



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: ISL 472**

**COURSE TITLE: ISLAM'S CONTRIBUTION TO CIVILIZATION**



## **NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to ISL472 – Islam’s contribution to civilization. This is a two-credit unit course. The material contains various efforts made by some eminent Muslim personalities to contribute to world civilization. This course guide gives you an overview of the course. It also provides you with information on the Organization and requirements of the course.

### **Course Aims**

This course is designed to help you to learn about the particular roles played by some personalities in Islam who contributed immensely and in various fields of endeavor to our contemporary civilized world. This is to enable the contemporary Muslim Scholars and students look for means through which they can also make meaningful contribution to the development of humanity.

### **Course Objectives**

To achieve the aims set out above, ISL472 has overall objectives for the course as a whole. These are not the same with the specific objectives which are at the beginning of each unit and upon which you are advised to read before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check your progress. Presented below are the wider objectives of the course. By meeting these objectives, you regard yourself as having met the aims of the course. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- (a) give some explanations on what civilization is all about
- (b) discuss civilization in Arabia before the advent of Islam
- (c) discuss the position of Islam on civilization
- (d) name some notable Muslims who have contributed to world civilization
- (e) discuss the contributions of people like Al-Gazzālī, Al-Farābī, Al-Kindi, Ibn khaldūn, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīna, Al- Rāzī etc

## **Working Through This Course**

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a notebook, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

## **Course Materials**

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- Course Guide
- Study Units
- Assignment file
- Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit.

## **Study Units**

There are 14 units (of three modules) in this course. They are listed below:

### **MODULE 1: CIVILIZATION IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC AND EARLY ISLAMIC PERIODS**

#### **Unit 1: The concept of Civilization**

#### **Unit 2: Civilization in Arabia before Islam**

#### **Unit 3: Islam and its attitude to research and learning**

#### **Unit 4: The Golden Age of Islamic civilization**

## **MODULE 2: ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AND MODERN RENAINSANCE**

### **Unit 1: Science in the medieval Islamic world**

### **Unit 2: Medicine in medieval Islam**

### **Unit 3: Islamic contributions to Literature**

### **Unit 4: Islamic contributions to Philosophy**

### **Unit 5: Islamic contributions to Technology**

## **MODULE 3: DECLINE OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION**

### **Unit 1: Islam in Spain**

### **Unit 2: Islam in Africa**

### **Unit 3: Causes of the decline of Islamic civilization**

### **Unit 4: Islamic civilization in the contemporary period**

### **Textbooks and References**

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading. Assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline.

### **Assessment File**

An assessment File and a Marking Scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the works you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the assessment

file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

### **Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs)**

You will have to submit a specified number of the TMAs. Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You will be assessed on four of them but the best three performances from the TMAs will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

### **Final Examination and Grading**

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflect the kinds of self-assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered and all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between completing the last unit, and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments ( best three assignments out of four marked)	=30%
Final Examination	=70%
Total	100%



The date for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and date for examination.

### Course Overview and Presentation Schedule

Unit	Title of Work	Weeks	Activity
Course Guide			
<b>Module 1:</b>			
1	<b>The concept of Civilization</b>	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	<b>Civilization in Arabia before Islam</b>	Week 2	Assignment 2
3	<b>Islam and its attitude to research and learning</b>	Week 3	Assignment 3
4	<b>The Golden Age of Islamic civilization</b>	Week 4	Assignment 4
<b>Module 2:</b>			
1	<b>Science in the medieval Islamic world</b>	Week 5	Assignment 5
2	<b>Medicine in medieval Islam</b>	Week 6	Assignment 6
3	<b>Islamic contributions to Literature</b>	Week 7	Assignment 7
4	<b>Islamic contributions to Philosophy</b>	Week 8	Assignment 8
5	<b>Islamic contributions to Technology</b>	Week 9	Assignment 9
<b>Module 3:</b>			

1	<b>Islam in Spain</b>	Week 10	Assignment10
2	<b>Islam in Africa</b>	Week 11	Assignment11
3	<b>Causes of the decline of Islamic civilization</b>	Week 12	Assignment12
4	<b>Revision</b>	Week 13	Assignment13
5	<b>Revision</b>	Week 14	Assignment14
6	<b>Examination</b>	Week 15	Examination

### **How to Get the Most from This Course**

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecture. In the same way, a lecturer might give you some reading to do. The study units tell you what you have to read, and about relevant materials or set of books. You are provided with exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is introduction to the subject matters of the units, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from reading section. The following is the practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor.

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to help you.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly, it is your assignment.
2. Organize a Study Schedule. Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and Schedule of work for each unit.
3. Once you have created your own schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their coursework. If you run into difficulties with your Schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late to help.
4. Turn to unit 1, and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. You will need your text books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
6. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
7. Well before the relevant due date (about 4 weeks before due dates), keep in mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignments carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the due date.
8. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsecured about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
9. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you can keep yourself on schedule.

10. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your Schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutors' comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comment on the ordinary assignments.
11. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Make sure you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the course guide).

### **Tutors and Tutorials**

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- You have difficulty with the exercises
- You have a question or problem with an assignment or with your tutor's comments on assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending the tutorials. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

## **Summary**

The course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study.

We wish you success with the course and hope you will find it both interesting and useful.



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# **MODULE 1: CIVILIZATION IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC AND EARLY ISLAMIC PERIODS**

## **Unit 1: The concept of Civilization**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1. What is Civilization?

3.2. The Islamic civilization

3.3. The benefits of civilization

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This course ISL472 will lay bare open the different ways in which Islam, especially through the Arabs, contributed to the world civilization. It is established in the Qur'an that the coming of Prophet Muhammad is a blessing and mercy to mankind. Therefore the religion which he had come to proclaim (Islam) must bear with it what would bring light to the world and improve the living standard of man. It is in the light of this that we shall be discussing some of the ways by which Islam has impacted positively on the life of man through the innovative endowment of some great adherents of the religion. Our discussion will start with the concept of civilization.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- Define the concept of civilization
- Explain what is meant by Islamic civilization
- Discuss on the general characteristics of the Islamic civilization



### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1. What is civilization?**

Many scholars have defined civilization in various ways. Hornby (2005) in his ‘Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary’, defines civilization as ‘a state of human society that is very developed and organized’. It is the flourishing of excellence of a civic idea, supported by peaceful flowering of the arts and pursuit of knowledge in which many ethnicities and religions may participate. It also means the comprehensive development of the physical, intellectual, spiritual, psychological and moral potentials of man. It is civilization that assists in transmitting the benefits of the human potentials into the larger society for onward transmission into the entire world. A collective effort of the whole society is needed for civilization to be effective. This is so because its benefits are not limited to certain groups or to a few individuals. Rather when a civilization is ripe enough and become mature, the entire society will be the beneficiary. This is one of the characteristics of civilization. Another characteristic of it is that it is continuity. This means that it has to maintain continuation. It has to be durable and not just emerge for some time and disappear soon. Civilization is equally easily adaptable i.e. any other society can easily copy and utilize any useful and influential civilization without much stress. This wide and easy spread of civilization is mostly aided by the current advancement in modern technology especially the communication technologies.

#### **3.2. What is Islamic civilization?**

By Islamic civilization, we do not necessarily refer to such civilization developed by Muslims only. It is the civilization that came to be as a result of the efforts of Muslims and non-Muslims but which was based on Islamic principles. What had been called a Muslim civilization in the past was a joint effort put in place by both the Muslims and the non-Muslims all over the world, Arabs and non Arabs. It spread beyond the areas of Muslim peoples and lands wherever and whenever this was possible. Its contribution reached non-Muslim Europe through Spain and Sicily, and influenced the

European Crusaders, who in medieval times, thought that they would meet savage barbarians in Jerusalem and its neighborhood. To their surprise they soon came to realize they were witnessing a civilization far better than what they had been seen in feudal Europe. More important, Muslim civilization was not always connected with military power. It continued to work one way or another in Muslim societies during times of military strength or military and political weakness.

Islam is not only a religion but also a civilization. It is a historical reality that has been on stage of human history for over fourteen centuries. Its geographical spread covers vast areas not only in Asia which is its cradle but also across African and European continents. Islam is also a spiritual reality which has been able to impart positively on the both the inner and the outer life of numerous human beings all over the world. Today over 1.2 billion people from different racial and cultural backgrounds are Muslim, and historically Islam has played a significant role in the development of certain aspects of other civilizations, especially Western civilization. Starting from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam had been recognized as a power civilization capable of subjugate some other seemingly indomitable powers hitherto oppressing weaker nations and societies. The spread and acceptance of Islam in and beyond the land of the Arabs could be ascribed to the social and intellectual revolutions which the religion was championing during its early period. Within the first century of Islam which is the seventh century C.E., the ancient lands of Asia, Africa, and the Central Asia witnessed a very large number of micro-transformations which brought about a new social and cultural order. It was an order of multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious society which was to form the basis for a long-term period of science and Islamic civilization to be known not only in Arab-land but across the globe. Today, Islam is not only a major religion to reckon with in today's world, but its influence is also evident in the history of the Christian West, not to mention that of India and other regions of Asia and Africa. It was the appealing and convincing social and the intellectual revolutions of Islam and not force as erroneously claimed by some western

historians that was responsible for the quick spread of Islam. Everywhere the religion spread to, it incorporated varied socio-cultural traditions of the people, sieved it to conform to the Islamic principles. Thus, many people of diverse culture and tradition preferred Islamic civilization to their old civilizations. In the eight century, there was mass conversion and migration into Islam, establishment of cities and administrative and fiscal institutions as a result of the new social contract which Islam established with the Jews and the Christians.

### **Self Assessment Test**

Islamic civilization does not refer to such civilization developed by Muslims only.  
Explain

### **3.3 General Characteristics of Islamic Civilization**

In his 'The Religion of Islam', Maulana Muhammad Ali (1986) while describing the contribution of Islam to the world civilization, says: "If unification be the true basis of human civilization, by which phrase I mean the civilization not of one nation or of one country but of humanity as a whole, then Islam is undoubtedly the greatest civilizing force the world has ever known or is likely to know". As a universal religion, Islam has been destined to become a world religion which came to create a civilization that covers the length and breadth of the globe. Phillip Hitti, in his 'Short History of the Arabs', while commenting on the contribution of the Arabs (Muslims) to world civilizations says: "During all the first part of the Middle Ages, no other people made as important a contribution to human progress as did the Arabs, if we take this term to mean all those whose mother-tongue was Arabic, and not merely those living in the Arabian peninsula. For centuries, Arabic was the language of learning, culture and intellectual progress for the whole of the civilized world with the exception of the Far East. From the IXth to the XIIth century there were more philosophical, medical, historical, religious, astronomical and geographical works written in Arabic than in any other human tongue." (<http://www.countercurrents.org/beg-250706.htm>)

Beginning with the Arabs of the Caliphate periods through the time of the Persian hegemony and later up to the periods of Turks, Islam created what can be described as classical Islamic civilization in the world. Islam introduced into the world the unity of the entire human race and saved the world from crushing into an abyss of savagery. Islam came with a civilization so powerful as to be able to reform the existing civilizations whose very foundations had collapsed and thus introduced an idea so mighty that it united warring nations that had already been torn into shreds. Islamic civilization laid emphases on the importance of knowledge. The first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad was a command to read, thereby showing the significance of learning. Islam, rather than condemning the educational legacies of the earlier civilizations, actually embraced them and incorporated into its world view, their science, learning and culture which were in tandem with Islamic principles. Islam is a religion which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination hence, it developed its own civilization using the Qur'an and Sunnah as bases, by drawing from the civilizations of such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese, Malays and many other smaller units who embraced Islam. Based on their former experiences before joining Islam, these people made contributions to Islamic civilization in no small measure. Thus, Islamic civilization was so universal and effective that even the nomadic Arabs became torch-bearers of science and learning. The religion of Islam, apart from creating an all-participatory civilization, also ensures that unparalleled intellectual and cultural life is developed.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Islam, as a complete way of life, is a unique religion in the sense that it addresses itself to every sphere of human's life. Arabic, which is the language of Islam, is equally unique if the position it played in establishment and consolidation of Islamic civilization is considered. Islamic civilization was able to unite numerous groups of people who ordinarily could not have related with one another in life. The performance of holy pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, which is one of the cardinal principles of Islam, is one of

the living legacies which Islamic civilization has established for mankind and which has impacted so much on the social life of man. Pilgrims converge on holy lands in their millions on yearly basis to perform the hajj rites. This thus strengthens the cord of unity in the world.

### **5.0 Summary**

In our discussion in this unit we have been able to:

- define the concept of civilization to mean ‘a state of human society that is very developed and organized’.
- define Islamic civilization to mean ‘a type of civilization developed not only by Muslims but also by non-Muslims but which is in conformity with the principles of Islam’.
- explain some general characteristics of Islamic civilization to include unification of human race; its all-embracing nature i.e. not limited to a particular race, group or nation; its language - Arabic being the language of learning, culture and intellectual progress for the whole of the civilized world.

