

Desert and Town: Arabian World and Birth of Islam: Arabian Peninsula was inhabited by Bedouin societies. Some desert-dwellers herded camels and goats. Others practiced agriculture in oasis towns. Important agricultural and commercial centers flourished in southern coastal regions. The towns were extensions of Bedouin society, sharing its culture, and ruled by its clans.

Clan Identity, Clan Rivalries, and the Cycle of Vengeance: Mobile kin-related clans were the basis of social organization. The clans clustered into larger tribal units that functioned only during crises. In the harsh environment, individual survival depended upon clan loyalty. Wealth and status varied within clans. Leaders, or shaykhs, although elected by councils, usually were wealthy men. Free warriors enforced their decisions. Slave families served the leaders or the clan as a whole. Clan cohesion was reinforced by inter-clan rivalry and by conflicts over water and pasturage. The resulting enmity might inaugurate feuds enduring for centuries. The strife weakened Bedouin society against its rivals.

Towns and Long-Distance Trade: Cities had developed as entrepôts in the trading system linking the Mediterranean to east Asia. Most important, Mecca, western Arabia, founded by Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe. The city was the site of the Ka'ba, an important pre-Islamic religious shrine, that during an obligatory annual truce in inter-clan feuds, attracted pilgrims and visitors. A second important town, Medina, an agricultural oasis and commercial center, lay to the northeast. Quarrels among Medina's two Bedouin and three Jewish clans hampered its development but later opened a place for Muhammad.

Marriage and the Family in Pre-Islamic Arabia: Women might have enjoyed more freedom than in Byzantine and Sasanian empire. Had key economic roles in clan life. Descent was traced through the female line, and males paid a bride-price to the wife's family. Women did not wear veils and were not secluded. Both sexes had multiple marriage partners. Still, males, who carried on the honored warrior tradition, remained superior. Traditional practices of property control, inheritance, and divorce favored men. Women did drudge labor. Female status was even more restricted in urban centers.

Poets and Neglected Gods: Arab material culture, because of isolation and the harsh environment, was not highly developed. The main focus of creativity was in orally transmitted poetry. Bedouin religion was a blend of animism and polytheism. Some tribes recognized a supreme deity, Allah, but paid him little attention. They instead focused on spirits associated with nature. Religion and ethics were not connected. In all, the Bedouin did not take their religion seriously.

Life of Muhammad and the Genesis of Islam: 6th century camel nomads dominated Arabia. Cities dependent upon alliances with surrounding tribes. Pressures for change came from Byzantine and Sasanian empires, from the presence of Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad, a member of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh, was born about 570. Left an orphan, he was raised by his father's family and became a merchant. Muhammad resided in Mecca where he married a wealthy widow, Khadijah. Merchant travels allowed Muhammad to observe the forces

undermining clan unity and to encounter the spread of monotheistic ideas. Muhammad became dissatisfied with a life focused on material gain and went to meditate in the hills. In 610 he began receiving revelations transmitted from Allah via the angel Gabriel. Later, written in Arabic and collected in the Quran, they formed the basis for Islam.

Persecution, Flight, and Victory: As Muhammad's initially very small following grew, he was seen as a threat by Mecca's rulers. The new faith endangered the gods of the Ka'ba. With his life in danger, Muhammad was invited to come to Medina to mediate its clan quarrels. In 622 Muhammad left Mecca for Medina where his skilled leadership brought new followers. The Quraysh attacked Medina, but Muhammad's forces ultimately triumphed. A treaty of 628 allowed his followers the permission to visit the Kaaba. He returned to Mecca in 629 and converted most of its inhabitants to Islam.

Arabs and Islam: New religion initially was adopted by town dwellers and Bedouins in the region where Muhammad lived. Islam offered opportunities for uniting Arabs by providing a distinct indigenous monotheism supplanting clan divisions and allowing an end to clan feuding. The umma, the community of the faithful, transcended old tribal boundaries. Islam also offered an ethical system capable of healing social rifts within Arab society. All believers were equal before Allah; the strong and wealthy were responsible for the care of the weak and poor. The prophet's teachings and the Qur'an became the basis for laws regulating the Muslim faithful. All faced a last judgment by a stern but compassionate god.

