



## Umayyads and Abbasids

### Introduction

In this lecture, we will discuss what happened after the Rashidun Caliphate? We would see some interesting points to talk about Umayyad and Abbasids. Here, we have excellent examples to compare and contrast of Right Caliphs and the successors of the Umayyad and Abbasids. Also, some factors regarding the rising empire of Muslims and its decline.

### Umayyad Period

During the time of rightly Caliphs, the Islamic empire expanded and it was known as *Dar-ul-Islam* where Islamic principles and provisions were followed. The Caliph was supposed to follow strictly the Qur'an and Sunnah, which were primary sources of the Caliphate. In this Caliphate, *AhlulKitaab* were not forced to embrace Islam, but they were allowed to follow their own religious practices representing religious tolerance as long as they pay *Jizya*, that is, for their protection under attacks or battles. Although, Muslims were also to pay a tax known as *zakat*.

### Expansion of Umayyads

The expansion under Umayyads can be observed from Spain, Persia, some parts of Pakistan, Mesopotamia, North Africa, Crete, Sicily, Sardinia, Northwest India, and Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The capital of the Umayyads was at Damascus. The Umayyads not only brought wealth, but also new converts to Islam. However, the domestic turmoil remained prevailing and later turned severe within the empire. The riches of the world were reaching in their hands.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) mentioned that, "I do not fear for your poverty, but the wealth of the world opens for you which will be the cause of the Fitna." (***Sahih Hadith***).

Umayyads became wealthy and they moved away from Taqwa and lived lavish lifestyles like royals. They did not care about the principles of Islam and Sunnah.

The only notable and devout leaders among Umayyads is the Hazrat Umer bin Abdul Aziz also known as Umer II. He was also known as a just, upright and an honest leader. His era can be regarded as the golden period of the Umayyad. He lifted away from the *Jizya* tax on those Non-believers who convert to Islam. He lifted away all extra allowances to his own family members. He treated everyone equally without any nepotism. The relatives of the leader were not given any privileges as they were treated as a common man in the society.

He was later poisoned when his successive government tried to reverse his financial and tax policies.

## **Decline of Umayyads**

The Umayyad became soft and corrupt due to wealth. Warrior lifestyle was abandoned as was in the Caliphate. The arts, crafts, entertainment, music and decadent lifestyle was prevailing among Umayyads. The difference between a rich and a poor has clearly been seen in Umayyads. Along the Indian frontier, warrior settlers revolted against the Umayyads with the help of the Abbasids.

In 750 CE, the Abbasids replaced Umayyads, and Umayyads were completely wiped out. The grandson of Umayyads escaped in Spain and established an exiled caliphate in Cordoba in Spain. There is nothing spectacular Umayyads to mention here in terms of any massive achievements apart from the expansion of the empire.

## **Advent of Abbasids**

In 750 CE, the Umayyads were completely wiped out by the Abbasids. The Muslim empire expansion was gaining strength. Abbasids have to tackle the internal conflicts. The period between 786 CE to 861 CE was known as the golden era of the Abbasids. The empire reached great cultural heights. In the era 813 CE to 833 CE, Mamoon was in power, he put down many rebellions and had fought wars with the Byzantine empire.

Abbasids empire lasted from 750 CE to 1258 CE. By the invasion of the Mongols under the leadership of Chingiz Khan, the Abbasids came to an end. Strange to say, the invading Mongols accepted Islam fascinated by Muslims 'architecture. The Abbasids followed the decadent and luxurious lifestyle, they considered themselves above the principles of Islam. Abbasids built a strong bureaucratic government to rule their empire. Muslim merchants expanded their trades across Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea.

## **Characteristics of Abbasids**

Abbasids built a centralized state with Baghdad as Capital. The absolute power was at the center of the state. The bureaucracy was under wazirs. There was a royal executioner. The revenue in the form of taxes and tribute was collected. The Abbasids were less powerful at a distance and strong at the center and they were not as sophisticated as the Umayyads were. The Abbasids caliphs placed themselves above the Islamic law. They remained remote from the people and instead they were more involved in their decadent lifestyle. There are golden achievements worth mentioning in terms of Science, Mathematics, Medicine, and Architecture etc.

