



Medieval Islamic Empires

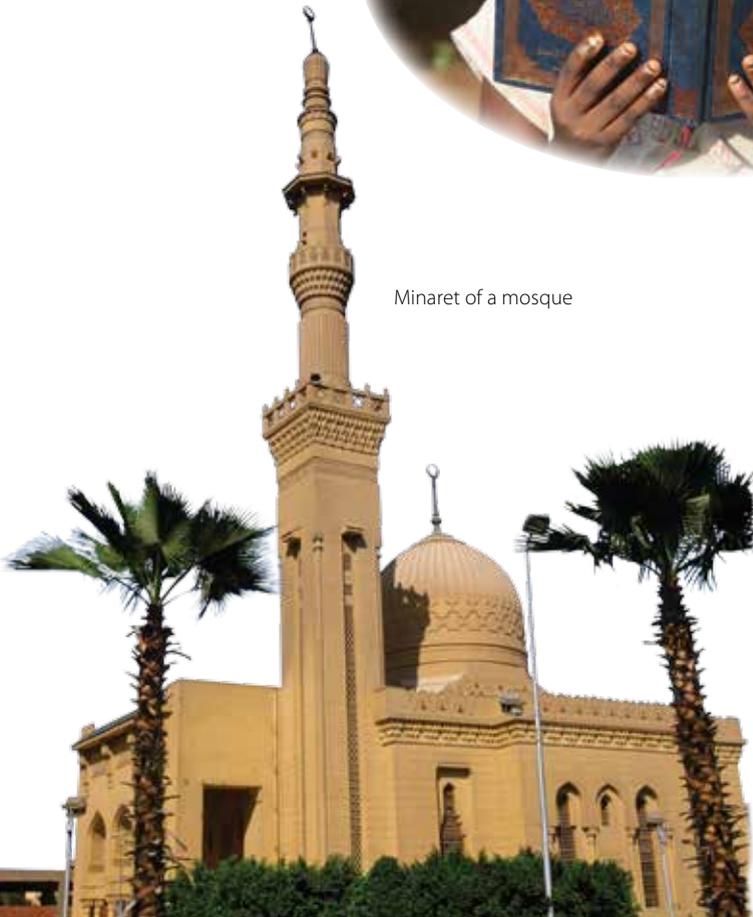


Reader



Reading the Koran

Minaret of a mosque



Kaaba in Mecca



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Medieval Islamic Empires

Reader



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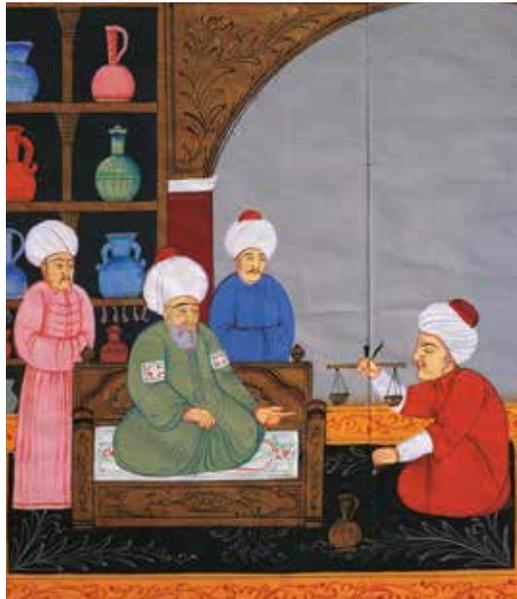
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Medieval Islamic Empires

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Medieval Islamic Empires Reader

Core Knowledge Sequence History and Geography 4

Chapter 1

The Pillars of Islam

The Call to Prayer Khalid ibn Zayd climbed the stairs that circled the outside of the tower. It was not an easy climb. It was just after noon, and the sun was beating down on the tower and the buildings below. The city was Cairo, Egypt, and the year was 1082 CE.

The Big Question

Within the religion of Islam, who is Muhammad?

There were 175 steps in all, but Khalid no longer thought to count them. When he reached the top step of the tower, he turned and looked down on the courtyard below. Then, he raised his hands beside his head, palms forward, took a deep breath, and called his neighbors to prayer.

Below him, worshippers moved steadily through doors cut into the courtyard wall. They moved toward a covered area near the opposite wall. Before entering the area, worshippers removed their shoes, covered their heads, and carefully took their places facing a small arch cut into the wall.

Vocabulary

minaret, n. a high tower on a mosque, from which Muslims may be called to prayer

muezzin, n. a religious official who calls Muslims to prayer



High on a minaret, a muezzin calls the Muslim faithful to prayer five times a day. This happens today, just as it did hundreds of years ago.

Like Khalid, they raised their hands beside their heads, palms forward, and prayed in Arabic, “*Allahu Akbar*” (“God is great!”)—Allah being the Arabic word for God.

The worshippers then knelt down and bowed their heads to the ground, while praising God for his goodness.

Toward Mecca

Khalid ibn Zayd was proud of the service he performed. He was a *muezzin* (/myoo*ez*ihn/), a special person trained to call others to prayer. Five times a day he climbed the tall tower, known as a minaret, (/mihn*uh*ret/) and called people to prayer.

The worshippers Khalid summoned were Muslims (/muz*lumz/). Muslims follow the religion Islam (/ihs*lahm/), which means “surrendering to God.” Muslims, then, are “those who have given themselves to God or His will.”

Many Muslims pray in a building called a **mosque** (/mahsk/). Muslims, however, believe prayer can take place anywhere.

When they pray, Muslims face toward Mecca, an important city in Islam. Mecca is located on the Arabian Peninsula in the Middle East in present-day Saudi Arabia. For Muslims, Mecca is the holiest city because it is the birthplace of Muhammad, the **prophet** of Islam.

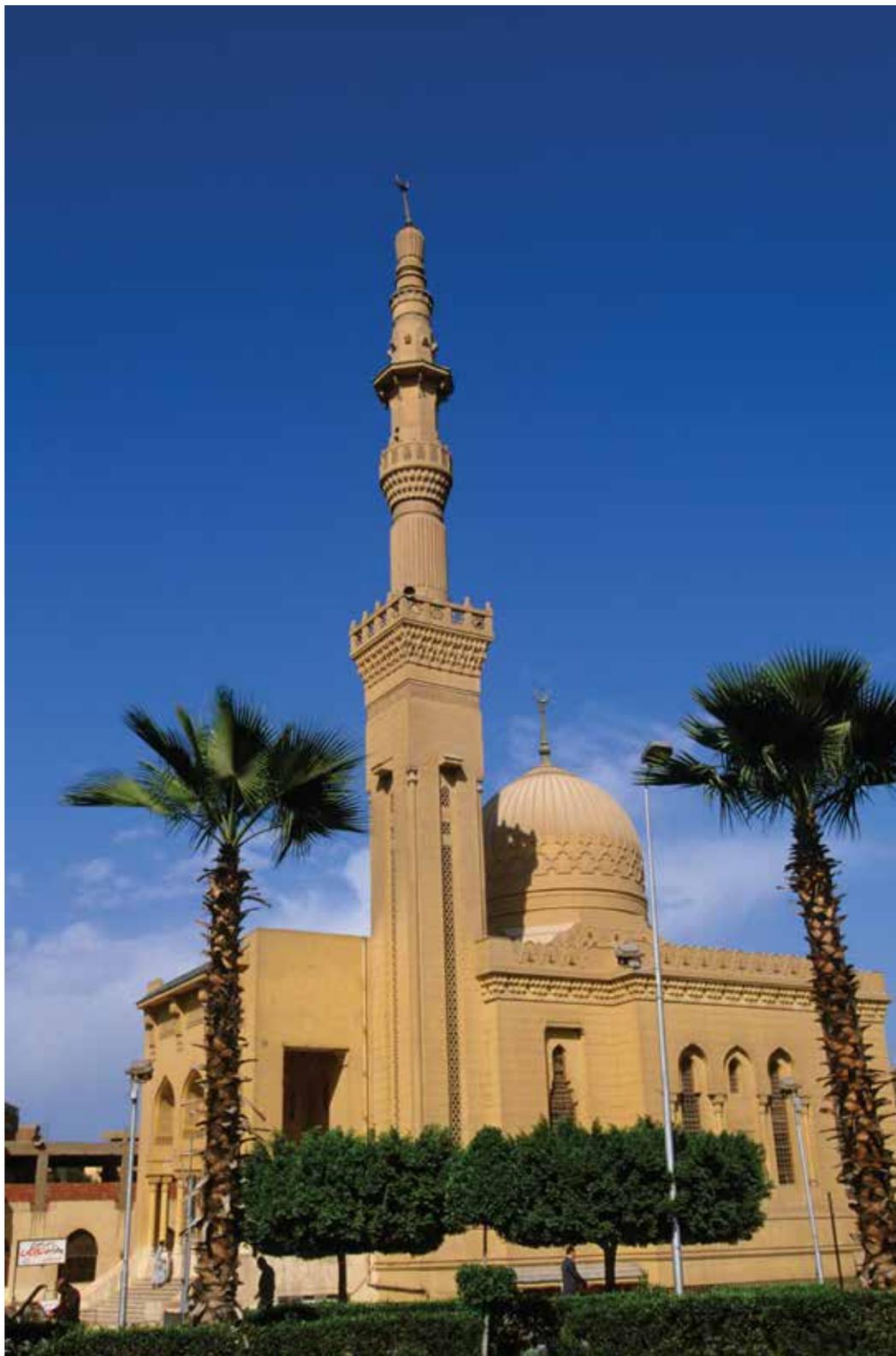
It is also the location of an important religious site called the Kaaba where Muslims perform an annual **pilgrimage** (*hajj*).