### **6.0 Tutor marked Assignment**

1. Define civilization.
2. Explain why Islamic civilization is different from any other types of civilization.

## 7.0 References/ Further Readings

Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

<http://www.countercurrents.org/beg-250706.htm>

Irvin T. B. (1979) *Islam Resurgent: The Islamic World Today* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Mustafa Siba'i (1984) *Some Glittering Aspects of The Islamic Civilization* Beirut. I.I.F.S.O

Muzaffar Iqbal (2007) *Science and Islam* London, Greenwood Press

## **Unit 2: CIVILIZATION IN ARABIA PENINSULA BEFORE AND AFTER THE ADVENT OF ISLAM**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1. Social life of the pre-Islamic Arabs

3.2. Political life of the pre-Islamic Arabs

3.3. Religious life of the pre-Islamic Arabs

3.4. Economic life of the pre-Islamic Arabs

3.5. Islamic Civilization

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was an Arab. He was raised a prophet among them in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Before the advent of Islam, the Arabs were known for their barbaric way of life. They could be described as an uncivilized people. Hence they were described as belonging to the *jāhiliyyah* period i.e. the period of ignorance. In this unit two, our attention will be focused on the socio-political, economic and the religious lives of the Arabs before they eventually became civilized through Islam.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- describe the social life of the Arabs before Islam
- discuss what the political situation was like among the pre-Islamic Arabs

- give a detail report on the religious activities in Arabia-land before the advent of Islam.
- explain the general effects of social, political, religious and the economic activities in Arabia before Islam on the life of the people.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

It is no more a novelty that the period before the advent of Islam in Arabia is described as the *Jāhiliyyah* period, meaning the period of ignorance. And to so describe a period, it means that such a period is devoid of any meaningful civilization that can better the life of the people. Let us now consider what the life was like during the period.

#### **3.1. Social life of the pre-Islamic Arabs**

Before Islam, there existed in Arabia the greatest anarchy. The whole environment was devoid of any ideal, discipline or morality. There was wide range of corruption, vices and superstition. The system in operation was the survival of the fittest as there was unlimited and unrestricted freedom for anyone to do whatever he or she liked. Women were not accorded any status and were thereby prone to attack, rape and humiliations. Plurality of wives and husbands was very common. Adultery and fornication was freely practiced. Brothers could marry their sisters while nothing would stop step-sons from marrying their step-mothers. Women were treated as chattels and the birth of a female child was considered a curse and a liability on the family. Women had no right of inheritance but were rather considered part of the property to be inherited. Slavery was then in its worst form as masters had unrestricted control over their slaves. They were generally subjected to the most inhuman treatment. The only aspect where an element of civilization could be noticed is the intellectual attainment of the people particularly in literature. There was an annual social gathering at Makkah, Uqās and Dhul Majās during which poets competed in verse-making and obtained distinction and honour. Apart from this, no civilization can said to be present in the society until the time when Islam was introduced.



### **3.2. Political life of the pre-Islamic Arabs**

To describe a society as being civilized, there should be a recognized form of governance. A government must be in place to oversee the affairs of the people. There must be law and order to guarantee peace and general well-being of the entire people. The situation among the Arabs before Islam did not possess these qualities. No form of government was known and there was lawlessness and total anarchy in the land. It was a total age of disintegration and disorganization. The Arabs were divided into many tribes and there had been perpetual conflict and warfare among the various tribes mostly as a result of trivial issues. Because of lack of government, there were tribal feuds, raiding and plundering of one tribe over the other. The whole Arabia was also dichotomized between the North and the South with strong enmity between the two divisions.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise:**

Considering the socio-political situation in Arabia before the advent of Islam, the society can be described as an un-civilized one. Discuss.

### **3.3. Religious life of the pre-Islamic Arabs**

It is a truism that some Jews and Christians were in Arabia before the introduction of Islam; however, the Jewish and Christian religions had become corrupted that they could not hold any higher religious ideal to the Arabs. The Arabs were idol worshippers, adoring many gods and goddesses. Every family, tribe or clan had its idols which they worshipped while some individuals also carried objects of worship along with them wherever they went. About 360 idols were said to have been placed in the Ka'aba which is the house of Allah converted to central worship shrine by the Arabs. The general situations in Arabia have been well expressed by Ja'afar who led the Muslim emigrants to Abyssinia, in response to the question raised by Negus the King, he said: "*Jāhiliyyah* people were we, worshipping idols, feeding on the dead animals, practicing immorality, deserting our families and violating the covenant terms

of mutual protection, the strong among us devouring the weak. Such was the state when Allah sent unto us a messenger.”

### **3.4. Economic life of the pre-Islamic Arabs**

The pre-Islamic Arabia was very much in primitive stage economically. There was little practice of agriculture as a result of the barren nature of the soil. The major source of income was through cattle rearing while a few people engaged in trading activities with neighbouring countries. Most people were generally very poor and were therefore greatly indebted to usurers. The Jewish money-lenders made great fortunes out of the poor situation as they treated their debtors very severely; making people to live miserably.

### **3.5. Islamic civilization**

One of the major contributions of Islam to human civilization is in the area of promotion of Culture and Science. As Islam continued to spread into various areas, it carried along with it the culture of learning. Islam encouraged seeking for knowledge and in actual fact contributed immensely into development of various fields of learning.

Ezzat Abouleish in his article titled “contribution of Islam to medicine” described the trend of Muslims’ contribution to civilization in the following way: As the Muslims challenged the civilized world at that time; they preserved the cultures of the conquered countries. On the other hand, when the Islamic Empire became weak, most of the Islamic contributions in art and science were destroyed. The barbarous hordes of Mongols burnt down Baghdad (1258 A.D.), and later the Spaniards, in their hatred, destroyed most of the Arabic heritage in Spain. What distinguished the Arabs from their enemies was their belief in Islam which stressed the importance and respect for learning. In fact, the very first word revealed to the Prophet of Islam was "Read". The Prophet freed an enemy captured in battle if he paid a ransom or taught writing and

reading to ten Muslims. In their holy book, the Qur'an, the importance of knowledge has been repeatedly stressed: "Those who know and those who do not are not equal." The Prophet Mohammed stressed learning by saying, "One hour of teaching is better than a night of praying." One of the early princes, Khālid Ibn Yazīd (end of the 7th century), gave up his treasure for the study of medicine and chemistry. He studied medicine under John the Grammarian of Alexandria and chemistry under Merinos the Greek (Haddad 1942). He also encouraged several Greek and Coptic medical books to be translated into Arabic.

Islam also forbade destruction of property. This was demonstrated when on conquering Mecca, the Prophet Mohammed strongly forbade destruction of homes, animals, or trees and these principles were faithfully followed by his companions when they conquered other countries.

Another area through which Islam contributed to civilization was its promotion and encouragement of cleanliness and personal hygiene. The Prophet taught his followers to approach God in their prayers five times a day with bodies and clothes spotlessly clean. To promote good health and avoid the spread of epidemics, Prophet Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) decreed that "no man may enter or leave a town in which a plague has broken out." And to make it all the more binding and effective, he promised heaven for those who die of plague, saying that such a death was that of a martyr (Haddad, 1942). Thus Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) laid for the Muslims the laws governing cordon and quarantine for the first time in history and made them work.

Islam was also known to be tolerant especially to the people of other religions. Islam recognizes Christianity and Judaism and considers their followers to be people with holy books like the Muslims. It is a fact that the Muslims generously sheltered the Jews at an era when the latter were persecuted in Europe.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Through our discussion so far, it would be seen that the pre-Islamic Arabia could not be said to have possessed any form of civilization. Socially, politically, religiously and economically, the whole society was barbaric and was in the state of anarchy. A civilized society is such that there is a recognized form of government, there is law and order and also acceptable form of socio-economic structure. This was absent in the Arabia-land for several years until Islam was introduced which thereafter injected civilization into the entire life-style of the people.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Following is the summary of what you have learnt in the unit one above:

- Arabia-land lacked civilization before the advent of Islam.
- Socially, the whole land was replete with disorderliness.
- The little element of civilization was noticed in the literary achievements of poets.
- There was no form of recognized government.
- There was complete anarchy in all facets of people's life.
- Idolatry was the religious system of the Arabs.
- People were economically poor and highly indebted to usurers.
- There was little practice of agriculture and trading.
- People lived mainly on cattle rearing.
- Islam contributed to civilization through promotion of learning
- Islam also promoted cleanliness and hygiene
- Islam recognizes the cultures of other people

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments**

Examine the socio-political situation in Arabia before the advent of Islam.

Discuss the economic life of the Arabs of the Jāhiliyyah period.

## **7.0 References/ Further Readings**

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## **Unit 3: Islam and its attitude to research and learning**

### 1.0 Introduction

### 2.0 Objectives

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1. Islam and learning

#### 3.2. Elementary and Adult education system

#### 3.3. Libraries and bookshops during the Abbasid regimes

#### 3.4. Architecture, Arts and Music of the early Muslims

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

You are welcome. In this Unit 3, we shall be discussing the position of Islam on seeking knowledge. We will also look at the education system, libraries, bookshops, architecture, arts and music as promoted by Muslims especially under the Abbasids.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

After our discussions in this unit, it is expected that students should be able to:

- discuss on the positions of Islam on seeking knowledge.
- talk about the importance which early Muslims attached to libraries and bookshops.
- discuss on the elementary and adult education system under the Abbasid administrations.
- give a brief explanation on how Islam contributed to architecture, arts and music.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Islam and learning**

Islam is a religion that promotes seeking for knowledge. The first verse revealed to Prophet Muhammad, in which he was commanded to read, justifies the importance of learning. There are also so many prophetic traditions which encourage Muslims to

strive hard in the course of seeking knowledge. He directed that Muslims should seek knowledge even if it means travelling through long distance. Islam does not discriminate on what to be learnt and what not to be learnt. All sorts of knowledge need to be learnt because each item learnt has its own advantage.

During the life time of the Prophet and his companions, the Arabs showed great love for intellectualism especially in the area of poetry and eloquence. This time witnessed poets in Arabia who distinguished themselves in verse-making. Muslims like Ali ibn Abī Tālib, Abbās, Ja‘afar, Zayd ibn Thābit and Ibn Mas‘ūd were some of the learned men of the time whose intellectual acumen cannot be overemphasized. Ali was a great orator whose discourses were largely attended by the people. However, little progress was made in literature and learning during the Umayyad period when compared with what was recorded during the Abbasid period. Lack of much achievement in the area of learning during the Umayyad period may be as a result of its closeness to the Jāhiliyyah age and its wars and unsettled social conditions which served as cogs in the wheel of intellectual development at that time. The little seed of learning sowed during this period blossomed under the Abbasids. Makkah and Bursa which were two Arab colonies, developed into centers of intellectual activity. It was then that Aswad al-Dualī founded the Arabic grammar. It was also during this time that the first Arabic Dictionary was compiled by Khalid ibn Ahmad. The study of the Qur’an also gave birth to the science of Hadith (Prophetic Tradition) and Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence). This period witnessed the emergence of traditionists like Abdullahi ibn Mas‘ūd and Shabi’i. People like Abid, Wahab and Ka’ab became prominent in story-telling and elementary history while Omar, Jamīl Hammad, Farazdaq, Jarīr and Akhtal were notable figures in the field of poetry.

In the field of science, Hārith, who studied in Persia, was the first scientifically trained Doctor of Arabia and Khālīd ibn Yazīd was a great philosopher who is said to have been the first to translate Greek and Coptic books on alchemy, medicine and

astrology. Omar II was said to have transferred the schools of medicine from Alexandria to Antioch. He also translated many Greek works into Arabic. The Golden Age of Islam was inaugurated by the middle of the 8th century by the ascension of the Abbasid Caliphate and the transfer of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad. The Abbāsids were influenced by the Qur'anic injunctions and hadith such as "the ink of a scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr" stressing the value of knowledge. During this period the Muslim world became an intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine and education as the Abbasids championed the cause of knowledge and established the House of Wisdom in Baghdad; where both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars sought to translate and gather all the world's knowledge into Arabic. Many classic works of antiquity that would otherwise have been lost were translated into Arabic and Persian and later in turn translated into Turkish, Hebrew and Latin. During this period the Muslim world was a cauldron of cultures which collected, synthesized and significantly advanced the knowledge gained from the ancient Roman, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, North African, Greek and Byzantine civilizations.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss how Islam supports learning

### **3.2. Elementary and Adult education system**

During the early stage of Islamic civilization, schooling at the elementary stage was carried out in mosques or their adjuncts. They are known as *Kuttāb*. The main reading text-book was the Qur'an taught to be memorized mostly in rote-learning method. The book served as the major curriculum of study. A little of writing from secular poetry was also taught. Pupils were also taught Arabic grammar, stories of the prophets, a little of arithmetic and poems. Pupils with exceptional performances in elementary schools in Baghdad were often honoured and paraded along the streets for people to applaud them.



Girl's education was also promoted at the time. Wealthy people in the society often employed private tutors (Mu'ddib), mainly of foreign extraction, to instruct their children in religion, literature and the art of versification. Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd, whose time witnessed the beginning of the golden age of Islam, gave instructions to the tutor he hired for his son – al-Amīn in the following words:

Be not strict to the extent of stifling his faculties or lenient to the point of making him enjoy idleness and accustom himself thereto. Straighten him as much as thou canst through kindness and gentleness, but fail not to resort to force and severity should he not respond.

