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**Unit 4**  
**Scholars, Traders, and Warriors:**  
**The Rise of an Empire**

Reader

GRADE 4



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Scholars, Traders, and Warriors: The Rise of an Empire

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**Unit 4**  
**Scholars, Traders, and Warriors:**  
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**Unit 4**  
**Islamic Empires in the Middle Ages**  
**Reader**

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# Islamic Empires in the Middle Ages

## Reader

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**Top:** An illustration showing Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (at right), discussed in Chapter 3, **Bottom:** Ancient Persian art showing the passing of power from one ruler to another

## Chapter 1

# Arabia

### THE BIG QUESTION

How can we describe the environment into which Muhammad was born?

*The Middle Ages* (Unit 2) revealed a time in Western Europe when the Christian Church slowly replaced the Roman Empire. You learned about the extraordinary power of the Church and its complex relationship with rulers and the nobility.

While Western Europe became Christian, other powers and ideas arose in the rest of the former Roman Empire. In the East, a new religion **emerged**: Islam. From the seventh century CE, the followers of this religion, Muslims, created enormous empires that lasted hundreds and hundreds of years.

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was born hundreds of years after Jesus, but both men had such a tremendous influence, shaping the world in which we live. Today, Christianity and Islam are the two largest religions in the world. More than half of the world's population, over four billion people, is Christian or Muslim.

## The Byzantine Empire and Arabia

Muhammad was born at a time of enormous change. The Roman Empire had **dominated** for centuries. It had covered land that over forty different countries occupy today. Europe, large parts of Africa, and the Middle East were all once part of the Roman Empire. Many believed it would last forever.





Map of the Roman Empire in 117 CE

They were wrong.

The Roman Empire became too big to govern, splitting into two. Over time, the Western Empire collapsed, and Medieval Europe emerged. In the East, the Empire continued for 1,000 years under a different name: the Byzantine Empire.

Muhammad was born in Arabia, a part of the world greatly influenced by the Byzantine Empire. Arabia benefited from Byzantine trade. For many centuries, the West had traded with the East. Trade ran along the famous Silk Road from Western Europe all the way to India and China. Although travel would take months or even years, **caravans** and ships endlessly carried glass, cloth, and silver and gold to the East and brought back silk and spices in return. People then, like today, wore clothes “made in China,” although Chinese silks were affordable only to the wealthiest.

Trade across the empire, including along the Silk Road, benefited the people of Arabia. Arabians also traded with people outside of



Map of the Byzantine and Persian Empires from the sixth century CE

Arabia, many becoming **merchants** with their own trade caravans. Some became very wealthy.

But not all of the contact with the Byzantines was positive. As was typical at the time, the Byzantines were always looking to conquer new territories and become more powerful and influential. They waged war against rival empires and used smaller, less powerful nations to help them.



A gold coin from the Byzantine Empire

One of the biggest rivals of the Byzantine Empire was the Persian, or Sasanian, Empire. The Roman Empire had fought the Persians for hundreds of years, with constant battles and wars. The Byzantine Empire carried on the struggle. Trade was one of the reasons they fought: both empires wanted to control the taxes from trading. Arabia was wedged exactly between the Persian and Byzantine Empires, often caught in the middle of the two rivals. This was a challenging position!

## Arabia

Arabia was a very **diverse** place. As people traveled, trading between the West and the East, some settled in Arabia. These included Christians and Jews, who believed in one god—they were **monotheistic**. There were also local people who were polytheistic.

Most people in Arabia lived in tribes, without a formal government. Each tribe was divided into many clans. Tribes were family based: you were born into a particular clan, within a particular tribe.



A silver coin from the Persian Empire

Clans would often fight one another, but they would also band together to fight other tribes. Your fate was tied to the others in your tribe (your family). If your clan or tribe became richer or more successful, you would find your fortunes rose or fell with theirs.

Some of the Arabian tribes founded towns such as Mecca in western Arabia, an important town for two reasons. First, it had a water well. Life was harsh and dangerous in the **arid** Arabian climate, and without a regular supply of water, families could not survive and settle in one place. As a result, most people were nomadic. But in Mecca, because of the water, they could stay in one place. That made Mecca a perfect town for people to settle.

Second, Mecca held a famous **shrine** worshipped by the local polytheists: the Kaaba (see box on page 18). A tribe called the Quraysh looked after the Kaaba and traded with other towns. One day, toward the end of the sixth century CE, a boy was born into that tribe. His name was Muhammad.



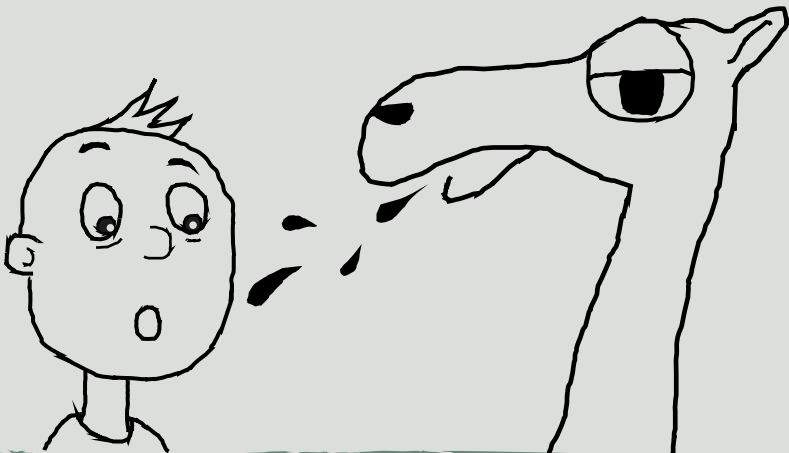
## Camels

Camels are perfectly suited to arid climates. They can store water for days, and their humps contain fat for nutrition if they cannot get food.

Some time around 100 BCE, the North Arabian saddle was invented. This allowed camels to be used for fighting and for carrying heavy packs for trade. Without the invention of the saddle and the **domestication** of camels, the Islamic empires may never have existed, because trading—and, later, **conquests**—were essential to the spread of Islam.

In North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, camels are still used today for transporting goods.

**Fun Fact:** Camels have a very effective way of keeping unwanted people away. They mix the half-digested contents of their stomachs with their saliva and then spit it all over you.





## Chapter 2

# The Birth of a New Religion

### THE BIG QUESTION

How did Muhammad become one of the most influential religious leaders of all time?

No one present at Muhammad's birth could have guessed his future. He had an **inauspicious** beginning. Although he belonged to the tribe that ruled the town of Mecca and looked after its shrine, Muhammad's father died before he was born. In the sixth century in Arabia, your father's death meant you were legally an orphan—and your position in society was not secure.

How did an orphan, born in a remote part of Arabia, become one of the most influential religious figures of all time? How did a boy in the desert grow to found a new religion and a mighty empire?

## Life among the Bedouins

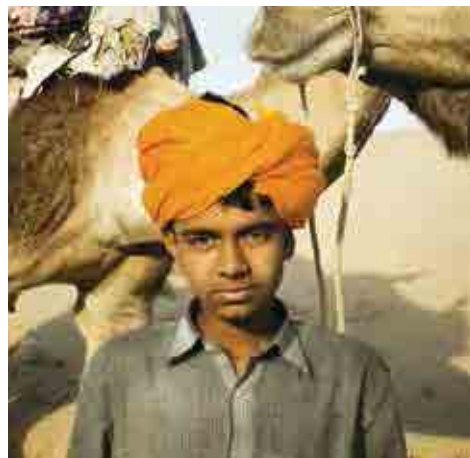
While still a baby, Muhammad was sent by his mother to be nursed and raised, as was traditional for infants in Mecca, in the desert among the **Bedouins**. Removing a child from its mother may seem cruel, but at the time it was actually a way of keeping babies safe. Illness



was more common in crowded towns, and if babies became ill there was no modern medicine to cure them. The desert was healthier.

Life for the Bedouins was difficult and dangerous. Finding enough water in the desert to survive was a constant struggle, and there were barely enough crops and cattle to feed everyone. From a very young age Muhammad worked for his foster family. As a boy he would have tended to the camels, taking them to the well to drink and watching out for hyenas and other **predators**.

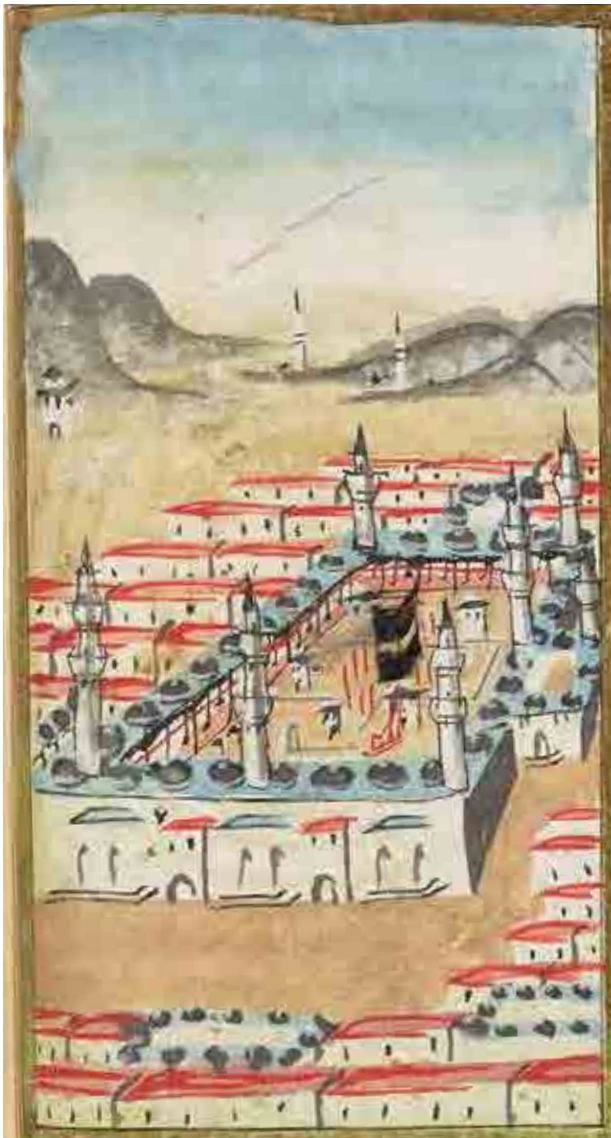
At night, in the desert, the sky is very clear, and the temperature **plummets**. In the freezing air, under the stars, the men of the tribe would recite long **oral** poems—stories of battles won, of grand adventures, of loves gained and loves lost. Hours-long poems were recited by heart. The Bedouins valued honor, bravery, and survival in the face of hardship. Their tales were full of these values, and Muhammad would have absorbed them. Muhammad, though believed to have been illiterate,



**A modern-day Bedouin boy**

understood clearly the importance of words and stories. For the Bedouins, life in the desert was one of poverty and danger—but also one of beauty.

There are still Bedouins today, some who lead similar lives to those of their ancestors. If you wish to cross the Arabian Desert the Bedouins are your best guides—they know how to find water, handle camels, and how to survive.



An illustration of Mecca

## Back in Mecca

At five, Muhammed was taken from his Bedouin foster family, the only family he had ever known, and returned to Mecca and his mother. Imagine how strange the city must have seemed after the empty desert: people **bustling** through the streets, merchants shouting about their **wares**, rich and poor living side by side.

Just a year after Muhammad returned to Mecca, his mother died. He then lived with his elderly

grandfather, the head of the tribe, until he also died, just two years later.

In his first eight years of life, Muhammad had lost both parents, had been taken away from his foster family, and had then lived with his grandfather only for him, too, to die. This was a time when death and disease were common, but even so, Muhammad had a tragic childhood.

These losses may have made Muhammad particularly sensitive to the least powerful in society. He later preached that it was very important to help the most **vulnerable**, including orphans.

Fortunately, Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib, the new head of the tribe, took him in. From the age of eight, Muhammad worked looking after the camels, traveling along Mecca's trade routes.

These trade routes were very dangerous; it was while traveling along them that Muhammad's father had died. The desert was **scorching** in the day and freezing at night. Most people walked for hundreds of miles, as camels were needed to carry the goods. During the day they had to watch for **raiders** who would attack caravans and leave the people to die. At night, people took turns keeping watch for wolves, hyenas, or thieves attempting to steal the camels.

Muhammad rose from being a **humble** camel boy to a merchant and his uncle's closest adviser. He earned a **reputation** for **integrity**. As a young man, Muhammad caught the eye of a wealthy widow and successful merchant named Khadijah, who asked Muhammad to marry her. Muhammad agreed, and they are said to have had a very happy and successful marriage resulting in several children.

## The revelations

Muhammad lived quietly and peacefully for many years, busy with his business and his family. He was a thoughtful man, and sometimes



he would leave the city for several days for the peace and **solitude** of the mountains. It was on one of these trips, in approximately 610, when Muhammad was around forty years old, that Muslims believe he had his first vision of the angel Gabriel. Muhammad heard Gabriel commanding him to recite a verse that would later become part of the Qur'an, the main religious text of Islam.

## The Qur'an and the Hadith

The Qur'an ("the **recitation**") contains the messages Muhammad believed he heard from God through the angel Gabriel over a period of twenty-three years and which were written down by **scribes** and memorized by others during his lifetime. It consists of 114 *surahs*, or chapters, and is one of the authoritative sources on what Muslims should believe and how they should behave.

In addition to the Qur'an, Muslims follow the Hadith, a collection of reports on the teachings, deeds, and sayings of Muhammad and his close companions that was **compiled** after his death.

One of the Hadith summarizes what are generally called the Five Pillars of Islam:

Shahadah. The belief in one god, and Muhammad as his prophet

Salat. Prayer five times a day

Zakat. Giving a portion of one's income to the poor and needy

Sawm. Fasting during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar

Haji. **Pilgrimage** to Mecca once in a lifetime



## The Qur'an

Up until this moment, Muhammad had been a polytheist. But through his visions he came to believe there is only one God, the God of Abraham who is worshiped by Jews and Christians.

At first, Muhammad was terrified by his experiences. He first told only his wife, Khadijah, who comforted him and believed him. Then he shared what he had seen and heard with some of his closest relatives and friends, who also believed what he was saying. In 613, Muhammad started publicly **preaching** his message.

Muhammad continued to have visions, or **revelations**, throughout his life. They were collected after his death and together form the Qur'an. Muslims believe that the revelations in the Qur'an came from God, just as Jews believe that the Torah, their own holy book, is from God. Muslims see Muhammad as the last prophet (someone who speaks the will of God)—following Moses, Jesus, and others.

## Medina and the growth of Islam

Some welcomed Muhammad's message, particularly the less powerful and wealthy of Mecca. But for Muhammad's own tribe, the Quraysh, it was **blasphemy**. The Quraysh, who worshipped additional gods, did not like being told that their religion was wrong. They made life very difficult for Muhammad, particularly after his uncle Abu Talib and wife both died, in 619.

The next three years were a constant struggle for the first followers of Muhammad, the first Muslims. They were facing violent

## The Abrahamic religions

Muhammad came to believe that the god he heard through Gabriel was the God of Abraham, also worshipped by Jews and Christians. Muslims call that God “Allah” (the word for “the God” in Arabic).

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are sometimes called the Abrahamic faiths, because they all trace their origin to Abraham, believed by Muslims, Jews, and Christians to be God’s first prophet. Followers of the Abrahamic faiths believe many of the same things, and follow many of the same practices. For example:

- All three religions are monotheistic, the belief in only one god.
- All three religions have Holy Scriptures that are believed to reveal the word of God (the Qur’an for Islam, the Torah for Jews, and the Old and New Testaments for Christians), as well as additional guides for living (in the Hadith for Islam and in the Talmud for Jews).
- The guidelines about food in Islam (*Halal*) have similarities to the guidance about food in Judaism (*Kashrut*).

**persecution** in Mecca; their future looked **bleak**. Some sought refuge in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia.

Neighboring towns were beginning to hear about Muhammad’s message (and his reputation for honesty). In 622, the people of Yathrib, a town about 250 miles north of Mecca, invited him to become their **arbiter**, and in many ways the ruler of the town.

Muhammad agreed. He moved there that same year, in 622, and this became known as the first official year of the Islamic era, the year of the Hijra Calendar. Yathrib was renamed Medinat al-Nabi, which means “the Prophet’s city” (Medina for short).

Muhammad's move to Medina as a ruler meant that for the first time, Muslims had political power, as they would continue to have to the present day. Over the following twelve years, Muhammad's reach grew rapidly. He used three **tactics**. He preached, winning many new believers; he conducted raids on nearby towns that fought him and on their caravans; and he made deals with important people, additionally offering wealth to towns willing to join his "Community of Believers." But while his influence grew, he continued to struggle with the people of his own town, Mecca. Many Meccans refused to **acknowledge** Muhammad as a true prophet.

By 630, eight years after leaving Mecca, Muhammad had converted thousands of people to Islam. He was able to march to Mecca with a force of 10,000 men. When

Mecca surrendered to Muhammad, he **pardoned** his enemies and gave them many important positions. By doing this, Muhammad showed his political wisdom. He knew that if he had **humiliated** the Quraysh

## Religion and politics

In the United States, the First Amendment of the Constitution prohibits the establishment of an official religion. This is sometimes called the "separation of church and state." For example, government funds cannot be used to benefit or advance the interests of a particular religion.