Vocabulary

mosque, n. a place of worship for Muslims

prophet, n. someone chosen by God to bring a message to people

pilgrimage (hajj in Arabic), n. a journey undertaken for a religious purpose



Muslims worship in a building called a mosque.

God's Messenger

Khalid ibn Zayd felt fortunate that he lived in Cairo, which was a great center of Islamic learning. There his son, Yusuf, could attend a madrasa (/ma*dra*sah/), or Islamic school. There, Yusuf learned how to read Arabic and how to live according to the Koran, the sacred scripture of Islam.

Soon after the noon prayers, young Yusuf ibn Khalid returned to his schoolroom in the madrasa.

"Peace be upon you," the teacher greeted the students.

"And on you be peace," responded the students in one voice.

"Yusuf," his teacher called, "why do we Muslims worship Muhammad, peace be upon him?"

Yusuf knew it was a trick question.

"Sir," he answered, "we do not worship Muhammad, peace be upon him. We honor him as God's greatest messenger, but we worship God alone."

"Well said," replied the teacher, smiling.

"Tell me more about Muhammad. How did he come to be God's messenger?"

"Once, when Muhammad was asleep," Yusuf answered with confidence, "the angel Gabriel came to him in a **vision** and told him to recite a **verse**. He was afraid. As he ran away, he heard the voice of the angel telling him that he was God's messenger."

Vocabulary

vision, n. an image in one's mind or imagination that others cannot see

verse, n. a part of a poem, song, or religious text, such as the Bible, or rhymed prose, such as the Koran



Muslims believe that the angel Gabriel visited Muhammad when he was praying in a cave outside of Mecca.

“And did Muhammad begin immediately to act as God’s messenger?” asked the teacher.

“No,” said Yusuf, “he was still afraid. But the angel came to him again and again until he began to preach God’s message.”

“You have listened well, Yusuf,” said the teacher. Yusuf bowed slightly and smiled, happy with his teacher’s praise.

“Ali,” the teacher called to a tall boy seated beside Yusuf, “did the people listen to what Muhammad said?”

“No,” replied Ali. “At first only a few people among Muhammad’s family and friends believed what he said. Most of the people ignored him or did not accept his message.”

“And what did he say that made him unpopular?” prodded the teacher.

“Well,” Ali answered thoughtfully, “he told them that there was only one God, Allah. He told them they should not worship other gods or **idols**. The people did not like that because they had lots of gods and put statues of them in the Kaaba.”

“And what was the Kaaba?” the teacher cut in.

“It was a **shrine** where various gods and idols were worshipped.”

“And what is it today?”

“It is the holiest place in Islam,” answered Ali, adding quickly, “and today only God is worshipped there.”

Vocabulary

idol, n. an object, such as a statue or carving, that represents a god and is worshipped

shrine, n. a place considered holy because it is associated with a religious person or saint

The Five Pillars of Islam

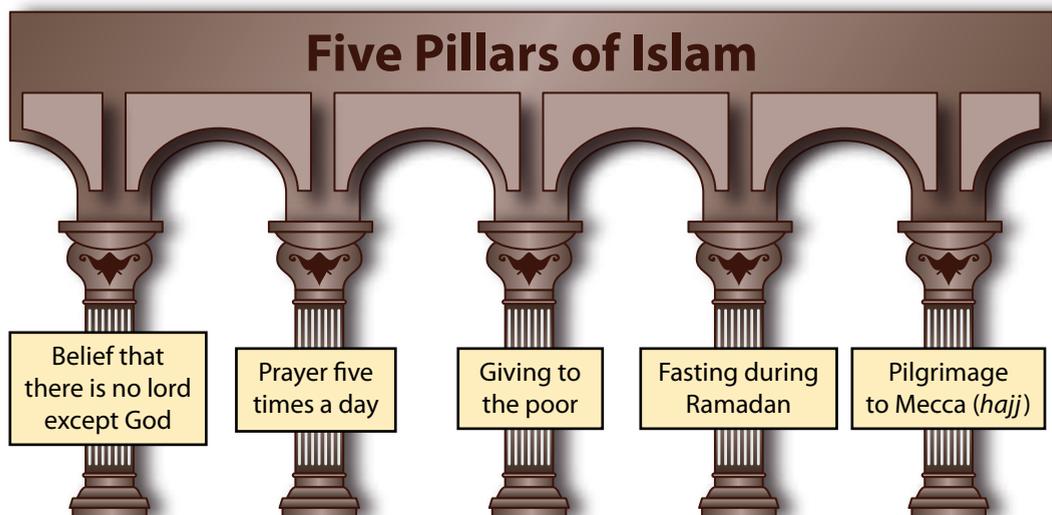
“Excellent,” said the teacher. “We believe only in God the Almighty. That is the first pillar, or foundation, of our faith. We believe there is no lord but God and that Muhammad is the last messenger of God.”

“What are the other pillars of our faith?” the teacher asked. “You first, Hassan,” he said to a boy sitting nearby.

“The second pillar of our faith,” Hassan responded, “is prayer. Five times a day we Muslims pray toward the Kaaba in Mecca. We must pray before the sun rises, after midday, in the afternoon, about sunset, and at night.

“The third pillar,” Hassan continued, “is sharing wealth with the poor. It is called *zakat*. Muhammad taught that we must help the poor and those in need by giving them money.”

“You have answered well,” said the teacher. “Let’s give someone else a chance to answer now.”



“Ishaq,” he called to a boy sitting next to Hassan, “what is the fourth pillar of our faith?”

“The fourth pillar is fasting,” Ishaq said.

“We Muslims fast during the month of

Ramadan. That means . . . uhm . . . it means that we do not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset for the whole month.”

“And the fifth pillar, Ishaq?” encouraged the teacher.

“Well, . . . the fifth pillar,” said Ishaq slowly, stalling for time. “The fifth pillar,” Ishaq finally said, “is to make a **pilgrimage** to Mecca.

Vocabulary

Ramadan, n. a holy month in the Islamic calendar when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset



A young Muslim girl reads the Koran, much as the students in the story did almost one thousand years ago.

“If we are able,” Ishaq continued, “we should visit Mecca at least once in our lives.”

“Well done, Ishaq,” said the teacher with genuine pleasure. “You all have answered well today.” He was very proud of his students and all they had learned about their faith.

Since the beginning of Islam, Muslim youth have attended their local mosques and later madrasas to learn more about their faith and how to be good Muslims. Today, Islamic schools much like the one described can be found in many parts of the world, such as Egypt, Nigeria, India, France, and the United States.

