



**Big Era Five**  
**Patterns of Interregional Unity**  
**500 CE – 1500 CE**



**Landscape Teaching Unit 5.2**  
**Afroeurasia and the Rise of Islam, 600-1000 CE**

**Table of Contents**

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Why this unit?.....	2
Unit objectives.....	2
Time and materials.....	3
Authors.....	3
The historical context.....	3
This unit in the Big Era time line.....	4
Lesson 1: Primer on Islamic Beliefs and Practices.....	5
Lesson 2: The Spread of Islam .....	15
Lesson 3: The Impact of Islam in Afroeurasia, 632-1000 CE.....	33
Lesson 4: Rules of the Road and Laws of the Sea.....	42
This unit and the Three Essential Questions.....	49
This unit and the seven Key Themes.....	49
This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking.....	49
Resources.....	50
Conceptual links to other teaching units.....	52
Correlations to National and State Standards.....	53

## Why this unit?

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The study of religions in world history and geography courses is a basic requirement in every state's academic standards, just as it is a major feature of the National Standards for World History. The importance of studying the origins, beliefs, practices, and spread of religion is a matter of consensus because this subject has contemporary relevance. Also, religious movements have been enormously significant in human history. Religious beliefs and practices have brought forth traditions and institutions that have shaped urban and rural life, built empires, and contributed to trade, literacy, and scientific development. Religious movements have influenced conflict and cooperation on many levels, and stimulated migration and travel.

The rise and spread of Islam in the seventh and following centuries CE profoundly affected large parts of Afroeurasia. This topic offers students an opportunity to study several interlinked historical processes. The story of the origins of Islam itself reaches as far back into the history of Southwest Asia as human settlement itself, since Muslims believe that the revelation given to Muhammad during the seventh century was only the final one in a continuous sacred exchange reaching back through all of the biblical prophets to Adam and Eve. The story also includes the rise and fall of empires from Mesopotamia to the Romans and Persians, and the rapid expansion of territory under Muslim rule under the early caliphate and the Umayyad Dynasty. The spread of Islam is a distinct phenomenon that historians relate to rapid advances in urbanization, the growth of trade networks in Afroeurasia, and a series of migrations. Islam also gradually spread as a faith and way of life among the populations of a region extending from the Iberian Peninsula to the borders of China. Not until about four centuries after the conquests of Southwest Asia, North Africa, and parts of Inner Eurasia did Islam become the majority faith of the population in those regions. Even then, religious diversity remained a hallmark of those societies matched only in modern multicultural societies like the United States.

This unit traces the rise of Islam, its spread, and the development of Muslim civilization. It also addresses its impact on Afroeurasia as a whole.

## Unit objectives

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Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

1. Locate the Arabian Peninsula and the bodies of water and landmasses adjacent to it. Identify important cities such as Jerusalem, Makkah (Mecca), Madinah (Madina), Damascus, Baghdad, Constantinople, Cairo, Cordoba, and Samarkand.
2. Describe the basic beliefs and practices of Islam, including the Five Pillars and explain their relationship to Muslim life, culture, and civilization.
3. Distinguish between the rapid expansion of territory under Muslim rule and the gradual spread of Islam among various societies.
4. Analyze the relationship between the spread of Islam and the use of the Arabic language in scholarship and trade.
5. Identify social and political institutions that emerged in Muslim society in response to religious practices, and give examples of diverse ways in which these institutions manifested themselves in different regional traditions.

6. Relate the spread of Islam to the expansion of trade in Afroeurasia from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries CE.
7. Compare primary sources and relate them to geographic information about interregional trade relations in Afroeurasia.
8. Relate the spread of Islam to the expansion of urbanization in Afroeurasia from the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE.

## Time and materials

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These lessons take 3-5 class periods to complete.

## Authors

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## The historical context

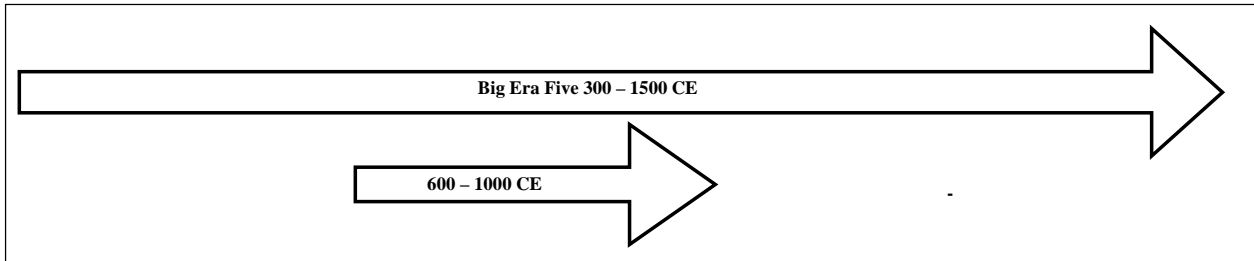
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During the millennium after 300 CE, significant changes occurred across Afroeurasia. Large states such as the Roman empire in the Mediterranean region and the Han dynasty in China collapsed. Large, multi-ethnic states, such as the Arab empire and the Mongol empire, formed and reformed. Throughout this period, invasions, migrations, and state-building activities strengthened and extended contacts among people in different parts of the Eastern Hemisphere and stimulated the exchange of goods and ideas over long distances. By the end of Big Era Five an interconnected system of commercial and cultural interchange extended across most of Afroeurasia.

This network—moving at the pace of sailing ships and pack animal caravans—enabled a wide variety of economic, intellectual, religious, and technological exchanges. Independent, profit-seeking merchants traded over long distances in both bulk and luxury products, stimulated technological innovation, and enriched the treasuries of political authorities. Trade, the spread of religions, and urbanization promoted the exchange of scientific ideas and the arts. Migrations and the spread of food and fiber crops enhanced agriculture and contributed to trade. In the period of especially remarkable economic growth in Afroeurasia from about 600 to 1500 CE, China and India became the biggest manufacturing centers. The Muslim lands of Southwest Asia served as the turnstile of the hemisphere, its cities generating their own finished goods and transshipping wares in huge quantities from one part of the hemisphere to the other. After 1000, Europe also emerged as a new center of growth, urbanization, and commerce. As trade grew, peoples of many regions were drawn into a single network.

## **This unit in the Big Era time line**

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***Lesson 1***  
***Primer on Islamic Beliefs and Practices***

**Materials:**

Student Handouts 1.1 and 1.2.

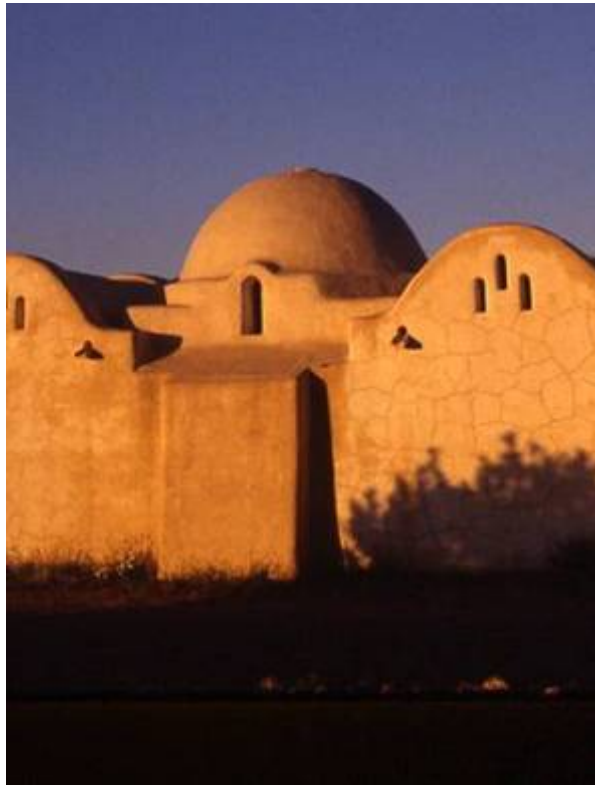
**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Describe the basic beliefs of Islam and list its two major authoritative sources.
- List the Five Pillars of Islam and associate each one with its definition and basic practices.
- Explain several levels of meaning of the Five Pillars and associate each with social and cultural practices.

**Procedure:**

1. Distribute and assign Student Handout 1.1. Use study questions to review and develop understanding of the basic information on Islamic beliefs and practices.
2. Distribute the blank graphic organizer table on the significance of the Five Pillars of Islam (Student Handout 1.2) and have students fill it in using class brainstorming techniques. Check answers using the model graphic organizer (also Student Handout 1.2).



**Dar al-Islam Islamic Center**  
**Abiquiu, New Mexico**  
Photo by R. Dunn

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.1—Islamic Beliefs and Practices*

The word Islam means “peace through submission to God.” Muslim practice is defined by the *Qur’an* (holy scripture) and the *Sunnah*, or example set by Prophet Muhammad and transmitted through the *Hadith* (recorded words and deeds). Islam is a universal religion, meaning that anyone may accept its beliefs and become a Muslim, or follower of Islam. A Muslim is “one who seeks peace through submission to God.” This means striving to reach a goal rather than achieving a fixed identity. “Seeking the face of God” is an expression often used to describe this lifetime goal. To fulfill the identity of a Muslim, a person must carry out certain acts, and live a moral, God-fearing life.

These basic acts required of a Muslim are called the Five Pillars. Accepting Islam requires only that a person state the basic creed, “There is no god but God” and “Muhammad is the messenger of God.” That is the first of the five basic acts or duties. The Five Pillars of Islam are:

- (1) *shahadah* -- to state belief in One God and the prophethood of Muhammad,
- (2) *salat* -- to pray five obligatory prayers each day,
- (3) *siyam* -- to fast from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan each year,
- (4) *zakat* – to pay obligatory charity each year,
- (5) *hajj* -- to make the pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime.

The following sections describe the pillars in detail.

**1. Shahadah (the Islamic Creed)** The declaration of faith in Islam is a simple statement that begins *Ashud anna*, (“I witness that”), and continues with the statement *La illaha illa Allah* (“There is no god but God”), and ends with the affirmation *wa Muhammad rasul Allah* (“and Muhammad is the messenger of God”). The first part defines the role of the Muslim, a continuous striving throughout life. This striving reaches into all aspects of personality and activity toward the self, the family and the community, to the entire community of humankind and the natural environment. The second part affirms the existence of one God by negating the existence of any other creature that people might worship, or any partner with God. It underlines the Muslim’s direct relationship with God as a witness and as a servant of God. No central authority nor privileged persons stand between God and the individual. The third part of the creed witnesses that God sent prophets to humankind, as stated in the scriptures revealed before the Qur’an. Then, it affirms that Muhammad was a prophet, or messenger who received revelation (the Qur’an) and guidance from God. Among the earlier revelations mentioned in the Qur’an are the Torah (given to Moses), the Psalms (given to David) and the Evangelium (given to Jesus). This series of prophets and revelation includes—among others—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Muhammad, according to the universally accepted teachings of Islam. The Qur’an states that what was revealed to Muhammad confirmed the basic message of the earlier scriptures.

**2. Salah (Muslims’ Daily Prayer)** is the five daily prayers that are the duty of every Muslim. Muslims perform the recitations and physical movements of *salah* as taught by their prophet Muhammad, according to Islamic sources. Each of the five prayers can be performed within a

window of time. (1) between dawn and sunrise, (2) noon to mid-afternoon, (3) between mid-afternoon and just before sunset, (4) at sunset, and (5) after twilight until nighttime. Prayer time is determined by the sun's position, which Muslims today calculate by clock time, using charts that change with the longer and shorter days of each season. Before praying, Muslims perform a brief ritual washing. This purification prepares the worshipper for entering the state of prayer, of standing before God. It is a symbol of the cleansing effect of prayer. No matter what language they speak, all Muslims pray in the Arabic language.

In the *salah*, Muslims recite specific words and selected verses from the Qur'an while standing, bowing, kneeling with the hands and forehead touching the ground, and sitting. Each cycle of movements is one *rak'at*, or unit of prayer, and each of the five prayers has between two and four units. At the end of the prayer, and throughout their lives, Muslims pray informally, asking for guidance and help in their own words. They also recite special prayers passed down as the words of the prophets. If two or more Muslims pray together, one of them will be the *imam* (prayer leader), and the others form rows behind the *imam*.

