

**Islamic Heartlands in Middle and Late Abbasid Era:** Abbasid Empire disintegrated between 9th and 13th centuries. Peasant revolts and slavery increased. Despite the artistic and intellectual creativity of the age, the position of women eroded. Signs of decline were present during the reign of Caliph al-Mahdi (775-785). He failed to reconcile moderate Shi'a to Abbasid rule. Al-Mahdi abandoned the frugal ways of his predecessor and surrounded his court with luxury. He failed to establish a succession system resolving disputes among his many sons, leaving a lasting problem to future rulers.

**Imperial Extravagance and Succession Disputes:** One son, Harun al-Rashid, became one of the most famous Abbasid caliphs. The luxury and intrigues of his court were immortalized in *The Thousand and One Nights*. The young ruler became dependent on Persian advisors, a trend followed during later reigns as rulers became pawns in factional court struggles. Al-Rashid's death led to the first of many civil wars over the succession. The sons of the winner, al-Ma'mun, built personal retainer armies, some including Turkic nomads, to safeguard their futures. The armies became power centers, removing and selecting caliphs; their uncontrolled excesses developed into a general focus for societal unrest.

**Imperial Breakdown and Agrarian Disorder:** The continual civil violence drained the imperial treasury. Caliphs increased the strain by constructing costly new imperial centers. Peasants had imposing tax burdens, often collected by oppressive tax farmers, forced upon them. Agricultural villages were abandoned and irrigation works fell into disrepair. Bandits and vagabonds were everywhere; they participated in peasant rebellions often instigated by dissident religious groups.

**Declining Position of Women in Family and Society:** Freedom and influence during 1st centuries of Islam severely declined. Male-dominated Abbasid society imagined that women possessed incurable lust, and therefore men needed to be segregated from all but women of their family. The harem and the veil symbolized subjugation to men. The seclusion of elite women, wives and concubines, continued, and the practice of veiling spread to all. Abbasid wealth generated large demand for concubines and male slaves. Most came from non-Muslim neighboring lands. Poor women remained economically active, but the rich were kept at home. They married at puberty and spent their lives in domestic management and childbearing. At higher political levels, women intrigued for advancement of their sons' careers.

**Nomadic Incursions and the Eclipse of Caliphal Power:** By mid-tenth century, breakaway former provinces began to challenge Abbasid rule. Buyids of Persia captured Baghdad in 945. Caliphs henceforth became powerless puppets controlled by sultans, actual rulers. Seljuk Turks defeated Buyids in 1055 and ruled remnants of Abbasid Empire for 2 centuries. Seljuks were staunch Sunni who purged Shi'a. For a time, Seljuk military power restored diminished caliphate. Egyptians and Byzantines were defeated, success opening Anatolia, center of later Ottoman Empire, to settlement by Turkic nomads.

**Effect of the Christian Crusades:** West European Christian knights in 1096 invaded Muslim territory to capture biblical Holy Land. Established small, rival kingdoms that were not a threat

to the more powerful surrounding Muslim leaders. Most were recaptured close of the twelfth century by Muslims reunited under Saladin. The last fell in 1291. The Crusades had an important effect on the Christian world through intensifying the existing European borrowing from the more sophisticated technology, architecture, medicine, mathematics, science, and general culture of Muslim civilization. Europeans recovered much Greek learning lost after the fall of Rome. Italian merchants remained in Islamic centers after the Crusader defeat and were far more important carriers of Islamic advanced knowledge than the Christian warriors were. Muslim peoples were little interested in European civilization.

**Age of Learning and Artistic Refinements:** Political and social turmoil of late Abbasid times did not prevent Muslim thinkers and craftsmen, in states from Spain - Persia, from producing 1 of great ages of human creativity. Rapid urban growth and prosperity persisted until late in Abbasid era. Employment opportunities for skilled individuals remained abundant. Merchants amassed large fortunes through supplying urban needs and from long-distance trade to India, Southeast Asia, China, North Africa, and Europe. Artists and artisans created mosques, palaces, tapestries, rugs, bronzes, and ceramics.

**Full Flowering of Persian Literature:** Persian replaced Arabic as primary written language of Abbasid court. Arabic, language of religion, law, and the natural sciences; Persian became language of "high culture," used for literary expression, administration, and scholarship. Development of a beautiful calligraphy made literature a visual art form. Perhaps the greatest work was Firdawsi's epic poem, *Shahnama*, a history of Persia from creation to Islamic conquest. Other writers, such as the great poet Sa'di and Omar Khayyam in the *Rubaiyat*, blended mystical and commonplace themes in their work.

