


**SSWH5: Examine the political, economic, and cultural interactions within the Medieval Mediterranean World between 600 CE/ AD and 1300 CE/AD**



*Element A: Analyze the origins of Islam and the growth of the Islamic Empire*

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**ORIGINS OF ISLAM**

- ❑ In 600 CE the northern portion of Middle East was dominated by the Christian Byzantine Empire and the Zoroastrian Sassanid Persian Empire.
- ❑ The Arabian Peninsula lacked any centralized political authority and was dominated by independent Arab tribes that profited from a lucrative trade route that transported frankincense and myrrh from southern Arabia and East Africa to the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires.
- ❑ In 570 Muhammad was born in a prosperous trading town along this trade route, Mecca.
  - Mecca also served as an important pilgrimage site for the polytheistic Arabs as it was home to an important temple to these gods, the Ka'ba.
  - As an adult, Muhammad had a lucrative career as a merchant and eventually married a wealthy widow, Khadijah.
    - Financially secure, Muhammad now turned to spiritual pursuits which included meditating in the mountain caves outside of Mecca.




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**ORIGINS OF ISLAM**

- ❑ In about 610, Muhammad began to have visions while meditating.
  - He came to believe that these visions were the Angel Gabriel who had been charged by the one true God (Allah in Arabic) to deliver a message to Muhammad.
  - The message delivered in these revelation outlined the basic beliefs of Islam and were eventually recorded in the Quran.
- ❑ While Muslims believe that the Jewish and Christian holy books contain religious truth, only the Quran contains the exact words of God.
- ❑ These basic beliefs of Islam (outlined in the Six Articles of Faith) include the belief in one God that created all of things.
- ❑ Muslims believe that God sent a series of messengers (prophets) including Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.
  - Each prophet delivered a divine message which is preserved in the Books of God, these include the Torah, Gospels, Psalms, and Scrolls.




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**ORIGINS OF ISLAM**

- According to Islam, Muhammad is God’s final messenger and he has delivered God’s exact words in the form of the Quran.
  - In addition to the Quran and Books of God, Muslims look to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad for guidance.
- These traditions of Muhammad are found in the **Hadith and Sunnah**.
- Additionally, basic practices of Islam are outlined in the Five Pillars of Islam and over the course of many hundreds of years, Muslim scholars have used these various sources of religious truth to compile the Shariah or Islamic law that regulated public and private affairs in the Muslim states.



**Sunnah vs Hadith**

- These two terms have in the most part become interchanged but there is a subtle difference between the two.
- From a derivation viewpoint the term *Sunnah* means a way or a tradition or even an evidence to guide in the vicinity of the matter.
- *Sunnah* from a linguistic perspective means a way or action. However, as well mean upon the Islamic or Shariah perspective tends to be more specific.
- *Hadith* *usually* refer to the sayings, actions and tacit approvals of the Prophet *muhammad*.



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**ORIGINS OF ISLAM**

- Muhammad began to share his message with the people of Mecca after 610.
  - The message was not well received as it threatened Mecca’s traditional role as a pilgrimage destination for the polytheistic Arabs.
- Facing hostility in Mecca, Muhammad led his followers to the city of Medina in 622.
  - Most of the population of Medina accepted Muhammad as the Messenger of God and converted to the new faith.
  - The Meccan migrants and the converts of Medina, unified under a single faith, now formed the Umma, a political and religious union led by Muhammad.
- The conflict with the city of Mecca continued until 630 when the armies of the Umma successfully defeated Mecca.
  - After this defeat, the Umma led by Muhammad continued to expand and by his death in 632, most of the Arabian Peninsula was unified under the authority of the Umma.

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**ISLAMIC UMMA CALIPHATE & Umayyad CALIPHATE**

- After Muhammad’s death leadership of the Umma passed to a successor called a caliph in Arabic.
- Under the first four caliphs, the Umma now known as a caliphate continued to expand.
  - By 661, the caliphate included all of the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, Palestine, and Egypt.
  - While the political authority of the caliphate expanded rapidly, religious conversion proceed very slowly.
- A civil war broke out in the caliphate in 656, this resulted in a power shift to a new dynasty of caliphs, the Umayyads who ruled from 661 to 750 (Umayyad caliphs remained in power in Spain until 1031).
  - Under the Umayyads the caliphate expanded to include all of North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula and parts of Central Asia.
  - The Umayyad government and army was dominated by Arabs, however the empire was ethnically diverse.
    - This discrepancy led to unrest and in 750 the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown and replaced with the Abbasid Caliphate which held the position until the last Abbasid Caliph was killed by the Mongols in 1258.

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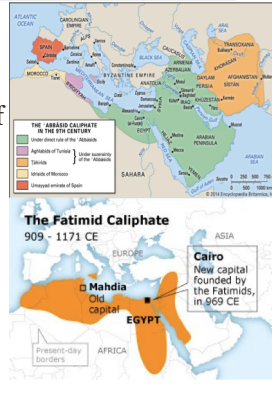
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**ABBASID CALIPHATE & FATIMID CALIPHATE**

- The Abbasid caliphs were never able to maintain the level of political unity or centralized authority of the Umayyads.
  - Abbasid authority never extended to Iberia and by 969 a rival caliphate, the Fatimids controlled Northern Africa and parts of Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula.




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