



IDX G9 History H
Study Guide Issue S1 Monthly 2
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7. Ferment in the Middle East: The Rise of Islam

7.1 The Rise of Islam

- Islam emerged in 7th-century Arabia amid social and political fragmentation following the decline of the Roman and Sassanian Empires.

Pre-Islamic Arabia

- Dominated by Bedouin tribes organized around kinship;
 - Leaders (sheikhs) chosen by councils (majlis).
- Polytheistic religion centered on spirits and sacred stones
 - The Ka’aba in Mecca housed a revered black meteorite.

Muhammad’s Life and Mission

- Born in Mecca (570 CE) to a merchant family;
 - Troubled by moral decay in urban society.
- Received revelations from the angel Gabriel, later compiled into the Qur’an.
- Faced initial resistance; migrated to Medina in 622 CE (Hegira), marking Year 1 of the Islamic calendar.
- Founded the umma (Muslim community) and later conquered Mecca (630 CE), purifying the Ka’aba for monotheistic worship.

Core Teachings of Islam

- Strict monotheism: Allah is the sole, all-powerful deity.
- Muhammad is the final prophet (not divine).
- Five Pillars of Islam

- Shahada (faith in Allah and Muhammad)
- Salat (prayer five times daily + Friday congregational prayer)
- Sawm (fasting during Ramadan)
- Zakat (almsgiving)
- Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca)
- Shari'a (Islamic law), derived from Qur'an and Hadith, regulated all aspects of life.
- Behavioral restrictions:
 - No alcohol, pork, gambling;
 - Modesty in dress and conduct;
 - Limited polygyny (max 4 wives).

7.2 The Arab Empire and Its Successors

- Rapid Arab-Muslim expansion followed Muhammad's death (632 CE), fueled by religious zeal, weakened Byzantine/Sassanian rivals, and Bedouin military mobility.

Early Caliphate

- Abu Bakr became first caliph;
 - Unified tribes and launched jihad (interpreted as both spiritual struggle and "holy war").
- Conquests: Syria (640), Egypt (640), Sassanian Persia (by 650).
- Policy:
 - Non-Muslims paid jizya (head tax) for protection;
 - Conversion was voluntary ("no compulsion in religion").

Umayyad Dynasty (661–750)

- Capital at Damascus; expansion reached Spain (710) and France (stopped at Battle of Tours, 732).
- Internal strife:
 - Shi'ite-Sunni split emerged after Ali's (Muhammad's cousin/son-in-law) assassination;
 - Shi'ites rejected Umayyad legitimacy.

Abbasid Dynasty (750–1258):

- Capital moved to Baghdad (762);
 - Promoted inclusivity (non-Arabs in government), cultural flourishing, and trade.
- Golden Age under Harun al-Rashid (786–809) and al-Ma'mun (813–833)
 - House of Wisdom translations and scientific advances.
- Decline:

- Bureaucratic corruption;
- Regional fragmentation (e.g., Fatimid Shi'ite dynasty in Egypt, 973);
- Loss of central control.

Later Powers:

- **Seljuk Turks** (from 1055):
 - Ruled militarily as sultans;
 - Caliph retained religious authority.
 - Defeated Byzantines at Manzikert (1071), triggering the Crusades.
- **Crusades** (1096–1291):
 - European Christian invasions;
 - Briefly occupied Jerusalem.
 - Saladin (Sunni leader) recaptured Jerusalem (1187) with notable restraint.
- **Mongols** (1258):
 - Sacked Baghdad, ending Abbasid Caliphate;
 - Later converted to Islam, aiding cultural revival in Cairo under Mamluks.
- **Al-Andalus (Muslim Spain):**
 - Umayyad survivor founded emirate (756) in Córdoba; declared caliphate (929).
 - Cultural/religious tolerance (*convivencia*) under early rulers; declined under puritanical Berber Almoravids/Almohads.
 - Intellectual center: Córdoba's libraries, paper production; figures like Averroës.
 - Last stronghold: Granada (Alhambra palace); fell in 1492.

7.3 Islamic Civilization

- Islam as a holistic system: religion, law, politics, and daily life were integrated.

Society and Economy

- Egalitarian ideals (all equal before Allah);
 - Slavery still persisted (non-Muslims only) in army/households.
- Women:
 - Respected but subordinate;
 - Veiling/seclusion common in cities (more cultural than Qur'anic).
- Thriving trade:
 - Dhows dominated Indian Ocean;
 - Baghdad/Cairo as commercial hubs;
 - Trans-Eurasian exchange (e.g., paper, crops).