Some of important Khaleefa Haroon-ur-Rasheed, Khaleefa Mamoon-ur-Rasheed and Al-Mansoor. During their time, they built Bait-ul-Hikma (House of Wisdom), which refers to a public academy and a center of excellence for knowledge. Muslims were very much into these houses of wisdom and they made many discoveries. The House of Wisdom was a formal academy. A lot of knowledgeable stuff could be found in this library, but it was destroyed by Mongols. In Islamic golden age there was education, advancements in

education, degree-granting universities, advancements in law especially Islamic jurisprudence, matters of Fiqh, Asool-al-Fiqh, in theology. In the same era Imam Ahmad ibn-e-Hanbil connected people to the Book of Allah (SWT) and the Sunnah as primary sources of Islamic knowledge. Ibn-e-Seena an authority in Philosophy and expert in modern medicine and had written a canon of medicine. Ibn-e-Seena and Ibn-e-Rushd were two authoritative figures in Philosophy. Al-Khawrizmi- famous Mathematician and invented Algebra, Trigonometry, the science of Algorithms and scientific methods. Al- bairuni- famous Physicist and Astronomer. Al-kindi- famous Chemist. In social science, Ibn e Khuldoon- a great historian and human behaviorist- his volumes of works on these topics can be found out.

## **Contribution of Muslim Scientists during Islamic Golden Age**

### **Ibn Sina**

Ibn Sina was widely described in medieval Europe as the father of early modern medicine, though his work as a philosopher was even more important. He began studying medicine at the tender age of 13, and he was practicing by the age 16.

Ibn Sina is credited with advancing medical knowledge through original discoveries and with improvements to the existing body of knowledge. One of his most important discoveries was the recognition of the potential for the airborne transmission of disease. He was also the first to correctly identify the distinction between central and peripheral facial paralysis, and he conducted groundbreaking research on psychiatric conditions.

Ibn Sina's book *The Canon of Medicine* was still being used as the standard medical textbook in European universities as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century—600 years after it was written. When he was a teenager, his medical expertise saved the life of a local ruler who rewarded young Ibn Sina with access to the palace library.

### **Ibn-e-Rushd**

In 12<sup>th</sup> century we meet Ibn Rushd in Cordoba, Andalus. Better known in the West as Averroes, Rushd was a Muslim philosopher who defended the rationalism of Aristotle and became a major and unique influence on the medieval philosophy of all three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

### **Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi**

He is a man whose very name is at the heart of algebra and algebraic calculations. The term itself comes from the title of one of his books, *The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*; the Arabic word for completion (in the sense of restoration or fixing) is al-gebr. Born in modern-day Uzbekistan around the year 780, al-Khwarizmi was a Persian scholar who did most of his work in Baghdad's House of Wisdom. Al-Khwarizmi says in the introduction to his book on algebra that it possesses the mathematical skills "such as men constantly require in cases of inheritance, legacies, partition, lawsuits, and trade, and in all

their dealings with each other or where the measurement of land, the digging of canals, geometrical computations and other objects of various sorts are concerned.

In 830, al-Khwarizmi published a book called *Zij al-Sindhind*, or *Astronomical Tables from India*. This was the first original work of Muslim astronomy, and it was a turning point. Until then, Muslim astronomers had merely adopted the work of others via translation. Now, thanks to al-Khwarizmi's inquiring mind, new research and celestial observation—along with calculations using new mathematical principles—led to original findings.

### **Al-Kindi**

One of the greatest scholars of the Islamic Golden Age was a man named Abu Yasuf Yaqub ibn Ishaq as-Sabbah al-Kindi. At the heart of al-Kindi's studies—and thus his reputation—are his philosophical writings, which drew heavily on ancient Greek learning. Indeed, Al-Kindi's relationship with the philosophical writings of the likes of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus was based on his translations of these philosophers. Al-Kindi's own philosophical inquiries emulated those of Aristotle. In addition to his translations of Greek texts, al-Kindi authored some 230 original works, and he was the first Arab to produce a comprehensive ordering of the different branches of science then practiced.

Al-Kindi was a fierce critic of alchemy, the medieval predecessor of chemistry whose adherents believed it possible to convert base metals, such as lead, into precious ones, such as gold.