*Masjid* is the Arabic name for an Islamic house of worship. The common English term *mosque* is a French version of the Spanish word *mezquita*. The *masjid* is named after the position of prayer called *sujud*, which means kneeling with the hands and forehead touching the ground. The *masjid* is a simple, enclosed space oriented towards the city of Makkah (on the Arabian Peninsula) where Islam's holiest place—the Ka'bah—is located. There is no furniture except mats or rugs, and Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder in rows, following the movements of the prayer leader all together. Because of these movements and the closeness of the worshippers, women pray together in rows behind the men.

**3. Sawm (Fasting)** During one month each year, Muslims fast, meaning that they do not eat or drink anything between dawn and sunset. Fasting is a duty for adults, but many children participate voluntarily, for at least part of the day, or only a few days. The fast begins with *sahoor* (a pre-dawn meal). While fasting, Muslims perform the dawn, noon and afternoon prayers, and go about their normal duties. At sunset, Muslims break their fast with a few dates and water, then pray, then eat *iftar* (a meal that breaks the fast). *Iftar* is usually eaten with family and friends, or at the *masjid*, which hosts meals donated by community members for all. After the evening prayer, many Muslims go to the *masjid* for congregational prayers that feature a reading of one thirtieth of the Qur'an each night. They complete the whole Qur'an by the end of the month.

The Qur'an links fasting with the practice of earlier prophets and religions: "*You who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint.*" (Qur'an 2:183) The fast begins at dawn on the first day of Ramadan, the tenth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Muslims may fast individually during the year, but doing it as a community magnifies the experience. The rhythm of life changes, and people's relations soften. Daily schedules change, and some workplaces and schools can adjust their schedules. Living outside majority Muslim



countries, Muslims find ways to cope and make the most of Ramadan. Gathering with others is an important part of that, whether in homes or in *masjids* and community centers.

Each individual experiences hunger and its discomforts, but in a few days, the body gets used to it. Muslims are supposed to fast in the spirit as well, and make extra effort to avoid arguments, conflicts and bad words, thoughts, and deeds. Fasting builds will-power against temptation, helps people feel sympathy for those in need, and encourages generosity toward others. Fasting causes physical and psychological changes, and many claim that it is a healthy way to purify the body. Fasting helps people to reevaluate their lives spiritually, and draw closer to God.

3. **Zakah (Charity as a Duty)** is the annual giving of a percentage of a Muslim's wealth and possessions beyond basic needs. The word means "purification," meaning that a person is purified from greed by giving wealth to others. When Muslims have cash savings for a year, they give 2.5% of it as *zakat*. *Zakat* on other forms of wealth, such as land, natural resources, and livestock is calculated at different rates. Paying the *zakat* reminds Muslims of the duty to help those less fortunate, and that wealth is a gift entrusted to a person by God rather than a possession to be hoarded selfishly. Prophet Muhammad set the precedent that *zakah* was collected and distributed locally, and what remained after meeting local needs was distributed to the larger Muslim community through the general treasury. *Zakah* money belongs to several categories of persons: "*The alms are only for the poor and the needy, and those [public servants] who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and for the wayfarers; a duty imposed by Allah. Allah is knower, Wise.*" (Qur'an 9:60).

Muslims may distribute *zakah* to needy and deserving people and groups on their own, and each person is responsible for figuring out the amount owed. Of course, 2.5% is a minimum amount, and more may be given.

Islamic traditional sources mention charity often. A *hadith* of the Prophet said: "*Charity is a necessity for every Muslim.*" He was asked: '*What if a person has nothing?*' *The Prophet replied: 'He should work with his own hands for his benefit and then give something out of such earnings in charity.'* The Companions asked: '*What if he is not able to work?*' The Prophet said: '*He should help poor and needy persons.'* The Companions further asked: '*What if he cannot do even that?*' The Prophet said: '*He should urge others to do good.'* The Companions said: '*What if he lacks that also?*' The Prophet said: '*He should check himself from doing evil. That is also charity.*'"

## 5. Hajj (Journey to Makkah)

The basic act of worship in Islam is the pilgrimage (journey) to the city of Makkah during a certain time of year. The *hajj* rites symbolically reenact the trials and sacrifices of Prophet Abraham, his wife Hajar, and their son Isma'il over 4,000 years ago. Muslims must perform the *hajj* at least once in their lives, provided their health and finances permit. The *hajj* is performed annually by over 2,000,000 people during the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, *Dhul-Hijjah*. In commemoration of the trials of Abraham and his family in Makkah, which included



Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in response to God's command, Muslims make a pilgrimage to the sacred city at least once in their lifetime. The *hajj* is one of the "five pillars" of Islam, and thus an essential part of the faith and practice of Muslims.

Muslims from all over the world, including the United States, travel to Makkah (in today's Saudi Arabia). Before arriving in the holy city, Muslims enter a state of being called *ihram*. They remove their ordinary clothes and put on the simple dress of pilgrims--two seamless white sheets for men, and usually, white dresses and head covering for women. The pilgrims are dressed in the same simple clothes. No one can tell who is rich, famous or powerful. White clothes are a symbol of purity, unity, and equality before God. The gathering of millions of pilgrims at Makkah is a reminder of the gathering of all humans before God at the Judgment Day. It is a symbol of the Muslim ummah, because pilgrims gather from all corners of the earth. It is a symbol of the past, because the pilgrims visit places where Abraham and his family faced the challenge of their faith, and where Muhammad was born and preached. Pilgrims go around the Ka'bah. According to Islamic teachings, it was the first house of worship for one God on earth. Pilgrims call "*Labbayka Allahumma Labbayk*," which means "*Here I am at your service, O God, here I am!*" This echoes the call of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible, in answer to the call of God. Pilgrims also walk seven times between the hills named **Safa** and **Marwah**, where they recall how Ishmael's mother searched for water for him, and the spring of water called Zam-zam flowed under his foot, and still flows.

Other stations of the pilgrimage are nearby Makkah, where they perform prayers, camp overnight, and stand all together on the Plain of Arafat asking for God's forgiveness and guidance. They recall Abraham's struggle with Satan by casting pebbles at three stone columns. Pilgrims complete the hajj by sacrificing a sheep or other animal, whose meat is to be shared with family, friends, and those in need. Nowadays, a meat processing plant near the place of sacrifice helps distribute the meat around the world. The sacrifice reminds of the Biblical and Quranic story telling how Abraham was willing to sacrifice even his son for God, and a ram appeared in the boy's place.

Pilgrims leave the state of ihram by trimming or cutting their hair and returning to Makkah for a final visit to the Ka'bah. A *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad says that a pilgrim "*will return as free of sin as a newborn baby.*" The pilgrimage brings Muslims from all around the world, of different nationalities, languages, races, and regions, to come together in a spirit of universal humanity to worship God together.

*And when We made the House at Makkah a place of assembly and a place of safety for humankind, saying: Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood to pray. And We laid a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael: Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down in worship.*

*And when Abraham prayed: My Lord! Make this a city of peace region of security and feed its people with fruits, such of them as believe in God and the Last Day, He answered: As for him who disbelieves, I shall leave him content for a while, then I shall compel him to the doom of fire--a hapless journey's end!*

*And remember when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the House, with this prayer: Our Lord! Accept from us this service. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower.*

From Surat al-Baqara, Ayah 125-128 (adapted from Marmaduke Pickthall translation)

### Study Questions

1. What is the most basic belief for Muslims?
2. What is the Islamic statement of belief called?
3. Identify and describe the prayers required of Muslims. How do Muslims prepare for prayer?
4. Who is required to pay the *zakat*, and who may receive it?
5. Which of the five pillars is linked to the lunar month of Ramadan? When, why, and how do Muslims fast?
6. What is the *hajj*, and how often must a Muslim perform it? What is the significance of clothing for the *hajj*?
7. What is the relationship of Abraham to the fifth pillar of Islam?

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**Muslim at Prayer**  
**Heathrow Airport, London**  
Photo by R. Dunn

## Lesson 1

### ***Student Handout 1.2—The Five Pillars’ Many Dimensions***

The Five Pillars of Islam are formal acts of worship—essentials of practicing Islam. Islamic teachings also require a person to live according to moral values and to work toward just relations among people in the family, community, and the world. Simply put, Muslims are supposed to live in knowledge that every act happens in the sight of God.

Even though there is much more to living as a Muslim than the Five Pillars, these universal acts have influenced Muslim societies in many ways. The Five Pillars are individual acts, but they have social effects. Each has a spiritual meaning, but it also has worldly significance. During more than 1400 years of Muslim history, practice of the Five Pillars has shaped the places where Muslims live, the form of their homes and cities, their buildings and cultural institutions, and even the links between regions of the world where Muslims live and travel.

**Belief in one God**, the first pillar of Islam, helped spread a simple message that attracted many people over time. The idea of spreading the message and living out its ideas opened up whole new branches of learning, like law and the sciences. Curiosity to know and understand led to the building of libraries and the spread of science and technology across much of the world.

**Daily prayer**, the second pillar, resulted in the constructions of *masjids* (mosques) everywhere that Muslims live. From the simplest mud-brick structures to huge, decorated edifices of stone, brick and tile, a wide variety of *masjid* styles developed in different Muslim regions. To have a clean place to pray, Muslims often use a mat or carpet at home or elsewhere. Local design traditions and techniques produced wonderful designs for these rugs. The need Muslims had to know the exact time for prayer and the direction of Makkah from any place in the world encouraged the sciences of mathematics, astronomy, and geography. The rhythm of the prayer times regulated daily life in Muslim societies everywhere.

**Zakah**, the third pillar, provided a steady source of charity because it is required, though additional giving is voluntary. One way of giving is to donate the money from a business on a regular and permanent basis, for example, from the sale of fruit from an orchard each year. These goods and money may be put into a foundation, as a kind of contract with God, or a trust fund that would last as long as the source lasted. By comparison, today in the U.S. wealthy people and organizations of many faiths give money to charitable foundations for hospitals, education, the arts, and other purposes.

**Ramadan fasting**, the fourth pillar, has been a special month of the year for Muslims for more than 1400 years. The rhythm of daily life changes, and Ramadan is a time of charity, community, and celebration that affects everyone in the society. Like the winter holiday season in the U.S. and Europe, the month-long celebration brings an economic boost to merchants and producers. Families host guests, and those who are able provide prepared food for anyone who attends the *masjid* in time for the *iftar*, the meal that breaks the daily fast. At the end of the month, gift-giving and obligatory charity in the form of foodstuffs and other necessities have a ripple effect

on society's prosperity and well-being. This burst of energy is balanced by an overall slowing of the pace of life and work, with the idea of putting more time and energy into the spiritual side of life.

Finally, the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Makkah each year, has had an enormous effect on Muslim societies and on the world. Muslims from Arabia, Africa, many parts of Asia, and now the Americas and Europe have made their way to the city of Makkah for the annual pilgrimage. The idea of the pilgrimage obliged people in the smallest villages to look outward on the world. The journey renewed contact among the world community of Muslims, helping to unify beliefs, practices, and knowledge. Muslim rulers were proud to build roads, watering places, ports, and way stations, doing their part to help pilgrims achieve the goal of the *hajj*. It did not matter that the Muslim world did not remain politically unified after the eighth century because Muslim society took on a dynamic of its own. Islam continued to spread, and new ideas, technologies, and even new foods and clothing spread with it.

When Muslims today carry out the Five Pillars, these basic acts of worship continue the traditions of unity-in-diversity among Muslims. These simple, regular practices have had far-reaching effects in many areas of Muslim life and civilization.

