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**IDX G9 HISTORY H STUDY GUIDE ISSUE 4**

**By Allison and Henry**

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 **Muhammad’s Early Life and Revelations**:

* Born in 570 CE in Mecca, a politically fragmented and religiously diverse region.
* Troubled by societal corruption, sought solitude in the hills and experienced visions from the angel Gabriel.
* Believed these visions were revelations from Allah, forming the basis of the Qur’an.

 **Early Spread of Islam**:

* Initially faced resistance in Mecca; fled to Medina in 622 CE (Hegira) and established the first Muslim community (umma).
* Returned to Mecca with military support, conquered the city, and declared the Ka’aba a sacred Islamic shrine.

 **Core Beliefs and Practices**:

* Monotheistic faith recognizing Allah as the sole deity and Muhammad as his Prophet.
* The Qur’an serves as the holy scripture, ethical guide, and law book.
* The Five Pillars of Islam:
  1. Belief in Allah and Muhammad.
  2. Daily prayers.
  3. Fasting during Ramadan.
  4. Almsgiving (zakat).
  5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj).

 **Shari’a and Way of Life**:

* After Muhammad’s death, scholars developed the Shari’a, a comprehensive legal code.
* Strict rules forbid gambling, dishonesty, alcohol, and pork consumption.
* Encourages arranged marriages and limits polygamy to four wives.

 **Historical and Textual Considerations**:

* Historical accounts of Muhammad’s life are speculative and rely on sources like the Qur’an and Hadith.
* Early versions of the Qur’an lack diacritical marks, leading to varying interpretations.

 **Impact of Islam**:

* Rapidly transformed Arabian society and united the region under a single religious and political framework.

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**The Death of Muhammad and the Caliphate**

* Muhammad’s death in 632 CE created a leadership crisis as he left no male heir or named successor.
* **Abu Bakr**, Muhammad’s father-in-law, was chosen as the first caliph, consolidating the Islamic community and suppressing internal tribal dissent.
* The concept of **jihad** was used to expand Islamic influence, interpreted as both internal struggle and external holy war.

**Arab Conquests and Empire Expansion**

* Rapid expansion of Islam into Byzantine and Sassanian territories:
  + Defeated Byzantines at Yarmuk River (636) and captured Syria and Egypt by 640.
  + Overthrew the Sassanian Empire by 650.
* Arab forces moved westward into North Africa and Spain and eastward into Central Asia.
* The Battle of Tours (732) marked the high point of Arab expansion in Europe.

**Governance and Social Policy**

* Non-Muslims in conquered territories:
  + Allowed to retain their religion but paid a tax (jizya) and were exempt from military service.
  + Conversion to Islam was officially voluntary.
* The egalitarian principles of Islam and Arab administrative efficiency attracted many converts.

**The Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 CE)**

* Established hereditary rule with the capital in **Damascus**.
* Expanded Islamic rule to Spain (Andalusia) and parts of the Mediterranean.
* Internal divisions emerged, including the Sunni-Shi’ite split over leadership disputes (Shi’ites supported Ali’s lineage).
* Overthrown in 750 by the **Abbasid Dynasty** due to accusations of corruption and favoritism.

**The Abbasid Dynasty (750–1258 CE)**

* Moved the capital to **Baghdad**, shifting the cultural and political center eastward.
* Integrated non-Arab Muslims into the administration and military.
* Achieved cultural and scientific advancements during the golden age, particularly under **Harun al-Rashid** and **al-Ma’mun**.
* Economic prosperity: trade networks spanned Europe, Asia, and Africa.
* Decline began due to corruption, civil wars, and reliance on non-Arab officials.

**Fragmentation and the Seljuk Turks**

* Abbasid power weakened, allowing independent states like the Fatimids in Egypt to emerge.
* The Seljuk Turks, originally military mercenaries, seized Baghdad in 1055, taking political control as **sultans**.
* The Seljuks revitalized Sunni Islam but provoked Byzantine appeals for the Crusades.