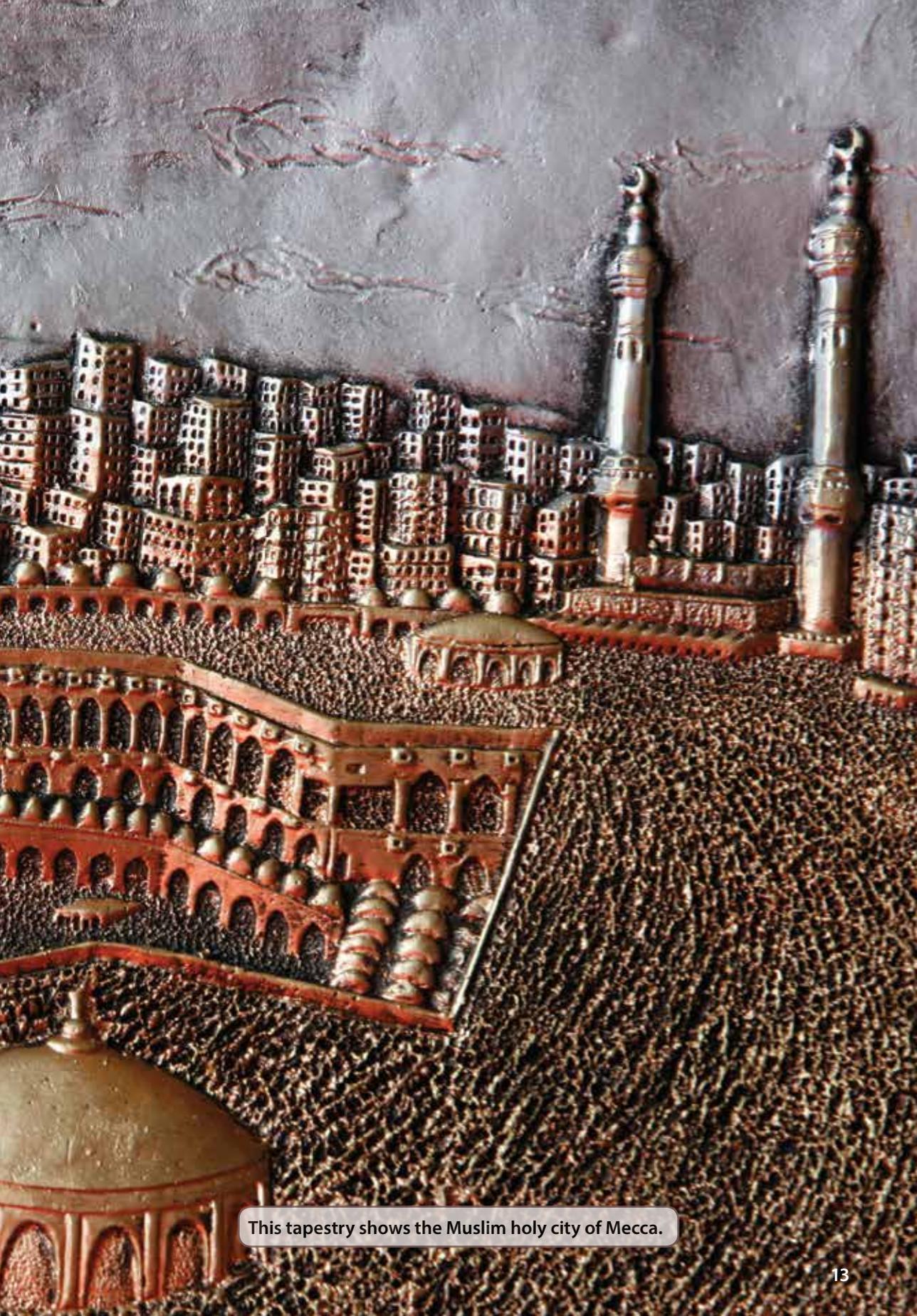
Chapter 2

Muhammad

Who Was the Prophet? Muhammad was born in the Arabian city of Mecca more than 1,400 years ago, in about 570 CE. Muhammad's father died shortly before he was born. According to Arabian tribal society, when a father dies, a child becomes an orphan, and so Muhammad became an orphan. He was raised by his uncle. Muhammad grew up to become a well-respected trader in his community.

The Big Question

What does Muhammad's decision regarding the replacement of the holy stone reveal about his character?



This tapestry shows the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Muslims tell a story about Muhammad to show why people respected him. One year, floodwaters badly damaged the Kaaba. The Kaaba is a holy shrine in Mecca that houses a **sacred** black stone. In Muhammad's time, people visited the shrine to worship many different gods.

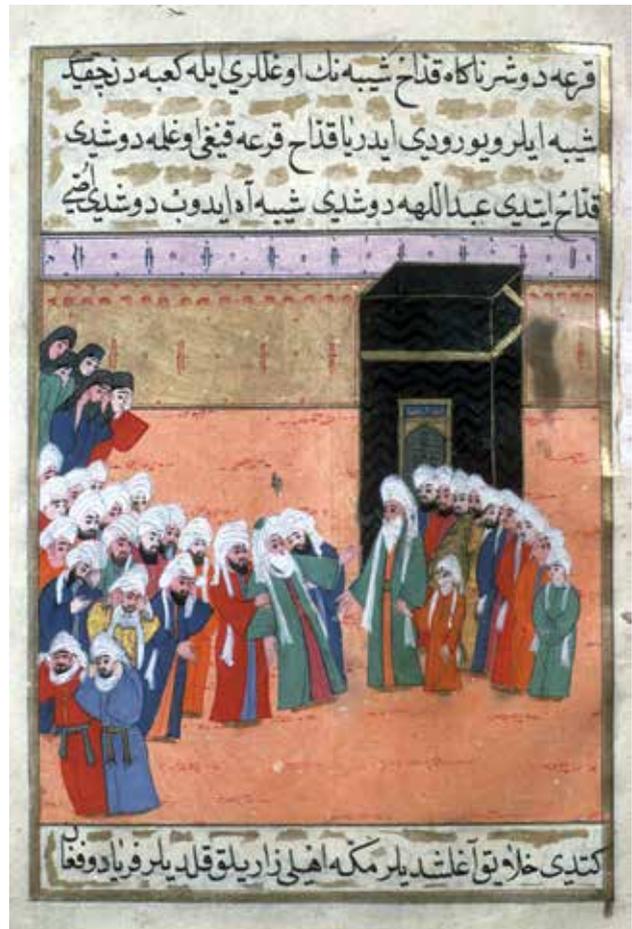
The flood knocked the stone loose from its special place in one of the Kaaba's walls. At that time there were many groups of families, called **clans**, living in Mecca. These clans argued over which one would have the privilege of replacing the stone. They could not agree. They decided that the next man who entered the courtyard would decide.

Muhammad was the next man to enter. He found a unique solution. He took off his cloak and spread it on the ground. He placed the sacred stone in the middle of it. Then he invited all of the clan

Vocabulary

sacred, adj. related to religion; holy

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor



The black building in the center of this picture is the Kaaba, the holiest place in all of Islam. The Kaaba is in the grand mosque in Mecca.

leaders to take hold of the ends of the cloak. Carefully, they lifted the stone to its place in the wall. Finally, Muhammad gently slid the stone into its place. The clan leaders praised him for his solution to a difficult problem.

Muhammad: The Prophet

Muhammad was a thoughtful man. Often he would go off by himself to reflect on life and how it should be lived. In 610, while **meditating**, Muhammad had a vision. He believed the angel Gabriel, a messenger from God, appeared to him. Gabriel told him he was to be God’s messenger. At first, he was confused and frightened. Muhammad did not know what he was expected to do. His wife, some family members, and friends reassured him. They told him he was meant to be a prophet who spoke on behalf of God.

Vocabulary
.....
meditate, v. to think quietly or carefully about something

In 613, after a second vision, Muhammad began sharing the messages he received. He said that there was only one God, Allah. People should pray to God alone, he insisted. Muhammad also taught that all believers were equal in God’s eyes. The rich, he said, must share their wealth with the poor. He warned people that they would be judged by their actions, not by their wealth.

Some people accepted the messages shared by Muhammad, but many opposed them. People of many faiths came to Mecca to worship their gods at the Kaaba. They spent a lot of money in Mecca. Would these people still come if the people

of Mecca started to worship only Allah? Even some members of Muhammad's clan stopped supporting him. He would not have their protection if he were attacked.

A Narrow Escape: The Hegira

Muhammad was worried that he and his followers were not safe in Mecca. Muhammad and his followers were invited by two Arab clans to move to Medina, a town two hundred or so miles north of Mecca. In July 622, Muhammad arranged to have most of his followers leave Mecca. But Muhammad himself remained in Mecca.

