

Lesson Six: The Umayyad State

Text

The Umayyad Caliphate, established in 661 CE by Muawiya, was the first major Islamic caliphate after the Rashidun Caliphate. Its capital was Damascus, and it marked a period of significant territorial expansion, stretching from Spain in the west to India in the east. This latter spanned nearly a century, from its foundation until its fall in 750 CE, the Umayyad dynasty transformed the political, cultural, and social landscapes of the Islamic world. The Umayyads are known for their administrative innovations, such as the establishment of Arabic as the official language and the creation of a postal system.

This era saw the spread of Islam, the flourishing of culture and trade, and the construction of impressive architectural landmarks, including the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. However, the Umayyad rule faced criticism for its dynastic succession and perceived favouritism towards Arab elites, leading to dissent among various groups, including the Shi'a. In 750 CE, the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasids, marking the end of their reign but leaving a lasting legacy in Islamic history.

In conclusion, the Umayyad state represents a pivotal period in Islamic history, characterized by expansion, cultural flourishing, and significant governance challenges. Its legacy persists, reflecting the complexities of Islamic identity and the historical interplay of politics and religion. The Umayyads' contributions laid the groundwork for future Islamic empires and continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about Islam and governance.

Definitions

Legacy	something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past
Territorial Expansion	the increase in a geographic area belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a governmental authority
State	a politically organized body of people usually occupying a definite territory, especially one that is sovereign
Era	a fixed point in time from which a series of years is counted
Dynasty	a succession of rulers of the same line of descent
Caliphate	the office of a caliph or the land he rules over

Activities

Fill the blanks in the paragraph below with the following terms: *legacy, territorial expansion, state, era, trade, dynasty*

The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 CE) built upon the of Rashidun Caliphate. Overseeing an..... of significant, from Spain in the west to India in the east, this vast empire established a centerized that promoted across its diverse regions, connecting Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The Umayyads, as the first hereditary in Islamic history, helped shape the political and cultural landscapes of the Islamic world, leaving a lasting impact on governance, architecture, and the spread of Islam. Their rule marked a key phase in the development of the Islamic state.

Sources

—“Dictionary”. *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com.