**The Crusades and Mongols**

* Crusades (1096–1291) temporarily established Christian rule in parts of the Middle East but had minimal long-term impact.
* The Mongols ended Abbasid rule in 1258, sacking Baghdad and disrupting the region.
* Over time, Mongol elites converted to Islam, allowing cultural recovery under the **Mamluks** in Egypt.

**Andalusia (Spain)**

* A member of the Umayyad family established a caliphate in **Córdoba** after fleeing Damascus.
* Andalusia became a hub for trade, agriculture, and intellectual achievements, fostering a period of cultural and religious coexistence.
* Decline began with internal divisions and Christian Reconquista efforts, culminating in the fall of **Granada** in 1492.

**Legacy of the Arab Empire**

* Islam spread widely, shaping the political, cultural, and religious landscape across three continents.
* Internal divisions (Sunni vs. Shi’ite) and external pressures (Crusades, Mongols) contributed to the eventual fragmentation of the empire

**Sunni-Shi’a Conflict**

* **Origins of the Split**: The Sunni-Shi’a divide began after Muhammad’s death in 632 CE over the rightful successor. Sunnis supported Abu Bakr, a close companion of Muhammad, while Shi’as believed leadership should remain within Muhammad’s family, supporting Ali, his cousin and son-in-law.
* **Key Differences**:
  + **Sunni Beliefs**: Leadership should be chosen by consensus or election among the Muslim community; they form the majority of Muslims worldwide.
  + **Shi’a Beliefs**: Leadership (Imamate) should remain within Muhammad’s bloodline, with Ali and his descendants as rightful leaders.
* **Historical Implications**: The conflict led to centuries of political and theological rivalry, with events like the assassination of Ali (661 CE) and the martyrdom of his son, Hussein, at Karbala (680 CE), which became pivotal moments in Shi’a identity and mourning traditions.

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**1. Islamic Religion and Law:**

* Islam emphasizes behavior and belief, integrating spiritual and societal duties as guided by the Qur'an and Shari'a law.
* The Qur’an is viewed as divine and immutable, influencing all aspects of life including politics, law, economics, and ethics.

**2. Political Structures:**

* Early Islamic governance faced challenges in aligning political authority with religious doctrine.
* The caliph served as a temporal and spiritual leader, though disputes over succession led to divisions like the Sunni-Shi’a split.

**3. Trade and Urban Prosperity:**

* The Islamic empire thrived on robust trade networks linking Africa, Asia, and Europe, supported by advanced maritime technology and banking systems.
* Cities like Baghdad, Cairo, and Córdoba flourished as cultural and commercial hubs.

**4. Society and Social Hierarchy:**

* Islamic society was relatively egalitarian for its time, though it practiced slavery and maintained gender hierarchies.
* Women had rights like property ownership but were often subject to restrictive customs such as veiling and seclusion.

**5. Cultural Achievements:**

* **Philosophy and Science**: Islamic scholars preserved and expanded upon Greek philosophy and sciences, making significant contributions in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine.
* **Literature**: Persian and Arabic literature produced works like Ferdowsi’s *The Book of Kings*, Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat*, and *The Arabian Nights*.
* **Art and Architecture**: Islamic art blended geometric patterns, calligraphy, and arabesques, avoiding representational images of humans or the Prophet. Iconic structures include the Dome of the Rock and the Alhambra.

**6. Sufism:**

* Sufism emerged as a mystical branch of Islam emphasizing personal connections with Allah through music, poetry, and dance, represented by poets like Rumi.

**7. Historical Writing:**

* Historians like al-Mas’udi and Ibn Khaldun advanced historical methods, emphasizing critical analysis of sources and understanding historical dynamics.

**8. Integration and Legacy:**

* Islamic civilization absorbed influences from Greek, Persian, and Indian traditions while creating enduring contributions in fields like science, literature, and architecture. Its intellectual legacy significantly impacted Europe during the medieval and Renaissance periods.

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