But for the Islamic and European dynasties of the Middle Ages, religion and government were not separate. Wars were often fought in the name of religion, and religious figures often had political and military **authority**. You cannot truly understand Muhammad's life, or what happened after his death, without remembering this. You also cannot understand the Crusades or life in the Middle Ages without understanding the relationship between religion and government.

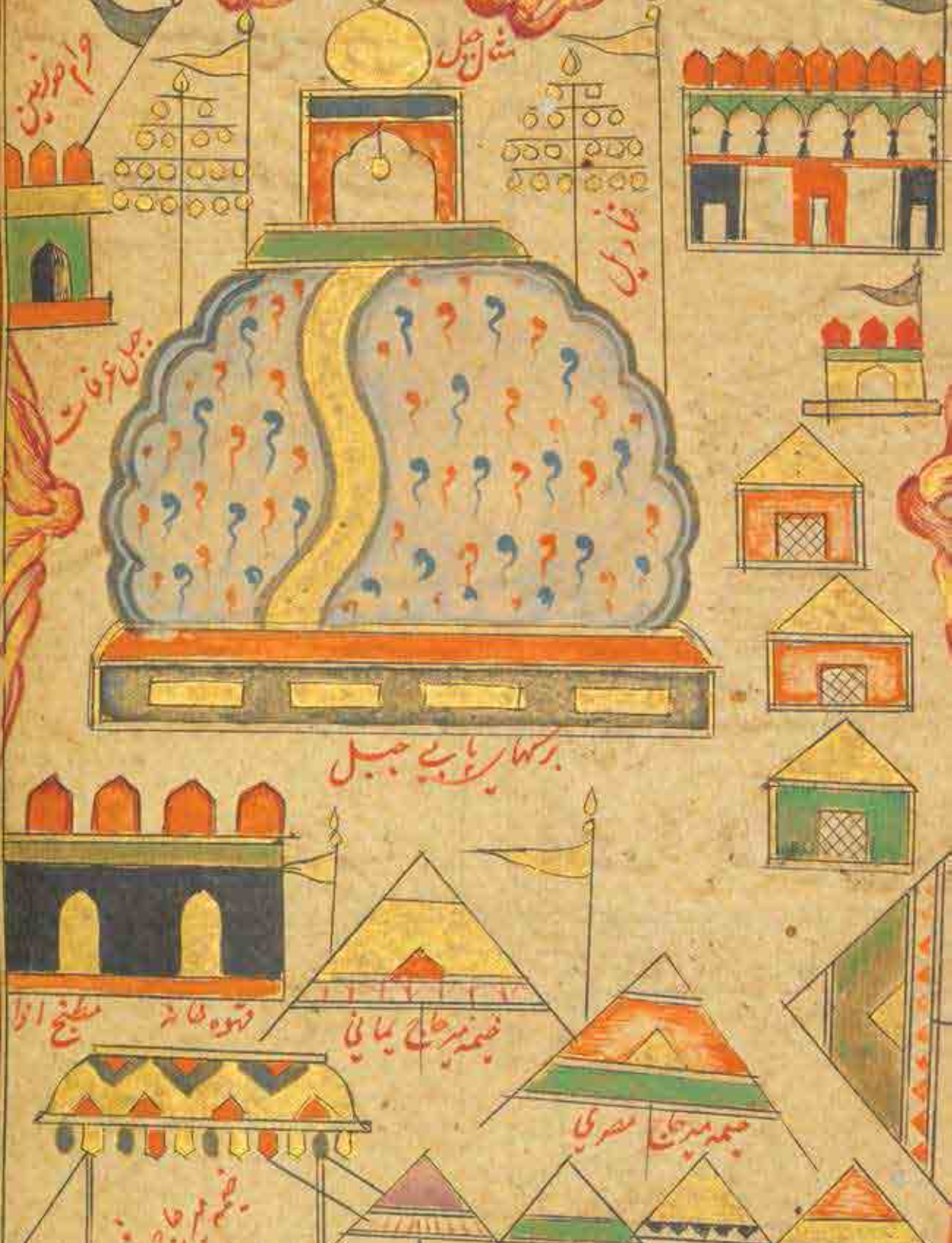


**A map of Islam's expansion under Muhammad**

they would have hated and tried to destroy him. By offering peace and power he instead made them his allies.

Once Muhammad had gained control of Mecca, he quickly used his expanding political and military power to expand Islam. By the time of his death, in Medina, in 632, all of western Arabia was under his control, and a huge number of people had converted to Islam.

This was the first time that the region had been united by religion or politics. It had happened amazingly fast—just two years after Muhammad had conquered Mecca.



*Futuh al-Haramayn*, a well-known Persian guide to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina

## Muhammad's legacy

In 632, just before he died, Muhammad went on a pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca. On the way back to Medina he stopped and gave a **sermon** to his followers. He told them he was about to die, and that they must continue to follow the Qur'an.

But who would succeed Muhammad? There was no unified view, and Muhammad's own words arguably did not make this clear. In his

### Kaaba

The Kaaba (the "cube") was a famous shrine in Mecca that Muhammad's tribe, the Quraysh, looked after and where its members worshipped their gods. It is an ancient stone structure that Muslims believe was originally built by Abraham.

When Muhammad returned to Mecca in 630 he destroyed all of the **idols** in the Kaaba and made it a place of worship for Muslims. Today, it is inside the Grand **Mosque**, the center of the Muslim world.

When Muhammad returned to claim Mecca most of the people there chose to convert to Islam. In 632 CE, just before his death, Muhammad called on his followers to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. More than 100,000 people joined him.

Since then, there has been a pilgrimage every year to Mecca (the *Hajj*). Going on this pilgrimage is one of the Five Pillars of Islam for those who can afford it. Over two million people now travel to Mecca every year for the pilgrimage, and as many visit it outside of the *Hajj* season.

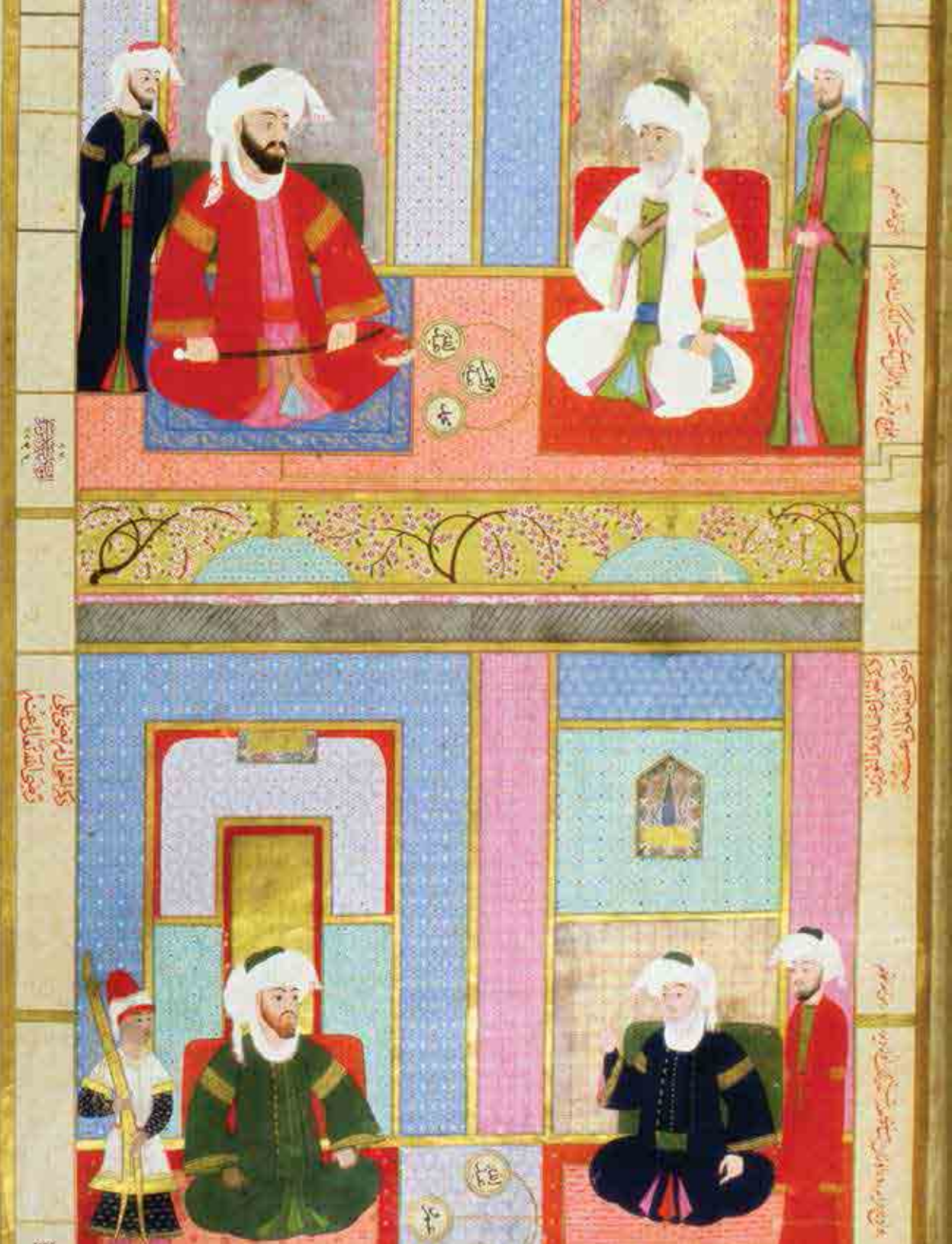
final sermon he had talked about his son-in-law, Ali. Therefore, some of Muhammad's followers believed he had intended for Ali to lead the Muslims after his death. Others who heard the same words, however, felt that Muhammad had not intended for Ali to be the new leader but was instead merely using him as an example of an important and faithful Muslim. As you will discover later, this disagreement was very important in Islam's history: the **ambiguity** over the role of Ali caused a lot of **discord** among the new Muslims, even as they continued to expand and conquer. Eventually, this led to the formation of two different branches of Islam—the Shia and the Sunni.

Muhammad left a great legacy. He overcame many challenges as a young boy and became the most important religious and political leader in Arabia. It was in many ways his continued influence after his death that was most extraordinary.

Worshippers facing the Kaaba in Mecca







The first four caliphs of Islam

## Chapter 3

# The Caliphate

### THE BIG QUESTION

How did people in the remote region of Arabia defeat two mighty empires?

## The first caliph: Abu Bakr

Muhammad died twenty years after he began preaching his message. Many of his “Community of Believers” had only recently converted, and their loyalty was not always strong. It was not clear if Islam would survive.

There needed to be a successor to Muhammad, and fast. The important people of Medina, which remained the most central city after Muhammad’s death, met in private. When they emerged, they announced that Abu Bakr would be the **caliph**, or successor (meaning Muhammad’s successor).

Muhammad had many children, all of whom died during his lifetime, except for Fatimah (wife of Ali). He also had a large extended family. After the death of his first wife, Khadijah, he had married again



Abu Bakr and the Muslims



An Islamic sword

several times. Abu Bakr was Muhammad's father-in-law by his wife Aisha (we will hear more of Aisha later). He was also one of Muhammad's closest friends and known to be a wise and strong man.

Abu Bakr had an immediate, and difficult, task. Many tried to leave Islam after Muhammad's death, or stop paying taxes to the new Muslim leaders. Abu Bakr fought many battles with people who wished to secede.

Abu Bakr was successful for two reasons. First, he was a great military leader. Second, he was a great preacher himself. The story was that he had convinced six of his friends to become Muslims within one hour after he himself had converted.

Abu Bakr turned his former enemies into committed Muslims. Eager to follow his lead, they became part of a **formidable** military force. He continued the **campaign** that Muhammad had begun, and within two years of Muhammad's death the Muslims ruled the entire Arabian **Peninsula** and had started campaigns to conquer Syria and Iraq.

Arabia became truly united. It had always been a mix of Bedouin tribes, towns, and small countries, often ignored or **exploited** by the Byzantine and Persian Empires. Now it was a power in its own right.

## The second caliph: Umar

Abu Bakr died just two years after becoming the first caliph. On his deathbed, he **nominated** his successor—Umar, a close colleague of Muhammad's, and his father-in-law's as well (Muhammad had married Umar's daughter, Hafsa).

## The story of Umar's conversion to Islam

Umar had an interesting past. He had been an enemy of Muhammad's before converting to Islam. Umar was a well-travelled and literate man born to a powerful family in Mecca. He had a reputation for being hard and sometimes cruel. At first, he hated Muhammad's message and was one of the worst persecutors of the early Muslims.

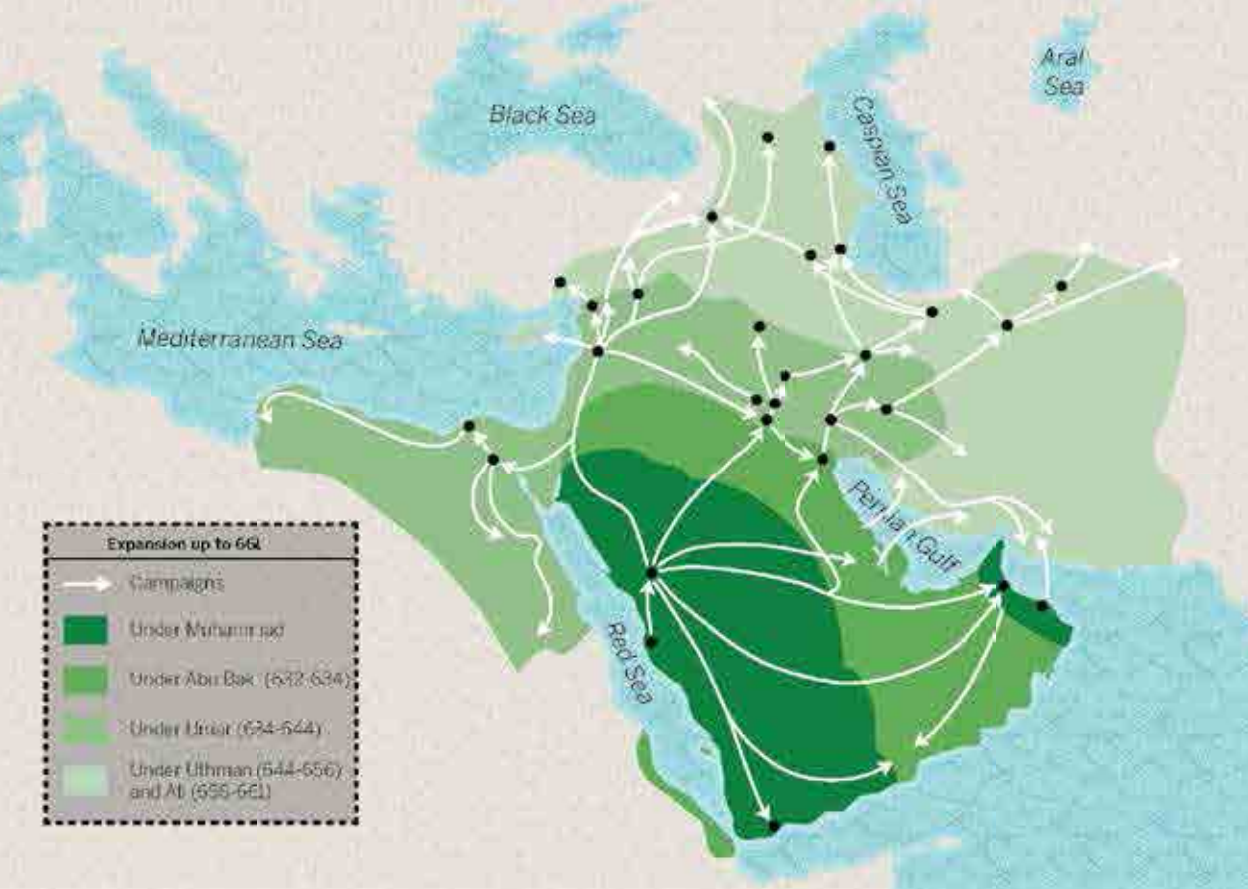
The legend is that in 616 CE, three years after Muhammad began converting people in Mecca, Umar decided to have him **assassinated**.

Striding toward Muhammad's house, he met a passerby who told him that Umar's own sister, Fatimah, had converted to Islam. Furious, Umar changed direction and rushed to Fatimah's house. He burst in, and his sister hurriedly hid the papers she had been reading. He shouted at her and demanded to see what she was reading.

Angry herself, Fatimah told him it was the Qur'an, and that he was too impure to touch it. He grabbed the Qur'an and began to read.

Immediately, he started weeping, and converted to Islam on the spot. He became one of Muhammad's closest allies.

Umar was a political genius. He established one of the greatest empires in history, winning battles and expanding that empire at an even faster rate than Muhammad and Abu Bakr had. He also put structures in place to keep the empire strong.



A map of the Islamic Expansion up to 661

He appointed regional governors to the places he conquered and required them to live in a humble way. Their doors had to remain open to the people. Umar himself is believed to have led a very simple life. He lived in a small home and wore inexpensive clothes. If he felt officials were **flaunting** their wealth, he had them **dismissed**. He created a special department that would investigate complaints about state officials. If they were found guilty, they could be **flogged**.