Universal Elements in Islam: Islam contained beliefs appealing to individuals in many differing world cultures. Included its monotheism, legal codes, egalitarianism, and strong sense of community. Islam, while regarding Muhammad's message as the culmination of divine revelation, accepted the validity of similar components previously incorporated in Judaism and Christianity. Islam's five pillars provide a basis for underlying unity: (1) confession of faith; (2) prayer five times daily; (3) fasting during the month of Ramadan; (4) payment of a tithe (zakat) for charity; and (5) the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.

Arab Empire of Umayyads: Muhammad's defeat of Mecca won allegiance of many Bedouin tribes, unity was threatened when he died in 632. Tribes broke away and his followers quarreled about the succession. Community managed to select new leaders, reunited Arabia by 633, then began campaigns. Arab religious zeal and weaknesses of opponents resulted in victories in Mesopotamia, North Africa, and Persia. New empire governed by a warrior elite under Umayyad clan, little interest in conversion.

Consolidation and Division in the Islamic Community: Muhammad, last of prophets, could not have successor possessing his attributes. Had not established a procedure for selecting a new leader. After a troubled process Abu Bakr chosen as caliph, leader of Islamic community. Break-away tribes and rival prophets were defeated during the Ridda Wars to restore Islamic

unity. Arab armies invaded the weak Byzantine and Persian empires where they were joined by Bedouins who had migrated earlier.

Motives for Arab Conquest: Islam provided Arabs with a sense of common cause and a way of releasing martial energies against neighbor opponents. Rich booty and tribute gained often was more of a motivation than spreading Islam as converts were exempted from taxes and shared spoils of victory.

Weaknesses of the Adversary Empires: Weak Sasanian Empire ruled by an emperor manipulated by landed, aristocratic class that exploited agricultural masses. Official Zoroastrianism lacked popular roots and more popular creed of Mazdak been brutally suppressed. Arabs defeated poorly prepared Sasanian military and ended dynasty in 651. Byzantines more resilient adversaries. Empire had been weakened by defection of frontier Arabs and persecuted Christian sects, by long wars with Sasanians. Arabs quickly seized western Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. From the 640s Arabs had gained naval supremacy in eastern Mediterranean and extended conquests westward into North Africa and southern Europe. The weakened Byzantines held off attacks in their core Asia Minor and Balkan territories.

Problem of Succession and Sunni-Shi'a Split: Arab victories for a time covered old tribal internal divisions. Murder of Uthman, 3rd caliph, caused succession struggle. Muhammad's earliest followers supported Ali, was rejected by Umayyads. In ensuing hostilities, Ali won advantage until he accepted a plea for mediation at Siffin in 657. Ali lost support of his most radical adherents, and Umayyads won the renewed hostilities. Umayyad leader, Mu'awiya, proclaimed caliph in 660. Ali assassinated in 661; his son, Husayn, was killed at Karbala in 680. The dispute left permanent division within Islam. The Shi'i, eventually dividing into many sects, continued to uphold the rights of Ali's descendants to be caliphs.

Umayyad Imperium: With internal disputes resolved, the Muslims during the seventh and eighth centuries pushed forward into central Asia, northwest India, and southwestern Europe. The Franks checked the advance at Poitiers in 732, but Muslims ruled much of Iberia for centuries. By the ninth century they dominated the Mediterranean. The Umayyad political capital was at Damascus. The caliphs built an imperial administration with both bureaucracy and military dominated by a Muslim Arab elite. The warriors remained concentrated in garrison towns to prevent assimilation by the conquered.

Converts and "People of the Book": Umayyad policy did not prevent interaction--intermarriage and conversion--between Arabs and subjects. Muslim converts, malawi, paid taxes and did not receive a share of booty; were blocked from important positions

in army or bureaucracy. Most of the conquered peoples were dhimmis/people of the book. 1st were Jews and Christians; later Zoroastrians and Hindus. Dhimmis had to pay taxes, were allowed to retain their own religious and social organization.