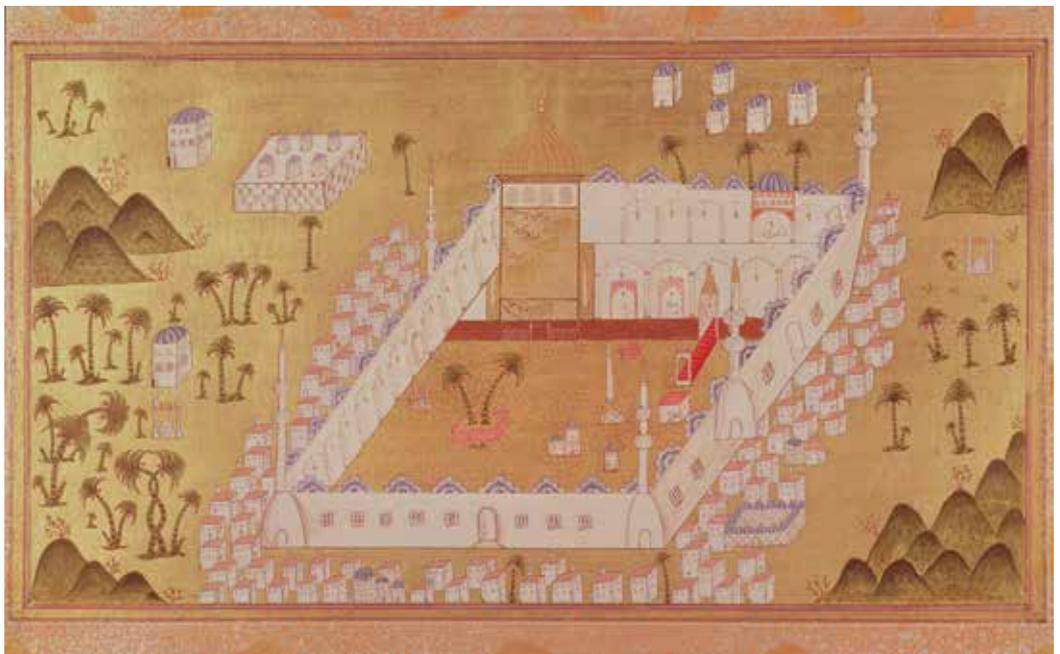
The Arabian Peninsula



The map shows the journey from Mecca to Medina.

Some Meccans were so upset by Muhammad's teaching that they planned to kill him. In September 622, when he learned of his enemies' plans, Muhammad and a trusted friend secretly left Mecca. They traveled on little-used routes to Medina. Many people in Medina welcomed Muhammad, including those who followed other religions, such as the Jewish people who followed Judaism.

The escape of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina is very important to Muslims. This event is called the *Hegira* (/hɪh*jye*ruh/). The Muslim calendar dates from the year in which the Hegira took place.



In the Hegira, Muhammad and his followers fled to the city of Medina.

Chapter 3

Islamic Expansion

From Medina to Mecca Again

The Hegira, Muhammad's flight to Medina, marked the beginning of a new period in the history of Islam. Muhammad tried hard to **convert** the citizens of Medina to Islam.

He concentrated on building a community among the people of Medina. He began to give Islam its own distinctive features.

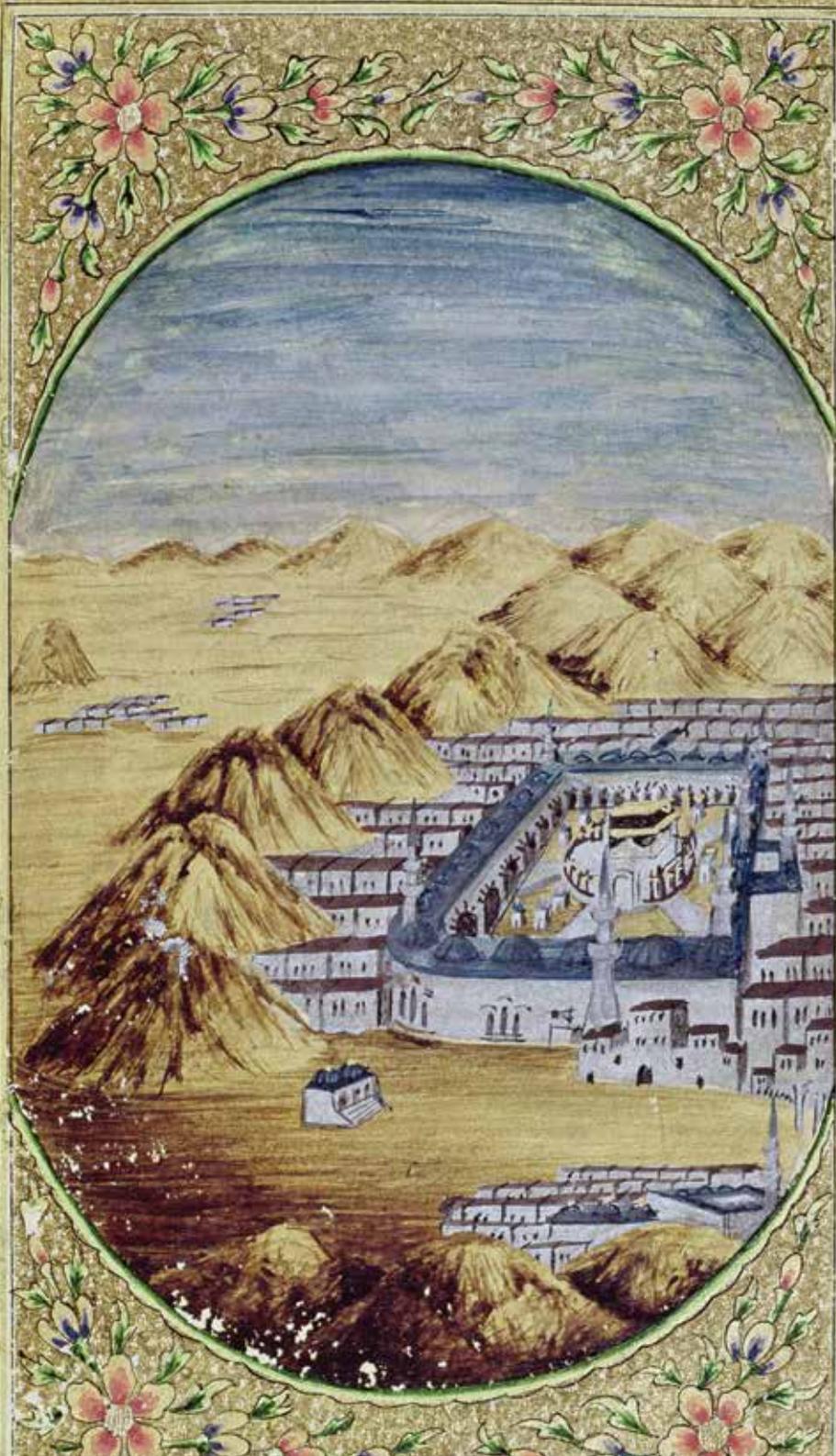
The Big Question

Why was the flight to Medina the start of a new period in the history of Islam?

Vocabulary

convert, v. to change from one belief or religion to another

Followers of Christianity and Judaism called people to prayer by using wooden clappers or rams' horns. Muhammad appointed a crier, or muezzin, to call Muslim believers to prayer.



The city of Medina, which welcomed Muhammad, is still considered holy by Muslims.

Jews fasted on the Day of Atonement, which came once a year. Muhammad's followers fasted between sunrise and sunset during the entire month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Jews prayed toward Jerusalem, their holy city. Muslims also first prayed toward Jerusalem until Muhammad instructed them to pray toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Jews set aside Saturday as their holy day of the week. Christians chose Sunday. Muslims chose Friday. Muhammad converted some of the people of Medina to Islam, though generally most Jewish people there resisted and continued to follow their own religion. Then conflicts appeared between the Jews of Medina and the followers of Muhammad. Eventually,



Upon returning to Mecca, Muhammad and his followers destroyed the statues of gods in the Kaaba and dedicated the shrine to Allah alone.

the Jewish people of Medina were either driven out, killed, or enslaved. Muhammad also spread Islam to other communities throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The merchants of Mecca, however, were not pleased. Meccans launched several attacks on Medina but were turned back. Finally, in 630, backed by a large force, Muhammad entered Mecca. Few Meccans fought against him. Muhammad destroyed the statues or idols of the many gods in the Kaaba. He restored the Kaaba into a holy place dedicated to Islam's God alone. Mecca was now the center of Islam.