Added to the elementary schooling was the setting up in Baghdad of the Bayt al-Hikmah (the house of wisdom) by the regime of Khalīfah Al-Ma'mūn in 830 A. D. It was a centre known for promotion of adult education. The centre became a famous institution for translation. It also functioned as an academy and public library. The centre also had observatories connected with it which served as schools for teaching astronomy and as hospitals for medical studies.

The first real academy in Islam was founded between 1065 and 1067 in Baghdad by a Persian scholar called Nizām-al-Mulk. The academy is called 'the Nizāmiyyah'. The institution was consecrated as a theological seminary. The teaching of the Qur'an and old poetry formed the main curriculum of the centre. Many students with endowed scholarships boarded in the academy. The early universities of Europe were said to have copied some certain details of organization of this academy. The popular Muslim scholar, Al-Ghazāli, was said to have lectured in the Nizāmiyyah for four years (1091 A. D. to 1095 A. D.). The centre was eventually merged with its younger institution called al-Mustansiriyyah built in 1234 A. D. by the next-to-the last Abbasid Khalīfah, al-Mustansir. The merger came about in 1393 A. D. by the Tatars who invaded Baghdad

which had earlier been captured by Hulagu in 1258 A. D. to put the Abbasid regime to a close.

There was no systematic way of carrying out adult education during the early stage of Islamic civilization. Like elementary schooling, mosques in different Muslim communities were used as training centers for the adults as well. Classes were organized to train people on hadith and its science and on linguistic and poetical subjects. Each of such classes was called a circle (*halqah*) or an assembly (*majlis*) anchored by learned teachers (*faqqīh*). The Imām al-Shāfi‘i was said to have presided over such a circle at the mosque of ‘Amr at al-Fustat, where he taught various subjects every morning until he died in 820 A.D.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

X-ray the elementary and adult schooling system of the early Muslim era in Baghdad.

### **3.3. Libraries and bookshops during the Abbasid regimes**

One of the multi-purpose functions of the mosques during the early period of Islamic civilization was to serve as libraries and repositories of books. Libraries were replete of religious literatures given out as gifts and bequests. Al-Kātibi al-Baghdadi was one of such people who willed his books as a *waqf* (mortmain) for the Muslims. Private libraries were also established to house collections bearing on logic, philosophy, astronomy and other sciences and thereby providing scholars and students with ample opportunities to access different collections. Buwayhid ‘Adud-al-Dawlah was said to have founded a library in Shiraz with books arranged in cases and listed in catalogues. There were also libraries built in al-Basrah where stipends were given to scholars working therein and in al-Rayy where over hundred camel-loads of manuscripts were listed in a ten-volume catalogue. Libraries were used as meeting-places for scientific discussion and debate.

Under the Abbasids, bookshops also flourished. Many bookshops appeared like booths around the mosques. As many as over three hundred booksellers were said to be present in a single street of the capital town. Some big libraries were used not only as stores but as centers for literary discussions.

### **3.4. Architecture, Arts and Music**

The Umayyad mosque at Damascus and the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem are two monumental structures depicting the beauty of Islamic architecture dating from the early Umayyad period. Other such edifices include the Khalīfah's palace known as the Golden Gate (*bāb al-dhahab*), the Green Dome (*al-qubbah al-khadra'*) which was built by the founder of Baghdad and his palace of Eternity (*qasr al-khuld*). These structures, which are designed with ovoid or elliptical domes, semicircular arches, spiral towers, indented battlements, glazed wall-tiles and metal-covered roofs, are some of the legacies left behind by the early Islamic civilization.



Mustansiriya University in Baghdad showing Islamic architectural design

The industrial arts of Islam attained a high degree of excellence through the Persians who have been proved to be very skillful in that aspect. Muslims, especially in Egypt and Syria, became very skillful in such arts as carpet-weaving, rug designs, ceramic

production and decorated silk fabrics. These fabrics became so valuable that they were chosen by Crusaders and other Westerners, above all textile materials, as wrappings for relics of saints. Pottery and metal works produced by Muslims were considered to be the best in the Middle Ages. The art of calligraphy, which was entirely Islamic, arose in the third century of Islam and soon became the most highly prized art. It thus has appreciable influence on painting. Among the distinguished early Muslim calligraphers were: al-Rayhāni who flourished under Khalīfah al-Ma'mūn, Ibn Muqlah who served as a *wazīr* under Khalīfah al-Rāḍī, Ibn al-Bawwāb and Yāqūt al-Musta'simi from whose name the Yāqūti style derives its designation. It is in calligraphy today that both Muslim and Christian representatives in places such as Constantinople, Cairo, Beirut and Damascus excel in elegance than any other ancient arts.

During the golden age of Islam, some Greek works dealing with speculative theory of music were translated by the Abbasids. For example, Hunayn ibn Ishāq translated into Arabic two Aristotelian works under the titles *kitāb al-Masā'il* and *Kitāb fī al-Nafs*. He also translated another work by Galen under the title *kitāb al-Ṣawt*. *Kitāb al-Nagham* (book of melody) and *Kitāb al-Qānūn* (canon) were two Arabic translations of Euclid. Other music-related works translated into Arabic during the Abbasid era include *Kitāb al-Iqā'* (rhythm) and *Kitāb al-Mūsīqi al-Kabīr* (opus major on music) by Al-Farābī. Abu-al-Majd ibn Abi-al-Hakam of Damascus and Abu Zakariyā' Yahya al-Bayāsī were two Muslims prominent in the construction of musical organs. Al-Kindi was also known for leading musical writers after the Greek school. He was credited with six works. Other Muslim philosophers and physicians such as Al-Rāzī and Al-Farābī were also known to be musical theorists during their time. Other work of Al-Farābī titled *Ihsā' al-'Ulūm* was the earliest and best known work on music to be translated into Latin. The music-related writings of Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd were also translated into Latin and became text-books in Western Europe.

#### **4.0. Conclusion**

As we have discussed above, Muslims contributed so immensely in various fields of human civilization. Many of the achievements recorded in Islam were made during the Abbasid era which is being referred to as the golden age of Islam. It is disheartening however that most of the glory so recorded could no longer be traced as a result of the Hulagu's invasion of Bagdhād and the subsequent collapse of the Abbāsīd dynasty in 1258 A.D.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In our discussion in this unit, we have been able to highlight some of the areas in which Islam and Muslims have been able to contribute to human civilization. We started with the position of Islam on learning, going through elementary and adult education system, to its values of setting up libraries and bookshops. The study also considered Islamic architecture, arts and music. The contributions of eminent Muslim philosophers into music were also highlighted.

#### **6.0. Tutor marked Assignment**

Write briefly on some of the contributions to civilization ascribable to the Muslims during the Abbasids regime.

#### **7.0 References/ Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

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## **Unit 4: The Golden Age of Islamic civilization**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The meaning of golden age of Islam

3.2. Reasons behind Islam's attainment of the golden age

3.3. Scholars' views on Islam's influence on European civilization

3.4. Islamic civilization in African continent

4.0 Conclusion

5.0. Summary

6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

There was a period in the history of Islamic civilization which is described as the golden age. This period witnessed unimaginable and tremendous contributions of Islam to human development. In this unit, attention will be focused on this very remarkable period and what kind of development was witnessed.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVE**

At the end of our discussions in this unit, students should be able to:

- explain what is meant by the golden period in the history of Islam
- explain how the Abbasids assumed the caliphate
- give brief historical account of the caliphates of Hārūn al-Rashīd and Al-Ma'amūn

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 The meaning of the golden age of Islam**

In a period between 750 and 1500 C.E. Muslim scholars in such cities as Cairo, Baghdad, Tripoli, Istanbul and Cordoba excelled themselves in the various fields of academic discipline. These Muslim cities became famous intellectual and cultural centers where theologians, scientists, philosophers, historians, mathematicians and others exhibited their intellectual acumen. Muslim scholars were at the forefront especially in the science and medical areas such as ophthalmology (study of the human eye), physiology (study of how the bodies of living things function), pathology (the study and diagnosis of disease), and anatomy (study of human body) etc. Thus, the period is known in history as the 'golden age of Islam' considering the civilization brought to life through the activities of Muslim scholars at that time especially when the Western world could be said to be in the Dark Age. This period fell under the regime of the Abbasids when the seat of administration was transferred from Damascus to Baghdad. The Abbasids drew their inspirations from some Qur'anic passages such as Q96:1-5, whose messages are in support of acquisition of knowledge, and also from such prophetic statements as "the ink of a scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr". Hence, the Abbasid established *Baytul Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) where a lot of translation activities were undertaken by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. Thus, many ancient literary works which could have been lost were preserved for posterity through translation into Arabic from their original languages such as Greek, Persian and Byzantine. This period therefore afforded the Arab world the opportunity to significantly advance through the knowledge gained from other civilizations such as Indian, Persian, Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Egyptian and Phoenician.

#### **3.2. Reasons behind Islam's attainment of the golden age**

The attainment of the golden age was an enviable feat which Islam and the Muslims will ever be proud of. This was a period that could be said to have been the foundation

for modern civilization. A lot of reasons could be adduced for this success. First is the universal nature of Islam itself which made its beautiful teachings and culture reach out to people of diverse cultural backgrounds around the globe. Another reason is the visionary leadership of the early Muslims who were dedicated to the ideals of the religion. The Muslim leaders recognized the importance which Islam attached to knowledge and the learned and thus supported the search for it and for its application. Furthermore, Islam tolerated other people's knowledge and cultures and thereby making the Arab world a collection of cultures which synthesized and advanced the knowledge gained from those other civilizations. One other reason that won the golden age glory for Islam is the power of Arabic as a unifying language for the Muslims. Being the language of the Prophet and with which the Qur'an was revealed, Arabic was held in high esteem and at the expansion of Islam, all Muslims were made encouraged to learn Arabic so that they could read the Qur'an. Therefore as a common language, Arabic was able to unite many different ethnic groups of people within the Islamic empire and also made it easy for them to exchange knowledge and ideas.

### **Self Assessment Test**

List out and then explain four reasons that facilitated Islam's attainment of the golden age.

### **3.3. Scholars' views on Islamic influence on European civilization**

As earlier discussed, Islam contributed in no small measure to the development of what is today known as European civilization. Muslims not only preserved the ancient civilization from going into extinction but also made a lot of discoveries in various fields of learning. During the middle ages, Universities in Muslim worlds particularly those in Spain and Sicily, formed the centers of learning. Between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, a lot of translation works from Arabic manuscripts were done by Muslim scholars upon which the modern European scholars depend for development. Following are views of some scholars on Europe's indebtedness to Islam:

John William Draper, in his book titled *Intellectual Development of Europe* says:



“I have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has continued to put out of sight our obligations to the Muhammadans. Surely they cannot be much longer hidden. Injustice founded on religious rancor and national conceit cannot be perpetuated forever. The Arab has left his intellectual impress on Europe. He has indelibly written it on the heavens as anyone may see who reads the names of the stars on a common celestial globe.”

Also, Robert Briffault in his book *Making of Humanity* has this to say:

“It is highly probable that but for the Arabs modern European civilization would never have risen at all. It is absolutely certain that but for them it would not have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, no where it is so clear and momentous as in genesis of that power which constitutes the permanent distinctive force of the modern world and supreme source of its victory – natural science and the scientific spirit”.

### **3.4. Islamic civilization in African continent**

The wind of change which Islam was blowing around the entire world also became manifest in Africa. Islam arrived Africa first in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when Prophet Muhammad himself directed some of his followers to seek asylum in Abyssinia which is presently known as Ethiopia. Abyssinia was then under the ruler-ship of king Negus (Najash) who was a Christian. This migration brought Islam in contact with the people of Africa for the first time. Later after the demise of the Prophet, Arab Muslims from Saudi Arabia started began to visit Africa through the East and gradually spreading Islam to Northern Africa toward Maghreb (Morocco) in the North West. Muslims in

Morocco founded the city of Fes in 808 which later provided asylum for Muslims who fled an uprising in Cordoba, Spain. Between the mid 11<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islam had gotten to many Empires and Kingdoms across the central and the West Africa, especially in Mali Empire where Mansa Musa proclaimed Islam the state religion, in the Songhai Empire, and in the ancient kingdom of Ghana. Many communities in the region especially Timbuktu thus became commercial and learning centers for Muslims. It was this period also that Islam got to the Kanem Empire, Ouddai Empire, the Sudan and down to Sokoto and Kano.

Talking about Islamic civilization in Africa, the role played by the University of Sankore cannot be overemphasized.