Umar also created a taxation system for the new Islamic empire. All Muslims had to pay a tax of two percent of their earnings to help the poor and needy. Non-Muslims also had to pay a tax. Umar used these

taxes, among other things, to help the unemployed and the elderly, just as many governments today use taxes to support people in need.

Umar was not only a political genius but a military one. In his ten years as caliph he fought many wars. With his greatest generals, Abu Ubayda and Khalid, he **devastated** the great Byzantine and Persian Empires. In 636 and 637, two decisive battles were fought that led to the Muslims conquering huge portions of Byzantine territory and breaking the Persian Empire completely.

By his death in 644, just twelve years after Muhammad's own death, Umar had captured much of the Persian Empire. He had moved through Syria and into Egypt. He had taken the great cities of Damascus and Jerusalem from the Byzantines.

## *Politics, not religion*

The Muslims conquered many lands, but they did not force Jews and Christians to convert. They recognized the common roots of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Some Christians and Jews were attracted to Muhammad's message and did choose to convert, but this happened over a long time.

Christians and Jews did pay higher taxes than poor Muslims, but less than under the Persians or Byzantines. In general, they were treated better in the first Islamic empires than they had been under earlier empires and often preferred living in Islamic lands.



The Yarmouk River valley

## The Battle of Yarmouk: An Introduction

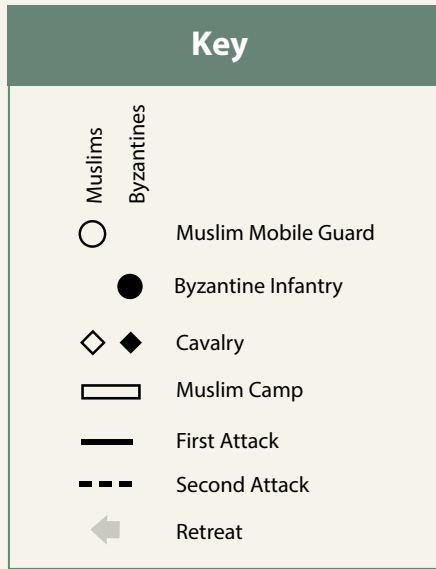
The Byzantines largely ignored the Muslims, until Umar conquered the great city of Damascus, in 635. It was then that the emperor, Heraclius, realized this new foe must be crushed.

He raised a huge army from across his empire to drive the Muslims back into Arabia. At first the Muslims retreated and regrouped on the edge of the desert (in modern-day Jordan), until they met the Byzantine forces on the plains overlooking the Yarmouk River valley, northeast of Jerusalem.

The Battle of Yarmouk was one of the great turning points in history. The Muslim army defeated a much larger, technologically superior force through strategy and determination. Umar had appointed a great general to lead his troops against the Byzantine army—Abu Ubayda, who was assisted by another **savvy** general, Khalid.

This is a fictionalized story of General Vahan, the leader of the Byzantine troops, and his experience through the long Battle of Yarmouk.

## The Battle of Yarmouk



General Vahan was confident. The loss of territory to the newly united Arabs had been an **unbearable** humiliation for the Byzantine Empire. He was proud that Emperor Heraclius had given him, his greatest general, 80,000 troops to crush the new Muslim army.

In the past few weeks he had swept through Syria, and the Muslims had retreated before him. Now was his chance to end their expansion. Twenty-five thousand Muslim troops were gathered before him on the Yarmouk plains. Deep ravines with rushing waters surrounded them—there were few ways to escape.



Not that escaping should be necessary for the Byzantines. Vahan's army was larger, more experienced, and had superior technology. There was little doubt of victory.

Vahan watched his army train. **Infantrymen** jogged up and down under the watch of a steely-eyed officer, holding their spears and shields aloft. In battle they would form a perfect barrier, preventing any of the enemy from attacking the troops within. Behind them the rest of the infantry would be sheltered, ready to throw javelins and shoot arrows at the enemy.

Then there were the mighty **cavalry**. He could see them, making **crude** jokes and **jostling** one another. Little could dent the **arrogance** of a cavalryman. Armed with lances, **long-swords**, and short-bows, they would be the key to crushing the enemy. They would charge at the Muslim soldiers, shooting arrows as they advanced. Then they would crash into them with their battle-trained horses, scattering men left and right.

Finally, there were the champions. Seasoned officers and warriors, they would begin the battle by fighting **duels** to the death against their Muslim opponents. General Vahan knew many would die. But those who succeeded would strike fear into the hearts of the other soldiers.

The Byzantine soldiers were as diverse as the empire itself. People from Armenia, Syria, Egypt, Greece, the Balkans, and more. They were also unstoppable.

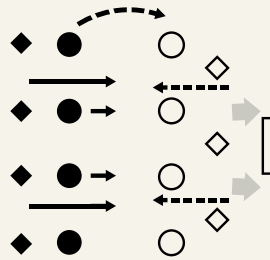
At least, they should be. Vahan **suppressed a twinge** of doubt. His soldiers were tired after fighting the Persians for so many years.

Still, Vahan believed victory would be within reach.

### Day 1

The battle began, as was the tradition, with the dueling of champions. Vahan was surprised at the number of champions the Muslims managed to slay. Still, it had been a fruitful day. Vahan had tested the Muslim lines with his army and now understood their strength and formation. He had a plan.

### Day 2



Now the real battle began! Vahan launched a major attack, with cavalry and infantry striking hard at the center of the Muslim forces. He attacked before dawn, when the Muslims would be praying. But the Muslim general Abu Ubayda

was prepared for this stratagem. He was ready to meet the Byzantines on the battlefield.

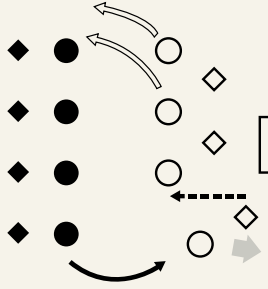
Abu Ubayda may have seen through Vahan's **ploy**, but he was still **overwhelmed** by the Byzantines' numbers. Soon, the Muslims' right flank collapsed! The soldiers fled back to their camps. Vahan watched with satisfaction.

Suddenly, he saw the Muslim soldiers returning. Sure it was a trick, he shouted for a messenger to discover what was happening. When the messenger returned, panting and breathless, he told an astonishing story. The Muslim women in the camps were furious with their husbands for fleeing the battle. They charged at them with tent poles, threw rocks at them, and sang songs of betrayal. Their fury had forced their husbands back into the battle!

Vahan was amazed but carried on with the attack. This time he pushed on the left flank. Again, the Muslim soldiers fled, only to be pushed back into the battle by their wives.

**Thwarted**, Vahan **retired** to sleep. His dreams were troubled. The day should have seen the destruction of the Muslim soldiers. Instead, little had been gained.

### Day 3



Vahan tried a new strategy: pushing hardest on the right flank to break it apart from the main Muslim army. Yet again, the soldiers retreated, only for their wives to push them back into the **fray**.

But while Vahan was concentrating on the right flank, Abu Ubayda ordered Khalid to sneak round and attack Vahan's own left side! Khalid's "mobile guard," his best soldiers, caused **havoc**. The battle descended into bloody fighting, with many dying on both sides. By nightfall, the Byzantines had still made no progress.

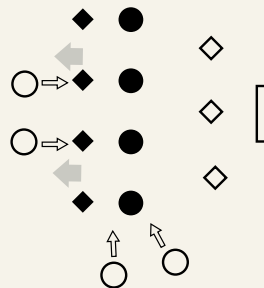


too. He had failed to gain any ground. Filled with **self-loathing** but knowing it was necessary, he sent a courier to the Muslim camp offering a truce.

After some hours, the **courier** came galloping back. “General,” he gasped, “they have declined the truce. Battle will begin again tomorrow.”

For the first time, Vahan knew real fear. By offering a **truce** he had signaled to the Muslims that he might lose. Now they would be excited and eager, believing they could win. He could be in trouble.

### Day 6



The sixth day of battle dawned. Vahan looked at his troops, seeing the worry in them that he tried to mask on his own face.

As the fighting began, Vahan realized the Muslims had indeed gained confidence. They attacked in force, while Abu

Ubayda's mobile army galloped around and attacked the Byzantines from the left and the rear. The Byzantines' left wing collapsed.

Vahan, seeing the disaster, tried to order his cavalry to respond. But he was too late. While the Byzantine cavalry were forming, Khalid attacked them. The cavalry fled to the north. Abu Ubayda's mobile guard rejoined the other Muslim soldiers, continuing to destroy the Byzantine army's left wing.

Vahan knew he was beaten and ordered a retreat. The Byzantines fled, only to find troops blocking them. As they scrambled, many fell into the deep ravines surrounding the plains, or dove into the waters only to be smashed by the rocks below.

Some soldiers did escape, including Vahan. But shortly afterward, Abu Ubayda's soldiers found them and fought them again near Damascus. This time, Vahan was killed. At least, he thought as he died, I will not see my Emperor's face when he realizes his Great Empire has been broken.

## Uthman

In 644, Uthman was appointed Umar's successor. Like Abu Bakr and Umar, he had been a close companion of Muhammad's; he was also his son-in-law (Uthman had married two of Muhammad's daughters).

Uthman continued to expand the Islamic empire, but his reign was more **controversial** than those of his **predecessors**. Some felt Uthman favored his own clan, the Umayyads, too much, and did not behave as a **pious** Muslim should. There were stories of **lavish** parties, of Uthman taking taxes from the people and spending the money for his own pleasure, on his family, and on his friends.

Regardless of whether those stories were true they convinced many. Uthman's enemies joined the cause of Muhammad's closest relative, Ali.

Do you remember the sermon Muhammad delivered shortly before he died? The one where he spoke about his son-in-law Ali? Ali and his family believed that Muhammad had meant Ali to be caliph.

Ali and his family had accepted Abu Bakr and Umar as strong leaders. But under Uthman their supporters' belief that Muhammad's direct relatives ought to be caliphs resurfaced (Ali was also Muhammad's cousin).

Uthman was assassinated in 656, leading to the first great crisis for the new Islamic empire.



## The codification of the Qur'an

In one of Abu Bakr's early battles, around 700 Muslims who had memorized the Qur'an were killed. Until that time, the Qur'an mostly existed in people's memories. Muhammad had recited the Qur'an to his followers, some of whom wrote parts of it down.

After that battle, Abu Bakr was afraid that knowledge of the Qur'an would be lost through future deaths. Although some written copies existed, he was not confident in their accuracy. He ordered a copy to be compiled that he then passed on to his successor, Umar.

But it was during the caliphate of Uthman that the final, "official" version of the Qur'an was established and distributed to the Muslims in the different parts of the new empire.

## From the lips to the pen

In Muhammad's time, oral poetry was prized. Most people were illiterate, but they memorized long tales with beautiful language, adding to and adapting them down the generations.

That ability to memorize is why so many could learn the Qur'an by heart. But, as Abu Bakr realized, the times became too dangerous for the holy book to live only in people's heads.

Once the Qur'an was written down, people wanted to make it as beautiful as possible. Over time, calligraphy—the art of decorative handwriting—became the most important Islamic art. Calligraphy was not only used for the page: you can see it decorating the walls and roofs of mosques, and on bowls and vases. Great calligraphers became famous and set up schools of their own. Some could even create writing in the shape of animals.



A manuscript page from the Qur'an



The Battle of the Camel

# The Civil War

### THE BIG QUESTION

Why are there Shiite and Sunni Muslims?

Uthman was assassinated by people who believed he was **nepotistic**. In particular, they felt he had unfairly placed people from his own clan in charge of Egypt, Syria, and other territories. So when the important people of Medina chose a new caliph after Uthman's death, they did not choose someone from Uthman's clan. Instead, they chose Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin.

Others opposed this decision, including Uthman's family. Their **opposition** to Ali grew, because they felt he did not punish the rebels who had killed Uthman. In the end, as is often true when people disagree about who should rule, civil war erupted.

## The Civil War Begins

This civil war was **traumatic** for many Muslims. It had only been twenty-four years since Muhammad's death, and in that time, Muslims had fought side by side, winning over others to their faith and conquering huge amounts of land. Now, for the first time, they faced people of the same religion, and even the same tribe.

After winning the Battle of the Camel (see box on page 40), Ali moved the center of the Muslim political world from Medina to the **garrison town** of Kufa. From there, he marched north toward Syria, where Muawiyah had his armies.

Ali's forces met Muawiyah's along the Euphrates River, but both sides were reluctant to attack. The battle began only to be broken off shortly thereafter, when Ali and Muawiyah agreed to seek a compromise. They appointed arbiters to find a way out of the conflict.

Unfortunately, the arbiters offered a bargain that didn't satisfy either side. Even worse for Ali, some of his supporters left him because they were angry that he was looking for a compromise at all. In 661, five years after the civil war began, one of those former followers assassinated Ali.

After Ali's death, his son Hasan briefly became caliph before deciding to retire to Medina. Perhaps he hated the idea of Muslims

## The Battle of the Camel

The civil war was mostly fought between Ali and his followers on the one side, and Uthman's relatives, led by the governor of Syria, Muawiyah, on the other. Other prominent Muslims also became involved.

One of the earliest battles in the civil war was the Battle of the Camel (656), at Basra in modern-day Iraq. It was there that Ali fought against one of his greatest opponents: Aisha.

You may remember that Aisha was a wife of Muhammad's and the daughter of Abu Bakr, the first caliph. She was also an important political adviser to the first caliphs known for her fierceness and passion.

Aisha was furious that Ali would not punish those who had murdered Uthman. She led opponents of Ali's into battle, directing them from a *howdah*, a kind of bed carried by a camel.

Aisha was defeated and retired from political life. She lived out the rest of her life in Medina, where she died at the age of sixty-four.

killing one another more than he liked the idea of being caliph. Or maybe he had seen too many caliphs suffer violent deaths. Whatever the reason, Muawiyah (Ali's rival) became the next caliph, and the first civil war ended.



What a cavalry might have looked like in the Battle of the Camel

This war, lasting five years, was very significant for the Muslims. It was the first time that they had opposed one another in battle. It also led to a **schism** that **resounded** through the centuries all the way to the present day.

## The Umayyad dynasty

Muawiyah ruled for nineteen years. He was a strong ruler and kept the **discontented** supporters of Ali at peace. When Muawiyah died he appointed his son, Yazid, as his successor.

This was unusual in early Islamic history. Unlike in Medieval Europe, the sons of the first caliphs had not succeeded them. Instead, it was the man considered most likely to lead the Muslims successfully who was chosen. In choosing Yazid, Muawiyah founded a dynasty of the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh.

There was immediate opposition to this dynasty.

Remember that part of the cause of the civil war had been the belief that Uthman favored his relatives too much. At the same time, many people felt that Muhammad's closest relatives should rule. So the feelings about whether authority should be inherited were complicated.

Ali's younger son, al-Husayn, led the opposition to the Umayyads. He refused to accept Yazid as the new caliph, and a new war started. It ended fast, because in 680, in the Battle of Karbala, Yazid's army killed al-Husayn and his entire family. Al-Husayn's supporters called it a **massacre** and his death **martyrdom**, and Shiite Muslims still mourn the anniversary.

Twelve more years of fighting would follow. By the end, Yazid's successor was **triumphant**, and the Umayyad dynasty continued

## *The Shia and the Sunni*

Around fifteen percent of Muslims today are Shias, with most of the remaining being Sunnis. The Sunni are the majority in most Muslim countries, but in Iran and Iraq, the Shia are the majority. Over the centuries, there have been many tensions between the two branches of Islam.

The Shiite and Sunni divide emerged in the time of Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin. The Shia (short for Shi'at Ali, or the followers of Ali) believe that Ali and his family were the true successors of Muhammad. They trace this all the way back to Muhammad's last sermon. For them, Muhammad was clearly appointing Ali as his successor.

The Sunnis disagree with this interpretation of Muhammad's sermon. Instead, they believe that Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and, later, the Umayyads, were Muhammad's rightful successors, since they were chosen by the **consensus** of the Muslim community.

The two branches of Islam have several different practices and beliefs. But they both believe in the Qur'an as Muhammad's revelation.

to rule. But winning came at a great cost: the **unity** of Islam was destroyed. Mecca and Medina, both **sacred** towns, had been attacked in the civil war, and the Shiite supporters of Ali would never forgive the Umayyads for killing al-Husayn.

Also, the expansion of Islam had slowed almost to a halt. The Muslims had been too busy fighting one another to conquer new territory.