Muhammad's Final Years

Muhammad lived two more years after his return to Mecca. During this time, Islam continued to spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Muslim warriors helped spread Islam by conquering neighboring communities. Muhammad taught that Muslims must spread God's law.

Thirty years passed between Muhammad's first vision and his death. Muslims believe Muhammad continued to receive **revelations** from Allah during this time.

After his death the revelations were collected in a single book, the Koran. Muslims believe the Koran is the final word of God. As the final word, it does not contain any errors.

Vocabulary

revelation, n.
something that is made known to humans by God

Some of his followers thought Muhammad would live forever, but in 632 he became ill. The man known as God's messenger died.

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَّبَّهُ فَقَالَ يَا رَبِّ إِنِّي مِّنْ أَهْلِ وَادٍ

وَعَدَكَ اللَّوْطَانَ أَكْمَلُ الْخَاصِمِينَ ۖ قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ
عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ ۖ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْخَالِعِينَ ۗ
قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي آجِدُكَ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَتَّخِذْنِي وَمَنْ حِوَّجْتَنِي
أَكُنُ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ۗ قَالَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَسَبِّحْ عَلَيْنَا وَاعْبُدْ
عَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّنْ عَمَلِكُمْ وَأُمَّمٍ سَمِعْتَهُمْ قَرَّبْتَهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِكُمْ ۗ تِلْكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ الْغَيْبِ
نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ يَا آدَمُ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا ۗ فَاصْبِرْ يَا نُوحُ
لِلْمُتَّفِعِينَ ۗ وَإِلَىٰ نَادِي آخَاهُمْ هُودٌ ۗ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم

مِّنْ رَّغْبَةٍ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ لِامْتِنَانِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ لَا نَسْأَلُكُمْ

عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْرًا إِنْ أَجْرُنَا عَلَىٰ الَّذِي فَطَرْنَا فَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا
رَبَّكُمْ وَقَرُّوا عَلَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ لِسَانَكُمْ عَلَيْهِ كُمْ مِدَدًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَىٰ قُوَّتِكُمْ
وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا هَمَزِينَ ۗ قَالُوا يَا هُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَاتِنَا
عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ إِنْ نَقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسْمٍ
قَالَ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ بِاللَّهِ وَشَهِدُوا لِي بِرَبِّي ۗ إِنِّي أَخُودِي وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِي فَكَيْفَ
جَمِيعًا تَرْتَابِطُونَ ۗ لِي نَبِيٌّ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ
بِصَائِبَةٍ أَرْسَلْتُمْ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ۗ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا

أَسْأَلْتُمْ فِي آلِهَتِكُمْ وَيَسْخَرُونَ لِي بِقَوْمٍ غَيْرِكُمْ ۗ

Muhammad's First Successors

When Muhammad died, he appears to have left no instructions for choosing a successor. His followers had considered him the last of the prophets. The Muslims knew, however, that they needed strong leadership if they were going to survive. But Muhammad's death caused conflict over who was the rightful leader of the Islamic community. Muhammad's successors were called **caliphs** (/kay*lihfs/). Muhammad had a surviving daughter, but not a son. Two men stood ready to take over. They were Ali, Muhammad's cousin and his daughter's husband, and Abu Bakr, the father of one of Muhammad's wives and one of Muhammad's closest friends. The important elders of Medina chose Abu Bakr. But Abu Bakr, the first caliph, lived for only two more years. The second Caliph was Umar, another close companion of Muhammad's. Once again, Ali was overlooked. Within twenty-four years of Muhammad's death, there was a civil war that created the two branches of Islam—the Shiite, who are the followers of Ali, and the Sunni.

Vocabulary

caliph, n. a successor of Muhammad; the leader of Islam

Despite such conflict, Islam spread far and wide. The first four caliphs conquered land throughout Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Persia.

Muslim warriors depended on military strategy and good fortune. In one important battle for the city of Damascus in Syria, for example, a much larger army outnumbered the Muslim warriors.

The Muslims camped with the desert at their backs, waiting for the enemy forces to follow them. When the two armies met in the



Damascus became the capital of an Islamic empire.

battle on a hot summer day, a strong wind blew in from behind the Muslim troops, swirling dust and sand and blinding the enemy forces. The Muslim warriors were able to win an important victory. The great ancient Syrian city of Damascus was theirs.

Within one hundred years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslim rule had spread from the Arabian Peninsula to the borders of India and China in the east. It spread through North Africa and into Spain in the west. Muslim armies also advanced as far as Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, conquering it in 1453.

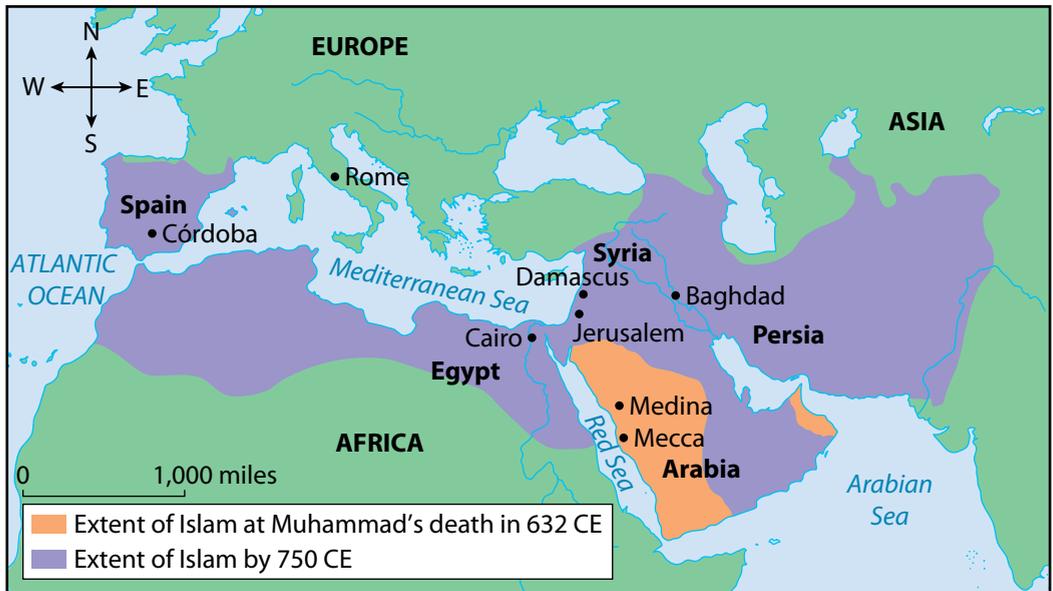
Although Muslim caliphs ruled this vast territory, most conquered people did not immediately convert to Islam.

This took hundreds of years. However, over time most conquered people did convert.

The caliphs worked to organize and govern their growing empire. They used their powerful armed forces to control that empire. They collected taxes. They made Arabic the official language of the government.

The caliphs also created a special place for other believers who worshipped one God. Jews and Christians were known as "People of the Book." Muslims believed that Jews and Christians worshipped the same God as Muslims. As "People of the Book," Jews and Christians had more rights and privileges than other non-Muslims, although they did pay a tax. This tax, according to Islamic law, provided them with protection and released them from having to serve in the army.

The Spread of Islam



This map shows how far Islam spread from the time of Muhammad's death in 632 to 750 CE.

Chapter 4

Islamic Culture

Islamic Civilization Thrives For the first hundred years or so, Islam spread mostly through conquest. Then, when new rulers took control of the empire, they moved the center of government from Damascus to Baghdad, in what is now Iraq. Baghdad became the center of a great empire. The new rulers did not conquer much new land. Instead, they strengthened their empire through trade, agriculture, and learning.

Traders crossed the empire exchanging goods from India, Arabia, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Traders also exchanged ideas, customs, and practices. The Islamic Empire had conquered many ancient centers of learning, such as Alexandria in Egypt. Traders and government officials brought the writings they found to Baghdad and other great Islamic cities.