Some images of the Sankore University, Timbuktu, Mali

The University was founded in the late tenth century AD in the city of Timbuktu during the height of the Empire of Mali. The main building was located in Sankore Mosque, a spectacular pyramid-shaped work of architecture. The University was not run by any central administration. Students were not formally registered and there were no prescribed courses of study. Rather, there were different colleges each of which was independently run by a scholar. In addition to the study of Qur'an, lessons were given in science, mathematics, jurisprudence, history, astronomy and logic. There was encouragement for writing of books which was a profitable art at that time. The University thus became a center of excellence and a pride of Africa until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century when the best of its scholars left as a result of the Moroccans' invasion of Mali.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Dark Age period in Europe was the golden age of Islam. It was a period when Muslim scholars made tremendous advancement in various fields of learning. Many discoveries were made in the fields of Medicine, Philosophy, Art, Mathematics, Geography, and Astronomy. Islamic civilization crossed the Red Sea to the continent of Africa and from there it extended to Spain through the Mediterranean. Islamic influence was thus felt in places such as Timbuktu and Fez in Mali and Cordoba and Granada in Spain.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have been able to learn that:

- The period between 750 and 1500 C.E. is known in history as the golden age of Islam.
- It was a period when Islamic civilization came to rescue the ancient civilizations from going into extinction.
- Muslim scholars contributed immensely to human development at this period.
- Muslims made a lot of discoveries in various fields of learning.
- Islamic civilization got to Africa and from there it crossed to Europe through the Mediterranean.
- Timbuktu in Mali and Cordoba in Spain were famous centers of Islamic civilization.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Explain why a period between 750 and 1500 C.E. is being described as the golden age of Islam.
2. Write a note on Islamic civilization in African continent.

## **7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

Draper J.W. (1863), *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* New York.  
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## **MODULE 2: ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AND MODERN RENAINSANCE**

### **Unit 1: Science in the medieval Islamic world**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1. The emergence of science in Islamic civilization

3.2. The contributions of Al-Battānī to science

3.3. The contributions of Al-Birūnī to Islamic civilization

3.4. The contributions of Al-Khawarzimī to Mathematics

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In module 1 above, you have been taken through the position of Islam on learning and research with special focus on the biographies of some Muslims whose efforts have contributed in no small measure to world civilization. In this module, we shall be discussing the various efforts which these great Muslim scholars have contributed in various fields of human endeavour. This will be discussed under four units.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in unit 1, it is expected that students should be able to:

- discuss on Islam and its position on science
- explain how relevant is science to civilization
- give detail explanation of what Islam has contributed to world civilization in the area of science.

#### **3.0 Main Content**

##### **3.1 The emergence of science in Islamic civilization**

It is a known fact that Western civilization has contributed immensely to the development of modern sciences which came into limelight at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. This was made possible by the efforts earlier made as early as up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. by Greek and Roman scholars. However, the period between 300

and 1500 C.E. was regarded as the 'Dark Ages' for Europe. At this period, scientific progress was dormant in the whole continent as no progress was made especially in the field of medicine. Renaissance in the area of science picked up again from 1500 C.E. upward. At this 'Dark Age' period, actual treatment of physical ailment was little valued as care of the soul was considered to be more necessary than care of the body. This position was championed by the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, spiritual treatment (through prayers) was taken as the primary mode of treatment.

On the other hand however, this period of Dark Ages in Europe was the period of emergence of the Islamic civilization in the Middle East. During the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, Islamic scholars had a breakthrough in the field of medicine for the first time. By 636 C.E., a place called Jundeshapur which was the old capital of Persia became part of the Muslim world and for the next two centuries it remained a great center of medical teaching. The town witnessed a great number of scholarly activities as Muslim physicians embarked on the study of Hippocrates, Galen and many other Greek, Roman, Indian and Chinese scholars and physicians of repute. It was there and then that many great texts on medical science were translated into Arabic by Muslim physicians thus saving the body of knowledge from going into extinction. These Arabic works which were later translated into Latin, in addition to the new original research and scientific study of Muslim scholars, served as sources for the reintroduction and renaissance of medical science in Europe up till the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Muslim physicians were able to make accurate diagnoses of various ailments such as diabetes, cancer, epilepsy and various surgical problems.

Two branches of science, medicine and astronomy, could be said to have existed during the time of the Prophet himself. There are traditions making references to the Prophet's teachings and exhortations on health, sickness, hygiene, some specific diseases and their cures. Scholars have made frantic efforts at compiling and systematizing those teachings and instructions to serve as foundation for what is today known in Islamic parlance as *al-Tibb al-Nabawī* or Prophetic Medicine. Many

literary works have been produced containing theoretical discussions on various issues of medicine as taught by the Prophet. It was also on record that the early Muslim radically transformed the pre-Islamic Arabic astronomy to give birth to development of Islamic astronomical literature that is generally referred to as the radiant cosmology (*al-hay'a as-saniya*). However, the second half of the seventh century can be said to be the period when scientific enterprise kick-started within Islamic civilization. According to Iqbal (2007), around 777 C.E., Muslim scientists of high caliber had started working on various disciplines in science such as cosmology geography, astronomy, and alchemy.

The all-inclusive system of administration of the Abbasids, as against the Arab-superiority system of the Umayyad, contributed largely into intellectual achievements recorded by the former especially starting from the regime of Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd. The Abbasids tapped essentially from the experiences and knowledge of many non-Arabs especially the Persians. This is evident in the following statement attributed to the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, Al-Ma'mūn (whose mother was of Persian descent):

*"The Persians ruled for a thousand years and did not need us Arabs even for a day. We have been ruling them for one or two centuries and cannot do without them for an hour."*

Islamic science was transmitted to the West through a number of medieval thinkers and scientists. Thus, much of the Alexandrian mathematical, geometric and astronomical knowledge such as that of Euclid and Ptolemy, were recovered and later developed by notable Islamic scholars and Persian scientists such as Al-Al-Birūnī and Abu Nasr Mansūr.

The Muslims' contribution to science is summed up by Allama Iqbal in the following way as quoted by Masudul Hasan (1987):

“Science was not brought into being by the West; in essence it is nothing but the delight that lies in creation. If you ponder well, it is the Muslims who gave it life; it is a pearl that dropped from our hands. When the Arabs spread over Europe, they laid the foundation of learning and science. The seed was sown by these dwellers of the desert, but the harvest was reaped by the West. The spirit is from the flask of our ancestors. Bring the fairy back, because, she hails from our Caucasus.”

### **3.2. The contributions of Al-Battānī to science**

Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Jābir ibn Sinān al-Battānī also known as Albategni or Albatenus was born in Harran 38 km southeast of Urfa in Upper Mesopotamia in the present day Turkey. He lived and worked in ar-Raqqah, a city in north central Syria. His family was of the Sabian sect worshipping stars. Hence they have great motivation for the study of astronomy out of which the family produced many outstanding astronomers and mathematicians. Al-Battānī made a very remarkable contribution to the field of astronomy having determined solar year as being 365 days, 5 hours, 46 minutes and 24 seconds. He also introduced the use of sines in calculation. He compiled tables for eclipses of the Sun and Moon. He used a uniform rate for precession in his tables. Thus, his work is considered to be very instrumental toward the development of science and astronomy. In the field of mathematics, Al-Battānī trigonometrically produced a number of relationships; such as relationship among sines, cosines and tangent. He came up with a number of trigonometric formulae and developed equations for calculating tangents and cotangents. He also produced what is known in the mathematical parlance as “table of shadows”. His major work especially on astronomy is called *Kitāb az-Zij* or “Book on the Science of Stars” which is a book of astronomical tables. The book is also called *az-Zij as-Sābi’*, wherein he provided description of a quadrant instrument. Al-Battānī is known as the “Ptolemy of the Arabs”.



### **3.3. The contributions of Al-Birūnī to Islamic civilization**

Abū al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Birūnī was born in September 973 C.E. in Khwarezm region of Persia. His popular name al-Birūnī which means “from the outer district” is called Alberonius in Latin and Al-Biruni in English. He was an Islamic scholar who took his fame in subjects such as Physics, Mathematics, Astronomy, and natural sciences among others. He spent many years as a scholar in Ghazni in the present day Afghanistan. In 1017 C.E. he went to live in India where he did a great job in interpreting Indian science to the Islamic world. For his scholastic achievements, he was given some titles which include “founder of Indology” (the study of India) and “first Anthropologist”. He was also given the title “al-Ustadh” (The Master) for his remarkable description of early 11<sup>th</sup> century India. He contributed immensely to Physics by introducing the experimental scientific method to mechanics. He was also well known for his ability to combine hydrostatics with dynamics to create what is called hydrodynamics. He also devised his own method of determining the radius of the earth using observation of the height of a mountain.



Al-Biruni's bust at an entrance to National library of Tajikistan

Al- Birūnī explained that Islam is totally different from Hinduism. According to him, Hindus considered Muslims as being violent and impure and therefore would not want to share anything with the Muslims. The Hindus share this opinion because

many of their cities had one time or the other been attacked by Islamic armies during which numerous Hindu slaves were taken to Persia. Some of Al- Birūnī's works from where he made his fame include:

- *Critical study of what India says, whether accepted by reason or refused* (also known as the *Indica*) - a compendium of India's religion and philosophy.
- *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology (Kitab al-tafhim li-awa'il sina'at al-tanjim)*.
- *The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries* - a comparative study of calendars of different cultures and civilizations, interlaced with mathematical, astronomical, and historical information.
- *The Mas'udi Canon* - an extensive encyclopedia on astronomy, geography, and engineering, named after Mas'ud, son of Mahmud of Ghazni, to whom he dedicated.
- *Understanding Astrology* - a question and answer style book about mathematics and astronomy, in Arabic and Persian.
- *Pharmacy* - about drugs and medicines.

### **3.4. The contributions of Al-Khawārizmī to Mathematics**

Also to mention here is a Persian scientist, Muhammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, who developed Algebra as a branch of Arithmetic. The name *algebra* which means 'completion' or 'subtracting a number from both sides of the equation' was derived from al-Khawārizmī's book titled *al-Kitāb al-mukhtasar fī hisāb al-Jabr wa-l-Muqābala* "The Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing". This popular work on calculation, was written approximately 830 C.E. with the encouragement given by Khalīfah al-Ma'mūn. An Arabic copy of the book translated in 1831 by F. Rosen is being kept at Oxford and another Latin translation is in Cambridge. The arithmetical terms *algorism* and *algorithm* or *logarithm* were also taken from the name al-Khwārizmī. Al-Khwārizmī was also responsible for the introduction of what is known today as Arabic numerals and Hindu-Arabic numeral

system beyond the Indian subcontinent. His work on Arithmetic was responsible for the introduction of Arabic numerals to the Western world.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Science is the knowledge about the structure and behavior of the natural and physical world. It is an important tool for the understanding of the universe. Islam as a religion that has not left anything unattended to, has, by its civilization, produced eminent scholars who contributed massively to the development of science for the advancement of the world and this is what we have been able to discuss in this unit. Further discussion on Islamic civilization will continue in the next unit.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit we have been able to:

- Trace the emergence of science in the Islamic civilization
- Learn that it was a development over and above the Greek and Roman civilizations
- Find out that a lot of advancement in scientific discovery was achieved by Muslim scholars under the Abbasid regimes.
- Learn that the likes of Al-Battānī, Al-Birūnī, and Al-Khawārizmī contributed in no small measures to the advancement of science in order to promote Islamic civilization.
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#### **6.0 Tutor marked Assignment**

Discuss on how Al-Birūnī, Al-Battānī, and Al-Khawārizmī contributed to the development of natural and physical science.

## **7.0 References and Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

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## **Unit 2: Medicine in medieval Islam**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

- 3.1. Islam and medicine
- 3.2. Ali al-Tabarī's contributions to medicine
- 3.3. Al-Rāzi's contributions to medicine
- 3.4. Ibn Sīna and his contributions to medicine

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In our discussions in the last unit you were able to learn about the contributions made by some great Muslim scholars in the field of science. The discussion will continue in this unit by looking further into the efforts made by other Muslim scholars like Ali al-Tabarī, Al-Rāzi, and Ibn Sīna in the advancement of medicine.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- explain the meaning of medicine
- explain how relevant is medicine to civilization
- give detail explanation of what Islam has contributed to world civilization in the area of medicine.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1. Islam and medicine**

The interest of Islam especially in curative medicine is hinged on the tradition of the Prophet which categorized the religion into two: theology and medicine. Thus some eminent Muslims made great fortune in the practice of medicine. For instance Jubril ibn Bakhtishū, who served as court physician for khalīfah Khārun al-Rashīd, was said to have made as much as 100,000 dirhams for bleeding the Khalīfah twice a year. His family was also said to have produced six or seven generations of

physicians the last of whom was said to have flourished till the second half of the eleventh century.

The Arab Muslims made remarkable advances in the aspect of curative use of drugs. Part of their achievements include establishment of the first apothecary shops, founding of the earliest school of pharmacy, and production of the first pharmacopoeia. Jābir ibn Hayyān, known to be the father of Arabic alchemy, was among the great composers of pharmacological treatises.

