



Chapter 6 “The First Global Civilization: The Rise & Spread of Islam”

“Postclassical Era”

- ▶ Time period: approx. 450–1450 C.E.
- ▶ Emergence of an “international framework”
 - ▶ Civilization begins to spread geographically, now covering many parts of the world not previously embraced by human organization
 - ▶ Several new civilizations/areas share key characteristics (ex: eastern & western Europe are primarily Christian societies)
- ▶ Era defined by the spread of major religions across much of Asia, Europe, & Africa
 - **Hinduism** = majority religion in India
 - **Buddhism** spread to China & parts of central and east Asia (including Japan)
 - Islam spreads across the Middle East and Northern Africa; also a “**minority religion**” in India, western China, & Sub-Saharan Africa

“Postclassical Era”

- ▶ Shift from **polytheism** to **monotheism**
- ▶ Growth in international trade
- ▶ Technology and ideas spread
 - Due to growing trade, military encounters, and redefining of boundaries within civilizations
- ▶ Variety of political forms
 - But no single, dominant political form

Rise of Islam

- ▶ Creation of a new empire in the “Middle East” and North Africa, as well as parts of India, south Europe, and central Asia
- ▶ *Islam* – submission; self-surrender of the believer to the will of the one
- ▶ *Muslims* – followers of the new faith (Islam) and its prophet (*Muhammad*)
- ▶ Muslim traders & conquerors became the prime agents for the transfer of food crops, technology, and ideas among the many centers of civilization in the Eastern Hemisphere
- ▶ Muslims had works in philosophy, literature, mathematics, and science
- ▶ *Quran* – the holy book containing Allah’s revelations to Muhammad

Rise of Islam

- ▶ Islamic world:
 - ▶ **unified** by a common allegiance to the religious teachings of *Muhammad* and to some extent by the Arabic language
 - ▶ **divided** by political rivalries, cultural & linguistic diversity, and religious *sectarianism* (excessive devotion to a particular sect, especially in religion)

Arabian World and Birth of Islam

- ▶ Many *bedouin* clans helped spread the beliefs of the prophet Muhammad.
 - *Bedouin* = nomadic
- ▶ *Sheiks* (*Shaykhs*) – leaders of tribes and clans
- ▶ Inter-clan rivalries would lead to wars breaking out
- ▶ Most important city was *Mecca* (located in mountainous region along the Red Sea and western part of Arabia)
 - *Mecca* was founded by the *Umayyad* clan
- ▶ Northeast of Mecca was *Medina* – the city of the prophet Muhammad.
 - Both Medina and Mecca engaged in long distance trading (Mecca more so than Media); both considered “trade centers”
 - Control of Medina was contested between 2 bedouin groups and 3 Jewish clans.

Arabian World and Birth of Islam

- ▶ Women in pre-Islamic **bedouin** culture enjoyed greater freedom and higher status compared to other civilized centers [**Byzantine** and **Sasanian (Persian)** empires].
 - Did NOT wear veils and were NOT secluded...at this point in time
 - Women's advice was highly regarded
 - Women AND men were both sometimes allowed to have multiple marriage partners
 - Still NOT considered **equal** to men though.
 - Women's status varied from one clan/family to the next.



Muhammad

- ▶ Born around 570 C.E.
- ▶ Lived in Mecca during his adolescence
- ▶ Lived/worked as a trader and traveler
 - Helps him see religious currents sweeping through Arabia, especially the idea of monotheism and a growing dissatisfaction of the old gods.
- ▶ Was socially prominent, economically well off, and admired for his trading skills and trustworthiness
- ▶ Became dissatisfied with life and distracted with a life that focused on material gains.
- ▶ Around 610 C.E. he received his first “revelation”
 - His following/followers were a small group at first (his wife, several clans people, and some servants and slaves).
- ▶ Eventually has to flee Mecca due to threats from the **Umayyads** and other clans

Muhammad

- ▶ 622 C.E. – secures safe passage from Mecca to Medina
 - Given a “hero’s welcome” when in Medina
- ▶ Series of attacks in **Medina** in mid 620’s C.E.
 - Signed treaty w/ the Quraysh clan in 628 C.E.
- ▶ His preaching/teaching would lead to a new form of monotheism
 - This new religion would provide an ethical system that healed deep social rifts within Arabian society
 - **Islam** stresses the dignity of all believers and their equality in the eyes of **Allah**.

Elements of Islam

Uncompromising **Monotheism**; highly developed legal codes; **egalitarianism** (belief in equality of all people); strong sense of community.

“5 Pillars of Islam”

1. confession of faith
2. pray 5 times a day facing the city of Mecca
3. fast during the month of Ramadan
4. tithe for charity (payment of charity called a *zakat*) strengthened the community and cohesion
5. *hajj*, or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca to worship Allah at the Ka'Ba (pg. 127 in textbook for picture).

Arab Empire of the Umayyads

- ▶ Muhammad's victory over the Umayyad tribe and resulting allegiance of bedouin tribes of Arabia creates a new center of power in the Middle East.
- ▶ Muhammad suddenly died in 632
 - Appeared that the Islam religion would disappear.
 - Internal disputes among clans/tribes
- ▶ Umayyads emerge as the dominating force in the Islamic community
- ▶ Under Umayyad rule, Arabs built a vast empire
 - This established the foundations for an enduring civilization until its fall in mid-8th Century
- ▶ Most of Arabia was united under Islam by 633
 - Begin to mount expeditions beyond Arabian borders
 - Conquests in Mesopotamia, North Africa, and Persia
 - This empire was considered "Arab" and not "Islamic"; led by the Umayyads.