Name	Meaning	Spiritual	Worldly	Individual	Communal	Cultural Influences
SHAHADA	To say the creed: <i>“There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God”</i>	Reminds that there is one Creator, who sent messengers and revealed words of guidance to humans	Muslims may not worship idols and should not prefer material things of life to moral life and belief	Each human being has a direct relationship with God	The basic message of Islam is universal. Muslims accept that earlier prophets, scriptures, and religions were true	No central religious authority nor priesthood, though Shi’i Muslims grant greater spiritual authority to the office of the Imam than Sunni Muslims do; limitation on the power of worldly authority over Muslim societies; Islamic jurisprudence (Islamic law system) developed and Arabic language of Qur’an spread
SALAT	To perform the five daily prayers as Muhammad did.	Obedience to God’s command to worship; regular purification during each day	Physical act and spiritual act joined; healthful exercise and mental relaxation	Self-discipline and self-renewal woven into life patterns; opportunity to seek forgiveness and ask God for help	Binds society together in regular worship and contact; established regular pattern to daily and weekly social life.	<i>Masjids</i> (mosques) exist everywhere groups of Muslims live, with their own architecture, decoration and sacred art; need to know prayer times led to study of astronomy, math, geography, and to study of science colleges & universities
ZAKAH	Giving to the poor and those in need a percentage of wealth beyond basic needs	Purification of wealth by giving a portion away—“a loan to God”	Constant and dependable stream of charity available to Muslim society	Limitation on greed and accumulation of wealth; stimulated both required and voluntary additional charity	Early development of charitable institutions and foundations; collective public works free from state control, tax exempt	Charitable foundations ( <i>waqf</i> ) developed as permanent source of funding for mosques, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, wells, and traveler accommodations; institutionalized help for the poor
SIYAM	Fasting from dawn to sunset during the month of Ramadan (ninth lunar month)	Fasting a tradition of prophets; purpose to come near to God; annual renewal of spirit	Fasting is said to contribute to health, rid the body of poisons	Self-discipline & sense of achievement; breaking up bad eating habits; God-consciousness	Whole community participates, visits, shares food, renews contact; additional prayers & Qur’an readings	Ramadan an international celebration all over Muslim world; stimulated math & astronomy for setting lunar calendar
HAJJ	Making the journey to Makkah to perform the rites during the pilgrimage season	“Dress rehearsal for Judgment Day;” standing before God; recalls obedience of Abraham	Orients Muslims even in remote places toward a world community; encourages travel and communication	Developed sense of individual being accountable to God; gave people desire to travel, think beyond own backyard	Brought people together to trade and exchange knowledge; organized huge pilgrim caravans from each city; established roads, wells, and ports for better travel	Contributed to the mobility & connectedness of Muslim society over 14 centuries; renewed common beliefs and practices, overcoming local traditions; increased trade & scholarship

Name	Meaning	Spiritual	Worldly	Individual	Communal	Cultural Influences
SHAHADA						
SALAT						
ZAKAH						
SIYAM						
HAJJ						

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## *Lesson 2*

### *The Spread of Islam*

**Materials:**

Student Handouts 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3

Large wall map of the Eastern Hemisphere suitable for a bulletin board display

Multi-colored sticky note strips in five bright colors

**Objectives:** Students should be able to:

- relate the spread of Islam to historical events and processes of historical change.
- trace the spread of Islam chronologically and regionally.
- assess the importance of cultural and political factors in the spread of Islam.
- evaluate the importance of shifts in economic and political power that accompanied the spread of Islam.
- evaluate the importance of and cultural influence among states and regions accompanying the spread of Islam.
- use a map key to identify and locate regions of Afroeurasia.

**Procedure:**

1. Assign or read as a class Student Handout 2.1 ("The Spread of Islam"). Study Questions at the end of the reading give suggestions for comprehension and discussion activities. Draw particular attention to the historical distinction between the rapid expansion of territory under Muslim rule and the gradual spread of Islam among the populations. Discuss previous ideas students may have about the spread of Islam "by the sword" or about "instant conversion" of regions to any world faith. Explain that conversion has usually been a gradual process.
2. Ask students to list the reasons why people might have changed from the religion they grew up with.
  - What are the conditions for converting from one faith to another (being exposed to different ideas, evaluating potential advantages and disadvantages of conversion, and so on)?
  - What influences might play a role in a decision to convert (social, political, or economic)?
  - Is it more challenging for individuals to join a faith when it appears to be a minority faith or when its members form the majority?
  - How do poverty and persecution of members of the faith, or, conversely, the wealth and power of adherents affect individual choice about conversion?
  - How might people across a wide geographic area learn about the beliefs of a faith? What role might spiritual leaders play?



- What other role models, such as traders, travelers, and teachers might influence people in converting?

For further reading, see Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) on the spread of world religions.

3. Distribute Student Handout 2.2 ("Chronology of the Spread of Islam"). Discuss the introduction to preview the information the students will find in the chronology. Reinforce for students the difference between the historical concepts of expanding Muslim-ruled territory and the spread of Islam among peoples in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Discuss the major events listed in all six historical segments into which the chronology is divided. Students should pay particular attention to items on the chronology that represented advances as well as setbacks for the spread of Islam.

Adaptation for middle school: Teachers may find it useful to break up the chronology into parts that correspond to historical periods or geographic regions being studied in class, using the chronology in conjunction with individual units corresponding to textbook chapters or content standards. By doing so, students can focus on five or six items at a time. If the class is making a world history timeline on the wall or in a notebook, they can insert these items from the chronology into the larger timeline. Discuss how these events described in the chronology may relate to events taking place in other regions and societies.

4. This is a bulletin board activity, correlating chronology to geography. Make a master copy of the Student Handout 2.2 by photocopying an enlarged version. Distribute copies of the chronology to members of the class, dividing them into six groups, each group taking one of the six historical segments. Give each group a set of rectangular sticky-note strips, each set in a different bright color. Each of these colored sets corresponds to one of the six historical periods. Have students in each group identify the historical events on their section of the chronology that relate to the spread of both Islam and Muslim rule. Also identify any events that indicate retreat of Islam or Muslim rule. Write brief summaries and dates of these events on the colored sticky-notes. At the end of the work period, have each group attach their strips to the classroom's wall map of the world at a location or locations appropriate to the event. (A physical map is preferable to a modern political map for this exercise.) The collection of strips on the map will show patterns in the sequence of the spread of Islam and Muslim rule from the seventh century to about 1500 CE. Make a map key on or next to the map using the six color sticky-notes.
5. In this activity students graph rates of conversion to Islam by region. Using Handout 2.4, have students read the background information to the graph of conversion rates in five Muslim regions during the period from the seventh to the end of the thirteenth century. Go over any unfamiliar terminology and discuss the study questions. Provide examples or brainstorm sources that historians and even contemporary demographers might use to gain information about ordinary people (e.g. census data, tax registers, birth and death registers).

Read the sample entry from a Persian biographical dictionary (Student Handout 2.5) and discuss what sort of information is provided. Compare this entry written in the early centuries of Islam with modern volumes of *Who's Who in America*, a resource that may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.marquiswhoswho.com/biographies/biopages/>. What are some similarities and differences in the kind of information provided?

Assess students for their understanding of the labels on the graph and the key. Emphasize to the students that the horizontal axis of the graph refers to dates, both in the Hijri (AH) and Common Era (CE) dating systems. It is also important to note that the percentages on the vertical axis do NOT represent percentages of total population but percentages of individual converts from a sample derived from biographical dictionaries.

Ask students to discuss or write essays on the study questions related to the graph.

6. Extension activity: Compare the map produced for the bulletin board activity (no. 4 above) with Student Handout 2.3, a published map on the spread of Islam. What agreement or disagreement do you find?

### ***Student Handout 2.1—The Spread of Islam***

**A Slow Process.** In the century after Muhammad's death, Muslims conquered territory "from the Atlantic to the borders of China." Many students reading this often wrongly imagine that this huge region instantly became "Islamic," meaning that most of the people living in those lands quickly became Muslims. To the contrary, the spread of Islam in these vast territories took centuries, and Muslims made up a small minority of the population for a long time. In other words, the expansion of territory under Muslim rule happened very rapidly, but the spread of Islam in those lands was a much slower process. There are several kinds of historical evidence of this gradual conversion process that we will examine in this lesson.

**"Let there be no compulsion in religion."** The Qur'an specifies, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2: 256). This verse states that no person can ever be forced to accept religion against his or her will. It tells Muslims that they cannot force people to convert to Islam. Muhammad set a precedent as the leader of Madinah. Under his leadership, the Muslims practiced tolerance towards those of other religions. They were signers of the Constitution of Madinah and of treaties with the non-Muslim groups. According to tradition, Muhammad often discussed religious ideas with the Jews, Christians, and polytheists (believers in many gods), and he heard their questions about his teachings. The Qur'an records some of the questions that people put to Muhammad, and his replies. Muslim leaders after Muhammad were required to be tolerant, based on the authority of both the Qur'an (in this and many other verses), and the Sunnah, that is, custom practiced by Muhammad or by early members of the Muslim community.

With some exceptions, Muslim leaders have adhered to this precedent over time. One major type of evidence for tolerance by Muslim political leadership is the persistence of many religious minorities in the lands Muslims have ruled. Spain is one example, where Christians and Jews lived and worshipped under Muslim rule and contributed to the society in many ways. The writings of well-known Jewish and Christian scholars, physicians, scientists, and artisans still exist. After the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain following the conquests of Ferdinand and Isabella, Jews settled in North Africa under Muslim rule. They were also invited by the sultan of the Ottoman empire to settle in Istanbul. Some of these communities still exist today. In Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey, for example, Christian and Jewish groups that pre-date the coming of Islam still exist, as do the Coptic Christians in Egypt, after 1400 years of Muslim rule there.

**Becoming Muslim.** Muhammad preached Islam at Makkah and Madinah in Arabia for about twenty-three years, while he received revelation of the Qur'an, according to Islamic teachings. For the first ten years (612 to 622 CE), he preached publicly at Makkah. After the migration to Madinah he preached for ten years, until his death in 632, only in his own house—the first *masjid* (mosque)—to people who came to hear him. Preaching in houses or in the *masjid* became the pattern in Islam.

To accept Islam, a person only has to make the profession of faith (*shahada*) in front of two or more witnesses. Even after a person has accepted Islam, he or she may take a long time to learn and apply its practices, going through many different stages or levels of understanding and practice over time. As Islam spread among large populations, this process was multiplied.

Different individuals and social classes may have had different understandings of Islam at the same time. Also, many local variations and pre-Islamic customs remained, even after societies had majority Muslim populations for a long time. These differences have been a source of diversity among Muslim societies and regions.

**Growth of Muslim population.** It is quite easy to map the large territory ruled by different Muslim political groups, or to illustrate the expansion of an empire. We can shade in areas of a map, and we can track the dates of Muslim rulers and dynasties from the time of Muhammad to the present day. It is more difficult, however, to understand why historians speak of a geographic area as a “Muslim region,” “Muslim society,” “Muslim civilization,” or even “the Islamic world.” At a minimum, such terms must mean that most of the people who lived in those places considered themselves to be Muslims, that is, people who believed in the religion called Islam. By what point in time did the majority of people in those places accept Islam, and how rapid was its spread? What effect did the gradual or rapid spread of Islam have on language, customs, art, and politics? How did the fact that many people were converting to Islam relate to the development of Muslim culture and civilization? We know, of course, that substantial numbers of people in those regions continued to practice the faiths they had belonged to before Islam, including Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Hindus and others. The social contributions of people of these religions continued under Muslim rule. As these former majorities became minorities, how were they affected? How did the presence of a large region in which the majority of its inhabitants were Muslim affect adjoining regions where the majority accepted other faiths?

**The process of conversion.** In the decades after Muhammad’s death, nearly all of the inhabitants of Arabia accepted Islam, except Christian and Jewish communities, which were allowed to continue practicing their faiths. As Muslim rule extended into regions beyond the Arabian tribal system, however, *khalifas*, that is, the successors of the Prophet as leaders of the Muslim community, did not encourage conversion to Islam among the populations of newly conquered areas.

Nevertheless, during the early caliphates (632–750) non-Arabs began to accept Islam. Conversion took place at first among the lowest classes of people. Men and women migrated to Muslim garrison cities to look for jobs and to offer their services to the ruling group. Learning about Islam in these centers, some converted and expanded the Muslim population. These migrants became associates, or *mawali*, of Arab tribes, a traditional method of integrating outsiders. Some migrant Arab and *mawali* converts founded families that later made important contributions in preserving and spreading Islamic knowledge. They became scholars of Islamic law, history, literature, and the sciences. In this way, Islam spread in spite of the policies of political rulers, not because of them.

During the years of the Umayyad Caliphate (Umayyad dynasty) from 661–750 CE, the overwhelming majority of non-Arab populations of the empire, which stretched from Morocco to Inner Eurasia, did not practice Islam. Toward the end of that time, the North African Berbers became the first major non-Arab group to accept the faith. Within a few centuries, Christianity disappeared almost completely in North Africa (today’s Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), though Christian groups persisted in many other Muslim regions. Jews remained as a small minority, with many living in Muslim Spain. The spread of Islam among Iranians and other peoples of

Persia was the second major movement, beginning about 720 CE. Both of these early groups of converts caused problems for the central government. In North Africa, Berbers set up an independent caliphate, breaking up the political unity of Islam. In Persia, the revolution arose that replaced the Umayyad with the Abbasid dynasty in 750, though only a small proportion of the population of Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia, centered on the Tigris-Euphrates valley) had at that time accepted Islam. From then, however, Islam was no longer the religion of a single ethnic or ruling group, and the rates of conversion climbed more rapidly in lands under Muslim rule.