### **3.2. Ali al-Tabarī's contributions to medicine**

Talking of Islamic contributions to civilization in the area of medicine, the role played by Abu al-Hasan Alī ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabarī can never be overemphasized. He was a Persian who got converted from Christianity to Islam under the Abbasid regime and precisely during the reign of Khalīfah Al-Mu'tazim who reigned between 833 and 842 C.E. Ali al-Tabarī developed himself so much so that he became a Muslim scholar, physician and psychologist of great repute. He produced one of the first encyclopedias of medicine. He pioneered pediatrics and broke ground in the field of child development. His academic prowess, won him the opportunity to serve in the court of Khalīfah Al-Mu'tazim. He also served under Khalīfah Al-Mutawakkil who reigned between 847 and 861 C.E. His father, Sahl ibn Bishr, was also known to be a highly educated state official and a well respected member of the Syriac community. Ali al-Tabarī was very fluent in Syriac and Greek languages and these languages were the sources for the medical tradition of the ancient pasts.

Ali al-Tabari wrote many works some of which were references for other works on medicine. His most celebrated work was his *Firdous al-Hikmah* (Paradise of Wisdom) which was also called *Al-Kunnash*. The book, which was written in Arabic, was a system of medicine divided into seven sections. It has a total of 360 chapters. To gain wider usage, he also translated the book into Syriac. The book

deals with pediatrics and child development, as well as psychology and psychotherapy. It also gives counsel in the therapeutic treatment of patients. Other works of this great scholar include: *Tuhfat al-Muluk* ("The King's Present"), *Hafzh al-Sihhah* ("The Proper Care of Health"), *Kitab al-Ruqa* ("Book of Magic or Amulets"), *Kitab fi al-hijamah* ("Treatise on Cupping"), and *Kitab fi Tartib al-'Ardhiyah* ("Treatise on the Preparation of Food").

### **Self Assessment Exercise:**

Examine the contributions of at-Tabarī to the field of medicine.

### **3.3. Al-Rāzi's contributions to medicine**

His name is Abubakri Muhammad ibn Zakariyah popularly known as Al-Rāzi. He was a Persian from Tehran area. He had his education in Baghdad. He later became established as the greatest Muslim clinician of his time. Al Rāzi was one of the few pharmacists who contributed in no small measure to medicine and pharmacy at the time when most of Europe was still living in the dark ages.

Al-Rāzi set up a large hospital in Baghdad of which he served as a director. He was also a renowned court physician and the first to observe papillary reaction to light. One of his popular works in the field of medicine was his work on small pox and measles which he titled: *Kitābul Judari wal Hasba*. The book, which also covers descriptive epidemiology and infectious diseases, has fourteen chapters and has been published not less than forty times in different languages such as French, English, Latin and German. This had won the book a great regard in Europe. Al-Rāzi also wrote a ten volume treatise which he titled *Kitābul Mansūri* dealing with Greek medicine and basically on the diagnoses and treatment of body diseases. His other works include *Kitāb al-Mulūki*, *Man lā Yahduruhu Tibb* (a book based on home medical [remedial] advisor, which he dedicated to the poor, the travelers, and the ordinary citizens who could consult it for treatment of common ailments when the doctor was not available). He also wrote *Al-Hawi fit-Tibb* which is a

comprehensive encyclopedia of medicine and *at- Tibb ar-Ruhāni* on the medicine of the soul. This great Muslim physician was also among the first to write book on pediatrics which is a special ailment affecting children.

### **3.4. Ibn Sīna and his contributions to medicine**

Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sīna, a Persian polymath, popularly known in the West as Avicenna, was born in Balk in the present day Afghanistan in 980 C.E. He was a great Muslim scholar who wrote prolifically on a wide range of subjects. He had about 40 treatises on medicine only and about 150 on philosophy. He is referred to as *Al-Sheikh al-Rais* (The Prince of All Learning) because of his vast knowledge in the fields of medicine, mathematics, philosophy, logic, religion and many more. His efforts brought medicine to a great height in the world. His most significant contribution to medical science was the writing of his famous book titled *Al-Qānūn fī at-Tibb* (The Canon of Medicine), a 14-volume work on the laws of Medicine which remained a standard medical text in Europe and the Islamic world until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The book remained a pre-eminent medical encyclopedia for almost 700 years. In it, Ibn Sina discussed on various medical topics such as contagious diseases, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and quarantine.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

Islam gives consideration not only to the spiritual but also the physical well-being of man and because of that, Islamic civilization paid due attention to the development and care of the physique. With sound mind and healthy body man would be able to attain the highest position of evolution. It is in line of this that great Muslim scholars rolled up their sleeves to contribute to the advancement of medicine and as we have discussed above, their efforts became monumental in the history of the development of the field in the world.



## 5.0 Summary

To summarize our discussion in this unit, students have been able to:

- Learn about the connection between Islam and medicine
- Learn that Ali al-Tabari practiced medicine and wrote many books on various fields of medicine.
- Find out that Ar-Rāzī established himself as the greatest Muslim clinician of his time.
- Discover that Ar-Rāzī also wrote many books on medicine dealing with diseases and how to cure them.
- Learn that Ibn Sīna wrote about 40 treatises on medicine alone.
- Learn that Ibn Sina's famous book on medicine is titled *Al-Qānūn fī at-Tibb* (The Canon of Medicine) and that it is a 14-volume work.

## 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

Discuss the life of Ibn Sīna and his contributions to Islamic civilization in the field of medicine.

## 7.0 References and Further Readings

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

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## **Unit 3: Islamic contributions to Literature**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

- 3.1. Islam and Literature
- 3.2. The contributions of Al-Tabarī to Literature
- 3.3. The contributions of Al-Mas‘ūdī to Literature
- 3.4. The Arabian Nights

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having seen how Muslim scholars contributed to science and medicine in the last two units, our discussion in this unit will focus attention on contributions which other Muslim scholars have made in the field of literature. The likes of Al-Tabarī and Al-Mas‘ūdī are great scholars of Islam whose efforts in this area of civilization cannot be overlooked. Let us now see how well they have done.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- Explain the importance which Islam attached to literary activities.
- Explain how well Al-Tabarī and Al-Mas‘ūdī had contributed world civilization in the area of literature.
- Give a brief talk on the position of “The Arabian Nights” in promoting literature.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1. Islamic Literature**

It has been earlier said that Islamic civilization flourished at the time when Europe, except for the Byzantine Empire, was in the Dark Ages. In other words, Europe, and what can be described as the Western civilization today, benefitted in no small measure, from the emergence of the Islamic civilization especially in the fields of

science, medicine, geography, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy. It should be noted however that little was known of the original literary creations of the Muslim world. Up till this present moment, little is known in the West of the rich heritage of Islamic literature except for a few such as the Qur'an and the popular tales known as 'The one thousand and one nights' which is otherwise called 'Arabian Nights'. The unfamiliarity was as a result of writing of many Islamic literature works in languages considered difficult to translate having partly being in Semitic script.

### **3.2. The Arabian Nights**

The Arabian Nights stories have been in existence over thousands of years. These are tales told in Persia, Arabia, India and Asia. It is also referred to as One thousand and One Nights. The stories have been told in many languages. They contain fairy tales, fables, romances, farces, legends, and parables which are connected with cities such as Baghdad, Basra, Cairo, Damascus, China, Greece, India, North Africa and Turkey. Some of the popular stories of 'the Arabian nights' have such titles as "Aladin's Wonderful Lamp", "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and "The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor"

The main story of The Arabian Nights is about a Persian king named Shahryar and his wife. Having discovered that his wife had been unfaithful to him, and having suspected that all women shared the same character of unfaithfulness, he killed his wife and decided to marry and thereafter execute every virgin lady he married. This continued until there was no other virgin left for him to marry except a daughter of his minister who himself was in charge of providing the virgins. It was this young bride called Scheherazade that, out of her wisdom, decided to be entertaining the king with interesting but uncompleted stories each night. In his curiosity to know what the end of the story would be, the king continued to postpone the killing of the bride for over a period of one thousand and one nights.

### **3.3. The contributions of Al-Tabarī to Literature**

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī is commonly known as Al-Tabarī. He is a great Muslim scholar who contributed a lot to world civilization. He is renowned for his contributions in the fields of philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and literature. His major contribution in the field of literature includes his 'Tafsir al-Tabarī' which is on the exegesis of the Qur'an. He also published a historical chronicle 'Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk' or History of the Prophets and Kings. In this book, Al-Tabarī beautifully expressed the Qur'an word for word and explained it lexicographically, using historical explanations.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

To what extent will you say 'The Arabian Nights' has promoted Islamic civilization in the area of literature?

### **3.4. The contributions of Al-Mas'ūdī to Literature**

He is Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī. He was born in Baghdad 896 C.E. He was an Arab historian and geographer. He was a descendant of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad. One of Al-Mas'ūdī's works was *Murūj adh-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir* (The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems) in which he combined history and scientific geography. He flourished during the Abbasid era when the use of paper was introduced in the Islamic world. During this time books were relatively cheap and readily available. There were large public and private libraries in different communities and all these assisted Al-Mas'ūdī and other scholars of his time in the attainment of literary excellence. It was reported that Al-Mas'ūdī often encouraged his readers to consult his other works which were accessible to readers. Al-Mas'ūdī was a contemporary of prominent scholars like al-Zajjāj, ibn Duraid, Niftawayh and ibn Anbarī. He was well read in philosophy, knowing the works of al-Kindī and al-Rāzī. In his writings, Al-Mas'ūdī included the history of the ancient civilizations such as the Assyrians,

Babylonians, Egyptians and Persians among others that had occupied the land upon which Islam later spread.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Being a term used to describe written or spoken material, literature is used in broad sense, to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works. Knowledge is promoted through literary activities. This may be in the form of prose writing or poetry. As has been discussed in this unit, Muslim scholars did a lot in the promotion of world civilization by writing books on different field of learning. The writing of the glorious Qur'an and of other Islamic literatures was to a large extent a way through which Islam has brought enlightenment to mankind.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, we have been able to learn that:

- Renaissance in Europe was credit to sprouting of Islamic civilization in the Muslim worlds.
- Muslim scholars like Al-Tabarī and Al-Mas'ūdī wrote books on different subjects which assisted in achieving the modern civilization.
- The Arabian Nights contain stories and tales told in places such as Persia, Arabia, India and Asia.

#### **6.0 Tutor marked Assignment**

Write a note on each of Al-Tabarī and Al-Mas'ūdī stating their contributions to Islamic civilization in the area of literature.

## **7.0 References and Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

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## **Unit 4: Islamic contributions to Philosophy and Technology**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

3.1. Islam and Philosophy

3.2. The contributions of Al-Kindī to philosophy

3.3. The contributions of Al-Fārābi to philosophy

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Like in other fields of learning, Islam contributed in no small measure to the advancement of philosophy. Thus Islam is proud of many great philosophers whose fame has brought glory to the religion. Among this great men are Al-Kindi and Al-Fārābi. In this unit, we shall be discussing some of the efforts which these men have put in place for the advancement of mankind in the field of philosophy.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- Define what philosophy is all about
- Mentions some great philosophers in the world
- Explain how people like Al-Kindi and Al-Fārābi have used philosophy to contribute to world civilization.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1. Islam and Philosophy**

The word ‘philosophy’ is derived from two Greek words ‘philo’and ‘sophia’. Philo means love while Sophia means wisdom or knowledge. In Arabic the corresponding meaning for ‘philo’ is *hubb* while that of ‘sophia’ is *hikmah* or *ma’rifah*.

The word philosophy was earliest used by a Greek Historian named Herodotus, in his writing. Likewise, the word philosopher was firstly used by the Greeks and thus, was

used by Socrates (c.470- 399 B.C) and Pythagoras.

Later, the Arabs arabised the word philosophy as falsafah and the word philosopher as Faylasūf to connote the same meaning given them by the Greek Historians and Philosophers; and thus, falsafah means love of wisdom and knowledge while faylasūf means lover of wisdom and knowledge. Philosophy searches for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means. It studies the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. As for the position of Islam on philosophy, Islam is a religion whose structure is built on knowledge. It encourages the pursuit of knowledge and appreciates application of wisdom. In the holy Qur'an, it is said that whoever has been endowed with wisdom has been given a tremendous blessing. The Qur'an also advocates the use of wisdom while carrying out evangelization. One needs wisdom to understand the essence of creation. To appreciate the sense in creating the natural phenomena such as the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the oceans, the vegetations, the animal kind, and even the mankind, one needs wisdom and love for it. It is in realization of this that many great philosophers of repute arose in Islam to contribute to human development in their own ways. Since human beings are the only creature endowed with the faculty of reasoning, they find reason(s) behind everything they come across; be it the creation, the purpose of creation and every individual thing they perceive or feel as well as the abstract beings. Human beings strive to know the reality of all the creatures as well as all what they perceive, feel or sense. With all these human activities that translate into their love for wisdom, knowledge and its acquisition, should we then conclude that every man is a philosopher? The answer to this question is NO. This is because philosophy is distinctively given a branch of knowledge meaning which specializes in exercise of reasoning faculty in finding remedy to the ambiguities of the universe and the problems of the creation. Whosoever does this and investigates into the interconnectivities between existential phenomena; such as time, space, motion, direction and light, could be called a philosopher. At the same time, a specialist who



has attained intellectual perfection and strong ability in understanding issues quickly in ways different from that of an ordinary or lay man could be called a philosopher. Likewise, any trained and experienced specialist in philosophy that investigates into the causes of things and the reality of things as well as engages him / herself in intellectual discusses for the love of knowledge is called a philosopher.

