

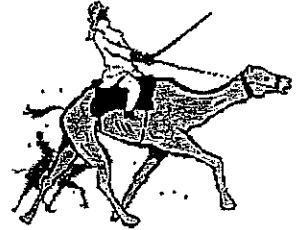
(750 - 1253)

Golden Age of Islam

Background

Islam began in the **Arabian Peninsula** in the early 7th century CE. It quickly spread throughout the Middle East before moving across **North Africa**, and into **Spain** and **Sicily**. By the 13th century, Islam had spread across **India** and **Southeast Asia**. The reasons for the success of Islam, and the expansion of its **empire**, can be attributed to the strength of the **Arab armies**, the use of a **common language**, and fair treatment of conquered peoples

Arab armies were able to quickly conquer territory through the use of advanced tactics and the employment of **horse** and **camel cavalry**. Islamic rulers were very tolerant of conquered peoples, and welcomed conversion to the Islamic faith. All Muslims must learn **Arabic**, so they can read the **Qur'an**, the Islamic holy book. This common language helped to unite many different **ethnic groups** within the Islamic empire. It also made possible the easy exchange of knowledge and ideas.



Golden Age

Islamic civilization experienced a golden age under the **Abbassid Dynasty (750-1253)**, which ruled from the mid 8th century until the mid 13th century. Under the Abbassids, Islamic culture became a blending of **Arab, Persian, Egyptian, and European** traditions. The result was an era of stunning intellectual and cultural achievements.

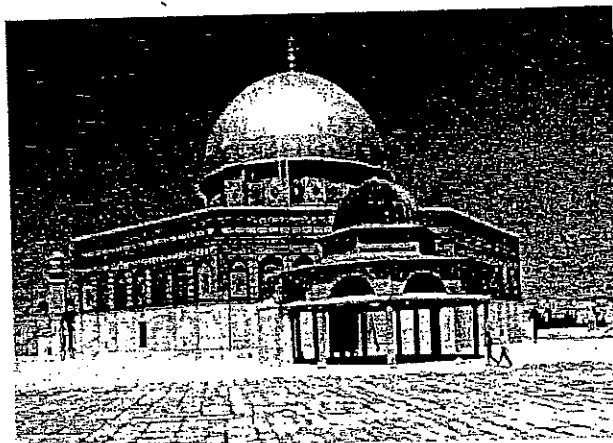
Arts & Literature



According to the teachings of the **Qur'an**, Islamic artists were forbidden from using human figures in religious art. Therefore, they developed a style of **geometric shapes** and **patterns** that were used to decorate religious buildings called **Mosques**. These geometric patterns usually contained verses from the Qur'an written in a stylized form of decorative handwriting called **calligraphy**.

Non-religious artists were allowed to use human figures. This type of work most often appears in scholarly works of **science** or **literature**, which were lavishly illustrated.

Islamic architects borrowed heavily from the **Byzantine Empire** which used **domes** and **arches** extensively throughout their cities. An example of this use can be seen in the **Dome of the Rock**, a famous mosque in **Jerusalem**.



There were many different styles of Islamic literature. Most works were based on the Qur'an, but some Islamic artists wrote poetry about the joys and sorrows of love. Also, stories from other cultures were adapted and rewritten for Islamic **civilization**. The most famous collection is called *The Thousand and One Nights*, which is a collection of tales that includes such well known stories as *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*.



Philosophy

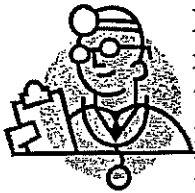
Islamic **scholars** translated **philosophic** texts from a variety of cultures. These include works from China, India, and Ancient Greece. Scholarly commentary written about these texts influenced a variety of cultures, including European civilizations.

Math & Science

Islamic scholars studied both Greek and Indian mathematics before making important contributions of their own. The most well known Islamic mathematician was **al-Khwarizimi**, who pioneered the study of **algebra**. His textbook on the subject became a standard in European universities for centuries.

Islamic scholars were also skilled in astronomy. They studied **eclipses**, the **rotation of the planets**, and calculated the **circumference** of the earth to within a few thousand feet.

Medicine



Many advances were also made in the field of medicine. Physicians and pharmacists were required to **pass exams** before treating patients. They setup **hospitals** that had separate areas for **trauma cases**, this is the basis for today's **emergency rooms**. Physicians developed treatments for **cataracts**, used a variety of herbal remedies, and were adept at treating a variety of injuries. Islamic pharmacists were the first to mix **sweet tasting syrups with medicine**, ensuring that they would be taken.

Ibn Sina, a famous Islamic physician, wrote a book called *Canon on Medicine*, which was an encyclopedia of **Greek, Arabic**, and his own knowledge of medicine. This book became the **standard medical text in Europe** for over five hundred years.

Economic Achievements

Under the Abbassids, a vast **trading network** was created which helped to spread **religion, culture**, and **technology** among the different peoples of the empire. New business practices such as, **partnerships**, the **use of credit**, and **banks to exchange currency**, were developed to handle the increase in trade. The establishment of such vast trading networks made the many nations within the Islamic Empire very wealthy, and helped to stimulate many of their cultural and intellectual achievements

Law

Islam developed a system of law based on the **Qur'an**. This system was created to help people apply the Qur'an to everyday life and situations. The book of laws, called the **Sharia**, regulates all aspects of life including, moral behavior, family life, business dealings, and government.