The Big Question

How did the Islamic Empire contribute to the development of Western knowledge and culture?



As the capital of an Islamic empire, Baghdad became a center of trade and learning.

Muslim scholars translated the works of Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and many other great scholars into Arabic. They saved many original works of Greek and Roman thinkers. These works opened up new levels of understanding for Muslim thinkers. Centuries later, the same would happen for Europeans, who rediscovered the ancient works, thanks to the work of Muslim **scribes**.

Vocabulary

scribe, n. a person whose job is copying written information

navigation, n. the act of planning and directing the movement of a ship, plane, or other vehicle

Other manuscripts were translated into Arabic from their original languages. Indian writings introduced the numerals 0 through 9. Indian mathematicians also introduced the place-value system.



Muslim scholars greatly improved the accuracy of the astrolabe, which was used for **navigation** and astronomy.

These numerals have been used since that time throughout the world. The mathematics in your textbooks today is based on these numerals and this place-value system. In the 800s, Muslims called these numerals “Hindi numbers,” after the language of northern India. However, since their translation into Arabic, they have been called “Arabic numbers.”



This manuscript from the 1100s reveals the study of the parts of plants.

Learning and Discovery

Muslim scholars didn’t just translate ancient works. They made great advances in many fields, including philosophy, astronomy, medicine, and mathematics.

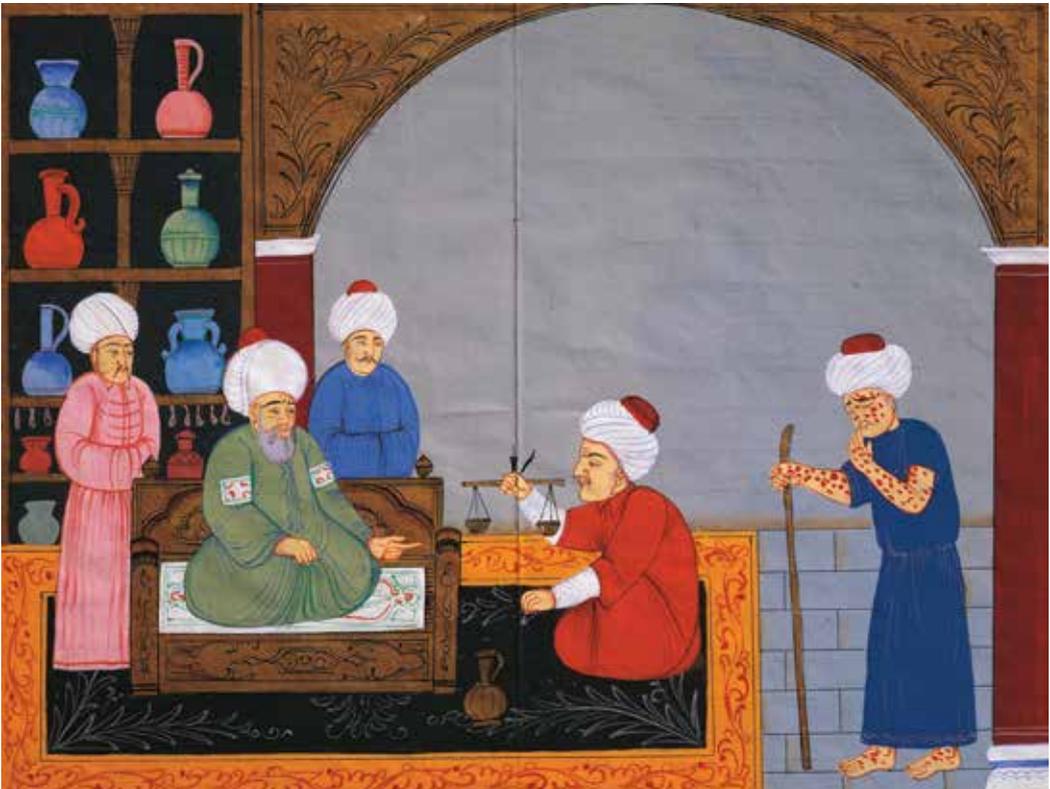
One mathematician, Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, created an entirely new form of mathematics—**algebra**. He built on the work of Greek mathematicians to create new ways of working with numbers.

Vocabulary

algebra, n. a type of advanced mathematics

In medicine, Muslim doctors were far ahead of those in western Europe. Muslim doctors were the first to describe measles and smallpox accurately. They were the first to discover how some diseases spread. One doctor and philosopher, Ibn Sina, was especially influential.

Ibn Sina was born in 980 CE. He was a wonder child. It is said that he memorized the Koran by the time he was ten and learned medicine and philosophy by the time he was a teenager. The Koran has 114 chapters and more than 6,000 verses! As an adult he wrote a detailed medical encyclopedia, the *Canon of Medicine*, and a review of all the philosophical sciences of his day. The encyclopedia was used to teach doctors throughout the Muslim world. Later, it was translated and used in Europe for hundreds of years.



Muslim doctors were the first to understand measles and smallpox.

Ibn Sina described various diseases and their treatments with great accuracy. He also wrote a philosophical text titled *The Healing*. His interests didn't stop there, however. He also wrote books on astronomy and mathematics.

Eventually, the works of Ibn Sina and other Islamic scholars were shared with Europe. Muslims conquered southern Spain in the late 700s. The Spanish city of Córdoba became a center of Muslim art and learning. Córdoba boasted three thousand mosques, seven hundred libraries, and several universities. Muslim scholars in Spain also translated works from Arabic and Hebrew and Latin. By 1150, European doctors were reading translations of Ibn Sina's medical encyclopedia and philosophical works. By 1200, Europeans had been introduced to algebra.



La Mezquita—the Great Mosque of Córdoba—was built in 784. Later, it was turned into a Catholic cathedral.

Architecture and Art

During this time art and architecture also thrived. Some of the most beautiful buildings in the world were designed by Muslim architects. The Great Mosque of Samarra, in Iraq, is one of these buildings.

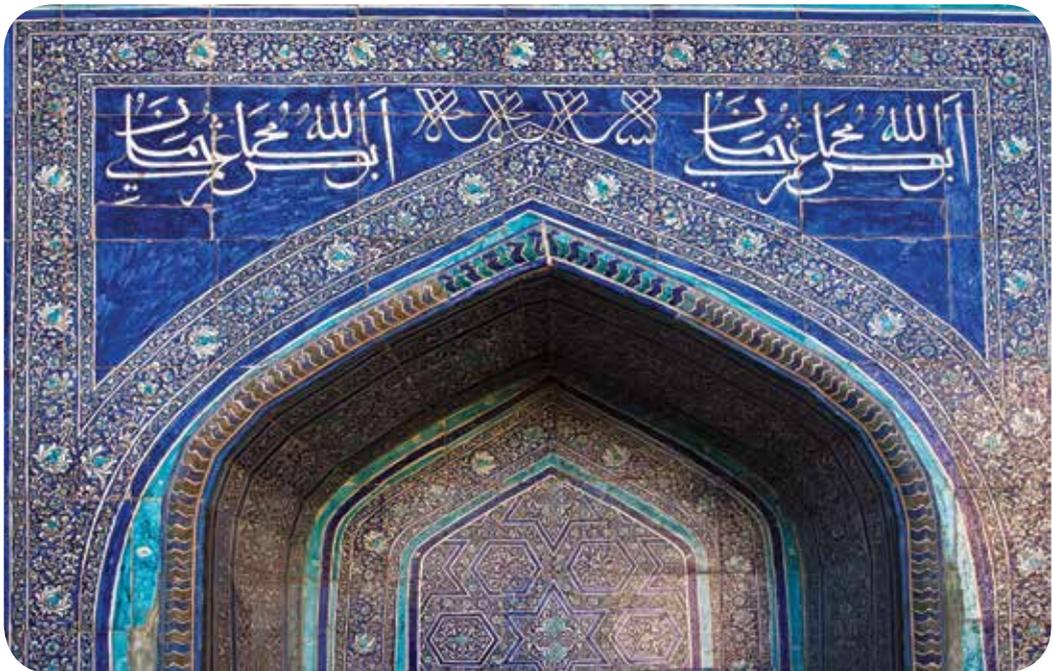
Muslim artists created complex patterns and designs in bright colors. They applied these patterns to all types of surfaces: pottery, tile, glass, wood, plaster, **stucco**, and even brick. Islamic artists developed **calligraphy**, the art of elegant writing. Muslims often used calligraphy to write words from the Koran. Thus, they turned the words into works of art.

