

# Islamic Empire (632 C.E.-1258)

## You Mean There Was an Empire Based on the Ideas of Islam?

### Beginning of Islamic Empire

After Muhammad died in 632 C.E., Islam began to spread along trade routes throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's close friend, became the first **caliph**. A caliph was the supreme political and religious leader in a Muslim government. Abu Bakr and the next three leaders became known as the Four "Rightly Guided" Caliphs because they closely followed the actions of Muhammad.

### Islamic Empire Spreads

Islam and the empire began to spread along trade routes throughout the Fertile Crescent, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The empire expanded despite great distances, deserts, and mountains. The Arabic language also spread with the empire and helped improve trade across the new lands.

In 651 C.E., the Umayyad family took power after the death of Ali, the Fourth Rightly Guided Caliph. They expanded the empire father across North Africa and north into Spain. A big decision was made to move the capital of the empire from Mecca to Damascus. Part of their success was due to the weakness of the Byzantine and Persian Empires. When non-Muslim peoples were

conquered, they could continue to practice their own religion or convert to Islam. Many converted to Islam because of the message of peace and equality, but some followed Islam for the benefit of not having to pay **jizya**, a tax for non-Muslims.

The Umayyad **Caliphate** tried to expand the Islamic Empire farther into Europe. In 732 C.E., Muslims invaded France but were defeated by Charles Martel and the Franks at the Battle of Tours. This defeat stopped the Islamic Empire from expanding into northern and western Europe.

In 750 C.E., the Abbasids came to power after a rebellion against the Umayyads. They chose to move the capital from Damascus to Baghdad. Baghdad was located on the Tigris River which gave it access to excellent trade routes and water for the city. The Abbasids established a **bureaucracy** to rule over the many areas of the empire. Unfortunately, they were not able to maintain political control over all of the lands of the empire. In 1258 C.E., the Mongols came from Central Asia and **sacked** Baghdad. This was the end of the Abbasid Caliphate.

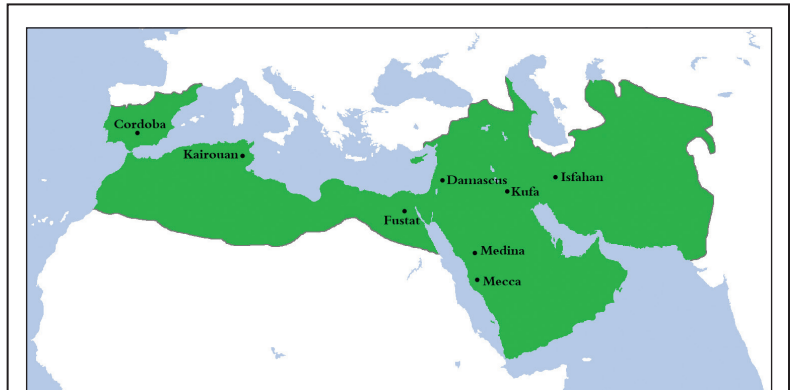
### Contributions of the Islamic Empire



Dome of the Rock

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:DomeOfTheRock053011.jpg>

As the Islamic Empire expanded, so did its contributions. One of the major contributions was in architecture. An example of this is the **Dome of the Rock** in Jerusalem. It is believed to be the location where Muhammad rose to heaven and is also the location of the second Temple of Jerusalem. **Mosaics** were often used to decorate **mosques** and public buildings. Education and knowledge were important in the Islamic Empire so scholars translated ancient texts into Arabic. These books became the basis for universities throughout the empire. The books helped preserve the knowledge of earlier civilizations such as the Greek, Persian and Indian civilizations.



Umayyad Caliphate

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Umayyad750ADloc.png>



Abbasid Caliphate

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Abbasids850.png>

Muslims developed new achievements in medicine, mathematics, and **astronomy** that contributed to world civilizations. Fatima al-Fihri, a woman from Tunisia, founded the world's oldest university in Morocco in 859 C.E. The Muslims pulled together all known information about medicine from previous cultures and added new information found by Muslim physicians. The first organized hospital was built in Cairo in 872 CE. Muslims adapted numbers, including zero, from India to form **Arabic numerals**. They developed the study of **algebra** to solve for unknown values. The Islamic Empire was also known for trade around the Mediterranean, Trans-Saharan Route, Silk Road, and the Indian Ocean. Travel gave Muslims knowledge of geography that most cultures did not have.



University of Al-Karaouine, founded in 859, C.E.  
Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_Al-Karaouine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Al-Karaouine)

### Key Vocabulary

**Caliph:** supreme political and religious leader in a Muslim government

**Bureaucracy:** a system of governors and officials to help a government maintain control over its empire

**Sack:** to destroy a city and to steal the wealth and valuables from it

**Caliphate:** an empire that is ruled by a caliph

**Dome of the Rock:** a shrine in Jerusalem at the site from which Muhammad rose to heaven, built on the site of the Jewish Temple

**Algebra:** branch of mathematics in which symbols, usually letters of the alphabet, represent numbers or members of a specified set

**Mosaics:** a picture or decoration made of small, usually colored pieces of stone, glass or tile

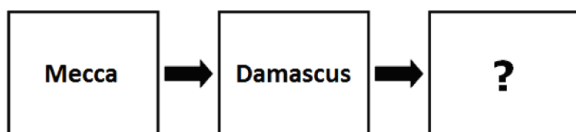
**Astronomy:** study of the movement of the stars and planets

**Arabic numerals:** Numbers developed from India that we use today (1, 2, 3, 4...)


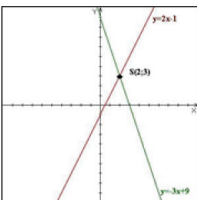

### Quick Review

1. Which city completes the sequence of capitals for the Islamic Empire?

- A. Medina
- B. Baghdad
- C. Jerusalem



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2. What is the best title for these images (above)?

- A. Cultural Influences from Western Europe
- B. Preservation of Byzantine Culture
- C. Contributions of the Islamic Empire

3. What was the significance of the Battle of Tours?

- A. The Muslims defeated the French and were then able to control North Africa.
- B. The French defeated the Muslims and stopped their expansion into Europe.
- C. This was the final battle where the Muslims defeated the Mongols.

4. Which two contributions of the Islamic Empire do you believe to have the greatest impact on people today? Why?

### Connection to Today

The Islamic Empire moved its capital twice. So did the United States, from New York to Philadelphia and then to Washington D.C. Where do you think the capital should be? Explain why.

### Resources

- Learn 360
- Islamic World (basic beliefs): (<http://goo.gl/7ksbs>)
  - The Franks and The Moors: (<http://goo.gl/TgsZW>)