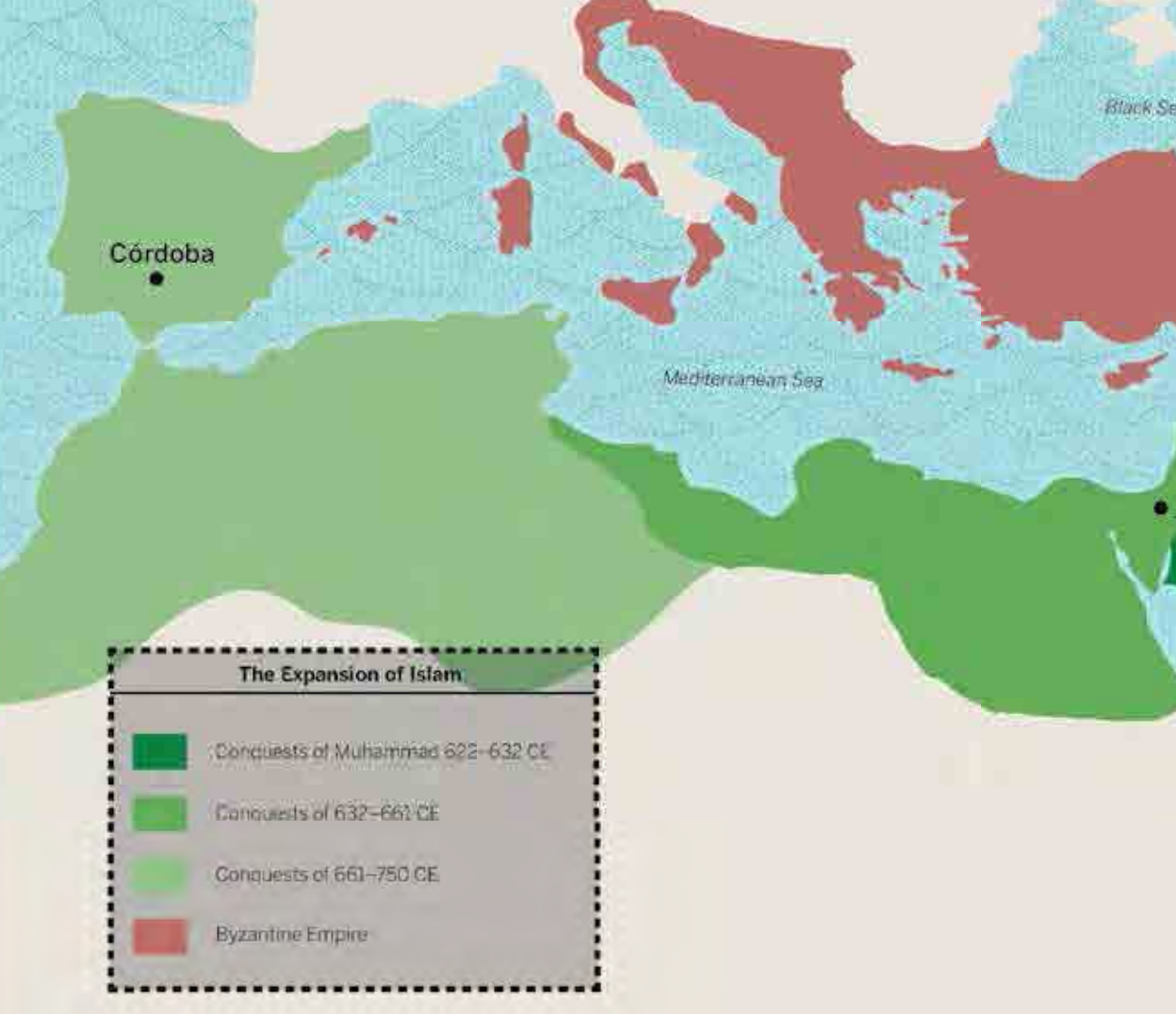
Remember Islam was still very new. It had only been sixty years since Muhammad had died. In that time, the growth of the Islamic empire had been extraordinary. Many had converted, and old empires had been destroyed. It is easy to forget that, at the same time, the Muslim people were trying to decide who should lead them, and why—both in politics and religion.

Given the disagreements among the Muslims, it is all that much more remarkable they were so successful. The combination of their message and their military and political genius was one the most **potent** the world had ever seen.

An Umayyad *Qasr* (castle)



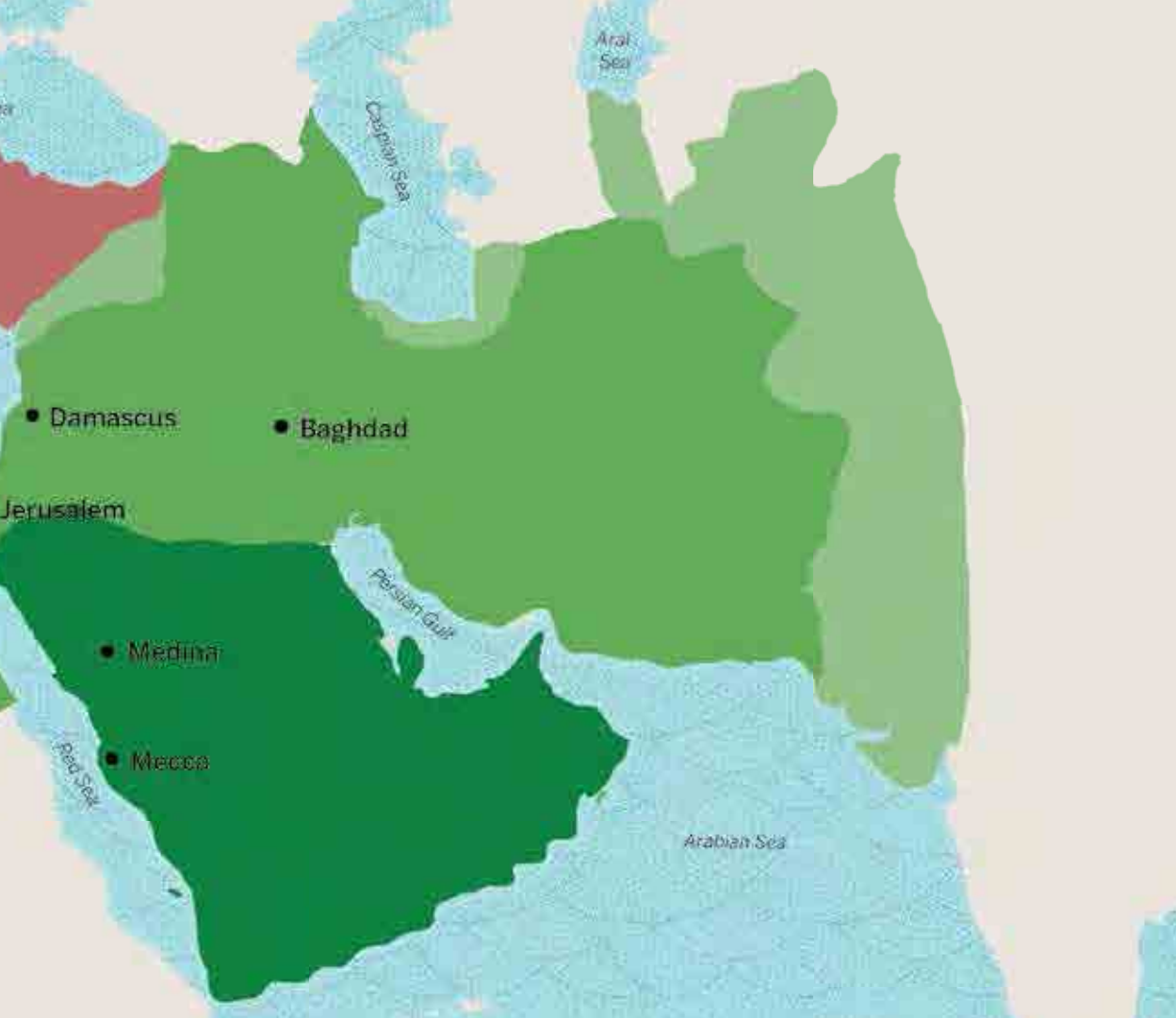




## The Umayyad Caliphate

The Umayyad Caliphate, which ruled the Islamic empire for almost one-hundred years, was the first dynastic caliphate of the Muslims. Under it, the empire expanded to its greatest extent, reaching as far as Spain in the West and India in the East.

The Umayyads moved the capital of the Islamic empire to Damascus in Syria. It was an ancient city in a more central location than Medina. Islam had become a world power, and remaining in Arabia was no longer **plausible**.



The Umayyads also started making their empire Arabic. Up to this point, the countries they had conquered continued using Greek, Latin, or Persian as their main languages. Little had changed in government or daily life as a result of the invasions.

The Umayyads changed that. They made the official language of the empire Arabic. Following old Roman practices they built and renovated roads across their empire, and they created **milestones** in Arabic showing the distance to major cities and describing the improvements they had made.

For the first time, the Islamic caliphs also built **architectural masterpieces**. These would continue to be built in the Islamic Classical Age.



The Dome of the Rock

## The Dome of the Rock

Toward the end of the Islamic civil war, the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It is one of the oldest Islamic buildings and their first great masterpiece.

Muhammad was believed to have **ascended** to heaven during his lifetime in an event called the Night Journey. Muslims disagree over whether this event occurred in Mecca or in Jerusalem. The Dome is a shrine that some Muslims in later centuries (and most Muslims today) have identified as marking the location from which Muhammad was believed to have ascended.

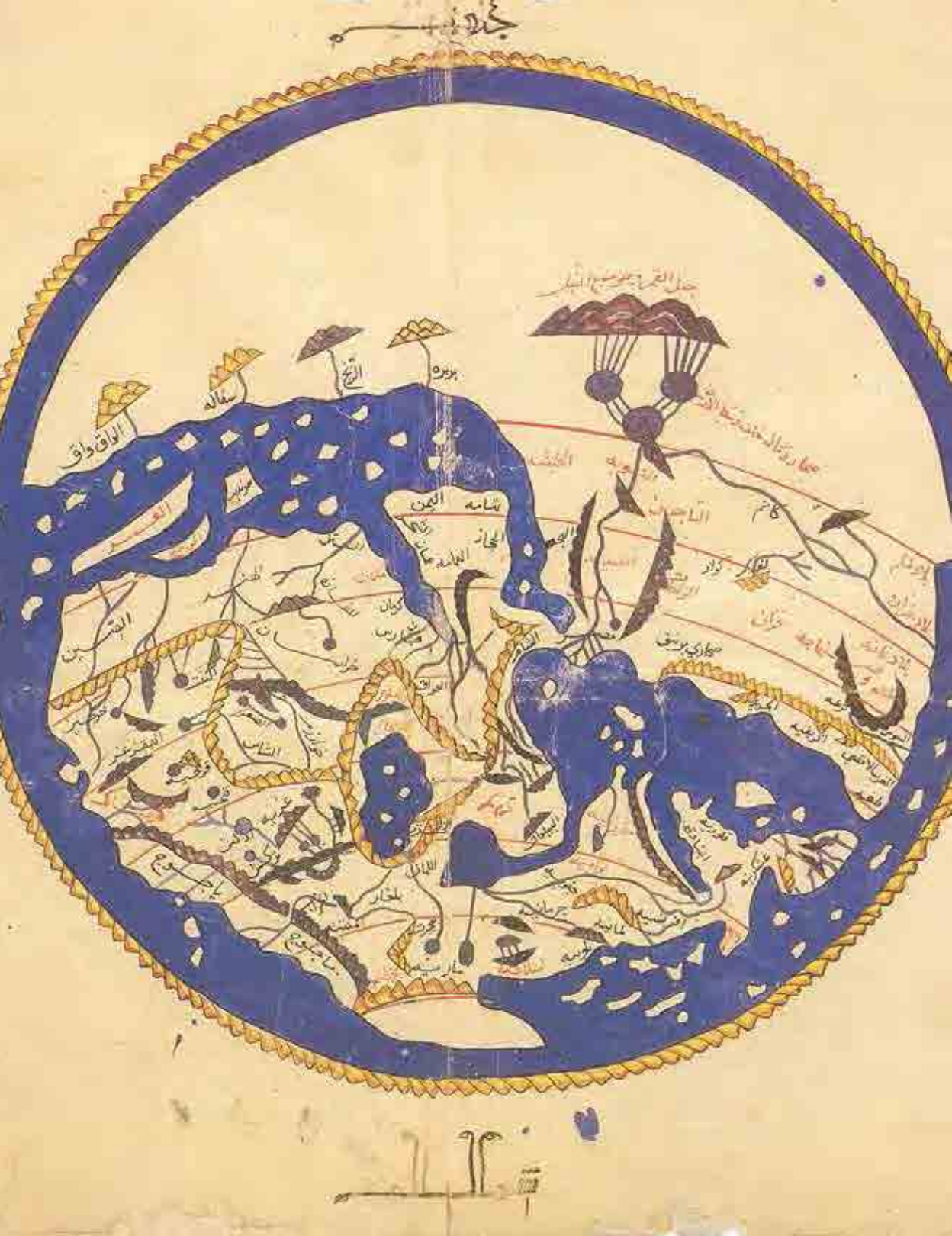
The Dome combines architectural styles from different parts of the Islamic empire. The structure followed a Byzantine model, but the tiles were brought from Persia. The result was something completely new that changed over the centuries.



The prayer hall at the Mosque of Córdoba

## The Mosque/Cathedral of Córdoba

The Mosque of Córdoba, later converted into a Catholic cathedral, was built by the Muslims when they conquered Spain. Construction began in 784 CE, and the final **modifications** were completed 200 years later. The mosque is famous for its 856 pillars that have been compared to rows of palm trees. The pillars are arranged in a series of double **arches** that were an architectural innovation allowing for high ceilings. (A double arch consists of a lower horseshoe arch and an upper semicircular arch.) Wedge-shaped elements in these arches are colored **alternately** red or white, giving the **interior** of the mosque its **distinctive** appearance. The massive dome is decorated with blue tiles and **countless** numbers of stars.



A map of the world created during the Islamic Classical Age

## Chapter 5

# The Classical Age

### THE BIG QUESTION

What was life like for Muslims during the Islamic Classical Age?

In the 740s, fighting broke out again in the Islamic empire. Shias, who still followed Ali, continued to rebel against the Umayyad caliphate.

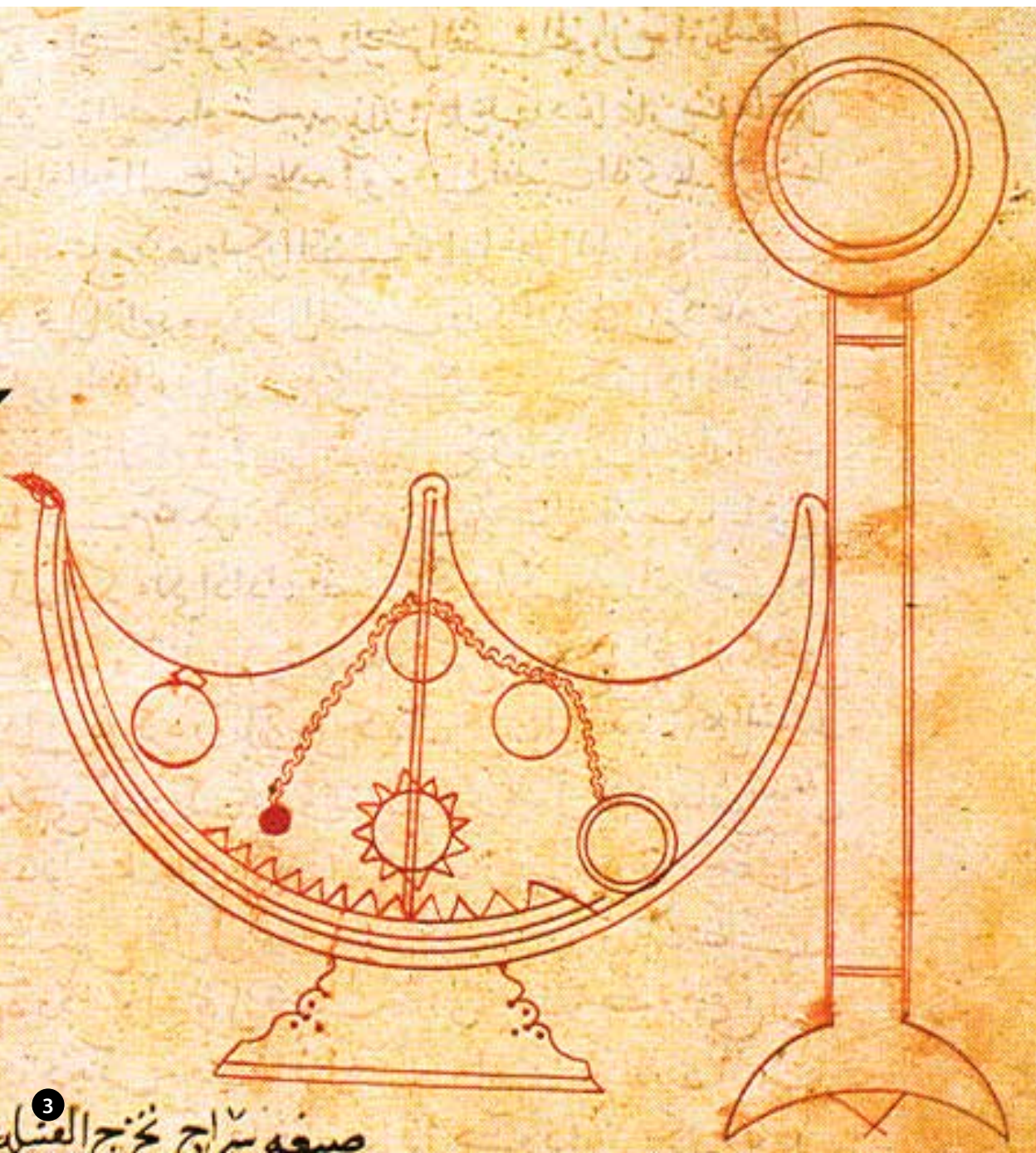
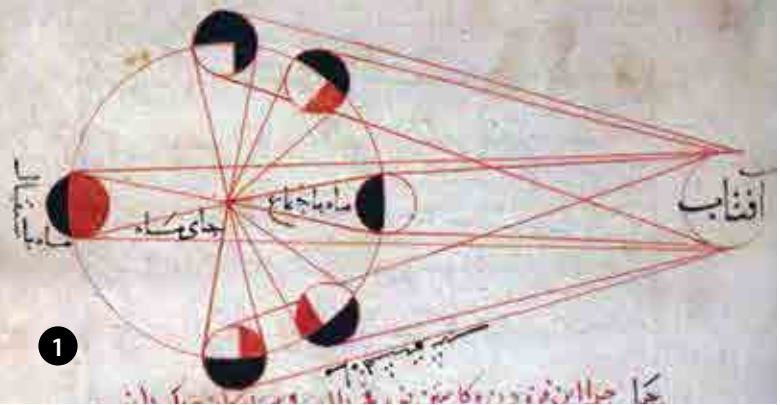
This time, the Umayyads were defeated. Only one member of the family survived: he fled to Spain, where his family continued to rule under a new, separate caliphate.

