

# The islamic golden age of baghdad



The Islamic civilization has been a victorious civilization dating back towards the 7th century; Islam was first originated in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. Just like any other religion and/or empire there was a Golden age which had formed in year 800-1200, throughout history Islam has encountered downfalls and achievements, however throughout the ups and downs it has been one of the most well-known empires in history. The reason why the Golden Age was a key element in the Islamic Civilization was because it was the period in which mathematicians, scientists, agriculture, politics, and philosophy began to originate. During which time the Abbasid Empire was centered in Baghdad which had promoted political stability, economic growth, and cultural awareness. The "Abbasids" were particularly Arabs however the Abbasid government was Persian and had many Persians involved with the army and administration. Baghdad became one of the most economically stable cities in the world during the Islamic Golden Age by expanding and introducing new levels and diverging people of various ethnicities such as the Chinese, Indian, and Africans.

Baghdad deriving from the Persian word "God Given" <sup>1</sup> was a small Persian village located in the Middle East, close to the capital Ctesiphon during the Golden Age of Islam, the city was a part of the Persian Empire. Baghdad was known as the center of the trade industry, and had many connections across the world especially Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean region. People from those regions would come to Baghdad to visit and gain more knowledge from the "House of Wisdom" and to trade crops <sup>2</sup>. In the year 762 a man by the name of Abbasid caliph al-Mansur began to construct the capital of Baghdad <sup>3</sup>. Mansur's architects built the city as a round circle and in the center stood

the main mosque of the city to worship Prophet Muhammad; the city had three walls around each wall had a different structure one of the walls had the army headquarters for protection<sup>4</sup>. Eventually, the city had developed onward toward the eastern bank of Tigris; unfortunately about 4 centuries later as Baghdad began to expand the Mongols came into the city in the year 1258 which set a decline in the Abbasid Empire. <sup>5</sup>

In the 9th century one of the biggest establishments had been created in Baghdad known as the Bayt al- Hikma (The House of Wisdom), it was educationally influential toward Baghdad and Islam as a whole; it was promoting literary and scientific methods. Scholars from around the world whether being Muslim or any sort of religion would gather the knowledge not only of the world but the universe, the House of Wisdom was founded to have a research library for all subjects such as; linguistics, science, math, and astronomy. <sup>6</sup> Plenty of the research which was done at the House of Wisdom had been translated from different languages like Farsi, Latin, Turkish, which had translated to Arabic. This was known as the translation movement; many mathematics, medicine, and astronomy which had been researched by Pahlavi from Persia were translated into Arabic. <sup>7</sup> Plato, Aristotle, and Galen very well-known philosophers their works were sent in to the House of Wisdom for translation to the Arabic language. <sup>8</sup> Many different people from around the world at that time would travel to the house to gain knowledge and bring the knowledge back to their home country which consisted of Mesopotamia, China, Egypt, and Greek civilizations. The medical works which had been done in the medical school of Jundishapur of

Sasamids had been transferred into the House of Wisdom; in the 9th century paper was introduced to the city of Baghdad. 9

The Golden Age during the rise of the Islamic civilization had a major transformation in agriculture, which had an environmental impact at the time. Muslim traders changed the trade industry by the dispersion of harvesting the crops and distributing these crops to various parts of the Middle East, which had led to the major transformation of economy, population, and circulation. Worldwide crops were grown and delivered to the Middle East from numerous countries such as: China would deliver citrus fruits to the Islamic lands and new food crops were created in India like date palms, spinach, bananas, eggplant, rice, and lemons. 10 These would be delivered to Iraq, at that time due to the climate and location of the Middle East which would not be able to produce these crops. One of the major discoveries was sugar production which turned into one of the biggest industries of the Golden Age, sugar plantations and refineries began to be established in the 8th century and distributed worldwide. 11 Gold Abbasid Coins were used as money known as “ Gold Dinars”; on the coins it says “ In the name of God, there is no deity except god alone”. 12

In the 8th century the expansion of trade and industry began where long distance caravan trade routes would be developed and expanded. Trade with India was very popular in the Golden Age because they developed many crops such as bananas, date palms, and rice. The trade would be delivered through the Persian Gulf to Iraq; this is when the creation of an international market started to begin with southeast Asia, Spain, India, and the Mediterranean lands. Iraq was the center of trade worldwide, and a

prosperous population of about 500, 000 people<sup>13</sup> the influences which took part were: peace, resources, wealth, and efficient laws.

Moving towards a political standpoint in the golden age of the Islamic empire, the city of Baghdad was ruled by Abbasids from 750-1258 and the Abbasids were culturally Arab. <sup>14</sup> However, the Grand Vizier and Vizier which means the “ Prime Minister” and “ Minister” was culturally Persian<sup>15</sup>. The Abbasids were Muslim both Shiite and Sunni; they provided economic growth and helped Baghdad to be a persevered city and known worldwide for their agriculture, people, culture, and intelligence. They provided cultural richness and political stability to ensure the population of approx. 500, 000 remained prosperous. The administrative policy in Baghdad were involving local governors appointing Caliphs also known as Muslim rulers who were people to be believed a demonstrative Allah on earth. <sup>15</sup>

Toward the conclusion of the Islamic Civilization during the Golden age, there were plenty of reasons why Baghdad as a city filled with so much potential is able to make them known worldwide for their agriculture, culture, political stability, and intelligence. For every choice which was made in Iraq was a step further toward an empire filled with wealth, happiness, and economically stable. The Abbasids and Persians built an impressive House of Wisdom for the world to admire; I can conclude that the Islamic civilization was one if not most successful civilization by making people from around the world visit Baghdad and diversify in peace.

## **Endnotes:**

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