Intellectual/Cultural Achievements

- Preserved/advanced Greek knowledge (Aristotle, Ptolemy);
 - Developed algebra, astronomy, medicine (Avicenna's Canon).
- Literature:
 - Persian epics (Ferdowsi's Book of Kings);
 - Sufi poetry (Rumi);
 - Folktales (1001 Nights).
- Art/Architecture:
 - Aniconic (no human figures);
 - Geometric/vegetal arabesques;
 - Calligraphy;
 - Iconic structures (Dome of the Rock, Great Mosque of Córdoba, Alhambra).

8. Early Civilizations in Africa

8.1 The Emergence of Civilization

- Africa's diverse geography shaped varied societal developments.

Early Agriculture

- Independent origins:
 - Nubia (sorghum, millet by 5000 BCE);
 - Spread south/west as Sahara dried (after 3000 BCE).
- Bantu migrations (from Nigeria, starting c. 1000 BCE):
 - Disseminated ironworking, farming (yams, bananas) across sub-Saharan Africa.

Key Kingdoms:

- **Kush/Meroë** (Nubia):
 - Iron production hub;
 - Pyramids for royal tombs;
 - Conquered by Axum (4th century CE).
- **Axum** (Ethiopia): Christian kingdom (from 4th century CE)
 - Traded ivory/slaves via Red Sea port Adulis;
 - Rock-hewn churches.

Trans-Saharan Trade:

- Camel (introduced c. 1st century CE) enabled caravans ("fleets of the desert")
- Connected Mediterranean (salt, textiles) with West Africa (gold, ivory).

8.2 The Coming of Islam

- Islam spread via trade/conquest, blending with local traditions.
- **North Africa:**

- Arab conquest (641 CE);
- Berbers gradually converted;
- Founded Muslim states in Maghreb.

- **West Africa:**

- Rulers adopted Islam for trade/administrative ties (e.g., Ghana, Mali).

- **Mali Empire:**

- Mansa Musa's hajj (1324) showcased wealth;
- Timbuktu became center of Islamic scholarship.

- **East Africa:**

- Swahili coast city-states (Kilwa, Mombasa):
 - Cosmopolitan trade hubs (gold, ivory for Chinese porcelain, Indian cloth).
- Swahili language/culture: Bantu base + Arabic/Persian influences; elites converted to Islam.

- **Ethiopia:**

- Isolated Christian stronghold;
- Resisted Muslim expansion;
- Zagwe/Solomonic dynasties.

7.3 States and Noncentralized Societies

- **Central/Southern Africa:**

- **Congo Basin:**
 - Kingdoms of Luba/Kongo (14th century);
 - Decentralized, clan-based.
- **Zimbabwe:**
 - Stone-walled capital (Great Zimbabwe, c. 1100–1450);
 - Controlled gold trade to Swahili coast.
- **Southern Africa:**
 - Bantu farmers coexisted/absorbed Khoisan hunter-gatherers (San rock art).

7.4 African Society

- **Social Organization:**

- Lineage groups/clans:
 - Core of identity;
 - Matrilineal descent common (e.g., property to sister's son).
- **Women:**
 - Vital in agriculture/commerce;

- Less secluded than in Muslim Asia;
 - Polygyny widespread.
- **Slavery:**
 - Existed pre-Europeans (POWs, domestic labor);
 - Expanded via trans-Saharan/Indian Ocean trade.
- **Urban vs. Rural:**
 - Cities (Timbuktu, Kilwa): trade centers with stone architecture
 - Rulers closely tied to merchant class.
 - Villages: Mud-thatch huts; “big man” leadership; self-sufficient.

7.5 African Culture

- **Art:**
 - Rock paintings (Tassili, San);
 - Nok terra-cottas (500 BCE);
 - Benin/Ifé bronze sculpture (lost-wax casting).
 - Masks/sculpture: ritual/spiritual functions (ancestor veneration, initiation).
- **Music/Dance:**
 - Rhythmic, communal, “call-and-response”;
 - Instruments (drums, xylophones);
 - Preserved oral history.
- **Literature:**
 - Oral epics (e.g., Son-Jara of Mali);
 - Proverbs, bards as historians/mediators.
- **Architecture:**
 - Regional diversity:
 - Egyptian/Axumite stelae;
 - Great Zimbabwe’s dry-stone walls;
 - West African mud mosques.