For example, Arab Muslim forces conquered Egypt in 642, but by 700 few Egyptians had become Muslims. By 900 CE, about fifty percent of the population was probably Muslim, and by 1200, more than 90 percent. In Syria, Islam spread even more slowly. There, the 50-percent mark was not reached until 1200, nearly six hundred years after the arrival of Islam. Iraq and Iran probably reached a Muslim majority by around 900 CE, like Egypt. In much of Spain and Portugal, Islam became established in the 500 years following the initial conquests of 711 CE, though it may never have become the majority faith. After Spanish Catholic armies completed the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in 1492, many Muslims and Jews were either expelled from Spain or converted to Christianity. Islam continued to exist, however, until after 1600. As in Spain and Portugal, Islam withered away in Sicily, the Mediterranean island that Muslims had conquered in the ninth century.

In Persia, Inner Eurasia, and India, Muslim law treated Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Hindus just as it treated Jews and Christians. Muslim rulers offered adherents of these religions protection of life, property, and freedom of religious practice in exchange for the payment of a tax, as an alternative to military service. In Sind (northwestern India), the Buddhist population seems to have embraced Islam in the eighth and ninth centuries. Buddhism disappeared entirely in that region. Hinduism, however, declined there more slowly than Buddhism did.

All of the lands described above had Muslim rulers. After the decline of the unified Muslim empire—from about 750—Islam gradually spread to lands outside the boundaries of Muslim rule. After 1071, Anatolia (or Asia Minor), which makes up most of modern Turkey, came under the rule of Turkish animal-herding groups that had become Muslims. Islam spread gradually for centuries after that, and when the Ottoman Turkish empire enfolded much of southeastern Europe in the mid-fourteenth century, most Albanians and Bosnians, as well as some Bulgarians, became Muslims.

**Continuing Spread.** Beginning in 1192, other Muslim Turkish military groups conquered parts of India, including most of the north all the way to present-day Bangladesh, which borders the Bay of Bengal. The number of Muslims in India gradually increased from that time. The people of Bangladesh had been Buddhists, but beginning about 1300, they rapidly embraced Islam. Elsewhere in India, except for Punjab and Kashmir in the far northwest, Hinduism remained the religion of the majority.

In South India and Sri Lanka, both merchants and Sufi preachers, that is, followers of mystical Islam, spread the faith. By 1300, traders and Sufis also introduced it to Southeast Asia. Over the next two centuries, Islam spread from Malaysia to the great archipelago that is today Indonesia.

Entering a region where Buddhism, Hinduism, and local polytheist religions existed, Islam required several centuries to become well established.

In Inner Eurasia beginning in the eighth century, Islam gradually spread to the original homelands of the Turkic-speaking peoples until it became the main religion of nearly all of them. Islam also spread into Xinjiang, the western part of China, where it was tolerated by the Chinese empire. Islam entered southern China through seaports, such as Guanzhou, the city where the earliest *masjid* exists.

**Africa.** Before 1500, Islam spread widely in sub-Saharan Africa. Before 1000 CE, the first major town south of the Sahara that became majority Muslim was Gao, a commercial center located on the Niger River in Mali. Over the centuries, many other rulers and parts of their populations followed this pattern. By 1040, groups in Senegal had become Muslims. From there, Islam spread to the region of today's Mali and Guinea. Muslims established the kingdom of Mali in the thirteenth century and the Songhai empire from 1465 to 1600. Farther east, Kanem-Bornu near Lake Chad became Muslim after 1100. In West Africa, like Turkestan, India, and Indonesia, traders and Sufis introduced Islam. When rulers accepted the faith, numerous Muslim scholars, lawyers, teachers, and artisans migrated into the region to help build Muslim administration and cultural life. African Muslim scholars became established in major towns like Timbuktu, where they taught and practiced Islamic law as judges. By 1500, Islam was established in West Africa in a wide east-west belt south of the Sahara. Local polytheistic religions remained strong, however, and Islam did not become the majority faith in this region until the nineteenth century.

In East Africa, traders spread Islam along the coast beginning at least by the tenth century. By the fourteenth century, the numerous commercial city-states along the coast from today's Somalia to Tanzania were predominantly Muslim. In the Sudan, south of Egypt, the population of Nubia gradually became Muslim during the fourteenth century, through immigration of Muslim Arab pastoral groups and because Christian rule became weak in that region.

**Strong Governments and the Spread of Islam.** By understanding that the expansion of Muslim rule was different from the spread of Islam, we can see an interesting trend. Ironically, Islam has spread most widely and rapidly among populations at times when Muslim rule was weaker and less unified. When Muslim political regimes were decentralized, disunited, or completely absent, Islam as a religion flourished and often spread to non-Muslims. Influence by traders and Sufis and influence of Muslim scholars, lawyers, and artisans in the cities aided the spread of Islam to new areas. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire in southeastern Europe, or the Sultanate of Delhi, and the later Mogul empire of India had little success in spreading Islam, though they did gain territory. Non-Muslim populations seem to have viewed these powerful, tax-gathering Muslim rulers negatively, and so they resisted conversion to Islam. Whoever did embrace Islam in such circumstances, if not for material gain, usually did so because of the efforts of merchants, teachers, and traveling Sufi preachers, who were not part of the government.

Study Questions:

1. In what important way was the conquest of territory by Muslims different from the spread of Islam?

2. How many centuries do historians think it took from the time Islam was introduced until it became the religion of the majority population in Egypt, Syria, Iran, and Spain?
3. To which regions did Islam spread mainly as a result of trade and travel?
4. How might laws tolerating other religions have affected the spread of Islam among the population?
5. Construct a simple time line tracing the spread of Islam using the dates in the text above.
6. Locate the regions mentioned in the text on a map, and make labels showing the dates when 1) Islam was introduced there and 2) when it embraced a majority of the population. Compare your map with Student Handout 2.3 map.



### *Student Handout 2.2--Chronology of the Spread of Islam*

Beginning more than 1400 years ago, Islam has spread from the small trading town of Makkah on the Arabian Peninsula to become a world religion practiced on every continent. Like other world religions, Islam has been spreading ever since its origin, both through migration of Muslims to new places, and by individuals who have accepted Islam as their religion, having chosen to convert from other religions.

During the first century after Muhammad began preaching, rapid expansion of the territory under Muslim rule took place as a result of military campaigns. This territory did not instantly become "Islamic," meaning that most people rapidly became Muslims. Rather, the spread of Islam among the population took centuries, even in the regions conquered in the seventh century CE.

The following chronology marks dates when various regions were first introduced to Islam. It also gives the dates when Muslims probably became a majority of the population in those regions. The timeline also records trends in cultural and religious influence by both Muslims and non-Muslims which affected the spread of Islam.

7 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	<p>622 Muhammad and the Muslims migrated from Makkah to Madinah at the invitation of the Madinans. Muhammad became the city's leader, and the first Muslim community was established.</p> <p>630 Makkah surrendered to the Muslim force, placing the city under Muslim rule. Many members of Quraysh accepted Islam shortly after.</p> <p>632 Muhammad died, leaving much of the Arabian Peninsula under Muslim rule.</p> <p>634-650 Muslim armies defeated Byzantine and Persian imperial armies, bringing Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Iran under Muslim rule, including the cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, and Alexandria.</p>
8 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	<p>711-715 Spain, Turkistan and Sind (northern India) were brought under Muslim rule.</p> <p>750s Muslim soldiers settled in Chang'an (Xian), the largest city in China. Muslim merchants also visited and settled in southern Chinese ports.</p>
9 <sup>th</sup> Century CE	<p>*c. 800-850 Islam became the faith of the majority of people in Iran.</p> <p>819 The Samanids became the first independent Muslim state in northeastern Iran and Inner Eurasia. By the 900s CE, Islam became the majority religion in that region.</p> <p>*c. 850-900 Islam became the majority religion in Iraq, Egypt and Tunisia.</p>

10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>  
Centuries CE

\*c. 940-1000 Islam became the majority religion in Muslim-ruled parts of the Iberian Peninsula (today's Spain and Portugal).

1099-1187 Western European Crusader armies held Jerusalem.

11<sup>th</sup> c Muslim traders in West Africa began to spread Islam. Muslims settled in the Champa region of Vietnam and introduced Islam.

1040s The Almoravids, a Muslim Berber ruling group, spread Islam in Mauritania and other parts of West Africa. They campaigned against the Soninke kings of Ghana.

1060s The Almoravids ruled in North Africa and Muslim Spain (al-Andalus). The empire of Ghana weakened.

\*c.1200 Islam became the majority religion in Syria.

13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>  
Centuries CE

13<sup>th</sup> c. Ghana's empire collapsed and Mali rose. Rulers of Kanem, near Lake Chad, became Muslim.

End 13<sup>th</sup> c. Muslims settled in northern ports of Sumatra (today's Indonesia). Muslim traders had close trade and cultural contacts in the trading cities on the east Indian coast, such as Gujarat.

ca.1300 Islam became the majority faith in Anatolia (part of today's Turkey).

1295 the Ilkhan ruler Ghazan "the Reformer" was the first Mongol leader to become Muslim, along with most of his Mongol generals.

1324-25 Mansa Musa, king of Mali, made the pilgrimage journey to Makkah, strengthening Mali's links with Islam.

14<sup>th</sup> c. Mali, Gao, and Timbuktu, cities on the Niger River in west Africa became important centers of Muslim trade and scholarship

15<sup>th</sup> Century CE

15<sup>th</sup> c. A ruler of Malacca converted to Islam, while that port city was becoming an important stop on the China-Indian Ocean trade routes. From Malacca, Islamic influence spread in the Malay peninsula and nearby islands.

1453 Ottoman forces conquered the city of Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire.

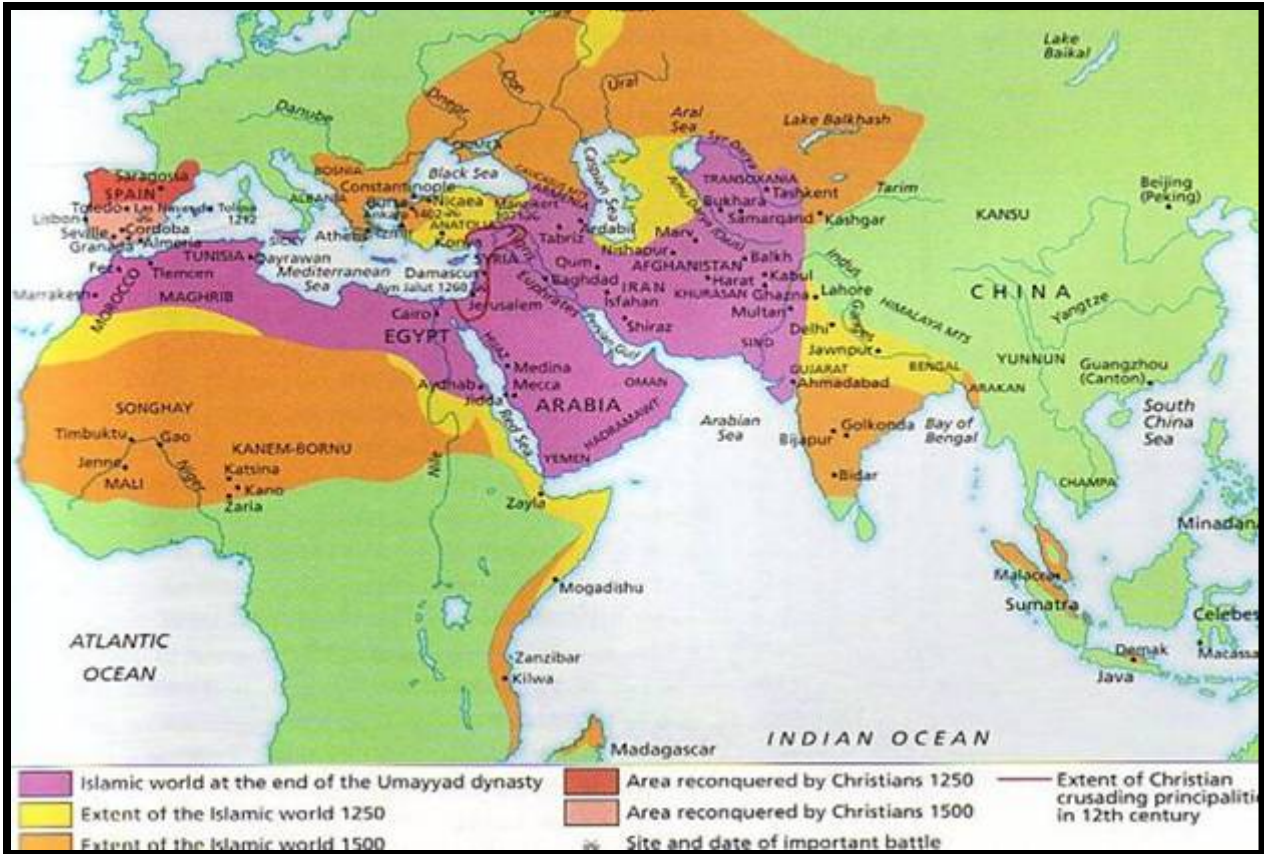
1085-1492 Spanish Christian forces carried out Reconquista in the Iberian Peninsula.

