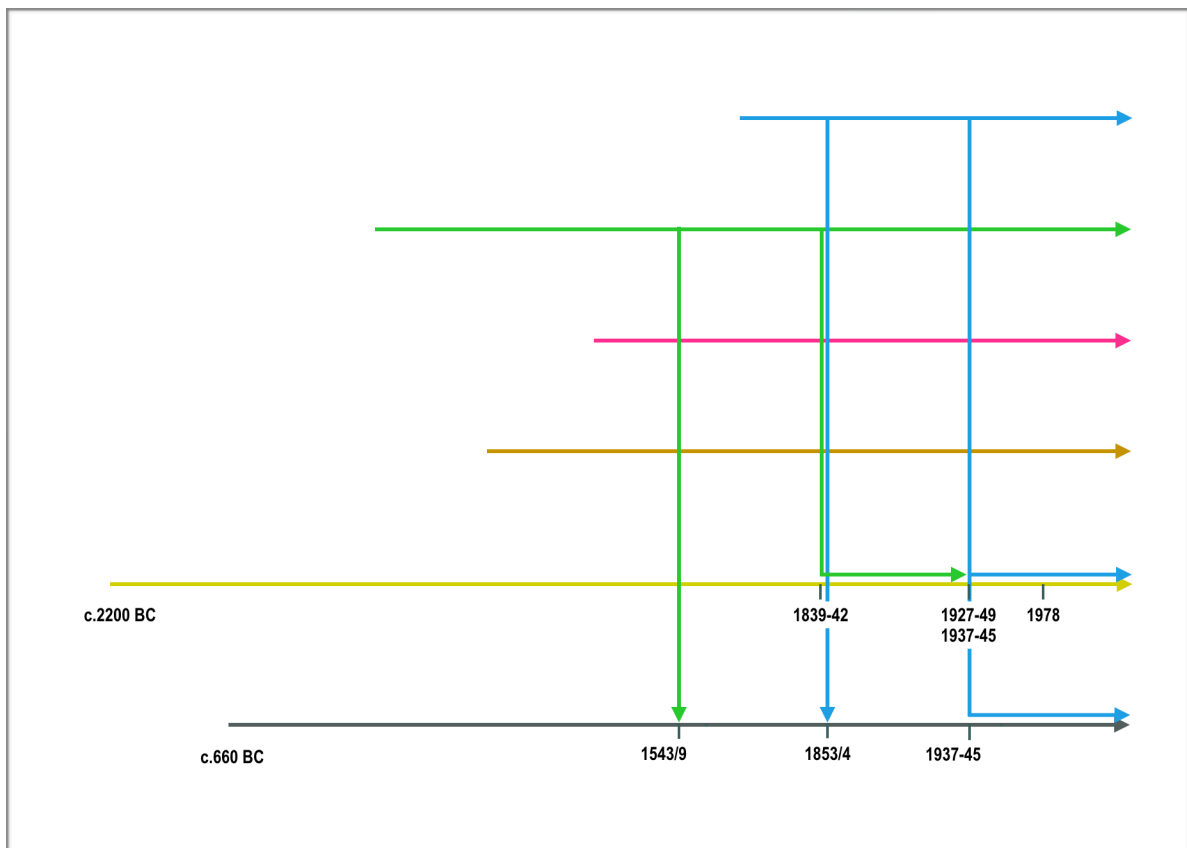
- 8. The exact length of the lines does not matter as much as the relative length. In other words, blue (American) can be drawn longer or shorter, but it must always be the shortest, and yellow must be the longest, etc.
- 9. If we add Japan (a "rope") to the diagram at the bottom in gray, then we get this:



- 13. The next step to making a useful diagram is to add the anchor facts we have learned:



14. We only write the dates, because writing a description of each even would make it messy. Obviously, if you are writing the date for an anchor fact on a timeline of your own, it is critical that you know what you are writing. *Never write a date that you don't know the meaning of on a diagram!*
15. Two more steps are required to *see the elephant!* On the diagram until now, we have six separate lines. How can we understand them as parts of one history? We need a way to show the connections between the cultures that act upon one another, such that events in China or Japan are not merely thought of as parts of their stories only, when they are in fact events involving them and others. For example, the First Opium War is not just an event of Chinese history. It is an event of world history, where a European country defeated China. Likewise, America defeated Japan in World War II. This is not just an event of Japanese history. It's an event of *world history*
16. On the next version of the diagram therefore, two types of connecting lines will be shown: 1) arrows that show the impact of one culture on another—such as the impact of Europe on Japan, because of missionaries arriving in **1549**, and 2) lines and arrows that shows how one culture stays in contact with another and finds a way to control it or force it to be different than it wants.



- 16. The final step in connecting the parts of the diagram together is to make sure that the different parts of the history of each culture make sense as a story with different chapters called “periods.”
- 17. The final diagram of history so far, in preparation for the study of the Islamic World is:

