

The effects of the expansion in the post classical period: the islamic civilizati...

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The “ Post-Classical Period,” was a time of change, expansion, and vast cultural diffusion. The Islamic civilization is a group that emerged from the Semitic groups of southwestern Asia, and moved to the Arabian peninsula in tribes, known as the Bedouin tribes, due to lack of water and food. The Islamic Civilization encountered the cultures of the Europeans, Asians and Africans, and connected into these civilizations because of the spread of the Muslim religion. The Bedouin Arabs intensified cultural diffusion also through trade, migration, and warfare. The movement of the Islamic culture resulted in the dissemination of distinct cultural characteristics, ideas, and technology throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Arabia was a name applied to the area in which the Arabian Peninsula was situated by the Greek historian Herodotus, and it was turned into a province, by the expanding Roman Empire, in 106 B. C. E. The Bedouin- Arabs were people who came from the northern part of the peninsula, and inhabited the area in which the Romans resided. They lived in autonomous tribes and survived by raiding passing caravans, shepherding, and gaining the domestication of the camel. About the first millennium B. C. E, the Bedouin- Arabs engaged in caravan trade, and became one of the leading carriers of goods between the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. (Duiker and Spielvogel 193)

During the pre-Islamic times, the Arabs were polytheistic, and contained Allah as the supreme god, and other less significant deities. The faith didn't contain priesthood, and was open to all members of a tribe. Each tribe worshipped a massive black meteorite, known as the Ka'aba in Mecca, and

also possessed their own stone. (Duiker and Spielvogel 193) During the fifth and sixth centuries, the Arabian peninsulas economy had elevated due to a third trade route that was introduced, through Mecca to Yemen and then by ship across the Indian Ocean. The contact between the Arabs of the desert and the wealthy merchants resulted in their contact becoming maladroit. (Duiker and Spielvogel 194)

Muhammad is a significant historical figure that brought change to the Muslim religion. Muhammad was an orphan and caravan manager that married his employer, a rich widow called Khadija. He was part of the local Hashemite clan of the Qurashi tribe, and was concerned with the gap of Bedouin values of honesty and generosity. As a result of his concern, he isolated himself and meditated. During one of his meditation sessions he experienced visions, heard voices, and was given a message that he was told to preach by the angel Gabriel. After that experience, Muhammad decided to preach to the people of Mecca his divination, but gained few success, because many thought he was a charlatan, or that he was going against traditional beliefs to cause political and social disorder. In 622, Muhammad and his closest followers went to Yathrib, also known as Medina or the "city of the Prophet," and obtained support from residents of the city, and some people from the countryside, but he didn't reach his original goal of converting the Jews in Medina to Muslims. (Duiker and Spielvogel 194) This voyage was known as the Hijrah, and as a result of it, the first Muslim community, also known as the umma, was developed.

Later on, Muhammad was also able to convert the townspeople of Mecca to Muslim and in 630, he visited the Ka'aba, ordered the idols of the traditional faith to be demolished, and made it the sacred shrine of Islam. Muhammad died two years later, as the Muslim religion was expanding throughout the peninsula. (Duiker and Spielvogel 195) " Praise therefore the name of thy Lord, the Great," is a line from the Koran that pertains to worshipping Allah. The Koran is a religious book, developed from and for the Muslim teachings, and is a representation of how this religion was preserved to show later generations. (Koran: passage on reward and punishment in the afterlife) The Islamic culture expanded into Africa, through the trans- Saharan trade routes and brought in the Islamic culture into the region, and also transformed the region politically, economically, and culturally. West Africa has experienced migration, because of the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups it contains, and because of the minerals, and goods it can produce.

Around the ninth century C. E., in the trans- Saharan route, slave trade became popular. These slaves were used by the Arabs for military service, administration, domestic service, and concubinage. Extensive trade in the region led to urbanization, as well as the introduction of Islam. Muslim Berbers contributed to the expansion of Islam, by controlling the trade routes in Africa, and becoming conduits for economic activities, by the tenth century. During the mid-11th century, cities like Gao and Timbuktu had Muslim scholars traveling the routes, because of the intrusion of the Almoravids, and this resulted in turning these cities into hotspots for study and trade.