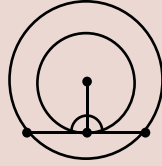
In the rest of the Muslim world a new dynasty emerged: that of the Abbasids, **descended** from another member of Muhammad's family (his uncle).

The story of early Islam might sound like one of constant battles, but it was actually very stable compared with what was occurring in Europe and elsewhere. The Abbasids ruled for 500 years, moving the capital from Damascus in Syria to Baghdad in modern-day Iraq. Under them, the Islamic empire was very **prosperous**. Art, science, mathematics, and architecture **flourished**. This period is known as the Islamic Classical Age.

During the Classical Age the Islamic world was much wealthier, and more scientifically advanced, than Europe. Jews, Christians, and Muslims coexisted in great cities. They lived in houses with **courtyards** and fountains and dined on **subtly** spiced foods. Their homes were filled with goods from across the empire and beyond.

The Classical Age was possible because of the size of the Islamic empire. Muslims were able to take ideas from different parts of the world and merge them into something completely new.





## Knowledge in the Classical Age

The Abbasid Caliphate, and its capital of Baghdad, was a magnet for scholars throughout the empire, regardless of their religion. Persians, Greeks, Indians, and others flocked there. Baghdad became one of the greatest **storehouses** of knowledge in the world, particularly of old Greek texts translated into Arabic.

As well as translating ancient Greek and Roman **manuscripts**, circles of scholars worked together and debated one another. Logic and reasoning were an important part of Islam, and that extended to the field of science.

With so much knowledge at their fingertips, scholars made countless scientific, philosophical, mathematical, and other discoveries. These contributions were often years, decades, even centuries ahead of developments in other parts of the world.

Developments during the Classical Age:

1) A drawing explaining the different phases of the moon, 2) a physician learning a complex surgical method, and 3) a drawing of a mechanical device





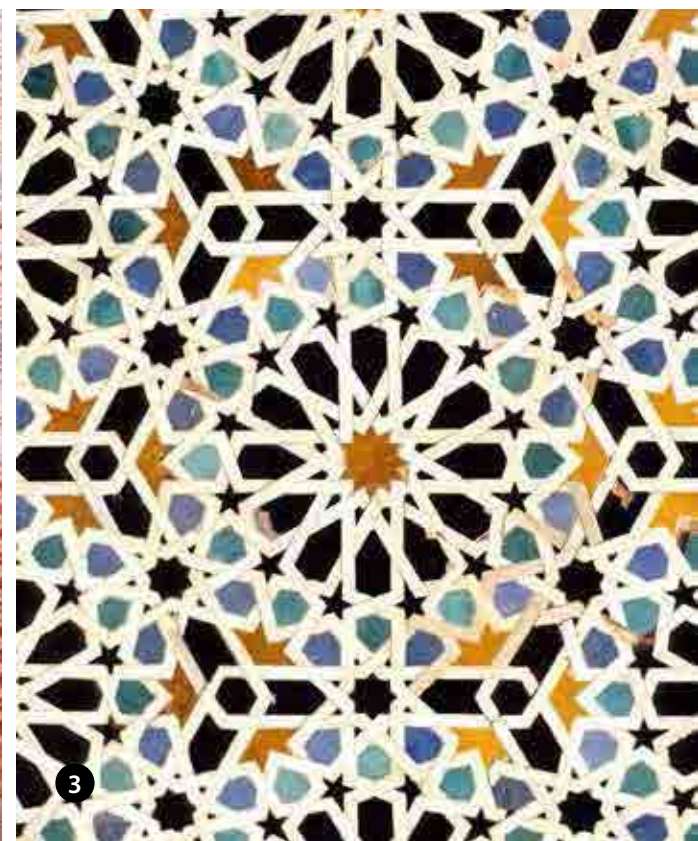
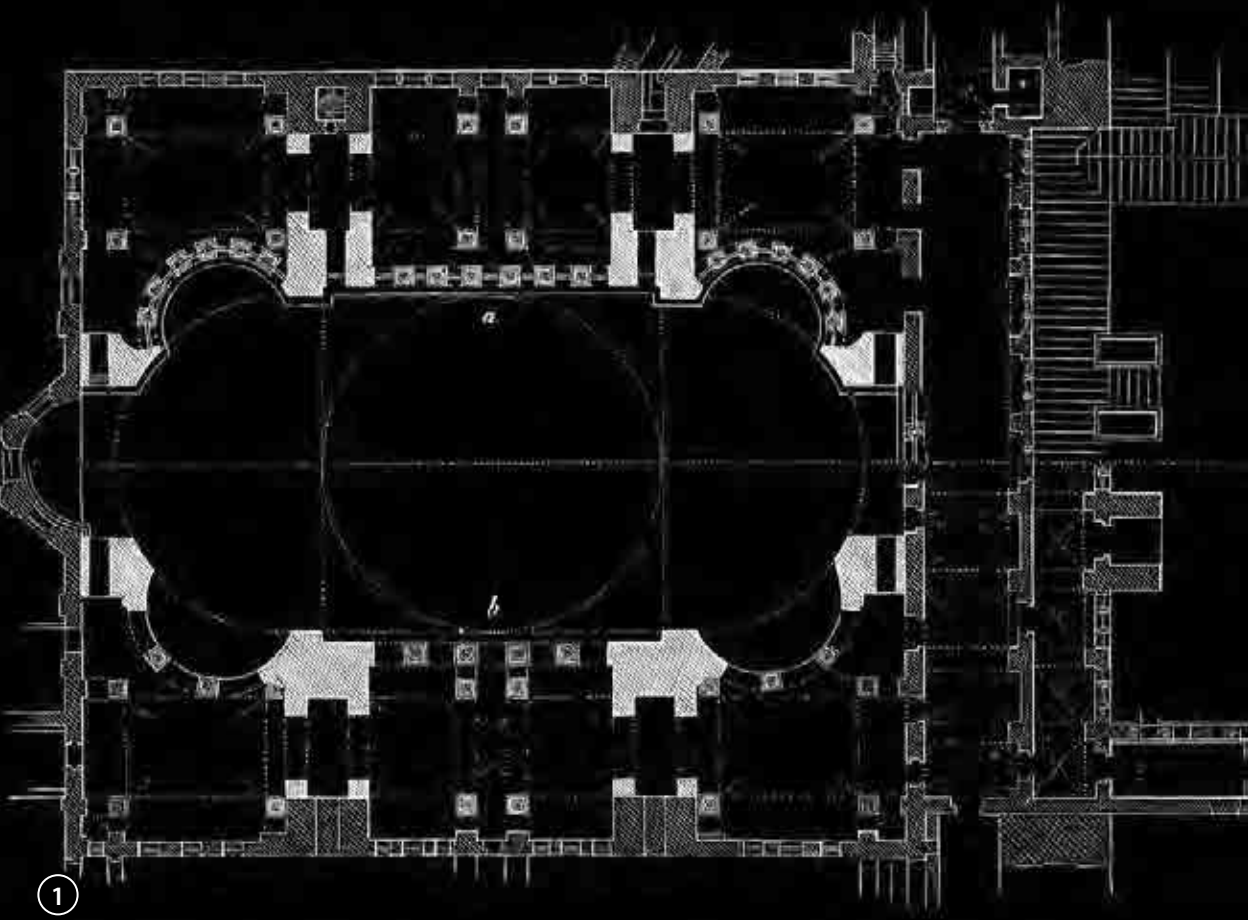


## Mosques

A mosque is the name for an Islamic place of worship, similar to synagogues for Jews and churches for Christians.

Over the centuries there have been many great mosques built throughout the Islamic empire. Many share common characteristics:

- All mosques have a *mihrab*, or prayer niche, pointing to Mecca; this is the direction in which Muslims pray.
- Many mosques have minarets, or tall towers used to call people to prayer.
- Calligraphy and **geometric** designs are both common features in mosques.






## Architecture

The Islamic world created some of the greatest architectural masterpieces of all time. Just as European Christians built great cathedrals, the Muslims built great mosques.

The Muslims wanted their mosques to be beautiful, **imposing**, and noticeable from afar. One of their greatest innovations was the pointed arch. A pointed arch is very **graceful**, but it also bears a lot of weight; you can build higher using one. Other arches the Muslims developed were used for beauty—the ogee arch in the form of an S shape, for example.

As well as arches, many mosques had great domes, like that of the Dome of the Rock mentioned in Chapter 4. From within the mosque, people might have looked up in the huge dome and felt as though they were looking at heaven. The domes **inspired awe** in the worshippers.

Geometric patterns were central to Muslim architecture. Perhaps because some Muslims did not believe in representing Muhammad's face, other decorative elements were emphasized. Artists **inscribed** squares or triangles inside circles and **interlocked** the figures into patterns that could be repeated near-endlessly. These patterns were intended to remind their viewers of the **infinite expanse** of the universe.



Another commonly used architectural pattern was the arabesque. If you were to go to a wealthy Muslim home, you might see courtyards with fountains and **elaborate** gardens. These created a sense of peace and **tranquility**. The arabesque was based on the observation of gardens, with elaborate patterns of **intertwined** plant stems and a variety of leaves. These patterns reflected both the natural world and the gardens of heaven that Muslims believed God had created for them.

## 1. The Great Mosque of Samarra

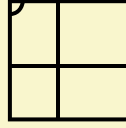
The Great Mosque of Samarra was built by the Abbasid caliphs in the ninth century. Its enormous **spiral** minaret, constructed entirely of baked brick, towered over the city.

## 2. Hagia Sophia

The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople) was originally a great church built by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. When the Muslims conquered Constantinople, they converted the church into a mosque; covered the many frescos of Jesus, Mary, and Christian saints; and added minarets, calligraphy, and a mihrab. The Hagia Sophia is now maintained as a museum, inside of which you can see the combination of Christian and Islamic design.







## Mathematics

Have you ever tried doing math in Roman numerals? It is a nightmare, because the Romans used combinations of letters for numbers. For example, C represented 100, M represented 1,000, and I represented 1.

So,  $578 = DLXXVIII$

A man called Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi solved that problem. A great mathematician, he took some of the ideas that existed in India and **refined** them into our current numeral system (1,2,3,4, and so on). He introduced the number 0 as well, which is a **foundation** of modern mathematics.

Al-Khwarizmi made many other discoveries—in **algebra**, in astronomy, and even in geography. His work spread to Western Europe, and his name in Latin led to the English term *algorithm*, which is a word we still use today. Without his work, many of the most important scientific discoveries of the past 1,000 years probably would not have been possible.



فأزاد العصير فصقه فهذا الشراب موافق لوجع الحلق والجنب والربو

والاسه والرافف ولمنه بلغم غليظ في حلقه يصفى اللون ويكثر النقي م



ومما يعطى لانه لو غشاه كله منع البصر من ان يمشى  
وهو على هذا المثال



والسرى الاخذ عن منافق او احاص الرطه بارت والطقات التي وصفنا



## Medicine

Medieval Europeans did not know much about **hygiene** or medicine. Cities and homes were often dirty: people did not bathe often, and sickness and death were very common.

The Islamic world was more advanced. Every city had many **bathhouses**, and the streets and homes were much cleaner than in Europe. This prevented the spread of illness and disease.

The Muslims also made many discoveries in medicine. For example, a famous physician called Ibn Sina **pioneered** a method of setting broken bones that is still used today. His book, *The Canon of Medicine*, collected all of the most **sophisticated** medical knowledge of the day. It was used throughout the empire and traveled to Europe, where it helped Europeans advance their own understanding of medicine.

Another Islamic physician, Abu al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi, wrote the first illustrated book about surgery and invented several surgical instruments. He offered **practical** advice about skincare and hair care, strengthening gums, and tooth whitening. He also discussed sunscreen, deodorants, an early form of lipstick, and ways of straightening curly hair.

Some discoveries that Europeans made during the Renaissance were only possible thanks to the translation of Arabic texts and scientific knowledge into Latin.

1) A drawing from an ancient Islamic book of medicine; 2) a manuscript drawing showing the human eye; and 3) an illustration of doctors preparing medicine from honey





## Food of the Classical Age

In the tenth century, a man living in Baghdad named Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq compiled hundreds of recipes. The resulting book, translated from the Arabic as *The Book of Dishes*, survived and gives us a fascinating glimpse into eating habits in the Islamic Classical Age.

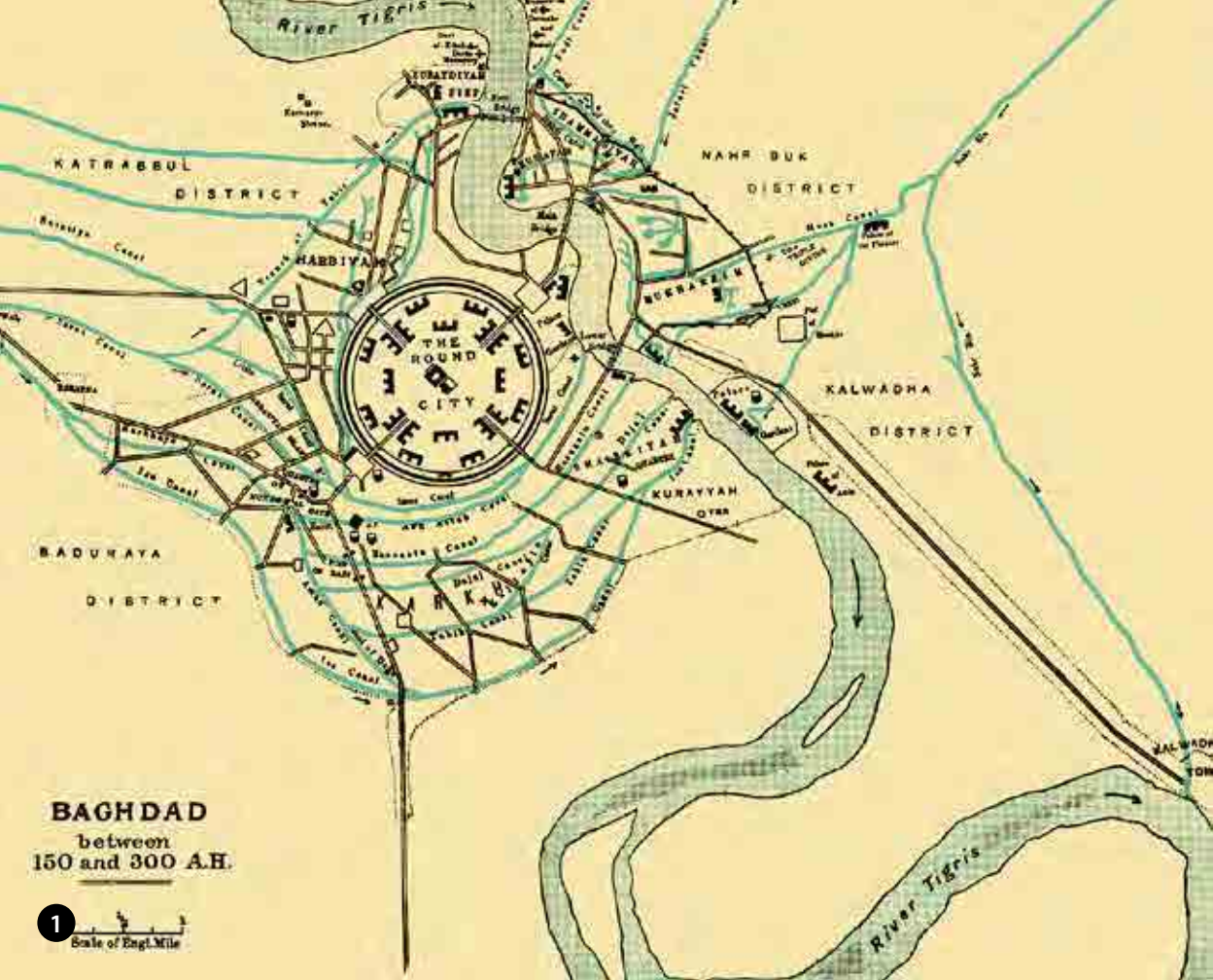
A sample recipe:

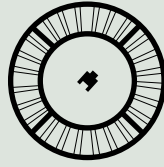
*Slice meat and chop it into small pieces (but not too small) and add some suet. Cook the meat with the green stalks of onion and kurrath, and season the meat with salt, olive oil, bruised cassia and galangal. Add coriander seeds and cumin.*

*Break eggs on the meat. Let the eggs look like eyes.*

*Place the pan with the meat and eggs on a reed tray and place a sprig of rue in the middle of each yolk. Drape over the pan a big thin sheet of bread and present to the table.*

1) A traditional spice market from the Islamic culture, 2) *Halal* cooking at a Muslim gathering, and 3) an *Iftar*—an evening meal for breaking daily fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan





## The Great City of Bagdad

Baghdad, founded in 762, was the capital of the Abbasid caliphs. It was centrally located within the empire and was defended by thick mud brick walls and a broad moat formed from the river Tigris. Four great gates facing different parts of the empire allowed people in and out of the city.