### **3.2. The contributions of Al-Kindī to philosophy**

Abu Yusuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ishāq popularly called Al-Kindi was born in Basra and educated in Baghdad in the present day Iraq. The exact date of his birth could not be ascertained but he was said to have been born around 800 CE and died in the early 870s. Record also showed that he served as a scholar under Khalīfah Al-Ma’mūn who reigned until 833 CE and under Khalīfah Al-Mu‘tasim who reigned between 833 and 842 CE. Al-Kindi was the first self-identified philosopher in the Islamic tradition. He worked as a translator of some philosophical works of Aristotle and others into Arabic. Apart from his translation works, he also developed his own philosophical works mostly in form of epistles addressed to members of the Khalīfah’s family. He based his own philosophy on the Aristotle’s line of argument. In his most famous work titled *On First Philosophy* which he dedicated to Khalīfah Al-Mu‘tasim, Al-Kindi argues that the world is not eternal and that God is a simple One. His other philosophical works centered on other topics such as psychology, cosmology and astrology. During his period, Al-Kindi oversaw two main groups of translators, one led by himself otherwise referred to as “Kindi circle” and the other group led by Hunayn ibn Ishāq. His own group translated numerous works of philosophy and science from Greek into Arabic.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise:**

Examine the contributions made by Al-Kindi to human development in the area of philosophy.

### **3.3. The contributions of Al-Fārābi to philosophy**

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad popularly known as Al-Fārābi was a renowned philosopher of the Islamic Golden Age. He was said to have been born either in Fāryāb in modern day Afghanistan or in Fārāb in modern day Kazakhstan. He became very popular and well known among medieval Muslim intellectuals as “The Second Teacher” after Aristotle who was regarded as the “First Teacher”. Al-Fārābi spent the largest part of his life in Baghdad where he also did most of his studies. According to him, he studied logic, medicine and sociology with Yūhannā ibn Haylān who was a Christian cleric. Al-Fārābi contributed immensely to the fields of logic, mathematics, music, philosophy, psychology and education. Apart from being an Aristotelian logician, he also included a great number of non-Aristotelian elements in his works. He categorized logic into “idea” and “proof” He also introduced into Aristotelian tradition, the concept of “poetic syllogism”. His efforts at promoting philosophy could be seen in his work titled *Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle’s de Interpretatione* through which he handed down Aristotle’s thought to the Christian west. Al-Fārābi was a founder of the school of early philosophy known as “Fārābism” or “Alfārābism” which was later on overshadowed by “Avicennism”. In Al-Fārābi’s philosophy, he unites theory and practice while in politics he liberates practice from theory. He had great influence on science and philosophy and his works aimed at synthesis of philosophy and Sufism.

In his work, attention of Al-Fārābi is focused on practical application of philosophy which is basically on Platonic thought. He posited that philosophy is both a theoretical and practical discipline. He described those philosophers who failed to apply erudition to practical pursuits as “futile philosophers”. The role expected of a good philosopher, according to Al-Fārābi, is the role expected of a physician on an ailing body. The duty of a philosopher in a society therefore is to establish a “virtuous” society where the souls of the people are healed of all ailments. He is also expected to establish justice in the society that would guide the people towards what he called “true happiness”. Al-Fārābi categorized a vicious society into three namely: “ignorant”, “wicked” and “errant”. He

described ignorant society as the one that had failed to comprehend the purpose of human existence and had replaced pursuit of happiness with another inferior goal. And for the wicked and errant society, they understood the true essence of human existence but they failed to follow or promote it. He referred to people in such society as “weeds” i.e. those people who undermine the progress towards the true human end.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

A lot of misconception has occurred on whether or not religion is against philosophy or vice versa. But a proper understanding of what philosophy is all about will leave no one in doubt that philosophy is an integral part of religion itself. Hence there is what we refer to as philosophy of religion. If philosophy is described as love for wisdom, then religion especially Islam, requires that its adherents must be wise and create time for knowledge. No wonder then that in some passages of the Qur’an, Allah would say no one would reflect (over His Ayah) except those who are wise. As has been discussed above, a number of great Muslim scholars have, by applying their instinctive knowledge, contributed immensely to human civilization. Good examples of these people are Al-Kindi and Al-Fārābi as discussed above.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit we have been able to explain the origin of the word “philosophy” as having been formed from “philo” meaning ‘love’ and “sophia” meaning ‘wisdom’. We also discussed that there are some Qur’anic passages that call for philosophizing, especially when pondering over the creations of the natural phenomena. The discussion in the unit closed with the examination of the life and works of great Muslim philosophers in persons of Al-Kindi and Al- Fārābi.

#### **6.0 Tutor marked Assignment**

1. Define the term “philosophy” and trace the origin of the term.
2. How will you explain the position of Islam on pursuit of philosophy as a discipline?

## **7.0 References and Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

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## **MODULE 3: DECLINE OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION**

### **Unit 1: Islam in Africa**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

#### **2.0 Objectives**

#### **3.0 Main Content**

- 3.1. Islam in East Africa
- 3.2. Islam in North Africa
- 3.3. Islam in West Africa
- 3.4. Islam in South Africa

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Summary**

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

#### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to unit one of module three. In the last unit we discussed Islam and philosophy under which we looked at the contributions of Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi in the field of philosophy which is another area where Islam contributed immensely to world civilization. In this unit we shall be discussing the decline of Islamic civilization in East, North, West and South Africa respectively.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- Discuss on the advent, spread and impact of Islam in East Africa
- Discuss on the advent, spread and impact of Islam in North Africa
- Discuss on the advent, spread and impact of Islam in West Africa
- Discuss on the advent, spread and impact of Islam in South Africa

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1. Islam in East Africa**

Many centuries before the advent of Islam in the East Coast of Africa, the area has had contacts with maritime India and Red Sea civilizations. The Assyrians and Sumerians from Iraq were among the first set of visitors to the area. The area especially the Aksum Kingdom (which was then a well established and flourishing Kingdom situated in what is now known as Ethiopia and Eritrea), was also known to have had contacts with the pre-Islamic Arab and Persian traders who traded in items such as lances, hatchets, daggers, awls, beads, wheat and other trading items which they exchanged in a barter system with slaves, ivory, rhinoceros horns, tortoise shells, coconut oil, wax, animal skin, Arabian gum and so on.

Islam got there during the early days of Muhammad's prophet-hood (in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE) when the few Muslims in Makkah suffered great persecution from the hands of the Qurayshi pagans. The holy Prophet had to instruct his followers to migrate to Habasha (now known as Abyssinia in Ethiopia) where a Christian monarch called An-Najash (Negus) was ruling. Having listened to the message of Islam brought by the immigrants and particularly a portion of Suratul Maryam which was recited to him, the monarch received the Muslims and allowed them to stay; contrary to the plea of the Quraysh that he should reject them. This was the first contact of Africa with Islam and it was from Abyssinia that Islam spread across the East Coast. Islam spread in the region through trading and Islamic educational activities. Abdullah ibn Marwan, a khalifah of the Ummayyads was said to have sent emissaries to the East African Coast in 696 CE. There was also a report of seven Muslim brothers who emigrated from Shiraz in Persia, and established rule on the East African Coast in the eighth century CE. Other reports also mention Egypt and Somalia as other places through which Islam spread to the East Coast. The expansion of trade in the Indian Ocean facilitated the influx of Muslim migrants along the Coast shortly after 1100 CE. And between then and 13<sup>th</sup> century, there were settlers who came from Oman, Iran, Yemen and Hadhramaut who settled along the entire Coast comprising of the Somali coast, the Lamu archipelago, Mombasa, Zanzibar, Kilwa, the Comoro Islands, and all the way south to Sofala in present day Mozambique.

From that period on, Islam started to grow steadily in the area as many people dumped their old faiths and got converted to Islam until in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC when the Portuguese Christians reached the Coast and started their evangelizations. Vasco Da Gama who visited the Coast in 1498 as the representative of the king, described Kilwa (one of the urban settlements in the East of Africa) where Islam had been well

rooted, as extremely beautiful, with exotic fruit, organized streets, running water, strong structures, and literacy with scholars to rival Europe.



The island of Kilwa in the 15th century

In 1505, Mombassa was attacked by the Portuguese army which caused mass exodus of the inhabitants. Thereafter, the Portuguese established what is known as Fort Jesus in Mombassa as well as other forts along the East coast. Having strongly established themselves, the Christian Portuguese army began to wage war against the predominantly Muslim communities in places like Gujarat, India, Aden, Goa, Calcutta and the rest. They also created a trade route that linked the East African Coast with China and introduced some policies that would not allow the existing trading system to thrive. Every community the Portuguese conquered, they imposed their missionaries on the people. Muslims on the Swahili coast were said to have vehemently resisted this imposition and preferred to be under the Turkish caliphate. With much efforts and dedication to what they believed in the Swahilis assisted by the Omanis, managed to drive away the Portuguese. In 1812, clashes occurred between Mombassa and Lamu which led to intervention of Sultan Sayyid Sa'id who again conquered the Swahili coast for the Muslims. The Omanis made efforts under the reign of Sultan Sayyid Sa'id to revive the moribund Swahili trade system but without success. This made the Swahili merchants focused their economic attention to the practice of agriculture and production of spices such as nutmeg and cloves for commercial purposes.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Explain in detail on how Islam was introduced to the East Africa

### **3.2 Islam in North Africa**

The introduction of Islam into the North Africa was ascribed to the conquest of Egypt in 640 CE by Amr ibn Al-As. He took over Fustat and other communities of the Byzantine Empire which were under the Romans. This was followed up by Ibn Abi Sarh who moved the religion across the entire North Africa to Western Tunisia, Northern Algeria, and across the Sahara. From there, Uqbah ibn Nafi' took the spread into Morocco up to the Atlantic Ocean and even southward up to the area close to

Lake Chad. The introduction and spread of Islam in the North Africa started originally by way of military incursions. Later on the spread became peaceful and was facilitated by trading activities and intermarriage. Many great scholars of Islam also emerged to give Islamic education and the teaching of Arabic to the people. They included the Al-Murabbitun (Almoravids) movement who did all they could to establish and teach pristine Islam and to fight against injustice, bad governance and excessive taxation. Al-Murabbitun (Almoravids) and Al-Muwahhidun (Almohads) are two Berber groups founded by the Sanhaja Berbers who originated from present day Mauritania. During the second half of the eleventh century to the middle of the thirteenth century CE, the Maghrib, as the land west of Tunisia in North Africa is known, and in fact, the Islamic world in North Africa as a whole, flourished in political power and intellectual influence under the Al-Murabbitun and Al-Muwahhidun. They moderated the excessive practices of some Muslims especially in forcing many people with large number of wives to reduce the number to four. They intended to restore orthodox (Sunni) Islam and to eradicate all non-Islamic practices already introduced into the religion. This struggle was led by Yahya ibn Ibrahim after his return from a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1035 CE. He was assisted in this reform effort by Wajaj ibn Zalwi, a cleric from Qayrawan. With the collapse of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain in 1031 CE and that of the Fatimid dynasty in 1050 CE, the Al-Moravids led by Yusuf ibn Tashfin (1061-1106) took total control of governance in the North African region. They adhered strictly to the Maliki school of Islamic teachings. Having successfully conquered the regions of Morocco and Algeria, Ibn Tashfin established his capital at Marrakesh in Morocco. In 1086 CE, he sent an army of 12,000 soldiers to Spain to dislodge the army of Alfonso IV who had taken over power there. Thus in a serious battle known as the Battle of Zallaqa between the two groups, the Alfonso army was defeated and the southern part of Spain once again came under the Islamic control.

Al-Murabbitun were succeeded by Al-Muwahhidun (Al-Mohads) who entered al-Andalusia (Spain) in 1146 CE. Their leader, Muhammad ibn Tumart, was a Masmuda Berber from southern Morocco. Having performed Hajj and studied in Makkah, he had been influenced by the writings of Al-Ghazali which propelled him to try to revive Islam in North African region.

The main teaching of Al-Muwahhidun was the importance of *Tawhid* (oneness of Allah) which aimed at bringing the conscience of all Muslims back into the pristine Islam. Having being successful in their teaching, the Al-Muwahhidun were able to make Islam more blossom in North Africa where many great thinkers and scholars such as Ibn Rushd emerged.

