



The Rise of Islam

The Arabs were a nomadic, Semitic-speaking people who lived in the arid climate of the Arabian Peninsula.

Most Early Arabs were polytheistic, many recognized a chief, or supreme god who they called Allah which is Arabic for “God.”



Allah was symbolized by a sacred stone - each tribe had their own.

One central stone called the Black stone was placed in the shrine called the Kaaba.

This shrine was located in the city of Makkah (Mecca) in what is now Saudi Arabia.



Muhammad

Muhammad was born in Makkah in present-day Saudi Arabia to a merchant family. His parents died when he was young and he was taken in by his merchant uncle.

Muhammad later became a caravan manager. The greed and corruption of many merchants and townspeople troubled him, so he went into the hills to meditate.



Muslims believe that it was while he was meditating in the hills that he received revelations from God through the Angel Gabriel who told Muhammad to recite what he heard to the masses.

Muslims believe that Allah had already revealed himself through Moses and Jesus, but Muhammad now had the final revelation for man.

This final revelation became the religion of Islam, which means “submission to the will of God.”

Quran



The revelations to Muhammad were written down by scribes in what became the holy book of Islam, The Quran.

Muslims believe that Islam was God's final revelation for mankind and that the Quran contains ethical guidelines by which Muslims should live their lives.

The Five Pillars of Islam

1-Declaration of Faith

Muslims must state that there is not God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.

2. Daily Prayer

Muslims must pray five times a day facing the Kaaba in Mecca.

3. Charity

Muslims are supposed to help others and donate part of their income to charity.

4. Fasting-Ramadan

Muslims must fast from sunrise to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan which celebrates the recording of the Quran.

5. Pilgrimage: Hajj

The fifth pillar of Islam is the Hajj. Once in a lifetime, if they are physically and financially able, Muslims are to journey to Mecca (Makkah) in Saudi Arabia and perform the rituals of the Hajj.

Islam Spreads

After the death of Muhammad, unity was difficult to maintain.

Muhammad's friend and father-in-law, Abu Bakr, was chosen to be the first Caliph, or successor to Muhammad.

Abu Bakr helped to unify the Muslim world and expanded their territory instead of fighting each other.

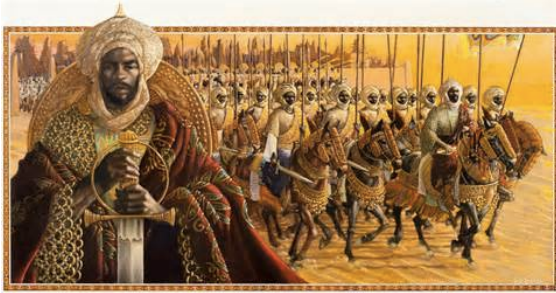


Under the idea of jihad, or "struggle in the way of God," the early Muslims expanded their territory in Arabia and beyond.

They defeated the Byzantine army in 636 taking the province of Syria. By 642 they took Egypt and by 650 they controlled the Persian Empire

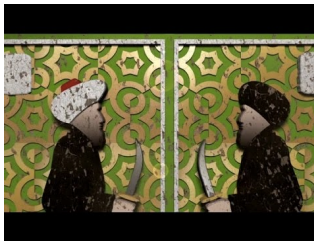
Islam Splits

Muslim leaders urged conquered peoples to convert to Islam, but Christians and Jews who chose not to convert were allowed to pay a tax and practice their religions because they were “People of the Book” who had written scriptures revealed to them by God before the time of Muhammad.



The empire eventually became so large that it was difficult to rule efficiently. Dissension and discord grew within the empire, eventually causing a split within the religion.

Sunni Muslims believe the Caliph does not need to be a direct descendant of Muhammad.



Shi'a Muslims believe that the Caliph should be a direct descendant of Muhammad through his son-in-law Ali and his grandson.

The Rise of the Turks



The Seljuk Turks were a group of nomadic people that migrated from the north Iranian provinces in Central Asia into mainland Iran. They converted to Islam and became great soldiers who played a large role in the military. Many rose through the ranks to gain political power and ruled parts of Central Asia and the Middle East from the 11th to 14th centuries.

The Seljuk Turks fought the Byzantine Empire throughout the second half of the 11th century, defeating them in 1071 and gaining control of Asia Minor.

In desperation, the Byzantine Empire turned to the West for help.

This led to a series of wars known as The Crusades.