Within the city, four huge streets were filled with shopping **arcades** where merchants sold spices, carpets, and everything else you can imagine—sugarcane, dates, mangos, and rice all traveled across the empire to be sold in the streets of Baghdad.

Just inside the wall were houses for the caliph's family, staff, and servants. The caliphs themselves lived in a palace in the city center. An enormous building, it had two reception halls with high domes, the highest standing twelve stories aboveground. Atop this highest dome was a statue of a horseman carrying a lance. Visitors called the horseman the "crown" of Baghdad. It was said that if the lance moved, rebels would attack from where it pointed.

Many members of the ordinary public lived in stone or brick houses or even in apartment buildings housing as many as 200. **Communal** bathhouses, with one for women and one for men, were dotted throughout the city.

1) The city of Bagdad between 150 and 300 AH (767 and 912 CE), 2) an illustrated scene from the siege of Bagdad, and 3) a mosque tower in Bagdad



City of Jerusalem

## Chapter 6

# The Crusades

### THE BIG QUESTION

Why did the Christians launch the Crusades?

## The First Crusade

On November 27, 1095, Pope Urban II gave a **rousing** speech to a congregation in southern France. The Muslims, he said, had invaded Jerusalem. Christians had a duty to claim it back.

The crowd screamed in support. “God Wills It,” they chanted. Thousands of men, inspired by the Pope’s words, went to war: the First Crusade had begun.

Jerusalem was the holy city of the Muslims, the Christians, and the Jews (remember, all three religions had a common root). Pilgrimages to Jerusalem had remained common for Christians after it became



a city within the Islamic empire. But, recently, it had become more difficult to **access** Jerusalem. A new Turkish group called the Seljuks had invaded it and did not welcome Christian pilgrims.

This is one of the reasons that the Crusades were launched. There are other possible causes. Some believe the Pope was trying to win more power in Europe by uniting soldiers and kingdoms behind him. Others think it was a way to stop war between Christian nations, by targeting them at a new enemy.

Whatever the cause, the Crusades were a surprise for most Muslims. It didn't occur to them that an army from Europe would cause them problems. Normally, they would have been right. The Islamic empire was larger, richer, and more powerful than Europe. But within the empire there was trouble. Different kingdoms were **jockeying** for power, and rebellions and wars were common. The Muslim armies were exhausted, and it made them vulnerable to attack from the outside.



## *A fractured empire*

By the time of the Crusades, the Abbasids' power had **waned**. Different corners of the empire had started to rule themselves, only supporting the caliph in name. In Baghdad, the capital, the Seljuk Turks ruled as "sultans," with the caliph as a mere **figurehead**. The Turks were **renowned** as warriors particularly skilled in archery and horsemanship.

By the eleventh century, therefore, the empire was **fractured**. Some of the groups fought one another. This made them more vulnerable to attack from outside.

The First Crusade conquered Jerusalem and many other cities in less than three years. As the crusaders swept into Jerusalem, soldiers went on a **rampage**, massacring some of the inhabitants. In a letter to a relative, an elderly Jewish man described the massacre:

"They killed everyone in the city, Muslims or Jews. The few who survived were made prisoners. We all hoped that our Sultan would chase these men away. But time after time our hopes failed. Yet to this very moment we hope that God will give our Sultan's enemies into his hands."

## The Second Crusade

The First Crusade had been a success for the Europeans. They had conquered Jerusalem in a very short period, catching the Muslim armies by surprise. For forty years they ruled successfully, establishing large castles to defend their territory.

But the Muslims were regrouping. In 1144, they launched a successful attack on Edessa, a large city held by the crusaders. The fall of Edessa signaled the first major Muslim victory against the crusaders and prompted a Second Crusade from Europe, with new armies.

While the First Crusade was a victory for Europe, the second was a humiliation. The armies of the Second Crusade did not even try to

**Battle between the crusaders and Muslims**



## The Mamluks

Early in Islamic history, beginning with the Umayyads, the caliphs had started to rely on soldiers from outside of Arabia. People from across the empire joined their armies, including non-Muslims.

Some of these people became Mamluk soldiers. Mamluks were a unique group, mostly Turkic, or from the Caucasus. Formally “property” of the caliph, they started training from a very young age. Boys as young as thirteen were converted to Islam, placed in **barracks**, and worked **intensively** to learn archery, sword fighting, and horsemanship. They developed deep friendships with one another and loyalty to their officers and caliph. They became the most **elite**, and effective, fighting force in the empire.

Many Mamluks themselves rose to power, becoming generals of the armies. Often, only those who were Mamluks were eligible for the highest positions. The Mamluks were important fighters in the later crusades, and, eventually, after they defeated the crusaders, they formed a dynasty of Mamluks that ruled Egypt, Syria, and most of Arabia.

reconquer Edessa. Instead, they tried to attack the great city of Damascus in 1148. They were defeated and had to retreat.

## Saladin and the Third Crusade

Salah ad-Din (or, “Saladin,” to the Europeans) is one of the most remarkable leaders in history. Before the Third Crusade he had followed his uncle (a famous general) and conquered many of the fractured Islamic territories, including Egypt and Syria. He was a great military leader and was also seen as a wise, compassionate man.



Salah ad-Din, the first sultan of Egypt and Syria and the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty

Saladin was initially willing to leave Jerusalem in the hands of the Christians, and he signed a treaty promising this. But then one of the crusader leaders, Raynald de Châtillon, broke the treaty. This caused Saladin to attack the crusaders, defeat them, and capture Jerusalem, in 1187. It was these events that sparked the Third Crusade, led by one of the most famous warriors in medieval Europe: King Richard I of England, known as the Lionheart for his bravery.



## The story of Saladin and Richard the Lionheart

“A curse on Raynald de Châtillon!” mumbled Richard the Lionheart, King of England, as he tossed and turned in his tent. His fever had raged for days, and he was desperate for water in this dry and hot land.

“Do you not mean a curse on Saladin, your Majesty?” asked one of his attendants.

“No I do not!” snapped the king, who hadn’t realized he had spoken aloud. “Raynald got us into this mess. Saladin signed a treaty promising to leave Jerusalem alone, and Raynald broke it. We all knew he was an evil man, but attacking those Muslim caravans was stupid as well as wicked. Now I’m suffering, desperate for cool water in this terrible land, because of Raynald’s actions.”

“But Sire,” protested his attendant, “Raynald de Châtillon was our ally! He died a **valiant** death at the hands of Saladin.”

“Ally?” the king asked incredulously, his cheeks flushing hotter. “ALLY? The man was a menace. Remember when he decided to attack the Emperor of Byzantium? He asked that great Christian leader, the Patriarch of Antioch, to **finance** his war. When the patriarch refused Raynald had the poor man

stripped, beaten, covered in honey, and left in the hot sun. When he was finally released, the patriarch was so exhausted, he agreed to give Raynald as much money as he liked.”

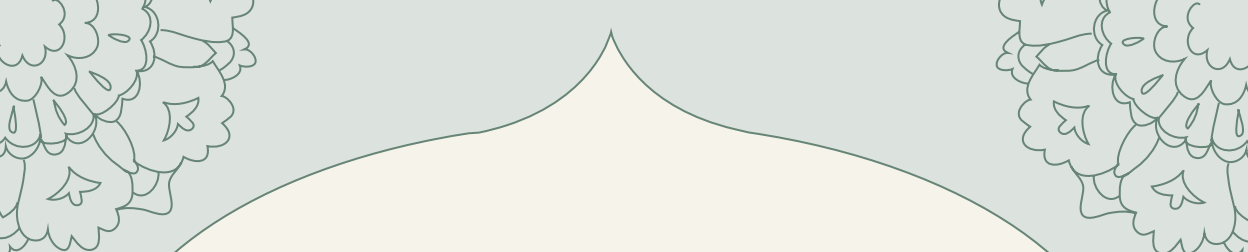
“No—with allies like that,” the king continued, “we are in little need of enemies. In truth, I cannot blame Saladin for killing him and retaking Jerusalem.”

“Your Majesty, I do not understand,” said the poor **bewildered** attendant. “You traveled all the way from England to retake Jerusalem. Now you say Saladin should have it.”

“You’re not listening,” the king chided. “Of course Jerusalem should be in the hands of Christians. That doesn’t mean that I think Raynald behaved well. Honestly, I am far more **beset** by my so-called allies than by my enemy, Saladin!”

“Take Philip, King of France, and Leopold, Archduke of Austria,” the king said, warming to his subject. “They were supposed to be on this expedition, but they ran home when things got difficult! They’re rats, both of them. Leopold even complained that I had insulted him!”

Seeing the king grow **agitated**, and worried about his health, the attendant attempted to sooth him. Suddenly, running footsteps were heard, and a messenger burst breathlessly into the tent.



“Your Majesty,” he panted. “A gift has arrived from Saladin. He heard of your fever and has sent you crushed snow and fruit for your health.”

As the messenger spoke, several **pageboys** entered carrying huge platters of fruit and big pitchers of snow. For the first time in several days, the king smiled.

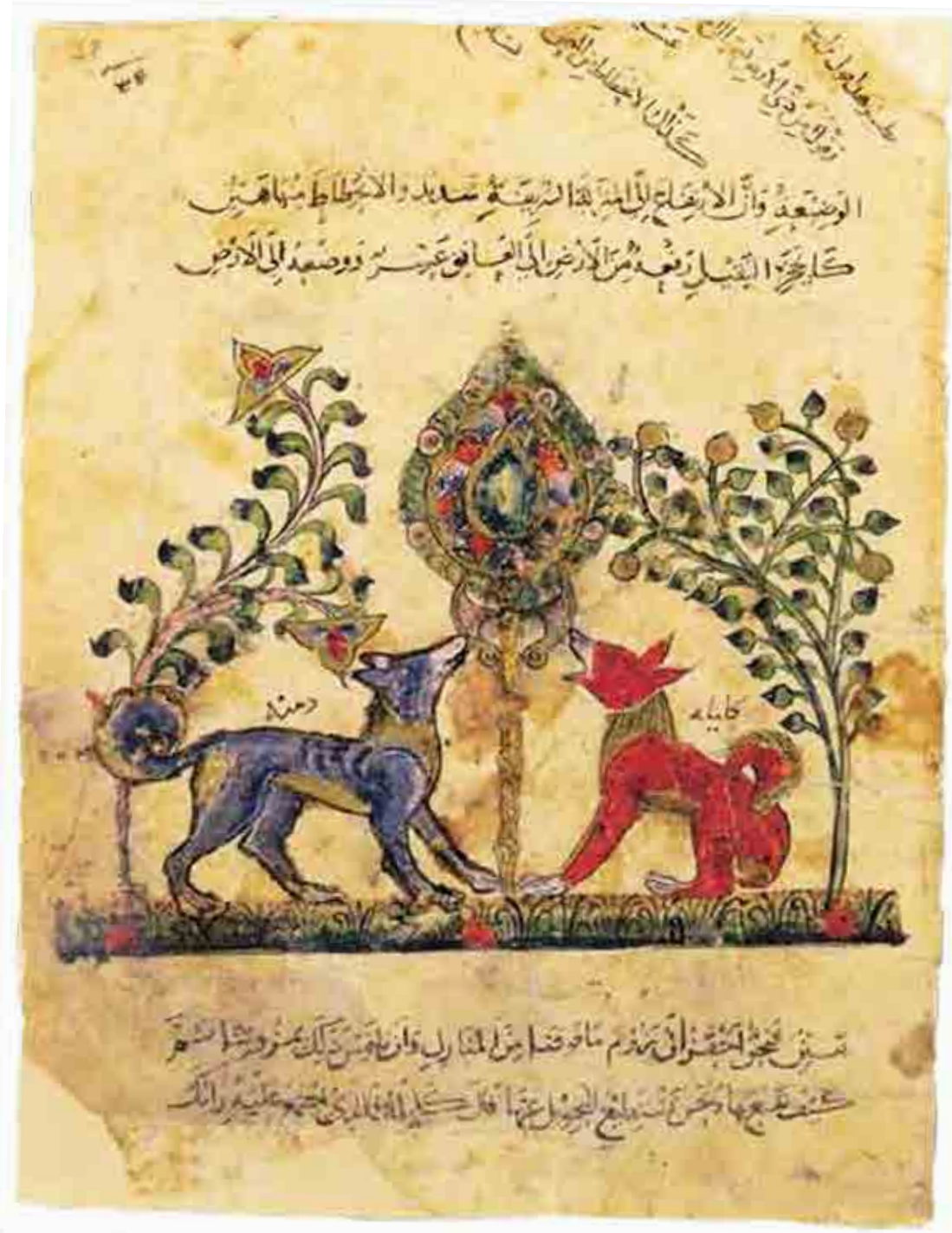
“You see?” he said. “Saladin knows how to behave in war. This is a gracious gift. Of course, we will still fight tomorrow—I mean to take Jerusalem—but at least he is behaving as **chivalry** demands.”

**Aftermath:** King Richard and Saladin continued to fight each other for another year. Their respect for each other grew. In the end, they reached an agreement: the Muslims would keep Jerusalem but allow Christian pilgrims to visit it. Other territories conquered by the crusaders would remain in European hands.

On his way back from the Crusades, Richard was captured and imprisoned by Archduke Leopold of Austria. His former ally had not forgiven him for his insults. Eventually, England paid a ransom to have him freed, but Richard never returned to the Holy Land. He died of wounds received during a battle in France, in 1199.

Saladin founded a new Islamic dynasty, the Ayyubids, who ruled in Egypt and much of the Middle East.





A page from the manuscript of *Kalila and Dimna*

## Chapter 7

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# *Kalila and Dimna*

### Introduction

*Kalila and Dimna* is a series of animal **folktales** that has been extremely popular in the Muslim world and beyond since the eighth century. Originally based on Indian stories, it was translated many times and is considered a masterpiece of Arabic writing. It is in some ways a symbol of the way the Islamic empires adopted, translated, and refined ideas from many different cultures.

Each story in *Kalila and Dimna* talks of friendship, leadership, and other human traits. “The Crane and the Crab” is one such story.

## The Crane and the Crab

Once upon a time, there lived a **cunning** crane. As a young bird, he had enjoyed his life hunting fish by the pond. But recently, life had seemed **drab**. Every day was the same: **stalking** the pool, looking for movements under the water, pouncing for his prey. It was hard work, and frustrating. More often than not he would come up empty-beaked. It took most of the day to catch enough fish, and then the next day he had to begin all over again.

The crane wanted a new life: one where he could spend his days **lazing** under the shade of the trees without having to lift a feather.

If you remember, the crane was a cunning crane. Instead of daydreaming about this new life, he hatched a plan....

The crane began to **cultivate** an **air** of sadness. He would stand by his pond, his beak drooping downward, balancing on his one leg. Every so often he would heave a great sigh, as if to say, “the world is a terrible place.”

One day, a crab **scuttled** by and saw the crane looking miserable as usual.

“Why are you so sad?” asked the crab, who was a nice crab and always concerned about her fellow creatures.

“My dear, I have heard the worst news. And I don’t know what to do about it!” the crane said, shaking his head from side to side. “I heard two fishermen talking, not twenty feet from where we are standing. They plan to drain the pond! These humans are so greedy. They don’t fish a little, like I do. They want to take everything.”

“But this is terrible!” said the crab. “What will my friends, the fishes, do? They will all die when the pond is drained. They don’t like you much (no **offense**, Mr. Crane), but at least you don’t kill them all at once.”

“I know,” answered the crane, “but I fear that, though I know a way out for the fishes, they will never trust me. I have eaten too many of them in the past. Alas, if only I had been a vegetarian crane.”

The crab sat and **pondered** a while, her claws waving gently. “I think perhaps it was fated that I meet you, Mr. Crane. I can talk to the fishes and persuade them to listen to your plan.”

The crab was as good as her word. Within a very short amount of time, fish began to bob up to the surface of the pond, including the king of the fishes himself. The crane's beak began to water, but he forced himself to remain calm.

"The crab has told us the terrible news," said the king. "But he mentioned you had a plan, Mr. Crane?"

"Indeed I do, O King of the Fishes, renowned for your wisdom and the care of your people," replied the crane. "Higher up on those hills lies another, larger pond. It has few fishes, which is why I have always hunted here."

As the crane mentioned hunting, some of the more timid fish began to dive back into the water in alarm, and it took a number of shouted commands from the king of the fishes to bring them back again.

"I could carry you to that pond," continued the crane, as if nothing had happened. "That is, of course, if you would trust me."