The eleventh century brought the acceptance of the Islamic culture, and led to conversion of the elites, so they can have legal, political, administrative, cultural, and economic benefits. The Islamic culture did not disrupt indigenous African shamanist and animist beliefs, it united ethnic groups, and led to the development of Islamic states throughout Africa. (Africa, 3000 B. C.-A. D. 1500 / West African Trade / Background Essay) A passage by Arab geographer al-Bakri said, " When the people have gathered, his coreligionists draw near upon their knees sprinkling dust upon their heads as a sign of respect, whilst the Muslims clap hands as their form of greeting," and this shows how the Muslims coexisted peacefully with the native people of the land. (al-Bakri 229)

The Islamic culture was introduced into China's Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), by the Silk Road. Until the Ming Dynasty, Chinese Muslims were part of the minorities, and were under control of their own local officials, and speaking their own language. In 1368, when the Mongol Yuan Dynasty collapsed, the Hans wanted to get rid of foreign influences, by making the Muslims comply with Chinese customs and language. Through trade and military adventures, the Muslims gradually settled into China.

The Chinese often employed Islamic mercenaries to fight against rebels, and these mercenaries would often remain in China. The introduction of the Islamic mercenaries strengthened the influence of the Islamic culture over China. Chinese emperor Shen Zong enticed 15, 000 Arab soldiers to create a stronger zone between the division of the Song territory and the Khitan territory. The movement of these soldiers led to more trade on the Silk Road.

In the 13th century, when the Mongols took over the Song Dynasty, they allowed the Muslims to take official positions, in the imperial administration, in large amounts. With the government in favor of the Muslim religion, Muslims engaged in more trade, and expanding into other fields. (The Muslims of China)

The Muslim conquest of Spain was relatively peaceful and it aided in making the Christians, Muslims, and Jews coexist. In the early eighth century, in the Visigoth Empire in Spain, under the sons of the Visigothic king Witiza, Spain had constant instability and rebellions. From 701 to 709, northern Morocco was conquered by the Arabs and was laid to siege by Ceuta, the area's last possession of the Byzantines, during Witiza's reign. Julian, the imperial governor, sent his daughter, Florinda, to court to be educated, but she was dishonored by Witiza's successor, Roderick. Ceding control of Ceuta to the Arabs, Julian provoked Musa ibn Nusayr, the Arab representative of North Africa, to raid Spain, and to become allies with Witiza's rebellious sons.

Tariq ibn Ziyad, the governor of Tangier, began the Arab invasion by attacking with 7,000 men, which mostly consisted of Berbers, on the Straits of Gibraltar in May 711. At the Battle of Río Barbate, on July 19, 711, Roderick was murdered and defeated. Encouraged by Witiza's sons and supporters to seize Toledo and Córdoba, with an army of 18,000 Arabs, Musa crossed Morocco, in 712, and seized Sevilla and Merida. An expedition into Leon and Galicia, and the capturing of Zaragoza was done by Musa and Tariq, in 714. Abdul Aziz, Musa's son, completed the conquest of Granada and Murcia, after seizing Portugal.

As a result of these invasions, the Jews and serfs gained some freedom, a lot of the population converted to Islam, the Visigothic families paid tribute in return for expensive domains, and the Mozarbs, also known as the unconverted, created communities in the Muslim cities, that received few discrimination. Due to the Arab conquest, social revolution occurred and the powers of elites were reduced, a peasant proprietorship was established, freedom was obtained by copious Christian slaves and serfs, new technology and agricultural techniques were introduced, and architectural styles, native music and dances, and ancient learning were preserved by the Arabs, as well as reintroduced into Europe. (Muslim Conquest of Spain)

The Islamic civilization intensified the spread of ideas, and expanded their culture throughout the Eurasian continent. They also helped people of other cultures and religions coexist with each another, such as the Christians, and the Jews. They helped to expand their empire, as well as others through trade, and brought new goods to the market. Cultural diffusion was the result of the dissemination of distinct cultural characteristics, ideas, and technologies, developed and preserved by the Islamic people.

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