Vocabulary

stucco, n. a type of rough plaster; a material used to make walls

calligraphy, n. artistic handwriting

Muslim poets wrote poems of great beauty. Other Muslim writers told stories that are still read today. One of the greatest story



This doorway is decorated with Islamic patterns and calligraphy.

collections in Muslim literature is *A Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *The Arabian Nights*.

While Muslim scholars, poets, and architects created great treasures, Islam continued to spread, by way of preaching, by trade, and by warfare. People in East Africa, West Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia converted to Islam.

During this time a new group of Muslims, the Seljuk (/sel*jook/) Turks, took control of much of the Islamic Empire. They did not stop there. By 1100, the Seljuk Turks had seized more than half of the old Byzantine Empire.

Chapter 5

The Crusades

A Call for Help Near the end of the 1000s, the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, asked Pope Urban II for help. Seljuk Turks were conquering parts of the Byzantine Empire. The emperor wanted help turning them back.

The Big Question

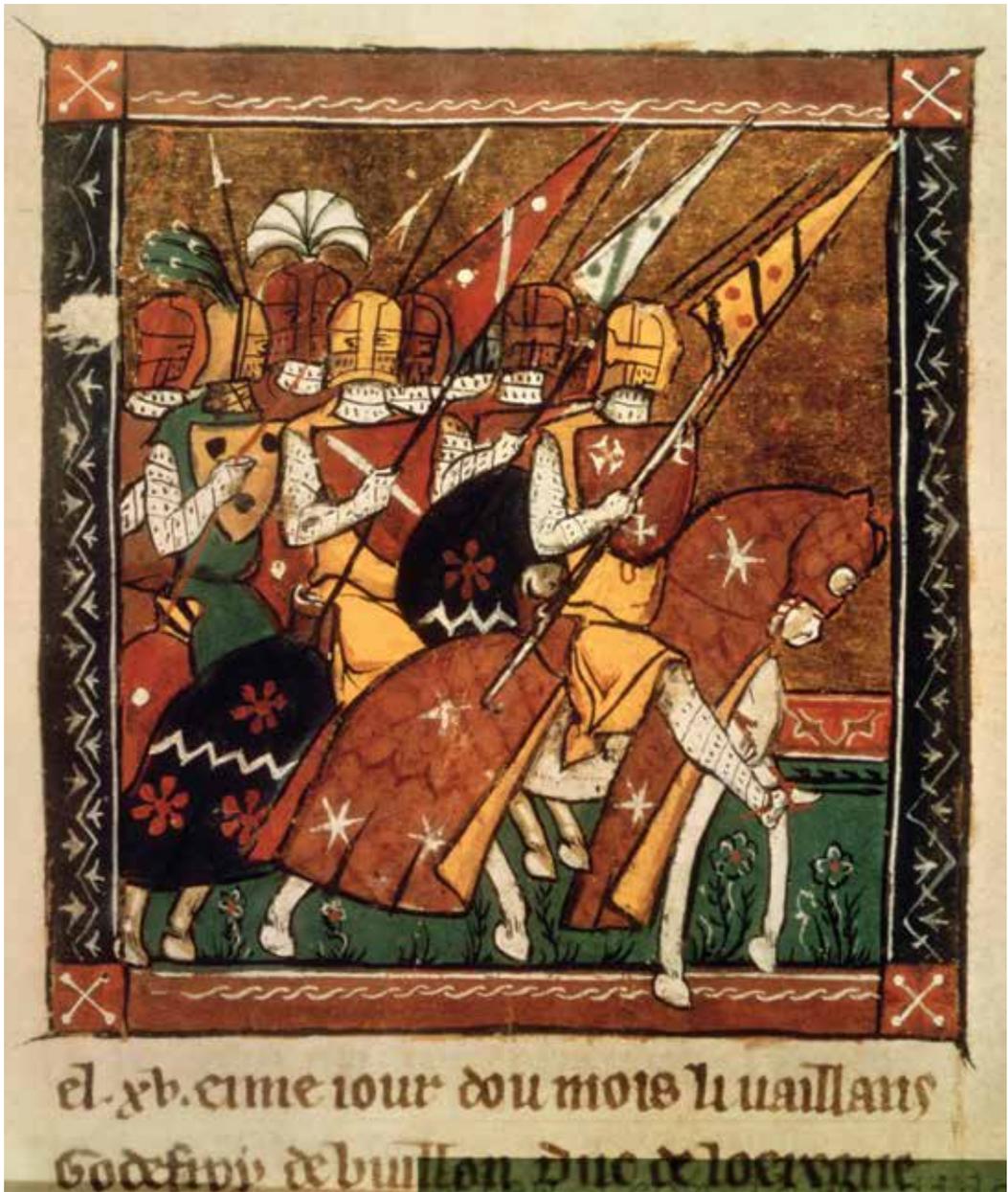
What events caused the First Crusade?

Urban II was the religious leader of Christians in western Europe. The Byzantines were members of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church. The emperor did not ask for help regaining his empire. Instead, he cleverly stressed the need for *all* Christians, whether they were from the west or the east, to unite against Muslims. Muslims also had control of Jerusalem and Palestine, known as the Holy Land. The emperor asked for help to conquer the Holy Land.

The Holy Land (present-day Israel and Palestine) was the place in the Middle East where Jesus had once lived. It had been under Muslim control for nearly four hundred years. During most of that time, many Christian pilgrims traveled to the Holy Land to pray and to visit the places sacred to Christianity. But Turkish conquests had made traveling to the Holy Land difficult.



The pope called on European Christians to reconquer the Holy Lands in the Middle East.



Many European knights answered the pope's call to free the Holy Land from Muslim control.

Pope Urban II responded as the Byzantine emperor had hoped. He delivered a stirring speech in 1095, urging all Christians to free the Holy Land. The Christians, assembled in a field, listened to Urban's powerful call for war against the Muslims. Many were eager to take

up this **cause**. Within a month, **crusaders** from western Europe were marching off to war.

War

A series of bloody wars followed when Christians from Europe set off to fight Muslims for control of the Holy Land. In Europe, these wars were called the Crusades. The word “crusade” comes from the Latin word *crux* meaning “cross.”

Among Muslims, these wars were called “the Frankish invasions.” The Arabic word for all Europeans in general was “Franks.” Muslims saw the Christian armies as invaders of their land.

