

# Islam Expands

## MAIN IDEA

**EMPIRE BUILDING** In spite of internal conflicts, the Muslims created a huge empire that included lands on three continents.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Muslims' influence on three continents produced cultural blending that has continued into the modern world.

## TERMS & NAMES

- caliph
- Umayyads
- Shi'a
- Sunni
- Sufi
- Abbasids
- al-Andalus
- Fatimid

**SETTING THE STAGE** When Muhammad died in 632, the community faced a crisis. Muslims, inspired by the message of Allah, believed they had a duty to carry his word to the world. However, they lacked a clear way to choose a new leader. Eventually, the issue of leadership would divide the Muslim world.

## Muhammad's Successors Spread Islam

Muhammad had not named a successor or instructed his followers how to choose one. Relying on ancient tribal custom, the Muslim community elected as their leader Abu-Bakr, a loyal friend of Muhammad. In 632, Abu-Bakr became the first **caliph** (KAY•lih), a title that means “successor” or “deputy.”

**“Rightly Guided” Caliphs** Abu-Bakr and the next three elected caliphs—Umar, Uthman, and Ali—all had known Muhammad. They used the Qur'an and Muhammad's actions as guides to leadership. For this, they are known as the “rightly guided” caliphs. Their rule was called a caliphate (KAY•lih•FAYT).

Abu-Bakr had promised the Muslim community he would uphold what Muhammad stood for. Shortly after the Prophet's death, some tribes on the Arabian Peninsula abandoned Islam. Others refused to pay taxes, and a few individuals even declared themselves prophets. For the sake of Islam, Abu-Bakr invoked *jihad*. The word *jihad* means “striving” and can refer to the inner struggle against evil. However, the word is also used in the Qur'an to mean an armed struggle against unbelievers. For the next two years, Abu-Bakr applied this meaning of *jihad* to encourage and justify the expansion of Islam.

When Abu-Bakr died in 634, the Muslim state controlled all of Arabia. Under Umar, the second caliph, Muslim armies conquered Syria and lower Egypt, which were part of the Byzantine Empire. They also took parts of the Sassanid Empire. The next two caliphs, Uthman and Ali, continued to expand Muslim territory. By 750, the Muslim Empire stretched 6,000 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus River. (See the map on page 261.)

**Reasons for Success** The four “rightly guided” caliphs made great progress in their quest to spread Islam. Before his death, Muhammad had expressed a desire to spread the faith to the peoples of the north. Muslims of the day saw their victories as a sign of Allah's support and drew energy and inspiration from their faith. They fought to defend Islam and were willing to struggle to extend its word.

## TAKING NOTES

**Summarizing** Use a table to summarize developments that occurred in Islam during each ruler's period in power.

Rulers	Period of Rule	Developments in Islam
Rightly guided caliphs		
Umayyads		
Abbasids		



▲ From 632 to 750, highly mobile troops mounted on camels were successful in conquering lands in the name of Allah.

to various restrictions on their lives. Before entering the newly conquered city of Damascus in the northern Arabian province of Syria, Khalid ibn al-Walid, one of Abu-Bakr's chief generals, detailed the terms of surrender:

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful, this is what Khalid ibn al-Walid would grant to the inhabitants of Damascus. . . . He promises to give them security for their lives, property and churches. Their city wall shall not be demolished, neither shall any Muslim be quartered in their houses. Thereunto we give to them the pact of Allah and the protection of His Prophet, the Caliphs and the believers. So long as they pay the tax, nothing but good shall befall them.

**KHALID IBN AL-WALID**, quoted in *Early Islam*

Tolerance like this continued after the Muslim state was established. Though Christians and Jews were not allowed to spread their religion, they could be officials, scholars, and bureaucrats.

## Internal Conflict Creates a Crisis

Despite spectacular gains on the battlefield, the Muslim community had difficulty maintaining a unified rule. In 656, Uthman was murdered, starting a civil war in which various groups struggled for power. Ali, as Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was the natural choice as a successor to Uthman. However, his right to rule

The Muslim armies were well disciplined and expertly commanded. However, the success of the armies was also due to weakness in the two empires north of Arabia. The Byzantine and Sassanid empires had been in conflict for a long period of time and were exhausted militarily.