**Achievements in the Sciences:** Muslim society, for several centuries, surpassed all others in scientific and technological discoveries. In mathematics, thinkers made major corrections in the theories learned from the ancient Greeks. In chemistry, they created the objective experiment. al-Razi classified all material substances into three categories: animal, vegetable, mineral. Al-Biruni calculated the exact specific weight of 18 major minerals. Sophisticated, improved astronomical instruments, such as the astrolabe, were used for mapping the heavens. Much of the Muslim achievement had practical application. In medicine, improved hospitals and formal courses of studies accompanied important experimental work. Traders and craftsmen introduced machines and techniques originating in China for papermaking, silk weaving, and ceramic firing. Scholars made some of the world's best maps.

**Religious Trends and the New Push for Expansion:** Conflicting social and political trends showed in divergent patterns of religious development. Sufis developed vibrant mysticism, but ulama (religious scholars) became more conservative and suspicious of non-Muslim influences and scientific thought. They were suspicious of Greek rationalism and insisted that the Quran was the all-embracing source of knowledge. The great theologian al-Ghazali struggled to fuse Greek and Quranic traditions but often was opposed by orthodox scholars. The Sufis created the most innovative religious movement. They reacted against the arid teachings of the ulama and

sought personal union with Allah through asceticism, meditation, songs, dancing, or drugs. Many Sufis gained reputations as healers and miracle workers; others made the movement a central factor in the continuing expansion of Islam.

**New Waves of Nomadic Invasions and the End of the Caliphate:** Early 13th century, central Asian nomadic invaders, Mongols, threatened Islamic lands. Chinggis Khan destroyed Turkic-Persian kingdoms east of Baghdad. His grandson, Hulagu, continued assault. Last Abbasid ruler was killed when Baghdad fell in 1258. Abbasid capital became an unimportant backwater in the Muslim world.

**Coming of Islam to South Asia:** Muslim invasions from the seventh century added to the complexity of Indian civilization. Previous nomadic invaders usually had blended over time into India's sophisticated civilization. Muslims, possessors of an equally sophisticated, but very different, culture were a new factor. The open, tolerant, and inclusive Hindu religion was based on a social system dominated by castes; whereas Islam was doctrinaire, monotheistic, evangelical, and egalitarian. In the earlier period of contact, conflict predominated, but as time passed, although tensions persisted, peaceful commercial and religious exchange occurred in a society where Muslim rulers governed Hindu subjects.

**Political Divisions and the First Muslim Invasions:** The Umayyad general Muhammad Ibn Qasim conquered Sindh, and, despite quarrels among succeeding Muslim dynasties, the occupation endured. Many Indians, treated as "people of the book" welcomed the new rulers because they offered religious tolerance and lighter taxes. Few Arabs resided in cities or garrison towns, and minimal conversion efforts did not change existing religious beliefs.

**Indian Influences on Islamic Civilization:** Although Islam's effect on India was minimal, Islamic civilization was enriched by Indian culture. Indian achievements in science, mathematics, medicine, music, and astronomy passed to the Arabs. Indian numerals were accepted, later to pass to Europe as "Arabic" numerals. Colonies of Arabs settled along India's coasts, adopted local customs, and provided staging points for later Islamic expansion to island and mainland Southeast Asia.

**From Booty to Empire: Second Wave of Muslim Invasions:** After the initial Muslim conquests, internal divisions weakened Muslim rule and allowed limited Hindu reconquest. 10th century, a Turkish dynasty gained power in Afghanistan. Its 3rd ruler, Mahmud of Ghazni, began 2 centuries of incursions into northern India. 12th century, Persian Muhammad of Ghur created an extensive state in the Indus valley and north-central India. Later campaigns extended it along plains of Ganges to Bengal. Lieutenant to Muhammad, Qutb-ud-din Aibak, later formed a new state, with its capital at Delhi on Ganges plain. Succeeding dynasties, sultans of Delhi, were military states; their authority was limited by factional strife and dependence on Hindu subordinates. They ruled much of north-central India for the next 300 years.

**Patterns of Conversion:** Although Muslims came as conquerors, early interaction with Indians was dominated by peaceful exchanges. Main carriers of Islam were traders and Sufi mystics, later drawing followers as of similarities to Indian holy men. Their mosques and schools became

centers of regional political power providing protection to local populations. Low and outcast Hindus were welcomed. Buddhists were most numerous converts. Buddhist spiritual decline had debased its practices and turned interest Islam. Others converted to escape taxes or through intermarriage. Muslim migrants fleeing thirteenth and fourteenth century Mongol incursions also increased the Islamic community.