The fish didn't like that plan very much, but the king of the fishes was a good ruler and decided that it was worth the risk. "I will go first!" he declared. "And if

I do not return with news of this pond, we will know the crane has tricked us.”

With that, the king of the fishes flung himself into the air, and the crane caught him neatly in his beak. Soaring up through the sky, the crane flew to the hills. Just as he said, a larger pond sat there, shaded by trees.

The crane carefully deposited the king of the fishes into the pond and allowed him to swim for several minutes. Eventually, the king declared the new kingdom safe, and the crane carried him back to his subjects below.

The fish rejoiced! They had been saved, and the crane had proved trustworthy. The next two fish hopped into the crane’s beak to be carried off to the new pond.

Or so they thought...

For the crane had been waiting for this moment all along. He was, if you will remember, a cunning crane.

There had never been two fishermen, or a plan to drain the pond. Instead of carrying the new fish to the pond in the hills, he took them to a rock. As they flopped on the rock’s surface, gasping, he ate them both in one big gulp.

This, thought the crane, was the perfect plan! The fishes will think I'm helping them—and they'll never know the difference. I could eat every fish in the pond—and they will jump into my beak!

The crane wasn't really hungry after those two fish, but he was so **smug** about the success of his cunning plan that he wanted to see some more poor fish tricked.

Meanwhile, the crab had been watching these **proceedings** with interest. She had, after all, brought the king of the fishes and the crane together. She decided to see the new pond for herself. After all, the fishermen would also destroy her home. And, secretly, the crab had always wanted to fly.

So on his next trip the crane **obliged**—he'd never eaten crab and thought it might be quite tasty. As he coasted toward the rock, though, the crab saw the bones of fish, **bleaching** in the sun. With horror, she realized what the crane had done.

“How could you?!” exclaimed the crab. “You monster!”

“Monster?” scoffed the crane. “I'm a crane. Eating fish is what I do—this was merely a more efficient method. I

experiment with new ideas all the time—for example, I think I may experiment now by eating crab, madame!”

But the crab was too quick. She normally didn’t approve of violence, but her life was at risk—not to mention the other fish waiting for their trip. She reached out with her claws and gripped the crane’s neck. Feeling the **pincers**, the crane was suddenly very afraid. He was too scared even to gulp.

“You will carry me back to the pond, Mr. Crane,” the crab said in a soft, menacing voice, “and then you will fly away very, very fast. You will find another place to live, and if I ever hear of you playing such a trick again, you will find out just how sharp these claws are.”

The crane, feeling less cunning by the minute, did as the crab said. As soon as the crab was deposited on the ground, he flew away as fast as his wings would carry him.

Meanwhile, the crab scuttled back to the old pond and told the fish the sad news of their **departed comrades**. They mourned for many days and vowed never to trust a bird again.





The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali

## Extention 1

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# West Africa

By the eighth century, Islam had spread all the way to North Africa, including to Morocco. From there, merchants traveled to West Africa. They carried goods from other parts of the Muslim world, and as they traveled, they spread the ideas of Islam.

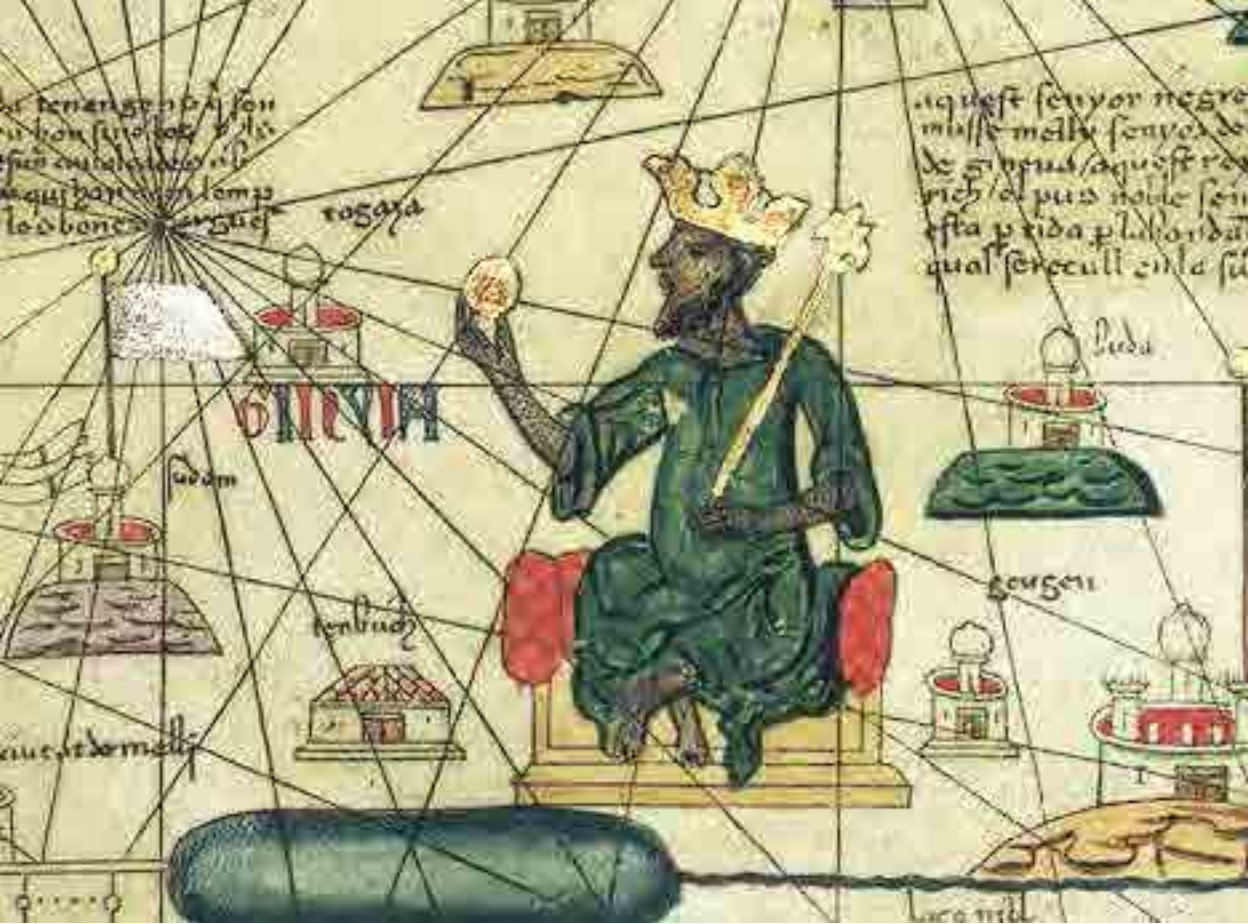
Over time, many in Africa converted to Islam. Great new cities were founded with Islamic scholarship at their heart. In Timbuktu and Djenné in Mali, and in Chinguetti in Mauritania, Islam flourished.

### The spread of ideas into West Africa

One thousand years before the first Muslims arrived in Africa, trade had existed between the Berber people of North Africa and the Western kingdoms south of the Sahara desert.

The Berbers converted to Islam early on while still holding on to their own traditions, including their language, their distinctive clothing, and their music. As the newly Muslim Berbers continued to trade, haggling over the price of salt, horses, dates, and camels, they talked. They told West Africans about Islam and why they had converted.

Over time, Muslim scholars accompanied the traders, meeting West African rulers and becoming their advisers. Their ability to write, and their understanding of Islamic law, made them very helpful to rulers managing large kingdoms.



Depiction of Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire.

Over many generations, West Africans converted to Islam, usually starting with the ruler himself. As conversion occurred, older traditions were **incorporated** into the religion, leading to different practices across the area and continent.

## The story of King Musa I of Mali

King Musa I of Mali may have been the richest man in history. The Mali Empire he ruled stretched across the vast savanna that lay south of the Sahara. It took four months to travel from the northern to the southern border. The empire held huge gold mines, the source of King Musa's wealth.

King Musa made Islam the state religion of his empire. He was a devout man, and in 1324, he became a legend when he went on

pilgrimage to Mecca. His procession is reported to have had 60,000 men all wearing **brocade** and Persian silk. Eighty camels accompanied them, each carrying up to 300 pounds of pure gold dust. Those who met him on his journey said he “almost put the African sun to shame.”

As Musa went on his pilgrimage, he gave gold to the poor. A storyteller visiting the city of Cairo twelve years after Musa had passed through found the city still singing his praises.

Musa brought back with him Arab architects and scholars to build great mosques and universities in Timbuktu and other cities under his rule. His most important contribution, though, may have been the pilgrimage itself. It reminded the rest of the Muslim world of the wealth and importance of the Mali Empire and turned Musa into a legend.

## The great city of Timbuktu

Timbuktu sits where the great river Niger flows into the Sahara. It is a crossroads where salt and gold were traded for cattle, grain, and learning. Books were one of the most important goods of Timbuktu.

This is because Timbuktu was a center of learning. It became part of King Musa’s empire when he returned from his pilgrimage, and it grew into an increasingly important city. By the sixteenth century it held one of the greatest collections of manuscripts and books in the world. It was also home to a 25,000-student university



A boy studying the Qur’an in Mali, near Timbuktu



The Djinguereber Mosque in Timbuktu, Mali

teaching geography, mathematics, science, and medicine. Several great mosques were built in the city, too.

## Ibn Battuta in West Africa

Ibn Battuta may be the world's greatest ever traveler. In 1325, at the age of twenty-one, he left his **native** Morocco to travel the known Islamic world, and he kept moving until he was nearly fifty.

One of Ibn Battuta's first visits was to the great city of Cairo in Egypt in 1326, just two years after King Musa had passed through on his way to Mecca. The people of Cairo were still talking about the remarkable journey and the amount of gold Musa had given them. It was probably then that Ibn Battuta decided he should visit Musa's great empire.

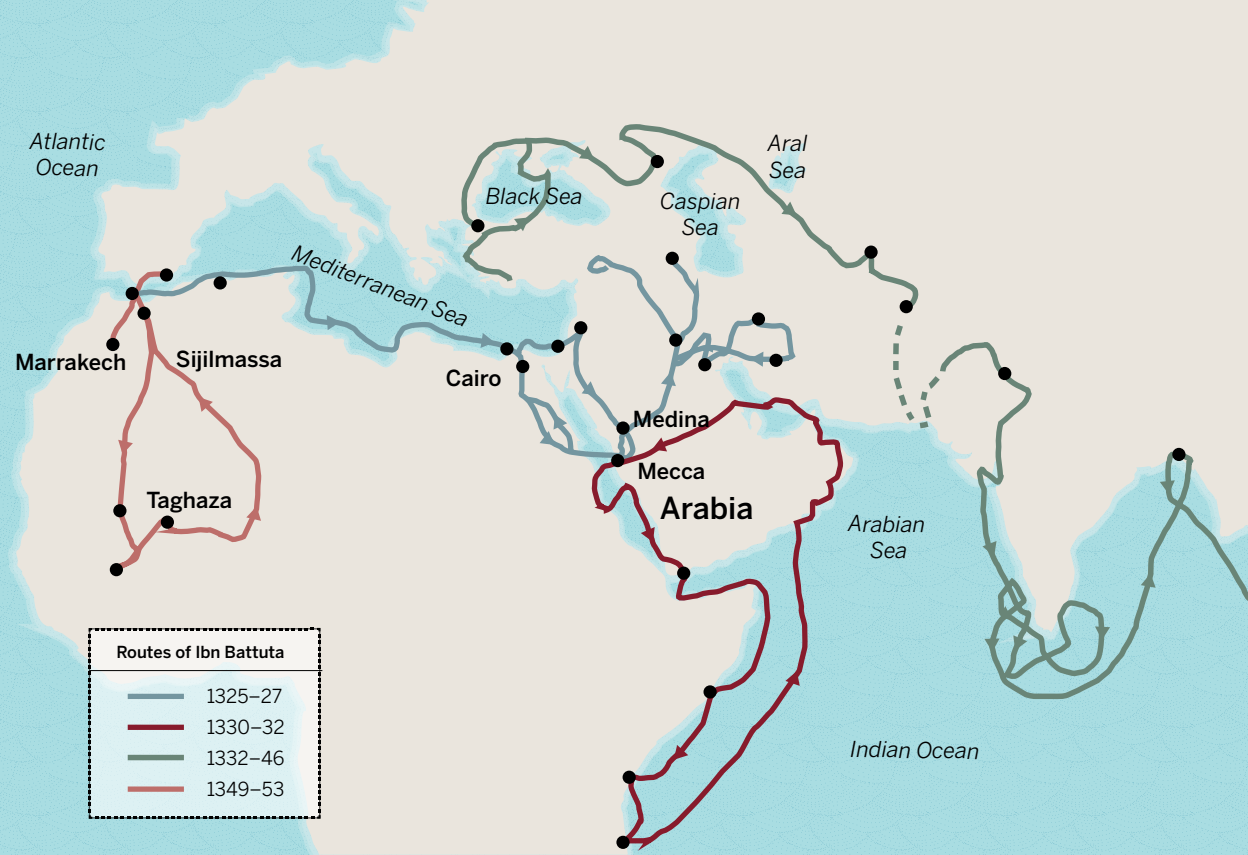


Ibn Battuta

But it was almost thirty years later, on his last journey, that Ibn Battuta finally crossed the Sahara.

Ibn Battuta first traveled to Sijilmassa, on the northern border of the Sahara, arriving there in October of 1351. Sijilmassa lay in a huge oasis and was on the trade route through the Sahara. From south of the Sahara came gold, ivory, ostrich feathers, and hides. These were exchanged for dates, perfumes, swords, books, and more from North Africa and the Middle East.

Ibn Battuta was forced to wait four months in Sijilmassa. Even camels could not usually cross the desert without dying from lack of water and heat. Finally, in February of 1352, merchants were willing to set out.



### The routes of Ibn Battuta

Ibn Battuta traveled with Berber traders across the Sahara, resting in the middle of the day to avoid the worst of the heat. After nearly a month they reached Taghaza. Taghaza was a great salt-mining area in the Western Sahara, and a source of much wealth. Workers cut huge slabs of salt from the mines and loaded it for the traders to take south, where West Africans would pay huge amounts of gold for it.

While in Taghaza, Ibn Battuta stayed in a house and prayed in a mosque made entirely of salt blocks (except for roofs of camel skin). But he did not enjoy his ten-day stay. He called the place “fly ridden” and complained the water tasted salty. The only thing that impressed him was the amount of gold traders paid for Taghaza salt.

From Taghaza, Ibn Battuta continued to travel south, eventually entering the Mali Empire. There, he abandoned the caravan, saying

that “[no one there] has anything to fear from thief or usurper.” In other words, the kingdom was so strong that it was safe for anyone to travel through it, even alone.

As he journeyed toward the capital of the empire he traded salt and glass beads for chicken, rice, **millet**, fish, pumpkins, and more. Sadly, one of his meals was of bad yams, which made him sick for two months. When he finally recovered, he met the ruler of Mali and remained in his capital for eight months, meeting with scholars in the city. On his departure, the king gave him a generous present of gold.

The journey to Mali was Ibn Battuta’s last trip: he had journeyed from China all the way to West Africa. He was able to do this because of the extraordinary unification of the Muslim world, where scholars like Ibn Battuta were welcomed everywhere.





## Extension 2

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# Scheherazade

The Islamic Classical Age was not only a time of science, mathematics, and art, but also one of literature. *One Thousand and One Nights* (also known as *Arabian Nights*) is a collection of folktales dating from this time. Different copies have different stories, but they all share the story of Scheherazade.

Scheherazade was a great heroine. She was a brave woman, trying to help her father. And through her cleverness and imagination, she turned a difficult situation into a triumph.

“The Three Apples,” one of the original tales from *One Thousand and One Nights*, is thought to be one of the earliest detective stories in literature.

## Scheherazade recounts the tale of the three apples

Once upon a time, there was a cruel king. It was whispered that he had once been a good man, but that a romantic tragedy had turned his heart to stone.

Every day, the king would order his advisers to find him a bride. They would marry at sunset, but by dawn the woman was cast aside, declared unworthy by the king. The brides tried everything to please the king—they sang, they danced, they played—but in vain. Some went quietly, some begged for another chance, others called insults. But in the end, all were dismissed.

Each day, the king's chief adviser, his vizier, was forced to seek a new bride. But news of the king's behavior had spread. Soon, not a woman could be found on the streets—they were all locked in their houses, with the shutters closed and the doors barred. One day, the vizier was forced to return empty-handed. He worried that the king would punish him for his failure.

Scheherazade, his daughter, saw that the vizier was in **distress**. She loved her father very much and decided to help him by offering herself as the next bride. She marched into the palace and to the king.

Despite the vizier's protests, the marriage took place.

The king turned to his new bride. “Others have tried to amuse me, Scheherazade,” he said. “Let us see if you can succeed where they failed.”

Scheherazade calmly sat down before him. “It would be an honor to entertain you, my lord. I am afraid I do not sing, or play, or dance. But I will tell you a story....”



..... **The story of the three apples** .....

“I can’t sleep.”

Jafar, the caliph’s vizier, looked up from his books. “Cannot sleep, O Commander of the Faithful?”

“Every night I am wracked by nightmares. My people are abused by those I trust while I sit, ignorant and betrayed.”

Jafar rushed to reassure. “Surely not! Your governors and officials are honest men—they care for the people as you do, your Majesty.”