Another reason for Muslim success was the persecution suffered by people under Byzantine or Sassanid rule because they did not support the official state religions, Christianity or Zoroastrianism. The persecuted people often welcomed the invaders and their cause and chose to accept Islam. They were attracted by the appeal of the message of Islam, which offered equality and hope in this world. They were also attracted by the economic benefit for Muslims of not having to pay a poll tax. **A**

### Treatment of Conquered Peoples

Because the Qur'an forbade forced conversion, Muslims allowed conquered peoples to follow their own religion. Christians and Jews, as "people of the book," received special consideration. They paid a poll tax each year in exchange for exemption from military duties. However, they were also subject

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Causes

**A** Why were Muslims successful conquerors?

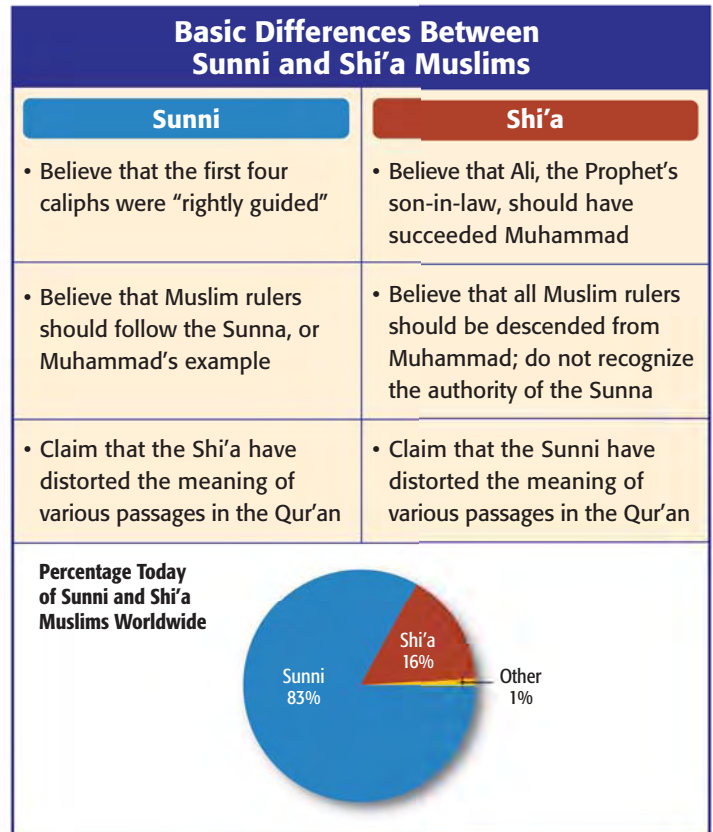


was challenged by Muawiya, a governor of Syria. Then, in 661, Ali, too, was assassinated. The elective system of choosing a caliph died with him.

A family known as the **Umayyads** (oo•MY•adz) then came to power. The Umayyads moved the Muslim capital to Damascus. This location, away from Mecca, made controlling conquered territories easier. However, the Arab Muslims felt it was too far away from their lands. In addition, the Umayyads abandoned the simple life of previous caliphs and began to surround themselves with wealth and ceremony similar to that of non-Muslim rulers. These actions, along with the leadership issue, gave rise to a fundamental division in the Muslim community.

**Sunni-Shi'a Split** In the interest of peace, the majority of Muslims accepted the Umayyads' rule. However, a minority continued to resist. This group developed an alternate view of the office of caliph. In this view, the caliph needed to be a descendant of the Prophet. This group was called **Shi'a**, meaning the "party" of Ali. Members of this group are called Shi'ites. Those who did not outwardly resist the rule of the Umayyads later became known as **Sunni**, meaning followers of Muhammad's example. Another group, the **Sufi** (SOO•fee), rejected the luxurious life of the Umayyads. They pursued a life of poverty and devotion to a spiritual path.