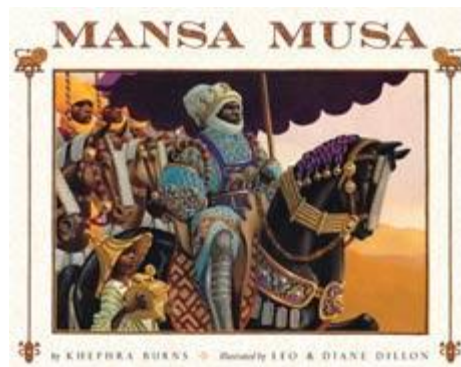




This mosque, built in Cairo by `Amr ibn al-`As, was the first mosque in Africa

### 3.3 Islam in West Africa

The history of Islam in West Africa can be dated back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE when the people of Ghana were said to have converted into Islam in 1076 CE. Ghana was by this time described as being very developed and economically very prosperous. The king of Mali was said to have employed Muslims as ministers and interpreters. Some of these ministers were learned in Arabic and communicated with other rulers on behalf of the king. According to Al-Bakri, Ghana consisted of two towns one of which was inhabited by Muslim wherein there were twelve mosques one of which was for the Friday services. The Muslim town possessed a large number of jurists, consultants and learned men. The flourishing of the Mali Empire in West Africa which arose from the ruins of the Ghana Empire brought significant development to the growth and popularity of Islam in the region. Some of the leaders of the Mali Empire were Muslims. Notable among them were Sundiata (1230-1255 CE) though considered to be nominal in his practice of Islam, and Mansa (Emperor) Kankan Musa (1307-1337 CE) who was a devout Muslim. It was also on record that a miserable period of drought in Mali Empire was brought to an end by offering prayers in the Muslim way and that also made the religion and the Muslims to be famous among the people. Sundiata, who was the founder of the Empire, died in 1255 CE and was succeeded by Mansa Uli (1255-1270 CE). He was also a Muslim who had performed pilgrimage to Makkah. Mansa Kankan Musa assumed leadership of the Mali Empire in 1307 CE. He performed his famous pilgrimage to the holy land of Arabia between 1324 CE and 1325 CE with an entourage of over 12,000 people. In his return, he brought with him a large number of Muslim scholars of Maliki School and architects who assisted him in building up to five mosques in his Empire. Musa also richly endowed the Universities in Walata, Timbuktu and Gao and thereby turned his Empire into center of learning. The achievement recorded during Mansa Musa's reign in Mali took Islam into high pedestal as many traders and scholars continued to visit the Empire and embraced Islam.



The popular Moroccan traveler and chronicler, Ibnu Battuta, who visited Mali in the 14<sup>th</sup> century during the reigning period of Mansa Sulayman who succeeded Mansa Musa, explained that the Africans were known to be very punctual in observing *salat* and adhered strictly to the Islamic rules of cleanliness and the giving of *zakat*. He also mentioned the level of recognition given to memorization and recitation of the glorious Qur'an among other things. Beside the Mali Empire, other empires that got prominence in the West African region include the Songhay and the Kanem-Bornu. Under the Songhay Empire were great people such as Sunni Ali who ruled the Empire from 1464 CE to 1492 CE and Askiya Muhammad Toure under whose tenure Islamic law was promoted in the Empire. Askiya Muhammad Toure also arranged for the training of large number of Muslims to be judges. He patronized the scholars and gave them large pieces of land as gifts. Sankore University which was the first Muslim University in Africa was established in Timbuktu. This University made great name in producing great scholars of repute. Also to be mentioned in West Africa is the Kanem-Bornu Empire which covered the areas around Lake Chad, stretching up to Fezzan in the north. Umme-Jilmi was the first Kanem ruler to embrace Islam. He ruled between 1085 CE and 1097 CE. In his attempt to perform holy pilgrimage, he died in Egypt before reaching Makkah. He was succeeded by his son, Dunama I who ruled between 1092 CE and 1150 CE. The reigning period of Ali ibn Dunama also known as Ali Ghazi between 1476 CE and 1503 CE witnessed significant development in the history of Islam in the Kanem-Bornu Empire. Ali revived Islam and promoted the learning of its principles.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

In what ways will you explain the Hajj exercise performed by Mansa Musa as a catalyst to the growth of Islam in Mali Empire?

### **3.4. Islam in South Africa**

The history of Islam in South Africa was in three phases. The first phase dated back to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when some Muslim slaves, political prisoners and political exiles from Asia migrated to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. The second phase was the coming of Indians who served as laborers in the sugar-cane fields in Natal province in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the early 20<sup>th</sup>

century. The third phase was the post apartheid movement of Muslims from other parts of Africa and beyond to settle in South Africa.

Muslims in the first phase category were brought to South Africa by the Dutch from the modern day Indonesia as slaves and as those who organized jihad activities in the Dutch colonies. The Muslims who were referred to as Mardyckers arrived South Africa for the first time in 1658 CE. They were used as laborers and as security against the insurgence of the indigenous people. Though they were Muslims, they were however denied the freedom to openly practice their religion.

Among the first political exiles sent to South Africa in 1667 CE were Sheikh Abdurahman Matabe Shah and Sheikh Mahmood who were both rulers of Sumatra in Asia. They were banished to the Cape of Good Hope because their Dutch masters considered them a threat to their political and economic authority. Sheikh Abdurahman Matabe Shah used the opportunity of his exile to preach Islam and teach it among slaves in the Cape. In 1694 CE, Sheikh Yusuf of Bantam along with his family members and his followers formed another group of exiles to Zandvleit near the Cape. The place later turned out to be the first Muslim community in South Africa.

In 1744 CE, Sayyid Alawi otherwise called Tuan Sa'id from Yemen, and Hadjie Matarim, were banished to the Cape and were incarcerated on Robben Island by the Dutch. After his release, Sayyid Alawi settled at the Cape where he served as a police officer. This position afforded him opportunity to visit slave quarters at night to teach Islam to the slaves. He was known as the first official Imam of the Cape.

Prince Abdullah Kadi Abu Salam who originated from Indonesia was also exiled to the Cape in 1767 CE. He was known for his erudition as he wrote a copy of the Qur'an from memory while in incarceration. After his release from jail in 1793, he organized an Arabic and Islamic school, the first of its kind in the area, which provided the slaves and other Free Black community opportunity to learn more about Islam. The school was used as an avenue to convert many slaves to Islam. Because of his literary excellence, Prince Abdullah Kadi Abu Salam was nicknamed *Tuan Guru* meaning 'Mister Teacher'. By 1793, a mosque was built in the Cape where Prince Abdullah Kadi served as an Imam.

#### **4.0. Conclusion**

The history of Islam and its development in Africa have been a very interesting discussion among scholars and students of Islamic history. What we have discussed above has been a brief summary of it. Africa played a very vital role in the introduction and defense of Islam in Spain. Islamic activities that took place in the North and West Africa regions are monumental and would remain indelible in the history record of Africa.

## 5.0. Summary

Our attention in this unit was focused on the introduction, spread and the impact of Islam in Africa. We have learnt that Africa came in contact with Islam at the early age of the religion through some asylum seekers in Abyssinia in the present day Ethiopia. Thus, Islam spread from the East Coast across the North Africa region from where it spread westward through the activities of Muslim traders, scholars and jihadists. The conversion of some African rulers to Islam and their subsequent promotion of the religion, contributed immensely to the wide acceptance of the religion. The Dutch imperialists contributed in no small measures to the spread of Islam to Southern Africa where they exiled some Muslim slaves and political opponents. Gradually, these slaves formed themselves into a formidable Muslim community.

## 6.0. Tutor Marked Assignment

1. In what ways will you say the activities of the Almoravids and Almohads contributed to the development of Islam in North Africa?
2. Explain the significant role played by Mansa Kankan Musa to the growth of Islam in West Africa.

## 7.0 References and Further Readings

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Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

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## **Unit 2: Islam in Spain**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

- 3.1. The advent and spread of Islam in Spain
- 3.2. Reasons for acceptance of Islam in Spain
- 3.3. The climax of Islamic rule in Spain
- 3.4. The final struck

### **4.0 Conclusion**

### **5.0 Summary**

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

## **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This module three is to look at the decline of Islamic civilization and what the cause of the decline was and the effect of the decline on Islam and the Muslims the world over. However, in this unit one, we shall start our discussion by looking at the advent and the spread of Islam in Spain, a place where Islam made a significant contribution to civilization before the eventual overthrow of the Islamic government.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- Discuss on the advent of Islam in Spain
- Explain some of the ways Islam imparted on the people of Spain
- Explain the climax of Islamic civilization in Spain
- Explain how and what led to the decline of Islamic civilization in Spain

### 3.0 Main Contents

#### 3.1 The advent and spread of Islam in Spain

Spain is an Island up above the Mediterranean Sea occupying about 85 percent of the Iberian Peninsula. It is a land that had been known to the peoples of the Mediterranean from very early times as a result of its richness in mineral and agricultural resources as well as its strategic location close to the strait of Gibraltar. Over a period of time, a number of different colonies such as the Phoenicians' and Greek's, sprang up in Spain. The Carthaginians who later settled on the east coast began to conquer most of the Iberian Peninsula and established Cartagena as capital.

Islam got to Spain in about 711 CE through the Jihad led by a Muslim Berber army of 7000 troops under the command of *Tāriq* ibn Ziyad. It was said that a Christian chief with the name Julian, who felt oppressed by Roderick, the tyrannical Visigoth ruler of Spain, had solicited for the intervention of the Muslim government in North Africa under Amir Musa Ibn Nusair. It was *Tāriq* who led the Muslim army across the Strait of Gibraltar into Spain and defeated King Roderick and collapsed his kingdom. The name 'Gibraltar' is derived from *Jabal At-Tāriq* which is Arabic for 'Rock of *Tāriq*'. This was the name given to the place where the Muslim army landed in Spain. These Berber conquerors, popularly called the Moors, gradually continued their efforts and conquered almost the entire peninsula and made Cordoba the capital and the seat of the government. After the first victory, the Muslims conquered most of Spain and Portugal with little difficulty, and in fact with little opposition. By 720 Spain was largely under Muslim (or Moorish, as it was called) control. The situation remained the same until 'Abd al Rahman I of the Umayyad dynasty, arrived Spain and established another independent Muslim State.

By the time 'Abd al-Rahman reached Spain, the Arabs from North Africa were already entrenched on the Iberian Peninsula and had begun to write one of the most glorious chapters in Islamic history. Their attention was now focused on how to occupy and develop Andalusia in southern Spain. When this was eventually accomplished, they reigned with justice and fairness. They so much tolerated the Jews and the Christians to extent that many of them appreciated the religion of Islam and embraced it. Trade and agriculture were promoted and there were a lot of development brought into the fields of arts and science. This changed the status of Cordoba to become the most developed city in Europe at that time. By the tenth century, Cordoba could boast of a population of some 500,000, compared to about 38,000 in Paris. Record shows that the

city could boast of up to 700 mosques, 60,000 palaces and 70 libraries where many workers were employed to serve. The Islamic government recorded great number of achievements in Spain. It was at that time that the first street lights of five miles were erected outside the city of Cordoba and it was the first of its kind in Europe. Other achievements in the city of Cordoba included construction of some 900 public baths and the erection of *Madinat al-Zahra* which was the official residence for the Khalifa. It took up to about forty years for this residence to complete and it was regarded as one of the wonders of the age until the 11<sup>th</sup> century when it was destroyed.

### **Self Assessment Exercise:**

Explain how Islam got to Spain

### **3.2. Reasons for acceptance of Islam in Spain**

Prior to the introduction of Islam, the people of Spain had lost confidence in their rulers who many saw as oppressors and tyrants. The people were therefore in dire need of a liberator to rescue them. This occurred at the time when the people of North Africa were enjoying the goodies of Islamic government. The Muslim rulers demonstrated justice and fairness on the basis of God-consciousness as advocated by Islam. No one was ever discriminated against on the basis of faith, tribe or colour. Thus, there was peace, love and tranquility in the land. Realizing the situation in North Africa being far better than what the situation was in Spain, the people sought the assistance of the Muslim government in bringing down their tyrannical government. Thus, Islamic government was established in Spain and the Muslim leaders led people by example. They were just and tolerant. This endeared the religion of Islam to many people who thereafter converted to Islam. Many Christians in Spain assimilated parts of the Muslim culture. Some learned Arabic; some answered to Muslim names and even dressed like their rulers. Christians who did this were known as Mozarabs. What contributed to rapid acceptance of Islam and the success of the Muslims in Spain was the generous surrender terms that they offered the people. This was in contrast with the harsh conditions imposed by the previous Visigoth rulers. The non-Muslims in Spain enjoyed some privileges under the Islamic government. These include:

- They were allowed to live together in the cities with the Muslims and not forced into exile.
- They were not treated as slaves despite the fact they were conquered by the Muslims.
- They were not forced to embrace Islam rather they were at liberty to practice their faiths.
- They were not banned from engaging in any particular lawful means of earning property.
- They were able to contribute just like their Muslim counterparts to the society and culture.

**Self Assessment Exercise:**

Summarize reasons why Islam was acceptable to the people of Spain at its inception.

**3.3. The climax of Islamic rule in Spain**

The popular ‘golden age’ period of Islam is ascribed to the period when the religion recorded the hitherto unparalleled achievements in Spain. It was a period of time during which both the religion and the country thrived as a spiritual, economic and commercial haven. It was at that period that learning was so promoted that large numbers of libraries and colleges were built and thus the capital city, Cordoba, became attractive to seekers of education from all over Europe and the entire Muslim world. Greek philosophy and literature, poetry and architecture also flourished, thereby giving both the Muslims and the non-Muslims the opportunities to make significant contributions to flowering of new culture. Islamic hegemony flourished in Spain for over seven (711 – 1492 CE) centuries before what could be described as diminishing return set in.