1495 Muslims and Jews were expelled from Spain, while others were forced to convert to Christianity.

**Sources for the Chronology:** Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979); Khalid Y. Blankinship, "Politics, Law and the Military," in S. L. Douglass, ed., *World Eras: Rise and*

*Spread of Islam, 622-1500* (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group, 2002), 230-232; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vols. 1-2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Francis Robinson, ed. *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500* (New York: Facts on File, 1982).

*Student Handout 2.3—Map of Expansion of Islam*



Map from Francis Robinson, ed. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 47.

### ***Student Handout 2.4—Graphing Rates of Conversion to Islam by Region***

The spread of Islam during the medieval period is difficult for historians to describe because there is a lack of population data for a period so long ago. Historians have a lot of evidence that Islam was spreading, but this evidence is hard to quantify. For example, there is ample evidence in literary works and government documents that the Arabic language was spreading, and the number of mosques built during those periods was clearly rising. Literature shows that many writers were concerned with Islamic topics, and chronicles of political history describe issues affecting their Muslim subjects. But determining how rapidly or slowly Islam was spreading and when a majority of the population in different regions had accepted Islam has been a mystery.

**Creative Historical Thinking.** The historian Richard W. Bulliet made a pioneering effort to measure the spread of Islam by making creative use of an important Arabic literary source, the biographical dictionary. Like today's *Who's Who* of prominent Americans, these dictionaries were produced in Muslim regions from a very early period. Compilers of biographical dictionaries collected information about prominent individuals in many walks of life, such as important religious scholars, government officials, judges, poets, and teachers of the Traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*). Biographical dictionaries recorded prominent citizens of a particular city, those who died during the reign of particular rulers or dynasties, or famous individuals in a particular profession. Some of the biographers compiled dictionaries from earlier collections of biographies. Taken together, these sources exist for many regions and provide a wide variety of information on thousands of individuals over centuries.

**What's In a Name?** By studying the biographical data, Bulliet developed a theory showing how rapidly Islam spread in various regions between the sixth and thirteenth centuries. To gather information on conversion to Islam by prominent individuals and families, he took advantage of the traditional Arab practice of naming people. A person might be named, for example, Abdullah al-Dimashqi. Abdullah was his given name, and his family name reveals that he was from Damascus. A name also typically included the father's, grandfather's and even great grandfather's name to identify the family. For example, a biographical dictionary would list a name like Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman ibn Yaqub al-Dimashqi. ("Ibn" means "son of.") Each person's biographical entry might include several generations. In Muslim tradition naming a child is very important, and parents are encouraged to give children good names to live up to. Popular names come from the Qur'an, or from prophets, or from important companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Bulliet noticed that the chains of names often included non-Arab, pre-Islamic names. If the great-great grandfather of an individual carried the Persian name Cyrus, for example, that name pointed to the generation in which the person's family had first converted to Islam. Hundreds of biographical entries show a similar pattern of naming and often describe in the entry how that person converted. By figuring out approximately how many years passed between the conversion of those ancestors and the deaths of individuals listed in the dictionary, Bulliet could plot conversions to Islam in various places. These dictionaries, taken together, provided a data sample made up of thousands of names over many centuries, ranging across major Muslim regions such as Egypt, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Muslim Spain.

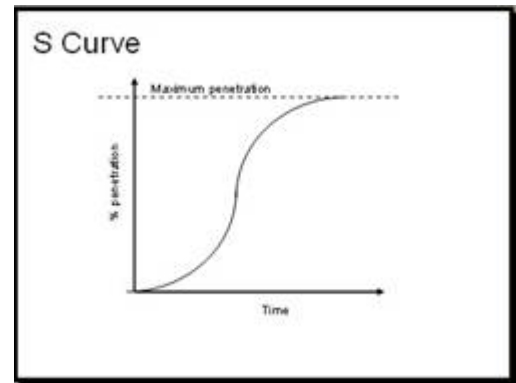
**How People Adopt New Ideas.** Using a technique from modern scientific data analysis, Bulliet set out to find meaningful patterns in the information on conversion to Islam. He learned about a type of graph used to analyze how human populations adopt technological innovations. For

example, when microwave ovens were invented and marketed for the first time, not many people used them. Then advertising in trade shows and magazines and on radio and television made more people aware of these appliances. Gradually, more people tried the new technology. Some of the early users liked their ovens and told their neighbors. Microwaves became easier to use, and more people saw their advantages. As the number of people who owned them increased, products like microwavable snacks and dinners appeared with cookbooks full of microwave recipes. The number of microwave purchases started to increase rapidly, the price went down, and competing models appeared everywhere. Today, microwave ovens are standard in nearly every household and business in the US. Sure, a few people suspect that “nuking” their food is unhealthy, and may never buy an oven. But the process of adopting microwaves in the US is complete.

The graph for adoption of a new technology looks like an “S-curve.”\* The curve starts out flat, like the bottom of a hill. The risk-takers who first adopt something new are called “Early Adopters.”

As more and more people hear about a new idea and buy into it, the bandwagon effect kicks in, and the curve rises more steeply. “Early and Late Majorities” are the people who hop on the bandwagon until 50 percent of the people who will use the new technology is reached and exceeded. Then the market of potential users gets saturated, the pace of adoption slows down, and the curve flattens out. At that point most people already use the new technology, and over time even some “Laggards” join in, waiting until everybody else already done so.

Some people never adopt the technology at all. This model could demonstrate the spread of personal computers, for example, or use of e-mail and the Internet between the 1970’s, when a few specialists used it, to today, when people all over the world communicate online.

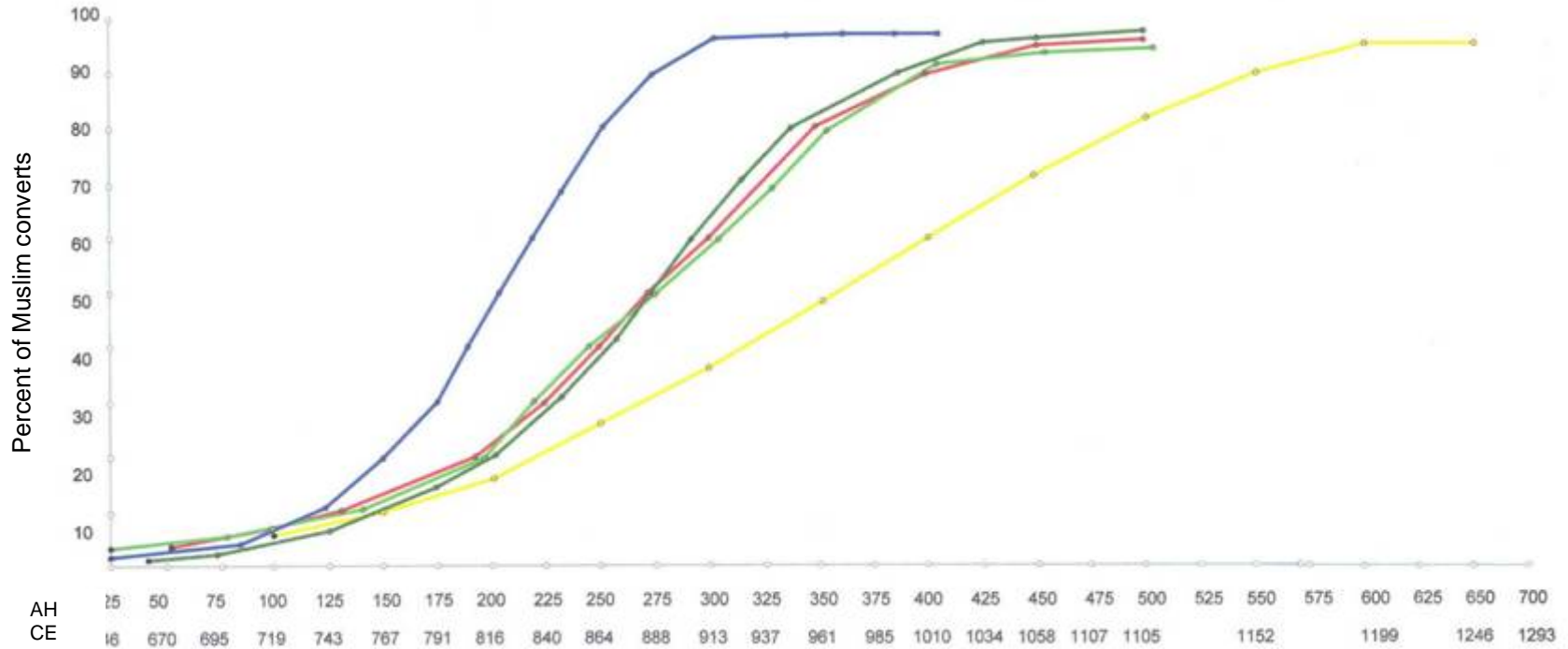


**Applying the Model to Religious Conversion.** Bulliet recognized that individuals in the biographical dictionaries made up a population set similar to people adopting a new idea or product. Conversion is a social process in which people gain information about a new faith, at some point adopt that faith, and begin to live by its practices. They also share information with others. They may migrate to a new place and become exposed to the new ideas. The story of Muhammad and the Muslim community showed that at first a very small number believed in his teaching, and they suffered as a minority. As the faith became more prominent and successful, numbers increased rapidly. By the time of Muhammad’s death, much of Arabia had adopted Islam. The story in other regions might not be as dramatic or rapid, but still might follow a similar pattern.

For Bulliet, preparing and analyzing the data involved many decisions and careful guesses in some cases. When he wrote his book, he laid out these problems, such as finding the average length of a generation between an individual, his father, and grandfathers, and dating the various entries accurately on the timeline. In order to see how a creative historian works, it is worthwhile to read his book.

The graph on the next page summarizes some of Bulliet's findings about conversion to Islam in five major regions: Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, and Spain, between 646 and 1293 CE, that is, the first six centuries after Muhammad's death. It is clear that the data for conversion to Islam fit the S-curve model. Of course, historians still test these ideas and contribute research on the problem. Having a better idea of how and when Islam spread in these regions helps historians better understand many other events in Muslim history, and compare the spread of Islam with other religions in world history.





**Spread of Islam in Different Regions by Conversions over Time**

AH = Anno Hijri (Muslim calendar) dates  
 CE = Common Era dates

- Iran ● ————— ●
- Iraq ● ————— ●
- Syria ● ————— ●
- Egypt & Tunisia ● ————— ●
- Spain ● ————— ●



## Study Questions:

1. What kind of historical source provided data for the graph? How did this source provide clues about when people converted to Islam?
2. What is the connection between microwave ovens and medieval Muslims?
3. Using the graph key, identify each colored line. Which Muslim region experienced the earliest wave of conversions to Islam? Which region was the latest in time? Which regions experienced a parallel process of conversions to Islam?
4. During the Umayyad dynasty, was there a Muslim majority population in any of the regions shown?
5. In 750, when the Abbasid dynasty came to power, what percentage of Muslim conversions in Iran and Iraq had, according to Bulliet's data, taken place? How does this data line up with the idea that large numbers of non-Arab converts to Islam contributed to the Abbasid victory?
6. Why do you think the conversion process happened later in Spain than in Egypt or Syria? What percentage of conversions had probably taken place by 1085, when the city of Toledo fell to the Christian forces? What might have happened to the rate of conversion to Islam in Toledo after 1085?