**Patterns of Accommodation:** In most regions, Islam initially had little effect on the general Hindu community. High-caste Hindus did not accept invaders as equals. Although serving as administrators or soldiers, they remained socially aloof, living in separate quarters and not intermarrying. Hindus thought the Muslims, as earlier invaders, would be absorbed by Hindu society. Muslim communities did adopt many Indian ways; they accepted Hindu social hierarchies, foods, and attitudes toward women.

**Islamic Challenge and Hindu Revival:** Muslims, despite Indian influences, held to tenets of Islam. Hindu response, open to all individuals and castes, led an increased emphasis on devotional cults of gods and goddesses. Cults, open to men, women, and all castes, stressed importance of strong emotional bonds to gods. Mira Bai, low-caste woman, and Kabir, Muslim weaver, composed songs and poems in regional languages accessible to common people. Reaching state of ecstatic unity brought removal of all past sins and rendered caste distinctions meaningless. Shiva, Vishnu, goddess Kali were most worshiped. Movement helped, especially among low-caste groups, to stem conversion to Islam.

**Stand-Off: The Muslim Presence in India at the End of the Sultanate Period:** Similarities in style and message between Sufis and bhaktas devotees led to attempts to bridge the gaps between Islam and Hinduism. The orthodox of each faith repudiated such thought. Brahmans denounced Muslims as temple destroyers and worked for reconversion to Hinduism. Muslim ulama stressed the incompatibility of Islam's principles with Hindu beliefs. By the close of the sultanate period, there were two distinct religious communities. The great majority of the population remained Hindu. They were convinced of the superiority of Indian religion and civilization and of its capability to absorb the Muslim invaders. South Asia remained the least converted and integrated of all areas receiving the message of Islam.

**The Spread of Islam to Southeast Asia:** Southeast Asia had been a middle ground where the Chinese part of the Eurasian trading complex met the Indian Ocean zone. By the seventh and eighth centuries, Southeast Asian sailors and ships were active in the trade. When Muslims, from the eighth century, gained control of Indian commerce, Islamic culture reached Southeast Asia. The thirteenth century collapse of the trading empire of Srivijaya, ruled by devout Buddhists and located on the Strait of Malacca and northern Sumatra, made possible large-scale, peaceful Muslim entry.

**Trading Contacts and Conversion:** Peaceful contacts and voluntary conversion were more important to spread of Islam than conquest and force. Trading contacts prepared way for conversion, with the process carried forward by Sufis. 1st conversions occurred in small northern Sumatra ports. On the mainland, key to spread of Islam was city of Malacca, smaller successor to

Srivijaya. From Malacca, Islam went to Malaya, Sumatra, and the state of Demak on Java's north coast. Islam spread into Java and moved on to the Celebes and Mindanao in the Philippines. Coastal cities were the most receptive to Islam. Their conversion linked them to a Muslim system connected to the principal Indian Ocean ports. Buddhist dynasties were present in many regions, but since Buddhist conversions were limited to the elite, the mass of the population was open to the message of the Sufis. The island of Bali and mainland Southeast Asia, where Buddhism had gained popular support, remained impervious to Islam.

**Sufi Mystics and the Nature of Southeast Asian Islam:** The mystical quality of Islam in Southeast Asia was due to Sufi strivings. They often were tolerant of the indigenous peoples' Buddhist and Hindu beliefs. Converts retained pre-Islamic practices, especially for regulating social interaction. Islamic law ruled legal transactions. Women held a stronger familial and societal position than they had in the Middle East or India. They dominated local markets, while in some regions matrilineal descent persisted. Many pre-Muslim beliefs were incorporated into Islamic ceremonies.

**Global Connections: Islam: Bridge Between Worlds:** Despite political instability of Abbasids, Islam's central position in global history was solidified. Expanding Muslim world linked ancient civilizations through conquest and commercial networks. Islam, civilizer of nomadic peoples in Asia and Africa. Cultural contributions diffused widely from great cities and universities. There were, tendencies that placed Muslims at disadvantage in relation to rival civilizations, particularly European rivals. Political divisions caused exploitable weaknesses in many regions. Increasing intellectual rigidity of ulama caused Muslims to become less receptive to outside influences at a time when European world transforming.