“Don’t try to comfort me, Jafar! My dreams are sending me a message, and I will not ignore them. Come—we will

walk the streets and talk to my subjects. There, I will discover the truth.”

Jafar dragged his feet reluctantly after his master. They trailed along the streets, at last walking through a narrow alley. There, they spied an old bent man **hobbling** along, carrying a crate for fish upon his head and a net in his hand. As he walked, the peasant grumbled to himself: “It is terrible being poor. There is never enough food, and the street dogs chase me for the fish I carry. I am oppressed by the wealthy, but when I complain, no one listens. I am old and tired. Life is a burden.”

The caliph heard the man and turned to his vizier. “See! I was right—all is not well with my people. I will talk with this man.”

Accosting the old gentleman, the caliph asked him, “Why are you upset, old man?”

The poor man answered, “My lord, I am a fisherman. All day I have cast my nets, but have not found a single thing for my family’s supper. I am in despair.”

The caliph was appalled. “Come to the bank of the Tigris with me,” he offered. “Whatever you pull up in your net, I will exchange for one hundred gold pieces.”

The fisherman could not believe his luck and hurried as fast as his tired old legs could carry him. Reaching the river, he cast his net. He tried to pull it ashore, only to discover it was almost too heavy to move. Heaving with all his strength, he dragged the net onto the banks of the river. Inside, he saw a heavy chest.

The caliph kept his word and handed the money to the fisherman, who left happy. His family would eat well for many nights to come.

The caliph was eager to open the chest and discover what might be found. Lifting the lid, he peered inside, only to stumble back in horror. Inside the chest was a woman's dead body!

"We will **avenge** her death," the caliph announced. "I will not allow any man, or woman, to kill one my subjects."

Jafar protested. "Your Majesty, how are we to do such a thing? We don't even know who she is!"

The caliph looked at his vizier with narrowed eyes. "We will find the killer, Jafar. In fact, you will find him. And if you do not discover the murderer in three days, I will see you punished in his place!"

Jafar trembled in fear. He rushed home and locked himself into his bedroom. Pacing up and down the floor, he desperately tried to find a way out of his trap. But he had no idea how to find the killer of the unknown woman.

The three days dragged by, but Jafar did not act. He did not even stir out of the house. On the third day, when he did not appear before the caliph, soldiers were sent to drag him out of his house and into the palace.

“Did you find the killer?” the caliph demanded.

“No, O Commander of the Faithful,” the miserable vizier was forced to reply.

The caliph sighed: “It seems that not only were you not successful, you did not even try. Very well. I said you would be punished, and I will keep my word.”

Just at that moment, two guards rushed in. “Your Majesty, two men are demanding to see you! They say that it concerns the dead woman.”

The caliph arched an eyebrow. “Bring them in.”

Two men were brought in and fell to their knees before the caliph. The first, a young man, said, “I come to confess! I slew the woman. Punish me as you see fit.”

The second man, much older, broke in: “No, O Commander of the Faithful, it was I! I killed the woman. I should be punished, not this young man.”

This was a puzzle. First there were no **culprits**. Now there were too many.

The caliph separated the two men and asked each to describe what he had done. Only the young man could describe killing the woman, placing her into the chest and throwing it into the river. The older man, he explained, was his father. He had only confessed to protect his son.

“Why,” the caliph demanded of the young man, “did you kill this poor woman?”

.....

### Scheherazade

At this, Scheherazade stopped. “It is late, your Majesty, and I am very tired. If I am to be dismissed tomorrow, I would at least like to leave with my eyes open. I will go to bed now.”

“Go to bed?!” spluttered the king. “But I don’t know why the woman was killed! You can’t stop now. I order you to continue.”

Scheherazade raised an eyebrow. “My lord, forgive me,



but I know you always cast your wives aside. Why should I do as you ask? At least if I am to be humiliated in the morning, I can do so with a good night's sleep.”

The king hesitated. No one had ever defied his orders before. “What if I did not dismiss you tomorrow?” he asked. “Will you tell the story then?”

Scheherazade smiled to herself. All was going to plan. “I will, your Majesty, but not until tomorrow. If I am still here, I will continue then.”

**Grudgingly**, the king agreed. The following night, Scheherazade came to him again and continued her story.

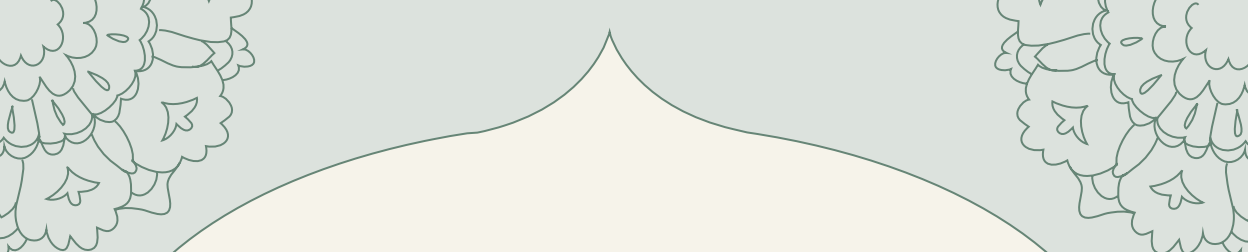
“Remember the young man?” she asked the king. “He was about to explain why he murdered the woman in the chest. This was his story...”



..... **The young man's story to the caliph** .....

The young man turned to the caliph and spoke.

“I loved my wife very much, O Commander of the Faithful. We had three wonderful children together.



One day, my wife fell ill. No doctor could cure her, and I feared for her life. I begged her to tell me what would make her more comfortable, and she asked for only one thing: some apples.

Now, as you know, apples are hard to find this time of year. But I was determined to give my wife what she desired. I searched every orchard and talked to every merchant. But no apples could be found. In the end, I traveled for many days to your own gardens. Your gardeners sold me the apples for three dinars.

Rushing back to her bedside, I gave her the apples she desired. But by then, her fever had become worse, and she showed no interest in the apples I had worked so hard to find.

Soon after, my wife's condition began to improve. Her life was no longer at risk, and, thankful, I returned to work.

One day, a tall man walked into my shop carrying an apple. I recognized it immediately and asked him where he had received it.

“My girlfriend gave it to me,” the tall man said. “Her fool of a husband rushed half way round the country to find her apples. She didn't want them, though, so she gave one to me.”

You can imagine my fury. I, who had been so worried by my wife's illness that I would do anything to help her, was betrayed.

I rushed home to confront my wife. Sure enough, by her bed there were two apples, not three. When I questioned her, she claimed not to know where the third apple had gone.

A red mist fell over my eyes. I was so angry that I killed her, and I placed her body into the chest you see before you."

The caliph listened to the man's story in horror and surprise. "But why did you confess your crime?" he asked.

"Because I discovered that my wife was innocent!" the young man cried. "The next day, my youngest son came to me. He confessed that he had stolen the apple, only to have it stolen from him in turn. A tall man had come across my son playing. My son told him the story of my search for the fruit, and the tall man grabbed the apple from him.

It was clear this was the same man who had entered my shop. He had lied to me about his girlfriend, using the story to cover up his theft. In his defense, I do not think he knew I was the husband."

"What a tragedy!" the caliph cried. "But it is clear that the tall man, too, must be punished."

“Jafar, you escaped this time, but now you must find me this man. You have three days!”

Poor Jafar! He had escaped his punishment once only to find himself in exactly the same position. Again, he locked himself indoors and sat, trembling, for three days.

On the third day, once again, soldiers came to drag Jafar to the palace. The vizier hugged his children, one by one, to say goodbye. When he came to his youngest child, he felt a hard round object in her jacket. Pulling it out, he saw it was an apple!

“Where did you get this?” he asked his child. “Our servant Rayhan gave it to me,” she replied.

Jafar called his servant (a tall man) and took him to the palace. There, with the caliph, he discovered the truth. It had been Jafar’s own servant who had stolen the apple!

The caliph could not believe the coincidence. “I have never heard such a story in my life!” he exclaimed.

“It is remarkable,” agreed Jafar. “But not as remarkable as the story of Nur Al-Din Ali and his son. I will tell you that story now.”

.....

## Scheherazade

At that moment, Scheherazade once more stopped her tale. “I am tired again, your Majesty,” she explained. “I will sleep now.”

“But how could the story of Nur Al-Din Ali be more remarkable than that of the three apples?” the king demanded.

“I suppose we shall never know, since I leave the palace tomorrow,” Scheherazade calmly replied.

Once more, the king could not bear to miss the rest of the tale. He gave Scheherazade another day in the palace so that she could continue her story.

For 1,001 nights, the pattern continued. Scheherazade would weave a magical tale and always stop when it became most interesting. Each night, the king allowed her to stay another day to hear the rest of the story.

Slowly, the king fell in love. Through Scheherazade’s influence, he became a good and just king. They lived happily ever after.

# Glossary

## A

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**abscesses, *n.*** inflammations caused by bacteria

**access, *v.*** approach; use

**acknowledge, *v.*** accept; recognize

**agitated, *adj.*** upset

**air, *n.*** appearance

**algebra, *n.*** a branch of mathematics

**alternately, *adv.*** switching regularly and repeatedly

**ambiguity, *n.*** uncertainty of meaning or intention

**arbiter, *n.*** a person with the authority to settle disputes

**arcades, *n.*** covered passageways

**arches, *n.*** openings or gateways that are curved on top (**arch**)

**architectural, *adj.*** relating to the design and construction of buildings (**architecture**)

**arid, *adj.*** very dry

**arrogance, n.** showing extreme pride or self-importance

**ascended, v.** rose; went upward

**assassinated, v.** killed on purpose

**astronomy, n.** the study of stars and planets

**authority, n.** a source of information that people believe is correct

**avenge, v.** to get revenge

**awe, n.** a feeling of being very impressed

## B

---

**barracks, n.** housing for soldiers

**bathhouses, n.** buildings for bathing

**Bedouins, n.** Arabic people who live in the desert

**beset, v.** attacked; surrounded

**bewildered, adj.** confused

**blasphemy, n.** words or actions that are offensive to a religion

**bleaching, v.** making white by exposing to the sun or a chemical

**bleak, adj.** hopeless; depressing

**blow, n.** a sudden attack

**brocade, n.** a cloth woven with an elaborate design

**bustling, v.** hurrying; moving fast and with purpose

## C

---

**caliph, n.** an Islamic spiritual and religious leader claiming succession from Muhammad

**campaign, n.** multiple military actions

**canon, n.** a collection of rules and knowledge

**caravans, n.** groups of merchants traveling together

**cavalry, n.** soldiers riding horses

**chivalry, n.** a code of honor often connected to European knights of the Middle Ages

**communal, adj.** shared by a community

**compiled, v.** put different texts together into a book

**comrades, n.** friends

**conquests, n.** when things or places are acquired through force

**consensus, n.** agreement between different people or groups

**controversial, adj.** open to dispute



**countless, *adj.*** too many to count

**courier, *n.*** messenger

**courtyards, *n.*** yards open to the sky but enclosed on the sides

**crude, *adj.*** impolite

**culprit, *n.*** someone guilty of a crime

**cultivate, *v.*** develop

**cunning, *adj.*** clever; sneaky

## D

---

**departed, *adj.*** dead

**descended, *v.*** had a specific family or person among one's ancestors

**devastated, *v.*** caused great destruction to

**discontented, *adj.*** unhappy; not satisfied

**discord, *n.*** disagreement

**dismissed, *v.*** fired, as from a job

**distinctive, *adj.*** different; unique

**distress, *n.*** pain or sorrow

**diverse, *adj.*** including many kinds

**domestication, *n.*** the process of training animals to live with, or work for, people

**dominated, *n.*** ruled

**drab, *adj.*** boring

**duels, *n.*** combat between two people that is planned in advance

## E

---

**elaborate, *adj.*** fancy and detailed

**elite, *adj.*** the choice or best of anything

**emerged, *n.*** developed

**expanse, *n.*** a vast space

**exploited, *v.*** used selfishly

## F

---

**figurehead, *n.*** a person who holds the title of head of a group but has no real power

**finance, *v.*** provide money for

**flaunting, *v.*** showing off

**flogged, v.** whipped

**flourished, v.** was successful and widespread

**folktales, n.** traditional stories that came back from a particular group or culture

**formidable, adj.** powerful

**foundation, n.** basis

**fractured, adj.** broken; split

**fray, n.** battle

## G

---

**garrison town, n.** a town that is protected, perhaps by a wall

**geometric, adj.** patterned with shapes

**graceful, adj.** beautiful; elegant

**grudgingly, adv.** in a way that shows reluctance

## H

---

**havoc, n.** confusion

**hobbling, v.** walking slowly, with a limp

**humble, adj.** modest; not extravagant

**humiliated, v.** caused a person or people to lose their dignity or self-respect

**hygiene, n.** clean conditions that promote health

## I

---

**idols, n.** a statue or image worshipped as a god or as the representation of a god

**imposing, adj.** impressive

**inauspicious, adj.** not suggesting future success

**incorporated, v.** combined into

**infantrymen, n.** soldiers who fight on foot

**infinite, adj.** going on forever

**inscribed, v.** engraved

**inspired, v.** produced a feeling or thought in someone

**integrity, n.** honesty

**intensively, adv.** with great effort

**interior, n.** the inside of something

**interlocked, v.** connected

**intertwined, v.** connected

## J

---

**jockeying**, *v.* competing for

**jostling**, *v.* bumping and pushing in a rough way

## L

---

**lavish**, *adj.* fancy and expensive

**lazing**, *v.* relaxing

**long-swords**, *n.* types of swords designed for two-handed use

## M

---

**maneuver**, *n.* a planned movement of troops

**manuscripts**, *n.* books or documents

**martyrdom**, *n.* death or suffering for the sake of a cause or belief

**massacre**, *n.* the killing of a large number of people

**masterpieces**, *n.* great works of art (**masterpiece**)

**merchants**, *n.* people who buy and sell things for profit

**milestones**, *n.* stones marking the distance to some place

**millet**, *n.* a type of grain

**modifications, n.** changes

**monotheistic, adj.** believing in a single god

**mosque, n.** a place where Muslims worship

## N

---

**native, adj.** the place of one's birth

**nepotistic, adj.** granting special favors to relatives and friends

**nominated, v.** appointed

## O

---

**obliged, v.** did a favor

**offense, n.** insult

**opposition, n.** a group of people who are against something

**oral, adj.** related to speaking or voice

**outwitted, v.** outsmarted

**overwhelmed, v.** felt unable to handle a situation

# P

---

**pageboys, *n.*** young messengers

**pardoned, *v.*** forgave

**peninsula, *n.*** an area of land surrounded by water on three sides

**persecution, *n.*** the mistreatment of a person or group

**pilgrimage, *n.*** a journey to a place or shrine that is important to a religion

**pincers, *n.*** claws

**pioneered, *v.*** was among the first to explore or accomplish something

**pious, *adj.*** following a religion with dedication

**plausible, *adj.*** seems worthy of acceptance

**ploy, *n.*** a maneuver designed to fool an enemy

**plummets, *v.*** drops very fast

**pondered, *v.*** thought about

**potent, *adj.*** powerful

**practical, *adj.*** useful

**preaching, v.** speaking publicly, usually about religion

**predators, n.** animals that hunt other animals

**predecessors, n.** people who came before another

**proceedings, n.** happenings

**prosperous, adj.** successful

## R

---

**raiders, n.** robbers

**rampage, n.** violent, destructive behavior

**recitation, n.** something spoken from memory (**recite**)

**refined, v.** improved

**renowned, adj.** famous

**reputation, n.** the opinion people hold about something or someone

**resounded, v.** echoed and repeated

**retired, v.** went to bed

**revelation, n.** the act of a god revealing himself or herself (or his or her will) to a person

**rousing, adj.** exciting



# S

---

**sacred, *adj.*** holy

**savvy, *n.*** knowledgeable and clever

**schism, *n.*** division; split

**scorching, *adj.*** very hot

**scribes, *n.*** people who copied documents before modern printing was invented

**scuttled, *v.*** ran with hasty steps

**self-loathing, *n.*** a feeling of disgust about oneself

**sermon, *n.*** a speech for the purpose of religious instruction

**shrine, *n.*** a place that people visit to remember or worship a god or religious figure

**smug, *adj.*** feeling confident and superior

**solitude, *n.*** being alone

**sophisticated, *adj.*** complex

**spiral, *adj.*** long and winding

**stalking, *v.*** hunting for

**storehouses, *n.*** warehouses; places where things are stored

**subtly, *adv.*** in a way that is complicated and pleasant

**suppressed, *v.*** kept a feeling inside

## T

---

**tactics, *n.*** procedures employed to gain success

**three-pronged, *adj.*** three-part

**thwarted, *v.*** prevented from accomplishing something

**tranquility, *n.*** a state of calm

**traumatic, *adj.*** emotionally painful

**triumphant, *adj.*** victorious

**truce, *n.*** an agreement that puts an end to fighting

**twinge, *n.*** a sudden, sharp feeling or emotion

## U

---

**unbearable, *adj.*** unable to be tolerated

**unity, *n.*** absence of disagreement

## V

---

**valiant**, *adj.* brave

**vulnerable**, *adj.* weak; helpless

## W

---

**waned**, *v.* faded

**wares**, *n.* goods or products that a merchant or shop sells

# Amplify.

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