***Student Handout 2.5—Muslim Biographical Dictionary Entry***

Abu Taiba Isa ibn Sulaiman al Darimi al Jurjani. He was one of the religious scholars and ascetics. He recited *hadith* from Kurz ibn Wabra, Jaafar ibn Muhammad, Sulaiman al A'mash, and others. His two sons Ahmad and Abd al-Wasi recited *hadith* from him, and did Saad ibn Said and others. His mosque was inside the walled inner city on the street named for Abd al-Wasi ibn Abi Taiba, his son. His house was beside his mosque. He had manifest benefices in the form of estates and lands. He established [charitable] trusts which are known by his name down to the present day, on behalf of his children, his grandchildren, and his relations in Juzjanan in a town known as Asburqan. . . . His grave is beside the Taifur canal at the edge of Sulaiman-abadh cemetery. . . . The story of Dinar, the grandfather of Abu Taiba, is that he was a rural landowner from Marv. He was taken prisoner during the raid on Khurasan of Said ibn Uthman ibn Affan and fell into the part of the booty that went to a man name Jafar ibn Khirfash. . . . He lived with him for a time, and then Jafar manumitted him. Jafar died without any heir other than Dinar. So Dinar took possession of Jafar's wealth. Then he married, and a son Sulaiman, the father of Abu Taiba Isa, was born to him.

From the Persian biographical dictionary entitled *Ta'rikh Jurjan* [History of Gorgan] quoted in Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (Columbia UP, 1994), 45-47.

### *Lesson 3*

## *The Impact of Islam in Afroeurasia, 632-1000 CE*

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to

- Locate important cities in Muslim regions during the period before 1000 CE
- Evaluate the growth of cities as a factor in the expansion of Muslim rule and spread of Islam
- Assess the impact of urbanization in Muslim regions on change in Afroeurasia
- Identify social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the impact of Islam in Afroeurasia.

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce Student Handout 3.1 and draw students' attention to the two prominent historians' statements about the cumulative impact of the spread of Islam and its political, economic, and cultural dominance in Afroeurasia during the period from 632-1000 CE and beyond. Have students read the excerpts and make notes by folding a sheet of notebook paper in quarters, drawing lines along the folds, and using both sides to complete the resulting eight boxes. Write a heading at the top of each box that reflects a realm of activity in which Islam had some impact, and quote segments from the two excerpts in support of that type of impact. After using this organizer to read the excerpts, debrief and discuss how such influences were manifested during the period. Compare with other societies and periods in world history. Examples of such headings are:

urbanization	growth of trade
migration	spread of knowledge
language	law
technology	governance

2. Discuss the map in Student Handout 3.1, which depicts trade routes in Afroeurasia. In what ways does this map express what the historians (K. N. Chaudhuri and Andrew Watson)

describe in their excerpts? Compare this map with the maps in Student Handout 3.2, which show the growth of cities in the Mediterranean region. Locate and name five major cities that existed in 528 CE. How many more cities are shown on the next map for 737 CE? Which of these cities are within Muslim-ruled territory? On the map for the year 1000 CE, how many cities are within Muslim-ruled territory, and how many new ones have been added? What are some factors that might account for cities being founded, becoming much bigger, declining, or disappearing?

3. Refer to Bulliet's graph of conversion (Student Handout 2.4). How would you characterize the period between 737 and 1000 CE in terms of the rates of conversion for each region of the graph in terms of the towns and cities shown on the map of Mediterranean region cities?

***Student Handout 3.1—The Impact of Islam in Afroeurasia***

**Excerpt from K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 35-36**

The expansion and the new activities which became faintly evident in the rhythm of both caravan and trans-oceanic trade from the seventh century onwards in northern and southern China received a great deal of their impetus from the domestic aspirations and developments of the T'ang and Sung empires. However, in the West it was joined by the second and most powerful of the historical forces of the time, the rise of Islam and its expansion across the fertile lands of the Near East and South Asia. Movements of people by definition involve the exchange of ideas, economic systems, social usage, political institutions, and artistic traditions. The spread of Islam subsumed all these things. It may be an exaggeration for lack of definite proof to state that the commerce of the Indian Ocean in the westward direction had entered a period of relative contraction during the later Roman empire with the weakening of a Mediterranean "world economy." It is certainly true that the Arab conquests and rapid demographic diffusion and the political integration of Egypt, Syria, Iran, and North Africa created an enormously powerful zone of economic consumption. It was an expanding area that drew its commercial and fiscal strength from refashioning in the West the Mediterranean economy of antiquity and from harnessing the productive resources of the lands around the Indian Ocean in the East. Arab economic success in the early caliphate period was achieved with the aid of the skills possessed by the people of the ancient Near East. But the growth of great urban centers, a universal feature of Islam, and the new capital cities gave rise to an expanding demand for commodities of all kinds and for precious objects. This in turn quickened the pace of long-distance trade. The revival of the sea and caravan routes across the famous international boundary lines, known to merchants since Hellenistic times, owed much to the ability of the Islamic rulers to protect their property and persons against violence. The laws of commercial contracts and the principles of juridical rights, which evolved in the centuries following the foundation of Islam, took into account a cardinal fact of pre-modern trade. Merchants who traveled by land and sea into the realms of foreign princes were prone to take their business elsewhere without the guarantee of a certain amount of commercial freedom secured by reciprocal political rights and obligations.



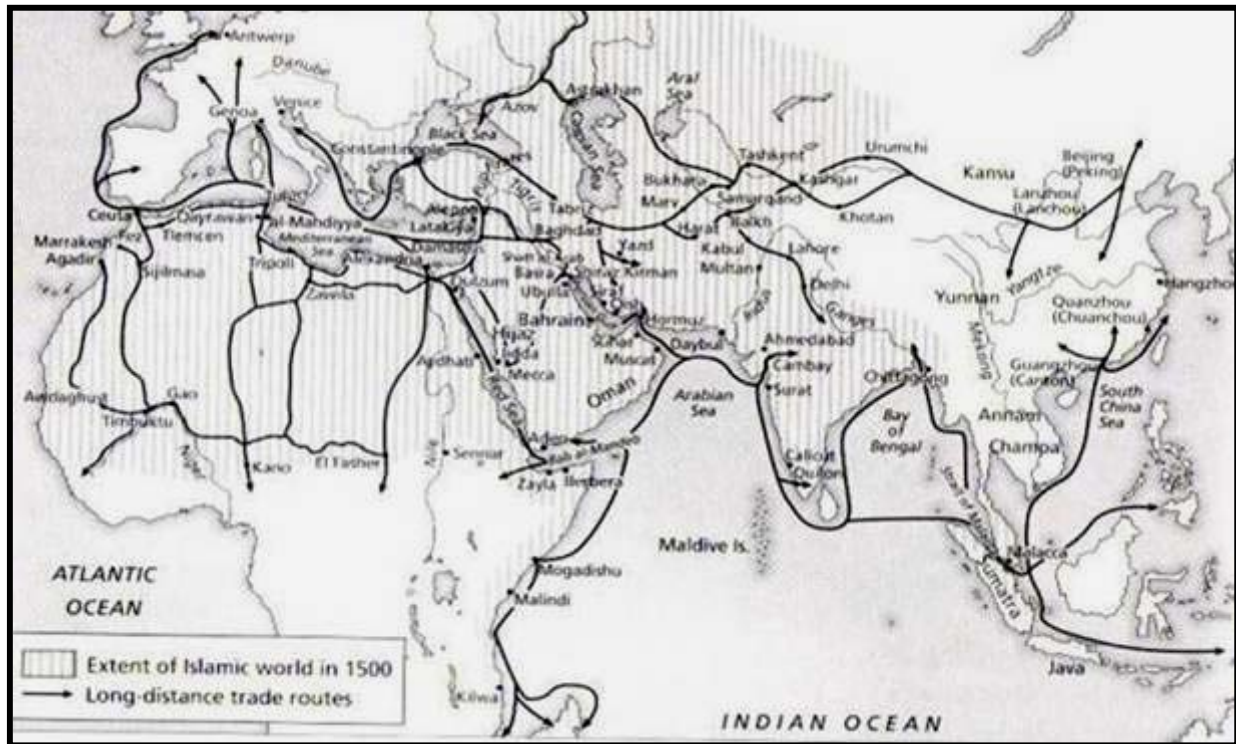
**K.N. Chaudhuri, “The Economy in Muslim Societies,” in F. Robinson, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 124**

In popular imagination, Islam was a religion of the desert which arose in the oasis towns of Syria, Iraq, and Egypt in the seventh century AD. Of course, neither Mecca nor Medina, the twin cities of the Prophet Muhammad, really belonged to the desert or the bedouin nomadic way of life. The Umayyad military victories in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Iran within a decade of Muhammad's death in 632 produced immediate and tangible results, the most notable of which was the consolidation of the two transcontinental trade routes through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The economic foundation of the Muslim world system created by the Umayyads and the Abbasids in the first century of Islam rested on three factors: settled agriculture, urbanization, and long-distance trade. Nomadism and its economy had provided the backdrop to the early Arab expansion and they were not entirely marginalized in the development of urbanized Islam. The bedouin of Arabia did not give up their nomadic way of life; the desert and the camel continued to signify certain aspects of Islam and certainly to signify the context of its movements. Anyone who contemplates the magnificent mihrab of the Great Mosque in Cordoba built in the eighth century, with its pure Arab geometry, must be aware that the historical roots of the Islamic world were already strong by the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. But those political leaders and their Arab followers who did migrate to the old and new towns to adopt an urban life soon revived the economic unity of the ancient world, which had been lost with the decline of Rome and Persia.”



**Interior of the Great Mosque, Cordoba, Spain**

Photo by R. Dunn



Map: K.N. Chaudhuri, "The Economy in Muslim Societies," in F. Robinson, ed.,  
*The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 124.

**Excerpt from Andrew Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 91-94.**

The early centuries of Islam saw the creation of a medium for diffusion of great efficiency: it was peculiarly receptive to novelties and favored their transmission. . . .

The creation of this medium began with the Muslim conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries which united—or began to unite—a large part of the known world, bringing the conquered territories for a time under one rule, and more durably under one language, one religion and one legal system. Although Muhammad's State was a very loose alliance depending on allegiance to the Prophet, and although centrifugal forces at all times worked against centralizing tendencies, the relatively strong State which emerged under the Umayyads and the early Abbasids was an umbrella under which other kinds of unification took place. Gradually, Arabic displaced indigenous tongues as the language of administration, of higher culture and—to varying degrees—of common speech. In time, more and more of the conquered peoples were converted to the religion of the Prophet, so that although non-believers were at first very numerous and religious minorities remained important throughout the period of classical Islam, the State came to be an Islamic state and the people it governed came to be predominantly Muslim. The apparatus of the State was the means for other kinds of unification: of law, of coinage and of weights and measures. It also forged, when it did not inherit them, links of communication—roads, caravan routes, ports, postal and courier services, and a far-reaching

network of smoke and flame signals—which drew still more closely together the far-flung territories of the caliphates. . . .

Within the area of Arab dominion, and to some extent beyond, there was much movement of men, of goods, of technology, of information and of ideas. Ibn Khaldun wrote of the Arabs that “all their customary activities lead to travel and movement,” and so it was to become not only for those of Arabic stock but also for the conquered peoples. The very conquest and settlement of new areas often led to important displacements of peoples. When an area was overrun by Arabs and their allies, the conquering soldiers—mostly from distant places—were often encouraged to settle in the conquered lands. Another wave of migrations occurred when the Jews of formerly Byzantine, Sasanian and Visigothic territories, many of whom had collaborated with the invading armies, began to spread out through the early Islamic world. Further movements followed the conquests with the flight of some conquered peoples, their forcible displacement and the long-distance trade in captured slaves. . . .

To the movement of peoples initiated by the conquests and their aftermath were soon added other kinds of displacement. The pilgrimages that Muslims made in great numbers, and especially the pilgrimage to Mecca, brought together people from the far corners of the earth and thus were a vehicle of prime importance for cultural transmission. . . . Many pilgrims took advantage of their displacement to indulge in further travel: to carry out business, to visit relatives, to study in foreign centers of learning and just to see sights. Trade by professional merchants also led to much movement. Very soon after the rise of Islam, Muslim and Jewish merchants were penetrating to the outer limits of the caliphate. By the middle of the eighth century they had reached far beyond these bounds and established counters in India, China and East Africa. Hand in hand with trade went missionary activity, as holy men followed in the footsteps of merchants to preach to isolated Muslim communities abroad and to convert the heathen. Thus both trade and religion linked distant outposts into a network which spanned the continents. . . .

