AMSCO Chapter 8

Islamic World Through 1450

1. Pre-Islamic Bedouin Culture
2. Sixth century Bedouins were nomadic, tribal and polytheistic, led by a sheikh who ruled by consent of tribal council.
3. Polygyny – one man could have more than one wife
4. Allah was supreme god out of many, and the sacred stone was in Mecca; no priests existed, rather everyone was involved
5. Economy based on camel caravans for trade; as sea routes expanded, Bedouins had more competition
6. Muhammad and Islam
7. Born around 570, worked as a caravan manager; married a rich widow in Mecca; experienced revelations from Allah (later collected in the Quran) that criticized polytheism and tribal loyalties
8. Spread of Islam
9. Muhammad preached and gain a few followers, who believed him to be a prophet in line after Abraham, Moses and Jesus, but not divine.
10. Meccan leaders were opposed to his teachings of monotheism and Muhammad fled Mecca, where he gained followers for the next 10 years
11. Muhammad returned to conquer Mecca and declare the sacred black stone (ka’aba) a shrine of Islam
12. In Muhammad’s lifetime most of Arabian peninsula united under Islam as people migrated further afield taking beliefs with them or as land was conquered; conquered people could convert or pay a tax
13. Core Theological Principles of Muhammad – monotheism, salvation, hope of afterlife, submission to will of Allah, belief in Quran as sacred book
14. Islam in Practice – Five Pillars
15. Belief in one god, Allah
16. Prayer five times per day
17. Charity
18. Fasting during Ramadan
19. Pilgrimage to Mecca
20. Jihad – added later, struggle in the way of Allah to improve self and society
21. Shariah – Islamic code of law for daily living, such as morality, honesty
22. First four Caliphs and the Umayyads
23. Muhammad died in 632 with no sons. Father-in-law Abu Bakr (Sunni – first four successors genuine) took over as caliph, but many had supported son-in-law, Ali (Shia – Ali was first true caliph)
24. Spread of Islam under Abu Bakr also spread Arabic language, cotton, sugar, citrus
25. Son-in-law, Ali, become fourth caliph in 656, assassinated in 661. Network of merchants who took over formed Umayyad dynasty of Sunni Muslims centered in Damascus
26. Umayyads came to control largest territory since the Romans
27. Shia believers still resisted, and developed separate leader called imam, not caliph
28. Umayyads and Abbasids
29. After 90 years, Umayyads conquered by Abbasids, centered in Baghdad, which rivaled Constantinople
30. Baghdad’s influence – center of learning, techniques for thicker paper, golden age of learning
31. Influence of Persia – Persian Muslims were first considered inferior, but eventually they were able to convert but keep their cultural identity.
32. Persians contributed to the Islamic Golden Age with scholars, scientists, and poets
33. Problems for the Abbasids – territory too vast to control tax collection; bureaucracy grew with viziers (prime ministers) as go between for communication between ruler and people
34. Invasions and Trade Shifts
35. Mamluks – Turkic group that took control of Egypt and North Africa
36. Seljuk Turks – Muslims from Central Asia that took control of Baghdad, reduced power of Abbasid Caliph to religious leader only, and eventually conquered Byzantine Empire
37. Crusaders – Christians trying to retake holy sites like Jerusalem
38. Mongols – Central Asian nomads that conquered first the Abassids and then the Seljuk Turks
39. Economic Challenges – Baghdad not so important because trade routes shifted north, city slowly deteriorated
40. Islamic Rule in Spain
41. Umayyads after 711 took over Spain and established capital city in Cordoba
42. Battle of Tours – Umayyads defeated by Frankish forces, very unusual
43. Prosperity under Islam – religious tolerance, trade with China and southeast Asia via dhous (trading ships); Islamic influence like Alhambra fortress in Granada, Spain.
44. Scholars in Spain – al-Andalus (Islamic state in Spain) had largest library in world, and scholars like Ibn Rushd and Maimonides.
45. Social and Cultural Life
46. Cities were centers of learning for languages, philosophy, math, medicine, poetry, not just religious studies
47. Social Classes in the Islamic World
48. Camel caravans spread Islamic culture across the trade routes, including the idea of kinship groups
49. A growing merchant class arose in Mecca and Medina, that followed shariah
50. A permanent military force that kept order and did not own land provided stable environment
51. Commerce and Class – Muhammad was a merchant, this class was respected for fair dealing and charitable acts
52. Slavery – Muslims could not enslave other Muslims, Christians, Jews, or Zoroastrians (all monotheistic). Slaves were from Africa, Kievan Rus, and Asia. Slaves could convert and be freed, then their children would be free.
53. Slave women served as concubines for men with the limit of four wives. They were allowed more freedom than married women and could sometimes buy their freedom
54. Free Women in Islam
55. Practice of covering head and or body came from Asia and Byzantium
56. Muhammad’s Treatment of Women – made dowries paid to wife, not her father; outlawed infanticide of female babies; married a woman who was and educated business owner
57. Status of Women
58. Better than Christian or Jewish women – own property after marriage, remarry if widowed, cash settlement if divorced, practice birth control, testify in court
59. In cities women’s rights reduced through the veil, harems
60. Sufism – in India and Persia, Sufis abstained from earthly pleasures, dedicated to rituals and chants, focused on mystical aspect of Islam, rather than intellectual