Vigorous religious and political opposition to the Umayyad caliphate led to its downfall. Rebel groups overthrew the Umayyads in the year 750. The most powerful of those groups, the **Abbasids** (uh•BAS•IHdz), took control of the empire. **B**



**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

**B** What are three groups within Islam and how do they differ?

## Control Extends Over Three Continents

When the Abbasids came to power in 750, they ruthlessly murdered the remaining members of the Umayyad family. One prince named Abd al-Rahman escaped the slaughter and fled to Spain. There he set up an Umayyad caliphate. Spain had already been conquered and settled by Muslims from North Africa, who were known as Berbers. The Berber armies advanced north to within 200 miles of Paris before being halted at the Battle of Tours in 732. They then settled in southern Spain, where they helped form an extraordinary Muslim state in **al-Andalus** (al•AN•duh•LUS).

**Abbasids Consolidate Power** To solidify power, the Abbasids moved the capital of the empire in 762 to a newly created city, Baghdad, in central Iraq. The location on key trade routes gave the caliph access to trade goods, gold, and information about the far-flung empire.

The Abbasids developed a strong bureaucracy to conduct the huge empire's affairs. A treasury kept track of the money flow. A special department managed the business of the army. Diplomats from the empire were sent to courts in Europe,

Africa, and Asia to conduct imperial business. To support this bureaucracy, the Abbasids taxed land, imports and exports, and non-Muslims' wealth.

**Rival Groups Divide Muslim Lands** The Abbasid caliphate lasted from 750 to 1258. During that time, the Abbasids increased their authority by consulting religious leaders. But they failed to keep complete political control of the immense territory. Independent Muslim states sprang up, and local leaders dominated many smaller regions. The **Fatimid** (FAT•uh•MIHD) caliphate was formed by Shi'a Muslims who claimed descent from Muhammad's daughter Fatima. The caliphate began in North Africa and spread across the Red Sea to western Arabia and Syria. However, the Fatimids and other smaller states were still connected to the Abbasid caliphate through religion, language, trade, and the economy.

▼ This 13th-century miniature shows Arab traders navigating the Indian Ocean.



**Muslim Trade Network** At this time, two major sea-trading networks existed—the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Through these networks, the Muslim Empire could engage in sea trade with the rest of the world. The land network connected the Silk Roads of China and India with Europe and Africa. Muslim merchants needed only a single language, Arabic, and a single currency, the Abbasid dinar, to travel in the empire. 🕒

To encourage the flow of trade, Muslim money changers set up banks in cities throughout the empire. Banks offered letters of credit, called *sakks*, to merchants. A merchant with a *sakk* from a bank in Baghdad could exchange it for cash at a bank in any other city in the empire. In Europe, *sakk* was pronounced “check.” Thus, using checks dates back to the Muslim Empire.

At one end of the Muslim Empire was the city of Córdoba in al-Andalus. In the tenth century, this city had a population of 200,000; Paris, in contrast, had 38,000. The city attracted poets, philosophers, and scientists. Many non-Muslims adopted Muslim customs, and Córdoba became a dazzling center of Muslim culture.

In Córdoba, Damascus, Cairo, and Baghdad, a cultural blending of people fueled a period of immense achievements in the arts and the sciences.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Recognizing Effects**

🕒 Why would a single language and a single currency be such an advantage to a trader?

**SECTION**

**2**

**ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- caliph
- Umayyads
- Shi'a
- Sunni
- Sufi
- Abbasids
- al-Andalus
- Fatimid

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which period of rule do you think was most effective?

Rulers	Period of Rule	Developments in Islam
Rightly guided caliphs		
Umayyads		
Abbasids		

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. How did Muslims under the “rightly guided” caliphs treat conquered peoples?
4. Why did the Shi'a oppose the rule of the Umayyads?
5. What tied the Abbasid caliphate and the independent Muslim states together?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **EVALUATING COURSES OF ACTION** Do you think Muhammad should have appointed a successor? Why or why not?
7. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** What attracted non-Muslims to Islam and Islamic culture?
8. **MAKING INFERENCES** What does opposition to the luxurious life of the Umayyads suggest about what is important to most Muslims?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** Write a one-paragraph **summary** in which you determine whether or not the Muslim Empire was well run.

**INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY**

Use the Internet to find out the number of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims today in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Create a **pie chart** showing the results of your research.

**INTERNET KEYWORD**  
country studies, Sunni, Shi'a