But perhaps any attempt to explain, or even to describe, the widespread movement of people across the early Islamic world is doomed to fail. All through the literary sources from the medieval Islamic world are found accounts that suggest an almost incomprehensible amount of coming and going across huge stretches of land and water. Every class of people, it seems, was prone to this restlessness; all traveled: the rich and the poor, the scholar and the illiterate, the holy and the not so holy. Poverty was no obstacle, as one could move by foot, begging along the way; relatives could be imposed upon endlessly; patrons were readily found for scholars or holy men, or those who posed as such; a place to bunk, and perhaps to eat, was available outside the main mosque in most cities. Lured on in search of money, adventure or truth, Muslims from every region and of every station left home and roamed to and fro over the continents, taking with them knowledge of the farming techniques, plant life and cookery of their homelands and seeing on their way the agricultural practices, plants and foods of new lands. In their travels the early Muslims were on the lookout for whatever could be learned or bought.

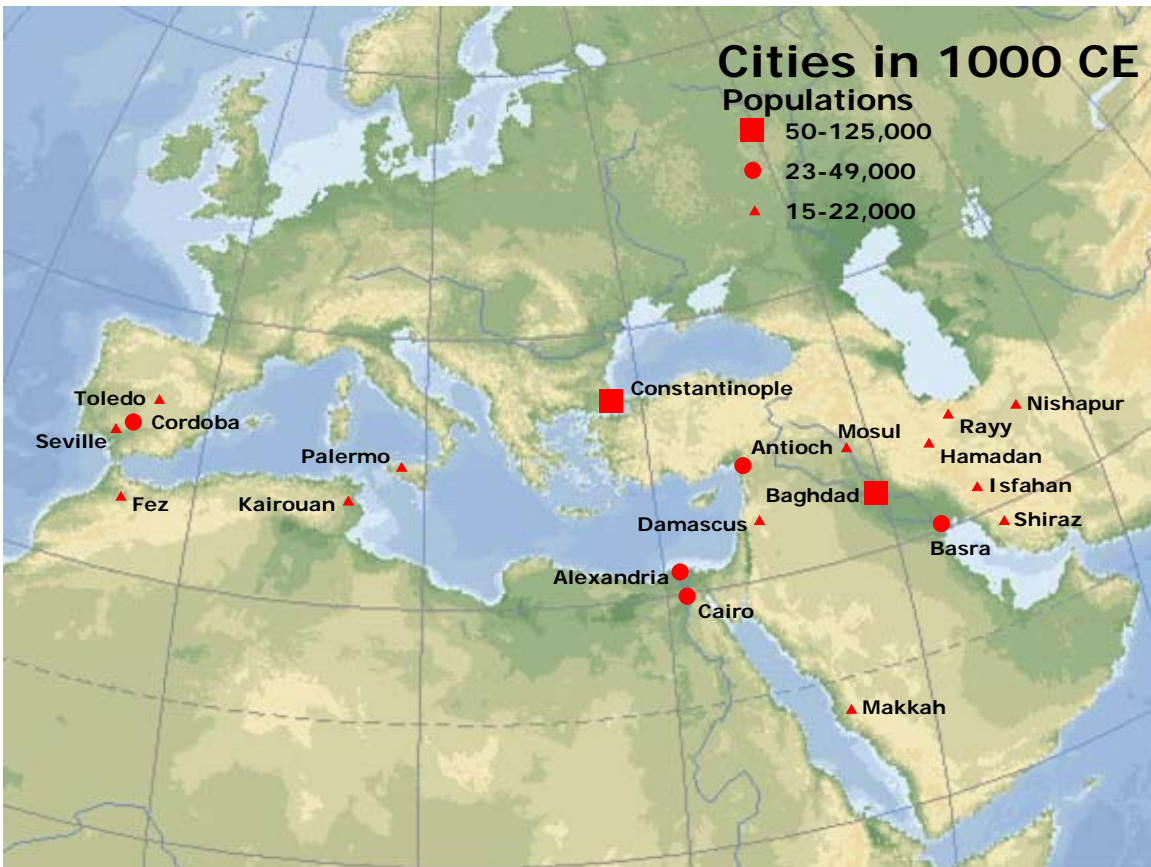
***Student Handout 3.2—Islam and Urbanization***

Compare the maps below by locating and listing those cities that

- existed before the expansion of territory under Muslim rule.
- that experienced continuity from the earliest map to the last.
- that appeared in the period between each pair of maps.
- that appeared outside of territory under Muslim rule, or which were in territory no longer under Muslim rule at the time shown on the map. What conclusions can you draw about the causes and effects of urbanization in the Mediterranean region between 528 and 1000 CE?









Maps adapted from Colin McEvedy, *The New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 25, 41, 57, 75.

## *Lesson 4*

### *Why Did Muslim Merchants Know the Rules of the Road and the Laws of the Sea?*

**Objective:**

Students will be able to

- demonstrate how Muslims contributed to creating an interconnected trade network in Afroeurasia before 1500.

**Introduction**

World trade networks seem a recent phenomenon to many people, including current secondary school students. Interconnected long-distance trade networks, however, existed before 1500. This lesson helps students discover how the spread of Islam in many merchant communities created connections between trade networks.

Most students best remember significant events or processes in history through stories. World history has many stories but no overarching narrative similar to what can be found in national histories. One narrative that teachers can point to is the effect of the spread of religions in the pre-modern period. Students will learn from this lesson that the spread of Islam in many merchant communities and the creation of the Caliphates created growing connections between trade networks from West Africa to southern China.

1. The skits that students create in this lesson will help them develop a narrative about the advantages Muslim merchants had in the inter-connected trade networks in the Eastern Hemisphere before 1500.
  - Students make a list of where their clothing, shoes, and accessories were manufactured.
  - Students mark the origin of the clothing on a world map.
  - Students draw lines from the manufacturing centers to where they bought the item.
  - Students discuss the extent of the interconnected trade network today.
  - Extension: Students compare import and export data for several nations. What are governments' attitudes toward import and export data? Which governments tax imports? Which governments tax exports? Why?
2. Students predict where they think Muslim merchants would have been most successful in the Eastern Hemisphere. Students should consult their world history textbook if they have one. It should have at least one map showing where Muslim governments existed and where trade routes existed before 1500.
3. Students use the following primary and secondary sources to create a skit showing at least three factors that made long-distance trade easier for Muslims: language, religion, and government protection. The skits must be placed in a specific time and place during the period 1200 to 1500 CE. Students must use at least three props in their skits. Possible examples are: a toy camel, a lateen sail (or picture of one), or a trade good like incense, silk, or fur.



Example: In 1200, a Muslim father decides to write a book for his young son giving him advice on how to trade in the Indian Ocean region. The book is added to by members of each generation. They comment on the continuities and changes in the trade networks: goods traded, government support, increase in the number of merchants who converted to Islam, and transportation technology. The skit could show how each contributor asks other members of his family, his business partners, or even the audience for help in writing his part of the book.

Students can use the primary and secondary sources in the Student Handouts to prepare their skits. Teachers might choose to remove the headings from the sources to help students work on categorization skills. As an additional step before creating and performing the skits, students might organize and label the sources based on geography, dates, and the potential advantages Muslim merchants have.

4. Coins and currency: Ask students to generate a list of elements found in paper and coin money in the world today. They should mention:
  - the currency amount
  - name of the government issuing/minting the currency
  - date of issue or minting
  - symbols related to the government and/or culture

Tell students that the American dollar is recognized and used outside of the United States even if the people using it do not read English. Have students discuss the advantages to merchants and tax collectors when currency looks familiar. Use the website “Early Islamic Coins” by James N. Roberts (<http://users.rcn.com/j-roberts>) to find images of all of the coins listed below. Students may use copies of images of currency from 1000-1250 that show Arabic writing on them (minted by Muslim and Christian rulers):

Almoravids (Spain)  
Fatimids (Egypt)  
Delhi Sultanate (India)  
Bela III of Hungary (1173-96)  
Seljuqs of Rum (Turkey)  
Rasulids of Yemen  
Khwarizmshahs (Iran/Afghanistan)  
Saffarids of Seistan (Iran)  
Ildegizids of Azerbaijan  
Normans of Sicily

Students use the above list to mark on a map of Afroeurasia the location of the places where the coins were minted.



**Discussion questions**

- Why did coins issued by Muslim rulers during most of the period from 1000 to 1250 only have Arabic writing on them? (religious prohibition against images of people)
- What advantage might readers of Arabic have in the trading zone encompassed by the coins?
- What kind of conclusions can you draw about the extent of Muslim rulers' influence on trade?

**Assessment**

Have students write a response to the passage below using the map they created and the other maps for this lesson:



**Modern Dhow with Lateen Sail off the Coast of India**

Photo by Ray Smith

### ***Student Handout 4.1—Evidence of Factors that Eased Trade in the Muslim World***

#### **Arabic as a language common to many Muslims made trade easier.**

- The first reliable evidence of Islam as an active force in Southeast Asia comes from the Venetian merchant Marco Polo. Landing in northern Sumatra on his way back to Europe from China in 1292, he discovered Perlak, an Islamic town surrounded by non-Islamic neighbors. An inscription from a tombstone dated 1297 reveals that the first ruler of Samudra, another Sumatran state, was a Muslim. The Moroccan Muslim Muhammad ibn-'Abdullah ibn-Battuta visited the same town in 1345-46 and wrote about his experiences with the Muslim ruler there. By the late fourteenth century, inscriptions in Sumatra were written with Arabic letters rather than older, indigenous or Indian-based scripts.
- The collection of documents from the Cairo Geniza (traditional Jewish archives) shows that Jewish merchants of the ninth to eleventh centuries prized command of Arabic to aid them in long-distance trade. Contracts and business partnerships between Jews and Muslims or Christians were common.

#### **Muslims spread transportation technology.**

- Camel: Arab and Muslim conquerors of North Africa brought the one-humped camel and the efficient North Arabian saddle to expand trans-Saharan trade. The camel made it possible for people from the southern Sahara to establish contacts with the people of the northern Sahara.
- Dhow: Lateen (triangular-shaped) sail on boat of sewn (not nailed) hull used extensively by Arab/Muslim sailors throughout the Indian Ocean region.
- Cartography: Knowledge of the monsoon wind patterns and map making recorded in books supported by Islamic governments (mostly the Caliphates).

#### **The *hajj*, the annual Muslim religious pilgrimage to Makkah, affected trade positively.**

Excerpt from *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. R. J. C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape 1952), 105-121. Ibn Jubayr was a Muslim from Spain who made the *hajj* in 1184 CE.

From all parts produce is brought to it, and it is the most prosperous of countries in its fruits, useful requisites, commodities, and commerce. And although there is no commerce save in the pilgrim period, nevertheless, since people gather in it from east and west, there will be sold in one day, apart from those that follow, precious objects such as pearls, sapphires, and other stones, various kinds of perfume such as musk, camphor, amber and aloes, Indian drugs and other articles brought from India and Ethiopia, the products of the industries of Iraq and the Yemen, as well as the merchandise of Khurasan, the goods of the Maghrib, and other wares such as it is impossible to enumerate or correctly assess. Even if they were spread over all lands, brisk markets could be set up with them and all would be filled with the useful effects of commerce. All this is within the eight days that follow the pilgrimage, and exclusive of what might suddenly arrive throughout the year from the Yemen and other countries. Not on the face of the world are there any goods or products but that some of them are in Mecca at this meeting of the pilgrims.

This blessing is clear to all, and one of the miracles that God has worked in particular for this city.

**Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, and adherents of other belief systems cooperated in trade together.**

- The *Geographical Encyclopedia* of Yaqut al-Hamawi (1179-1229) included a section about Baghdad under the Abbasids, c. 1000 CE :

“The long wide estrades [platforms] at the different gates of the city were used by the citizens for gossip and recreation or for watching the flow of travelers and country folk into the capital. The different nationalities in the capital had each a head officer to represent their interests with the government, and to whom the stranger could appeal for counsel or help. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1000baghdad.html>

- An early fourteenth-century traveler described Cambay, the major port of Gujarat in the Indian subcontinent, as having beautiful houses and mosques. The majority of its inhabitants were foreign merchants.
- In 1442, a Persian Muslim diplomat, described Calicut (a port city on the west Indian coast) as a place where there were no restrictions on foreign merchants bringing goods from throughout the Indian Ocean trade network. Arab-speaking captains and merchants were treated the same as Hindu merchants by the Hindu ruler of Calicut.
- Al-Hassan ibn-Muhammad al-Wazzan al-Fasi, better known as Leo Africanus, was probably born in the 1460s in Granada, the last Muslim state in Spain, but he was raised in Fez in Morocco. Educated in Islamic law, he entered the service of the sultan of Fez, who sent him on commercial and diplomatic missions across sub-Saharan West Africa. During one such mission, he was captured by Christian pirates and brought to Rome in 1518, where Pope Leo X persuaded him to accept Christianity. In 1526, while in Rome, he completed in Italian his *History and Description of Africa*, probably based on an earlier version he had written in Arabic. About Mali, he wrote:

”Here are many craftsmen and merchants in all places: and yet the king honorably entertains all strangers. The inhabitants are rich and have plenty of merchandise. Here is a great number of temples, clergymen, and teachers, who read their lectures in the mosques because they have no colleges at all. The people of the region excel all other Negroes in wit, civility, and industry, and were the first that embraced the law of Muhammad. . . .”  
About Timbuktu, he wrote: “All its houses are . . . cottages, built of mud and covered with thatch. However, there is a most stately mosque to be seen, whose walls are made of stone and lime, and a princely palace also constructed by the highly skilled craftsmen of Granada. Here there are many shops of artisans and merchants, especially of those who weave linen and cotton, and here Barbary merchants bring European cloth. The inhabitants, and especially resident aliens, are exceedingly rich, since the present king married both of his daughters to rich merchants.”