Although alchemy is seen today as yet another pseudoscience, it was once taken very seriously. Al-Kindi, to his credit, derided alchemy as a pseudoscientific refuge for those who were more interested in get rich-quick schemes than they were in science.

### **Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmed al-Biruni**

He was born in the city of Khwarezm, in modern-day Uzbekistan. In his formative years, al-Biruni was schooled in Islamic subjects, such as theology and jurisprudence, and non-Islamic subjects, including astronomy, medicine, and mathematics (known then as the Greek sciences). From the start of his life, it was evident that al-Biruni was exceptionally gifted.

Al-Biruni had a lifelong obsession with measuring time and space. This drive found an outlet in geodesy, the branch of applied mathematics concerned with measuring the Earth. Al-Biruni's calculation of the Earth's circumference produced a result with an error of less than 1 percent, or about 200 miles. A similar degree of accuracy wouldn't be achieved in Europe until the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

As a court astrologer, al-Biruni had to produce regular readings for his paymasters, even as he ridiculed the unscientific pursuit of interpreting star charts. He was much happier, and on stronger ground, when writing about astronomy.

Although al-Biruni accepted—as it was written in the Quran—that the Earth lay at the center of the universe, his observations led him to postulate that we might actually live in a heliocentric world, with the Sun, not the Earth, at the center of things<sup>i</sup>.

### **Ibn Khaldun**

The very agenda of social sciences, why and how change occurs in society, was mapped by Ibn Khaldun, who produced a coherent body of analysis of why societies rise, peak and wane. Ibn

Khaldun spread himself across so many disciplines and spheres of work, one wonders how so many activities fit into a single CV.

Ibn Khaldun was an historian, but he branched out from narratives of unique occurrences to trace developments that could be generalised across time and place. In other words, Ibn Khaldun shaped history as a branch of social science. Ibn Khaldun's exploration of what dynamics trigger change in society displays the skill set of a political economist.

Ibn Khaldun's 'Muqaddimah', is a multi-volume tract which starts by explaining the origins of civil society. Then it moves on to a set of dos and don'ts for government relations with civil society, specifies how to tell good taxes from bad ones and sums up the nature of entrepreneurship<sup>ii</sup>.

According to Ashfaq Ahmed: 'Degrees are mere the receipt for your educational expenditure, but the true knowledge is seen through your good conduct.' The character is the most important aspect considered in Islam if you lose your character, you lose your leadership and in the sight of Allah (SWT).

The purpose of education is also to make your character best if education is not making you more upright than your education system is not right. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, 'I have been sent to perfect the good character.'

Allah (SWT) mentioned that He (PBUH) has the best of the character. In Qur'an said,

**"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds".  
[Al-Anbya:107]**

Muslims were first who created the first maps. Those were very detailed and ancient maps. Muslims discovered coffee to awake for tahajjud and soap for their cleanliness.

### **Europeans Influenced by Muslims Knowledge**

Europeans visited and learned the Arabic language to learn knowledge. They came out of the dark ages, they learned and took books with them. In Europe, people opposed religion due to the orthodoxically and influential nature of the powerful church. Because Europe believed that the religious thoughts were resisting them from advancements and therefore they opposed church and gone through the enlightened era of empirical knowledge. As Muslims, we accept the empirical knowledge, but our primary source of knowledge is divine knowledge. Christian went through downfall and they came out to be more knowledgeable about the advent of secular ideology. People of this era, like Carl Marks, Sigmund Freud, etc., where atheist and anti-religion. Therefore, those who had written books regarding the backwardness of religion. They all were well-versed of only Christianity not of Islam. Whereas, Islam is a more modern religion and accepts modern knowledge.

## **Decline of the Abbasids**

Due to the royal and lavish lifestyle, Abbasid faced their downfall. Their decadent lifestyle and considering them above Islamic law made them vulnerable. When Mongols attacked them, there was no one who would go to perform Hajj. People were busy in their lavish lifestyle. People who do not learn from history, history makes them lessons for the others. Abbasids left the Quran and Sunnah and they died out completely in the history.

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ii <https://newdirection.online/2018-publications-pdf/ND-report-Islam3-preview%28low-res%29.pdf>