Family and Gender Roles in the Umayyad Age: Gender relationships altered as Muslim community expanded. More favorable status of women among the Arabs prevailed over the seclusion and male domination common in the Middle East. Muhammad & Quran stressed moral and ethical dimensions of marriage. Adultery of both partners was denounced; female infanticide was forbidden. Although women could have only 1 husband, men were allowed 4 wives, but all had to be treated equally. Muhammad strengthened women's legal rights in inheritance and divorce. Both sexes were equal before Allah.

Umayyad Decline and Fall: The spoils of victory brought luxurious living styles and decline of military talents to the Umayyads. Many Muslims considered such conduct a retreat from Islamic virtues, and revolts occurred throughout the empire. The most important occurred among frontier warriors settled near the Iranian borderland town of Merv. Many men had married locally and developed regional loyalties. Angry at not receiving adequate shares of booty, they revolted when new troops were introduced. The rebels were led by the Abbasid clan. Allied with Shi'ite and mawali (non-Arab converts to Islam), Abu al-Abbas defeated the Umayyads in 750, later assassinating most of their clan leaders.

From Arab to Islamic Empire: The Early Abbasid Era: Triumph of a new dynasty reflected a series of fundamental changes within Islamic world. Increased size of Muslim civilization brought growing regional identities and made it difficult to hold empire together. Abbasid victory led to increased bureaucratic expansion, absolutism, and luxurious living. Abbasids championed conversion and transformed character of previous Arab-dominated Islamic community. Once in power, the Abbasids turned against Shi'a and other allies to support a less tolerant Sunni Islam. At their new capital, Baghdad, rulers accepted Persian ruling concepts, elevating themselves to a different status than the earlier Muslim leaders. Growing bureaucracy worked under direction of wazir/ chief administrator. Great extent of empire hindered efficiency, but the regime worked well for more than a century. The constant presence of the royal executioner symbolized the absolute power of the rulers over their subjects.

Islamic Conversion and Mawali Acceptance: Under Abbasids new converts, both Arabs and others, were fully integrated into Muslim community. Old distinction between mawali and older believers disappeared. Most conversions occurred peacefully. Many individuals sincerely accepted appealing ethical Islamic beliefs. Others perhaps reacted to the advantages of avoiding special taxes, and to the opportunities for advancement open to believers in education, administration, and commerce. Persians, for example, soon became the real source of power in the imperial system.

Commercial Boom and Urban Growth: The rise of the mawali was accompanied by the growth in wealth and status of merchant and landlord classes. Urban expansion was linked to a revival of the Afro-Eurasian trading network declining with the fall of the Han Dynasty and Roman

Empire. Muslim merchants moved goods from the western Mediterranean to the South China Sea.

Town and Country: Urban prosperity led to increased artisan handicraft production in government and private workshops. Most skilled artisans formed guild-like organizations to negotiate wages and working conditions, and provide support services. Slaves performed unskilled labor and served caliphs and high officials. Some slaves held powerful positions and gained freedom. Most unskilled slaves, many of them Africans, worked under terrible conditions. A rural, landed elite, the *ayan*, emerged. The majority of peasants occupied land as tenants and had to give most of their harvest to the owners.

First Flowering of Islamic Learning: Arabs before Islam were without writing and knew little of the outside world. They were very receptive to accomplishments of many civilizations falling to Muslim armies. Under Abbasids, Islamic artistic contribution first lay in mosque and palace construction. Islamic learning flourished in religious, legal, and philosophical discourse, with special focus on the sciences and mathematics. Scholars recovered and preserved works of earlier civilizations. Greek writings saved and later passed on to Christian world. Muslims introduced Indian numbers into the Mediterranean world.

Conclusion: The Measure of Islamic Achievement: 9th century Abbasid power had waned before rise of regional states and incursions of non-Muslim peoples. Turks converted to Islam and became a major component of Muslim world. Arabs created a basis for 1st global civilization, incorporating many linguistic and ethnic groups into 1 culture. They created Islam, 1 of great universal religions. Religion and politics initially had been joined, Umayyads and Abbasids used religious legitimacy to govern their vast empires. In religion and politics they absorbed precedents from earlier civilizations. Muslims did the same in arts and sciences, later fashioning their own innovative thinking that influenced other societies