[http://college.hmco.com/history/world/bullet/earth\\_peoples\\_brief/1e/students/primary/africanus.htm](http://college.hmco.com/history/world/bullet/earth_peoples_brief/1e/students/primary/africanus.htm)

**Coins produced by governments and having Arabic texts and standard shapes made trade easier.**

- In AD 698 the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) radically changed the way coins looked. All pictorial designs were removed and replaced with inscriptions to meet the Muslim prohibition against graven images. His coins gave pride of place to a version of the *kalima*, or declaration of faith, (“There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”), which was written across the obverse. The inscriptions also include the date, mint, and name of the ruler. This coin style became the standard for almost all coins produced by Muslim rulers throughout the Eastern Hemisphere.
- In the Red Sea port of Aqaba, archaeologists found at the eleventh century street levels a cloth sack full of gold coins, 32 dinars, possibly left by a *hajj* pilgrim trying to escape an attack on the city. Three of the coins appear to have been minted in North Africa. Others were gold coins probably minted at Sijilmasa, a Moroccan town on the northern edge of the Sahara.

**Five Pillars of Islam: hospitality to travelers and annual *hajj* created regular routes**

- A Muslim interpreter who went on several of the Ming voyages led by the Chinese Muslim admiral, Cheng He, noticed that the Muslim king of Malacca improved trade by building a bridge over a stream near the royal palace and constructing twenty booths for sale of all kinds of goods. Harry J. Benda and John A. Larkin, *The World of Southeast Asia: Selected Historical Readings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 14-15.
- Between 1328 and 1330, Ibn Battuta, a Moroccan Muslim legal scholar and judge (*qadi*) traveled to Mogadishu, a very large East African port city dependent on trade. He wrote in his travel memoir a description of trade in Mogadishu:

“When a boat comes in the harbor, young men sail their small dhows out to the larger trade ships and offer fresh food on platters. The Mogadishu men invite the foreign merchants to their homes and arrange to sell their imported goods. They also take charge of buying local goods for the foreign merchants to take with them.”
- In the 1330s, Ibn Battuta observed the sultan in Kilwa in on the East African coast. On the Sultan Abu al-Muzaffar Hasan:

“A man of great humility, he sits with poor brethren, and eats with them, and greatly respects men of religion and noble descent. He used to devote the fifth part of the booty made on his expeditions to pious and charitable purposes, as is prescribed in the Koran, and I have seen him give the clothes off his back to a poor religious homeless man who asked him for them.
- On the Sultan Abu Muhammad of Oman on the Arabian Peninsula, Ibn Battuta wrote:

“Its inhabitants make a habit of eating meals in the courts of the mosques, every person bringing what he has, and all sitting down to he meal together, and travelers join in with them.”
- On the Muslim ruler of Mali in Sudanic West Africa, Ibn Battuta had this to say:

"I stood before the sultan and said to him, 'I have indeed traveled in the lands of the world. I have met their kings. I have been in your country four months and you have given me no hospitality and not given me anything. What shall I say about you before the

Sultans?"

Then the Sultan ordered a house for me in which I stayed and he fixed an allowance for me...He was gracious to me at my departure, to the extent of giving me one hundred mitqals of gold."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/4chapter3.shtml>

### **Muslim government protected trade and property for merchants.**

- In his eleventh-century work *A Guide to the Merits of Commerce* Abu al-Fadl Ja'far bin 'Ali ad-Dimashqi wrote about Damascus:

"There are three kinds of merchants: he who travels, he who stocks, he who exports.

Their trade is carried out in three ways: cash sale with a time limit for delivery, purchase on credit with payments by installment, and *muqaradah* (in Islamic law a contract in which one individual entrusts capital to a merchant for investment in trade in order to receive a share of the profits). The investor bears all of the financial risks; the managing party risks his labor."

- *The Book of Routes and Kingdoms* by the eleventh-century Andalusian geographer Abu 'Ubayd al-Bakri writes on the West African kingdom of Ghana:

"The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain. One of these towns, which is inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques in one of which they assemble for the Friday prayer. There are salaried imams and muezzins, as well as jurists and scholars. The king's town is six miles distant from this one. . . . The king has a palace and a number of domed dwellings all surrounded with an enclosure like a city wall. Around the king's town are domed buildings and groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cult, live. In them too are their idols and the tombs of their kings."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/4chapter1.shtml>




- Malacca, 1400 - 1511 CE: "The sultans of Malacca appointed a multilingual harbor captain with a large staff who met every ship coming from China, India, Persia, the Arabian peninsula, East Africa, or other parts of Southeast Asia. As with all trade cities, Malacca provided "guarded storehouses where goods from the interior and abroad could be stored until traders arrived. The Malaccan Muslim rulers also made alliances with outlying tribes and ports and a regional 'navy' that policed the local waters and escorted friendly vessels."

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, New York,

<http://www.interknowledge.com/malaysia/history03.htm>

## This unit and the Three Essential Questions

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	<p>How did humans overcome the difficulties of transporting goods and people across long distances and over difficult terrain using only pack animals, carts, and wagons?</p>
	<p>In what ways did the spread of Islam facilitate contacts and communication among far-flung groups of people? Why might individuals who share a religion prefer to do business with one another rather than with people of another religion?</p>
	<p>How did the growth of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam in the first millennium CE affect the exchange of scientific knowledge, technology, and the arts? How do religions today contribute to the development and spread of new ideas in the arts, such as painting, architecture, and music?</p>

## This unit and the Seven Key Themes

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This unit emphasizes:

Key Theme 2: Economic Networks and Exchange

Key Theme 6: Science, Technology, and the Environment

Key Theme 7: Spiritual Life and Moral Codes

## This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking

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Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

The student is able to (e) interpret data presented in time lines.

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student is able to (b) identify the central questions a historical narrative addresses, (c) read historical narratives imaginatively, taking into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals involved—their probable values, outlook, motives, hopes, fears, strengths and weaknesses, (e) draw upon data in historical maps in order to obtain or clarify information on the geographic setting in which the historical event occurred, its relative and absolute location, the

distances and directions involved, the natural and man-made features of the place, and critical relationships in the spatial distributions of those features and historical event occurring there, (g) draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources.

#### Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student is able to (d) draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

#### Historical Thinking Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

The student is able to (a) formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past, (c) interrogate historical data.

## Resources

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### *Instructional Resources for Teachers*

Annenberg/CPB. *Bridging World History: A 26-Part Multi-Media Course in World History*. Produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting. (Burlington, VT: Annenberg Foundation, 2005). The Course Guide describes *Bridging World History* as a course designed “to help students construct a meaningful context that reveals the shared human past. This 26-part integrated media learning resource uses video, Web, and print to deliver content and activities sufficient to support a six-credit undergraduate-level course. Unit 7, titled “The Spread of Religions” addresses the early centuries of Muslim history.

Bentley, Jerry H. *Old World Encounters: Cross-cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

Blankinship, Khalid. "The Spread of Islam." In S. L. Douglass, ed., *World Eras: Rise and Spread of Islam, 622-1500*. Farmington, MI: Gale, 2002), 230-232.

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Curtin, Philip D. *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.

Douglass, S. L. *Beyond A Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization*. Fountain Valley, CA: Council on Islamic Education, 1999.

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Dunn, Ross E. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. Rev. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

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Goitein, S. D. *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Nasr, Sayyed Hossein. *Islamic Science, An Illustrated History*. Westerham, Kent: World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, 1976.

Francis Robinson, ed. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Watson, Andrew. *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

### ***Instructional Resources for Students***

Pouwels, Randall L. *The African and Middle Eastern World, 600-1500*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. This book is part of the Oxford University Press series for young people titled “The Medieval & Early Modern World.” The first seven of thirteen chapters are concerned with the early centuries of Islam.

“The Qur’an.” *Calliope: Exploring World History* 14, 4 (Dec. 2003). The history magazine for young people devotes this entire issue to the Qur’an.



## **Correlations to National and State Standards**

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### ***National Standards for History***

Era 4: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 CE. Standard 2: Causes and consequences of the rise of Islamic civilization in the seventh-10th centuries; Standard 3: Major developments in East Asia and Southeast Asia in the era of the Tang dynasty, 600-900 CE ; Standard 4: The search for political, social, and cultural redefinition in Europe, 500-1000 CE ; Standard 7: Major global trends from 300-1000 CE.

Era 5: Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 CE. Standard 1: The maturing of an interregional system of communication, trade, and cultural exchange in an era of Chinese economic power and Islamic expansion

### ***California: History-Social Science Content Standard***

7.2 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of Islam in the Middle Ages. 5. Describe the growth of cities and the establishment of trade routes among Asia, Africa, and Europe, the products and inventions that traveled along these routes (e.g., spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops), and the role of merchants in Arab society.

### ***Illinois Learning Standards: Social Science***

State Goal 16 – History. E. Understand Illinois, United States and world environmental history. 16.B.3b (W) Identify causes and effects of the decline of the Roman empire and other major world political events (e.g., rise of the Islamic empire, rise and decline of the T'ang dynasty, establishment of the kingdom of Ghana) between 500 CE and 1500 CE. 16.C.3a (W) Describe major economic trends from 1000 to 1500 CE including long distance trade, banking, specialization of labor, commercialization, urbanization and technological and scientific progress.

### ***New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies***

Standard 2: World History—students...demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments and turning points in world history... Global History and Geography Core Curriculum, Unit 2: Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 500-1200, Unit 3: Global Interactions, 1200-1650.

### ***Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies***

The student understands: (17) Culture. The student understands relationships that exist among world cultures. The student is expected to: (A) explain aspects that link or separate cultures and societies; (B) explain the impact of political boundaries that cut across culture regions; (E) evaluate how cultural borrowing affects world cultures; and (F) evaluate the consequences of improved communication among cultures.

(23) Science, technology, and society. The student understands how major scientific and mathematical discoveries and technological innovations have affected societies throughout history. The student is expected to: (B) identify new ideas in mathematics, science, and

technology that occurred during the Greco-Roman, Indian, Islamic, and Chinese civilizations and trace the spread of these ideas to other civilizations;

### ***Virginia Standards of Learning***

Era IV: Regional Interactions, 1000 to 1500 AD. WHI.10 The student will demonstrate knowledge of civilizations and empires of the Eastern Hemisphere and their interactions through regional trade patterns by a) locating major trade routes; b) identifying technological advances and transfers, networks of economic interdependence, and cultural interactions. WHII.2 The student will demonstrate an understanding of the political, cultural, and economic conditions in the world about 1500 AD by d) analyzing major trade patterns; e) citing major technological and scientific exchanges in the Eastern Hemisphere.

## **Conceptual links to other teaching units**

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This unit on the rise of Islam and its relationship to the development of a trans-hemispheric network of trade, travel, and cultural exchanges leads smoothly into the next instructional unit. Landscape Teaching Unit 5.3, titled Consolidation of Trans-Hemispheric Networks (1000-1250 CE) examines how interconnections across Afroeurasia matured and intensified, partly owing to the spread of Muslim merchants and their institutions across the mid-region of the hemisphere, but also owing to the continuing boom of China's economy and the rise of a new, vigorous urban civilization in Europe. The period from 1000 to 1250 is the crucial moment when peoples almost everywhere in Afroeurasia become linked together in one way or another.



**Mosque of Ibn Tulun  
Cairo, Ninth Century**

Photo by R. Dunn