

How did Baghdad become the 'City of Peace'?

Very Important Vocabulary

Prophet Muhammad: Founder of Islam, believed by Muslims to be the last messenger of God.

Hijra: refers to the journey Prophet Muhammad and his Followers took from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD to escape persecution, marking the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

Mecca: is the holiest city in Islam, where Muhammad was born, and Medina is the city where he established the first Muslim community.

Conquest: often refers to the military campaigns that expanded Islamic rule, including the eventual takeover of Mecca by Prophet Muhammad and his Followers.

Caliphate: is an Islamic state led by a Caliph, who is the political and religious leader of the Muslim community.

Scholars: in the Islamic world were educated individuals who studied and contributed to various fields, including religion, science, and philosophy.

The Abbasid Caliphate: was an important Islamic empire that ruled from 750 to 1258 AD and is known for fostering a rich culture and knowledge.

The Golden Age of Islam: refers to the period during the Abbasid Caliphate when science, culture, and knowledge flourished in the Islamic world.

The Rashidun Caliphate

There were four caliphs of the Rashidun Caliphate, the first of which was Abu Bakr. A caliphate is the area that was ruled by a caliph. During the Ridda Wars of 632 CE, the Muslim armies defeated the rebellious Arabian tribes. Muslim armies also conquered territories in North Africa, Mesopotamia and Persia. Captured cities were often treated well; in Damascus in Syria, the Christian people were not hurt and were allowed to worship freely.

The Silk Road

The Silk Road was a network of trade routes that snaked through countries in the Islamic Empire, such as the Arabian Peninsula, Persia (modern-day Iran), Mesopotamia and North Africa. The Silk Road was used for trading luxury goods such as spices, silk, horses and tea. The Silk road proved to be very lucrative for Muslims because it ran through parts of the Umayyad Caliphate. People travelling and meeting to trade along the Silk Road also helped to spread ideas, knowledge, culture, art and inventions across the Umayyad Caliphate.

The Significance of Mecca and Medina

Mecca is the birthplace of Muhammad and the site of the Kaaba, the most sacred place in Islam. Muslims around the world pray facing Mecca, and every Muslim is expected to make a pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if they are able.

Medina is where Muhammad established the first Muslim community and where he is buried. It is also the site of the Prophet's Mosque, which is one of the holiest sites in Islam.

Baghdad in 900 AD

Baghdad was built in 752 AD by Caliph al-Mansur as the new capital of the Islamic Empire. It was built in a circle, about 1km in diameter, with the mosque and guard headquarters in the centre. Houses were built around the city walls. Baghdad's location was perfect for the city to succeed. It was close to water and established trade routes. Major roads crossed through the city and many traders set up markets around the entrances. Baghdad became known as the cultural and learning capital of the world. The world's first universities and hospitals were built there. A banking system was set up so people could trade. This encouraged more people to settle close to the city.

Over 1 million people lived in Baghdad. The House of Wisdom was built in Baghdad as the centre of learning and knowledge. Many scholars travelled there.

The Umayyad Caliphate

After the first Umayyad caliph established himself as the leader of the Islamic world, the Umayyads followed a dynastic rule. The Umayyad Caliphate was the largest empire at that time. It controlled the Middle East, parts of Asia as far as India, North Africa and most of Spain. The Umayyad Empire introduced a common currency by creating new coins that everyone in the empire could use. The Umayyads decided to make their own coins with Arabic writing and symbols of Islam, this helped to unify the empire. These new coins were used everywhere in the empire, from Spain to India, making trading easier and helping people to feel as if they were part of one big community.

What was life like in early Baghdad?

Baghdad's layout, with its circular design, made it easy for people to access important places like the Caliph's palace and the grand mosque at the center. This design highlighted the Caliph's central role in both religion and politics. Markets, schools, and homes surrounded the center, allowing for efficient trade and communication within the city. Baghdad's circular shape with strong walls and gates provided excellent defense, making people feel safe from outside threats. The walls also controlled who entered and left, protecting the city's wealth. The radial streets made it easy for people to move around, helping trade and making goods more available. The layout encouraged social interaction, cultural exchange, and learning, attracting scholars and traders. Markets were well-placed, supporting Baghdad's role as a prosperous economic center.

The Rise of Islam

The Prophet Muhammad Born in 570 CE

The Prophet Muhammad was born around 570 CE in the city of Mecca, in what is now Saudi Arabia.

He belonged to the Quraish tribe, a respected family. When he was very young, his parents died, and he was raised by his grandparents and later his uncle.

The First Revelation Born in 610 CE

At the age of 40, whilst praying in a cave called Hira, near Mecca, Muhammad received his first revelation from the Angel Gabriel. This revelation marked the beginning of his role as a prophet. He was told that there was only one God, Allah, and that he was chosen to be his messenger. This event is very important because it marks the beginning of Islam.

Preaching in Mecca 613 CE

After the first revelation, Muhammad began preaching in Mecca, calling people to worship only Allah and to live justly. At first, only a few people believed him, and many of the powerful leaders in Mecca were against him because they wanted to continue worshipping their many gods.

Medina and the Muslim Community 622 CE

In Medina, Muhammad became not just a spiritual leader but also a political and military leader. He helped settle disputes between tribes, established laws, and worked to build a strong, united community. The people of Medina welcomed him, and Islam started to spread more quickly.

The Hijra (Migration to Mecca) 622 CE

As opposition in Mecca grew, it became dangerous for Muhammad and his followers. In 622 CE, Muhammad and his followers migrated from Mecca to a city called Yathrib, which would later be known as Medina. This journey is called the Hijra. The Hijra is a significant event because it marks the start of the Islamic calendar and the establishment of the first Muslim community, or Ummah, in Medina.

Return to Mecca 630 CE

In 630 CE, after years of conflict with the leaders of Mecca, Muhammad and his followers returned to Mecca. Instead of seeking revenge, Muhammad forgave his enemies and took control of the city peacefully. He entered the Kaaba, the holy shrine in Mecca, and destroyed the idols inside, dedicating it to the worship of Allah alone. Mecca then became the holiest city in Islam.

Death 632 CE

Prophet Muhammad died in 632 CE in Medina at the age of 62. By the time of his death, Islam had spread across much of the Arabian Peninsula, and he had laid the foundations for what would become a major world religion.

