WHI.8 Islam Pt. 2

**The Spread of Islam**

The Big Idea: Despite internal conflict, within 200 years Islam went from a local religion in the Arabian desert to a major empire on three continents

Why it's important: The religion of Islam and its history still influences those people today.

Some of those internal conflicts were over who should lead Muslims after Muhammad died. Some wanted Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali to take over. Others backed Muhammad's father-in-law, Abu-Bakr.

Abu-Bakr won the power struggle and became the first caliph, or successor to Muhammad

Islam spread quickly in the years after Muhammad, out of the Arabian desert across trade routes (cultural diffusion).

Islamic armies were able to expand into the Fertile Crescent, Iran and out into central Asia because the Persian and Byzantine Empires were weak and easily toppled there.

Many of these people accepted Islam. Some of them liked the message, some liked the fact that by becoming Muslim they avoided paying a tax put on non-Muslims.

The Koran prevented Muslims from forcing others to accept the religion, however.

Muslim rulers allowed people to follow whatever beliefs they chose.

**Muslims Become Divided**

Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, eventually became the fourth caliph (or successor to Muhammad). After he died however, the next group of people to take power were a family called the Umayyads.

The Umayyads didn't follow the simple life of Muhammad and his family members, they were rich, powerful and loved to surround themselves with wealth.

This caused a split in the Muslim world. Those who didn't believe in the Umayyads were called Shi'a- thinking the leader of Muslims should be a descendant of Muhammad, and those who were ok with the Umayyyads were Sunni, believing any good Muslim man could lead the people.

This division continues through to today.

**Under the Umayyads**

Under the Umayyads the Muslim Empire expanded furthest, as far East as the Indus River Valley, and as far West as across Africa and North into Spain.

Muslims took over the Holy Land, capturing Jerusalem, Damascus, and establishing a capital in Baghdad

It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows though: Muslims eventually took two major losses:

* Muslim expansion into Europe was stopped at the Battle of Tours in 732
* Baghdad was lost to the Mongols in 1258

**Muslim Culture**

As Muslims conquered new lands they were fair and generous to their people

Muslim society was divided into four groups.

* At the top were people who were Muslim from birth.
* Next came those who converted to Islam. These people paid a tax higher than the first group but lower than the next two groups.
* The third group included Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians- protected because Muslims shared some of their beliefs.
* The fourth group was slaves- not based on race, but they weren't Muslims

An important part of Muslim culture is the Arabic language and alphabet

Muslims also had mosaic art like the Byzantines

**Education**

Muslims placed a high value on learning. Muslim scholars added much to humans' store of knowledge.

Europe was in chaos, during which much that had been known in ancient Greece and Rome was lost.

During this time, Muslim scholars kept much of this knowledge alive. They collected ancient Greek, Indian, and Persian works of science and philosophy and translated them into Arabic.

One center of this study was the House of Wisdom built in Baghdad. Later, this ancient learning returned to Europe when the works of Muslim scholars were translated.

**Islamic Academics**

In addition to libraries, Muslims created several universities where research and learning would take place

Some of that research was in the field of math, where arabic numerals and the idea of zero was borrowed from India. Today, those are our numbers: 1,2,3,...

Muslim thinkers invented algebra

Advanced medicine

Made maps

**Wrap Up**

The Muslim world of yesterday was much different than the Muslim world of today.

When Europe was in the Dark Ages the Muslim world was thriving- working on science, math, architecture and existing peacefully.

While it may not be our own family history, Islamic history is a part of the shared human history.