Arab Empire of the Umayyads

- ▶ **Caliph** – the political and religious successor to Muhammad.
 - First caliph to succeed Muhammad was *Abu Bakr* (632–634)
 - He received no financial support from Muslim community and his mandate was limited
 - Only loosely controlled military commanders
- ▶ Islamic peoples defeated bedouin tribes one after the other.
 - These victories are known as the *Ridda Wars*
 - Initial victories revealed vulnerability of the Byzantine & Persian Empires. Sasanian/Persian empire was the weaker of the two.
 - Former guardians of Byzantine & Persian empires now joined the Arabian empire
- ▶ **Motives for Arab Conquests:**
 - Unity provided by Islamic faith gave them a common cause and strength
 - Campaigns of expansion and rich farmlands of other territories
 - To glorify their new religion (Islam)
 - Desire for looting other tribes' materials/wealth
 - Release the energy of other bedouin tribes against each other

Arab Empire of the Umayyads

- ▶ *Jihads* – holy wars launched to forcibly (force) spread the Muslim faith
- ▶ *Arabs did NOT want to convert a large number of people to Islam because they would have to share the wealth they acquired and also lost tax revenue*
- ▶ By 650 CE, Arab invaders eventually would be able to take over most of: **Palestine, Egypt, Syria, and western Iraq**
- ▶ Even though the Byzantine empire survived for many centuries to come, it was constantly under siege and greatly reduced its power.

The Sunni–Shi'i Split

- ▶ Success of the Muslim armies and their expansion of the Arab empire diverted attention from rivalries/division within the Islamic community (inter-tribe rivalries)
- ▶ Growing tension among groups broke into violence in 656 CE when the 3rd caliph, *Uthman*, was murdered.
 - *He was unpopular among many tribes because he was elected caliph by the Umayyad clan (Muhammad's rivals).
 - *Ali* was proclaimed by supporters to be the next caliph; Umayyad's rejected this claim. → this leads to warfare between the groups.
- ▶ **Ali:**
 - Famous warrior and commander
 - After victory at Battle of the Camel in 656, most Arab's shifted support to him against the Umayyad's.
 - *Eventually assassinated by Umayyad's after early victories against them
- ▶ Split into two groups (**Sunnis & Shi'ites**):
 - Sunnis – supporters of the Umayyads
 - Shi'ites – supporters of Ali
- ▶ Still a major fundamental conflict in the Islamic world TODAY!

The Umayyad Empire

- ▶ Muslim armies started a rivalry with Buddhism in central Asia...rivalry still continues TODAY!
- ▶ By early 700's, Umayyad's empire ruled from Spain to central Asia (largest empire since the Romans!)
- ▶ Mecca still remained the “holy city” of Islam, but the Umayyad's shifted their political center to the city of *Damascus* (located in Syria)
- ▶ *Only Muslim-Arabs were considered “first class citizens” of this empire.

“Converts” & “People of the Book”

- ▶ *Mawali* – converts to Muslim
 - Were forced to pay property taxes
 - Number of converts was low due to taxes
- ▶ *Dhimmis* – people of the book (the Bible)
- ▶ Umayyad’s were tolerant of other religions (Christians and Jews) as long as they paid their *jizya* (a tax for non-Muslims)

Umayyad Decline & Fall

- ▶ Many Umayyad warriors settled far away from Damascus (political center of Umayyad).
 - Resent authority from far away
 - Warriors also not given their share of the wealth captured by the empire
 - Saw the Damascus elite as corrupt
- ▶ Revolt started when new warriors were introduced by Umayyad officials
- ▶ Former Umayyad warriors formed alliance with groups that resisted Umayyad rule.
 - Also were allies with Shi'ites and the mawali (not fully recognized as Muslim)
- ▶ *This diverse group of rebels captured Persia and Iraq and eventually conquered Syria (including the Umayyad capital of Damascus).

From Arab to Islamic Empire: “The Abbasid Era”

- ▶ **Abbasids** are the next major group to take over Islamic civilization.
 - Abbasids lead to a bureaucratic expansion.
 - **Admitted converted Muslims as FULL members of the Islamic community**
 - This results in Islam becoming a universal faith (from Spain to the Philippine Islands) instead of a religion for a few elite groups.
- ▶ Built new capital in **Baghdad** (Iraq)
- ▶ Bureaucratization of Islamic Empire is shown in the growing power of the *wazir* – chief administrator and head of the *caliph's* inner councils.
- ▶ Distinctions between the **mawali** and first generation Muslims disappeared.
 - Most converts were won over peacefully now → exempt from paying a tax
- ▶ “Abbasid Age” was a time of great urban expansion due to the revival of the Afro–Eurasian trade network.

Conclusion

- ▶ Arab/Islamic Empire became one of the greatest civilizations of the preindustrial world.
- ▶ *The first truly “global” civilization
- ▶ *Built their religion on earlier traditions of Christianity and Judaism
- ▶ Umayyad caliphs (661 – 750 CE) → Umayyad rule
 - First example of religious legitimacy to be used to build a powerful, absolute political order/structure.
- ▶ Achievements in Arts & Sciences – relied heavily on achievements of Greece and Mesopotamian civilizations.
- ▶ Never before had a civilization combined so many linguistic groups, religions, and ethnic types.