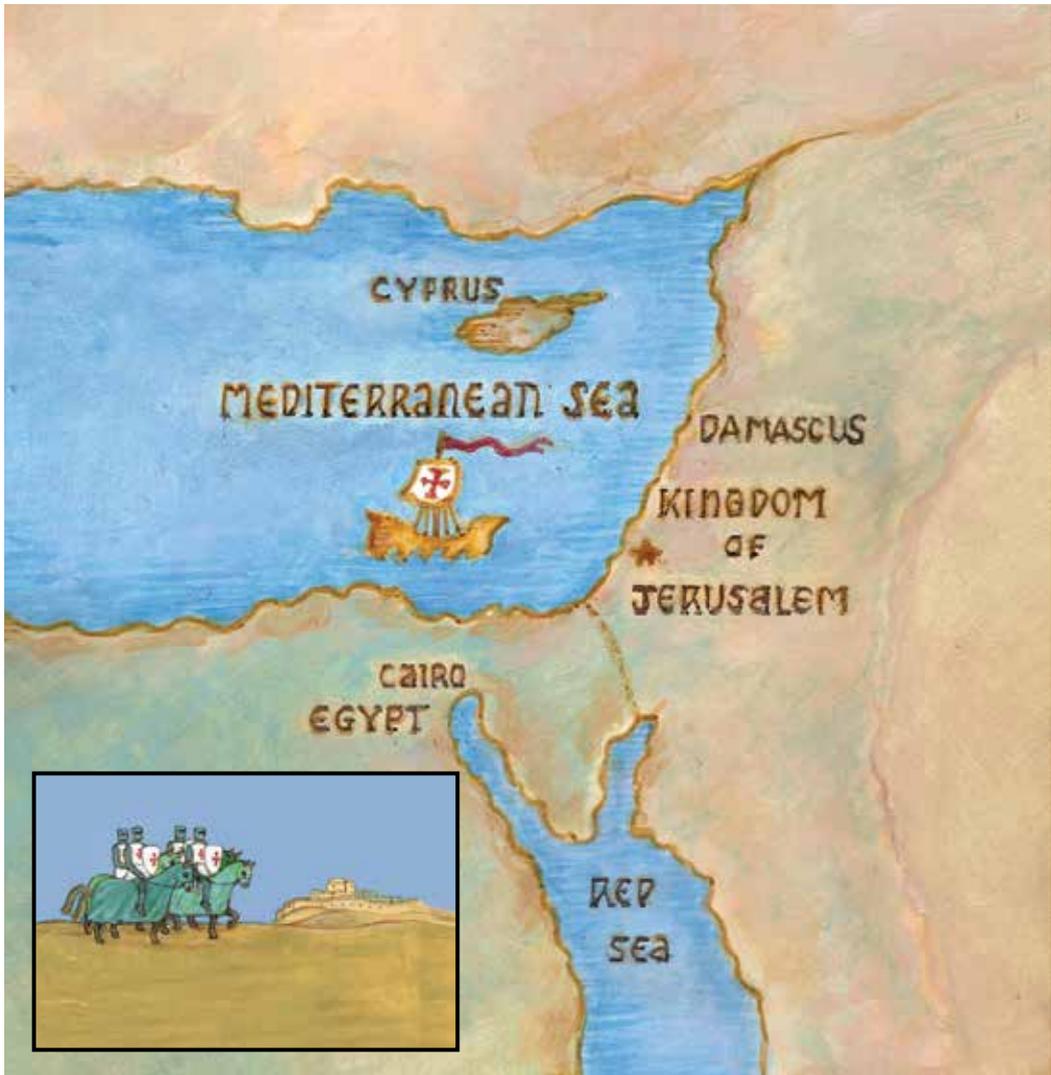
These clashes, from 1095 to 1272, were a sad chapter in history. Western Christians were eager to expel or convert nonbelievers. They attacked not only Muslims, but also Jews and eastern Christians, whom they also considered **heretics**. Muslims defended the lands they had conquered more than four hundred years before. Muslims generally respected Christians as fellow believers in one God and considered them as “People of the Book.” However, they did not want western Christians conquering their land. The result was nearly two hundred years of gruesome warfare.

Vocabulary

cause, n. something that a group of people believe in or fight for

crusader, n. someone who participated in religious wars during the Middle Ages in which Christians from Europe attempted to recover territory, or the “Holy Land (Jerusalem),” from Muslims in the Middle East

heretic, n. a person who does not accept or follow the ideas of a particular religion



During the Crusades, European crusaders fought Muslim armies for control of Palestine.

The Europeans sent eight Crusades from Europe. Only the First Crusade brought the Europeans military success. They gained some territory in Palestine, including Jerusalem. Over time, however, the Muslims gained back all the territory they had lost.

Richard and Saladin

The Third Crusade (1189–1192) is perhaps the most famous because the leaders of both sides were heroes to their followers. The crusaders

allow his soldiers to kill the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He left the holy city's shrines and churches unharmed.

The pope called for a new Crusade after the Muslim capture of Jerusalem. King Richard responded to the call.

Loved by his subjects, Richard was everything a knight in the Middle Ages was supposed to be. He was brave in warfare, a fearless leader whom men were willing to follow into battle. It is said that he put everything he owned up for sale to raise money for the Third Crusade.

Both Richard and Saladin were men of courage and were willing to fight for their religions. They were both convinced that the other was an **infidel** and that the Holy Land should be theirs. But they admired each other's bravery and skill in battle.

Vocabulary

infidel, n. someone who does not believe in a certain religion or rejects its teachings



England's King Richard I led Europeans in the Third Crusade.

The crusaders under Richard never did retake Jerusalem. However, the two sides came to an agreement. The European Christians would give up some of their land along the Mediterranean Sea. Saladin permitted Christians to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land, provided they came unarmed. Richard agreed to these terms and returned to England.

Some Effects of the Crusades

By the end of the last Crusade, the Muslims had reclaimed all the territories they had lost. Years of brutal warfare left Muslims and Christians suspicious and distrustful of each other.

Nevertheless, the Crusades allowed European nobles and Muslim leaders to learn from each other. In particular, western Europe benefited from Muslim scientific and cultural advances. By 1140, universities in western Europe taught the Arabic language. Western European scholars used Islamic scholarly texts. Arabic works, like those of Ibn Sina—known in the West by the Latin name Avicenna—were being translated into Latin. Trade was on the rise. Distrust remained, but it existed alongside a new curiosity.

The Ottoman Turks

By 1453 the Islamic Empire was dominated by another group of Turks: the Ottoman Turks. They had grown powerful enough to capture Constantinople. This city had been the center of the Byzantine Empire for more than 1,100 years. The Ottomans gathered a large fleet of ships and many warriors for an attack on Constantinople.



This painting shows the siege of Constantinople, which was finally conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

On May 29, 1453, the Ottomans captured this prize of the Byzantine Empire. They changed its name to Istanbul, from a Greek word meaning “into the city.” Istanbul would be a major center of Islam for centuries to come.

The Ottomans did not stop at Constantinople. Over the next seventy-five years, they pushed into southeastern Europe. They were halted first in 1529 at Vienna, in present-day Austria. In 1571 the navies of western Europe dealt the Ottomans a decisive defeat. The Ottomans stopped expanding into Europe.

For hundreds of years, Islamic armies had successfully defended themselves and conquered new lands. Islamic cultural accomplishments had continued to grow, too. Islam influenced people around the world. We still benefit from its scientific and mathematical advances. We still marvel at the riches of its art.

Glossary

A

algebra, n. a type of advanced mathematics (29)

C

caliph, n. a successor of Muhammad; the leader of Islam (23)

calligraphy, n. artistic handwriting (32)

cause, n. something that a group of people believe in or fight for (37)

clan, n. a group of families claiming a common ancestor (14)

convert, v. to change from one belief or religion to another (18)

crusader, n. someone who participated in religious wars during the Middle Ages in which Christians from Europe attempted to recover territory, or the “Holy Land (Jerusalem),” from Muslims in the Middle East (37)

H

heretic, n. a person who does not accept or follow the ideas of a particular religion (37)

I

idol, n. an object, such as a statue or carving, that represents a god and is worshipped (8)

infidel, n. someone who does not believe in a certain religion or rejects its teachings (40)

M

meditate, v. to think quietly or carefully about something (15)

minaret, n. a high tower on a mosque, from which Muslims may be called to prayer (2)

mosque, n. a place of worship for Muslims (4)

muezzin, n. a religious official who calls Muslims to prayer (2)

N

navigation, n. the act of planning and directing the movement of a ship, plane, or other vehicle (28)

P

pilgrimage (hajj in Arabic), n. a journey undertaken for a religious purpose (4)

prophet, n. someone chosen by God to bring a message to people (4)

R

Ramadan, n. a holy month in the Islamic calendar when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset (10)

revelation, n. something that is made known to humans by God (21)

S

sacred, adj. related to religion; holy (14)

scribe, n. a person whose job is copying written information (28)

shrine, n. a place considered holy because it is associated with a religious person or saint (8)

stucco, n. a type of rough plaster; a material used to make walls (32)

V

verse, n. a part of a poem, song, or religious text, such as the Bible, or rhymed prose, such as the Koran (6)

vision, n. an image in one’s mind or imagination that others cannot see (6)



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Troops of Sultan Mohammed II laying siege to Constantinople in 1453 (vellum), Ottoman School, (15th century) / Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France / De Agostini Picture Library / Bridgeman Images: 42

View of Mosul (From the Tigris). Baghdad, The Capital of Iraq, Stands On the Banks of the Tigris. / Private Collection / Photo © Liszt Collection / Bridgeman Images: 26–27

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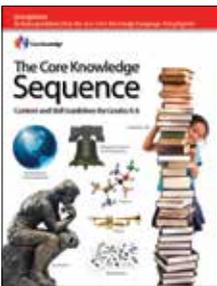
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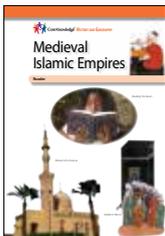
Medieval Islamic Empires

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