By the mid of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, al-Andalus, as Spain was known to the Arabs, was at the peak of Islamic civilization. The city had over 80% Muslim inhabitants. The Umayyad rulers maintained a united government that was known to be far more advanced and



stable than any other government in the whole of Europe. By the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century however,

At a point some of the Muslim rulers in Spain became intolerant of the non-Muslims. They could not allow them to enjoy the same rights and privileges they had hitherto been enjoying. This led to substantial deterioration in their position and some of their churches were looted especially under Amir Almanzūr who also imposed upon them strict restrictions. This new development started around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century when some certain restrictions were placed on the Christians especially. These include that they should not be allowed to build or live in houses taller than the Muslims', they were not allowed to employ Muslims as servants, and they had to give way to Muslims on the street. Furthermore, at a stage, Christians were not allowed to publicly display any sign of their religion. In the year 1066 CE, an organized killing of people (pogrom) was carried out in Granada which led to serious violence in the whole region. This scenario developed into pressure from within and outside Spain as discord and discontent started to set in among the people which led to gradual decline of the great Islamic empire.

#### **3.4. The final struck**

In 1492 CE, the Christian forces in northern Spain launched what is called 'the Reconquista' campaign against the Muslims which led to the taking over of Granada by Queen Isabel of Castile. During this campaign, Muslim states started to capitulate one after the other to Christian kingdoms invading from the North. Despite all efforts made by Muslim (Almurabbitūn and Almuwahhidūn) movements from North Africa to prevent the Christian campaigns, lack of unity among the Muslims would not produce a formidable barrier that could withstand their enemies. Hence, major cities such as Cordoba, Seville, and Toledo fell. Granada remained the only Muslim state not conquered by the Christians based on a memorandum of understanding signed by its rulers with the Kingdom of Castile that Granada would be tributary state to Castile, meaning that a yearly ransom would always be paid (usually in gold) to the Castilian

monarchy. This worsened the situation for the Muslims of Granada as they paid regularly to strengthen their enemies.

In 1482 CE, King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, two staunch oppositions against Islam, got married and resolved to see to the end of Granada, the only remaining Muslim Emirate in the Iberian Peninsula. From this time, the Christians lunched wars against the Muslims who though weaker in strength and tactics, fought very bravely. However, internal rancor and political upheaval broke out among the Muslims. In 1483, there was a rebellion led by Muhammad the son of Sultan of Granada, against his father. King Ferdinand took advantage of this and gave Muhammad all necessary military supports to fight against his family members. Thus, Muhammad was able to take over Granada from his father, though other surrounding areas were under the rule of the Christian army. Shortly after the new regime was solidified, King Ferdinand demanded Muhammad through a letter, to surrender the city of Granada to him. Muhammad opposed this demand militarily but without success despite little supports from the Ottoman navy. By the end of 1491 however, Granada was surrounded by both armies of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in an attempt to conquer it. In order to save his face from humiliation, Muhammad decided to sign a treaty to give up the control of the city. The treaty took effect with the official taking over of the city by Spanish army on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1492. The legendary Alhambra palace of the Sultan was occupied by Christian soldiers hanging the banners and flags of Spain's Christian monarch on the walls. A giant silver cross was erected on the tallest tower at the top of Alhambra, which signaled the victory of the Christian forces and the lost of the Muslim Empire in al-Andalus.



Mezquita mosque in Cordoba which was later converted into a church

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Islamic civilization in Spain and by extension in Europe for over a period of seven hundred years, as could be seen in our discussions so far, was highly remarkable. Cordoba, Granada and in fact many other cities were replete with religious tolerance, great libraries, splendid architecture and public baths which turned the cities into centers of attraction to scholars who came from all over Europe and outside for study. However, lack of unity, highhandedness and overzealousness set in and caused the Islamic Empire in Spain to nosedive into oblivion.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Our discussions in this unit have been on the advent and spread of Islam in al-Andalus (Spain). Islam got there in the eighth century via the North Africa owing to distress call from the people that were oppressed. A number of significant achievements were recorded by Islamic Empire especially in the area of educational advancement, infrastructural provisions and establishment of social justice. Many non-Muslims embraced Islam out of conviction and thus Islam became very popular. However, political uproar broke out among the Muslims and the hitherto unity among them became shattered and this gave their Christian enemies opportunity to wage war against them and torn their hitherto indomitable Islamic Empire to shreds in 1492.

#### **6.0 Tutor marked Assignment**

How would you explain the fall of Islamic Empire in Spain?

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## **Unit 3: Causes of the decline of Islamic civilization**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

3.1. Division in the house of Islam

3.2. External aggressions against Islam

### **4.0 Conclusion**

### **5.0 Summary**

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In units one and two above, we discussed on Islamic civilizations in Africa and in Spain. We saw how the early Muslims showed commitment to Islam which culminated in successes recorded. However, a point came when almost all the successes so recorded were lost and the great Islamic civilization crumbled. In this unit, attention will be focused on some of the causes that led to the decline of Islamic civilization especially in Spain where Islam had ruled for almost 700 years but which is now living at the mercies of Christian leaders.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end our discussions in this unit, students should be able to:

- Summarize some of the achievements recorded in Muslim Spain.
- Explain the activities of some Muslim leaders which led to the decline of Islamic civilization in their domains.
- Explain how external aggressions affected the stability of Islamic civilization in Spain.

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1. Division in the house of Islam**

Two major reasons could be adduced for the total collapse of Islamic civilization throughout the Islamic world. One is the misconduct of the Muslim leaders and the external aggression as the other. On the first, some Muslim leaders turned tyrannical and became oppressors. Some became so avaricious that little or no attention was paid to their religious and political responsibilities. This led to resentment which consequently resorted to divisions among Muslims. There was no more cohesion in the administration of Muslim State. The hitherto united Muslim entity became torn into shreds. This Problem is not a new phenomenon among Muslims. In the early days of Islam shortly after the demise of Prophet Muhammad, there was a problem of who to succeed him as the head of the Muslim Ummah. It took the grace of Allah and the wisdom of some Companions to arrive at the choice of Abubakri who later died in 634 CE. His successor, Umar Ibn Khattab was assassinated in 644 CE and he too was succeeded by Uthman Ibn Affan who himself was again assassinated in 656 CE as a result of political turmoil that ensued over the death of Umar and allegation of maladministration. Uthman was succeeded by Ali Ibn Abi Talib. His tenure was not also without blemishes because it was as a result of the belief of his loyalists to his absolute right to succession at the expense of all his other predecessors which led to shi'ism in Islam. Resentment continued unabated among Muslims during the Umayyad dynasties when Muslim leaders made succession to the khilafah hereditary. Muawiya Ibn Abi Sufyan was the first Umayyad khalifah. He was able to obtain the pledge of allegiance for his son Yazid and from then each khalifah was made to be succeeded by his appointed sons or siblings. This resulted to political struggles and killings which later characterized the entire governance in the Islamic Caliphate. Yazid's caliphate was challenged by Ali's second son Husain and this resulted into Islam's second civil war in twenty-five years he first being between the groups of Ali and Muawiya. In this

war, Husain and almost his entire family was mercilessly killed by Yazid's forces in order to maintain Umayyad grip on power which eventually led to introduction of Shia-Sunni division in Islam. After about ninety years in power, the Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasids in 750 CE.

### **3.2. External aggressions against Islam**

Aside the internal political wrangling among Muslims, Islamic Empire especially in Spain was greatly threatened by External aggressions from the Christian rulers. By the early eleventh century CE, Islamic empire had been shattered into small weak kingdoms each of them claiming independent authority. Consequently by 1085 CE, Toledo, which was one of the big Islamic centers, fell to Christianity.



Toledo fell to Christianity in 1085

The aggressions by the West against Islam are better summarized in the following allegations leveled by Imam Khomeini and Sheikh Ayman Zawahiri:

According to Imam Khomeini,

[European-Imperialists] have known the power of Islam themselves for it once ruled part of Europe, and they know that true Islam is opposed to their activities. They have also realized they cannot make the true religious scholars submit to their influence, nor can they affect their thinking. From the very outset, therefore, they have sought to remove this obstacle from their path by disparaging Islam and besmirching the religious leaders. They have resorted to malicious propaganda so that today, we imagine that Islam simply consists of a handful of legal topics. They have also tried to destroy the reputation of the fuqaha and the

ulama, who stand at the head of Islamic society, by slanderous accusations and other means.

And for Sheikh Ayman Zawahiri he said,

The people of the Crusader West, according to Islamic law, are combatant people that fight the Muslims, because they elected their rulers and parliaments of their own free will. In other words, they elected the executive authority, which carries out the aggression against Islam and the Muslims, and they elected the legislative authority, which monitors the executive authority, holds it accountable, and approves or rejects its policies as it pleases. These peoples also pay the taxes that finance the aggression against Muslims, and supply the armies that invade Islamic countries with men, money, advice, and knowledge. They supply men and expertise to the Crusader security agencies, which try to harm the Muslims. Even those among them who oppose the policies of the Crusader governments consider these governments to be legitimate governments, which have the right to order them to participate in the fighting against us.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Explain the two reasons that led to the total collapse of Islamic civilization in the early Muslim world.

### **3.3. The total fall**

The Muslims finally lost all power in Spain in 1492. This was followed by an order given in 1502 by the Christian rulers mandating all Muslims to convert to Christianity. When this directive could not materialize, they imposed brutal restrictions on the remaining Spanish Muslims.

Islamic civilization continued to rise with military successes recorded in many parts around Spain until the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 and the failed Siege of Vienna in



1683 which marked a turning point against the rise of the Turkish Empire. From this point, the Muslims started to rely on the technological skill of the West and on copying of Western civilization which finally led to predominance of the Western civilization over and above the Islamic civilization. Gradually, Christian states conquered most of the Ottoman Empire, ultimately defeating it in the First World War and dividing up most of its empire, leaving the rump that became the modern state of Turkey.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The teaching of Islam as contained in the Glorious Qur'an is that Muslims should remain united and maintain a single brotherhood. There is also a common saying that united we stand and divided we fall. The early Muslims in Spain adhered strictly to this instruction as a result of which they succeeded in building a strong Islamic Empire that reigned for about 700 years. Under the Islamic authority, Al-Andalusi grew to a status of no equal in virtually all aspects of life. Spain became a center of knowledge and home of scholars in the whole of Europe. This period is known as the Golden Age of Islam. However, the law of diminishing returns set in when struggle for leadership position and love of wealth created loopholes among the Muslims. This led to political rivalry and enmity which finally gave room for their Western rivals to subvert the Islamic civilization and replace it with the Western civilization.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit we have been able to discuss some reasons that led to the decline and the eventual collapse of the Islamic civilization. The identified reasons have been disaffection and disunity among the Muslims and the tyrannical attitude of some Muslim leaders. Some leaders were so avaricious that they did not maintain the standard of Islamic governance. The other reason was the open and clandestine plot of the Christian West against Islam. All these combined together to bring Islamic civilization to its knees in Spain in particular and in Europe as a whole.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

Discuss the reasons that led to the decline and total collapse of Islamic civilization in Spain.

## **7.0 References and Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

Irvin T. B. (1979) *Islam Resurgent: The Islamic World Today* Lagos,  
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## **Unit 4: Islamic civilization in the contemporary period**

### **1.0 Introduction**

### **2.0 Objectives**

### **3.0 Main Content**

3.1. Post Colonial Period

3.2. The Islamic Renaissance

3.3. Education and Science in the Islamic World

3.4. Challenges to Islam in the contemporary period

### **4.0 Conclusion**

### **5.0 Summary**

### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This is the final unit on this course. Having discussed extensively on the rise and fall of Islamic civilization in our earlier discussions, we shall be looking at the current trend in the resurgence and growth of Islamic civilization in the contemporary period.

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of our discussion in this unit, students should be able to:

- Give the summary of the position of Islam after the colonial period
- Explain the renaissance of Islam
- Discuss on the situation of Education and science in the contemporary Islamic World.

### **3.0 Main Contents:**

#### **3.1. Post Colonial Period**

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE, most of the Islamic Empires had been taken over and subjugated by the European colonialists. The only few regions such as Persia, Afghanistan, Yemen and a part of Arabia which was not under the Europe colonial masters remained under foreign influence and constant threat. Consequent upon the First World War, the Ottoman Empire broke up leaving a number of Arab states such as Iraq becoming independent. Jordan was also created at that time while states such as Palestine, Syria and Lebanon were made to be under French colonies.

Other changes that happened then was that Saudi Arabia became finally consolidated. As a result of the fall of the Ottomans, Egypt which had been under the control of the descendents of Muhammad Ali since the 19th century became more independent. Turkey was made a secular republic by Ataturk, and the Pahlavi dynasty in Persia took Iran as its new name. Aside the aforementioned most of the rest of the Islamic world remained under colonial rule.

Muslims in India were joined by the Hindus to fight for independence from the British. The independence was finally accomplished in 1947. This led to the creation of Pakistan which became the most populated Muslim state. In 1971, Pakistan broke up into two and the East Pakistan has since been named Bangladesh. Indonesia became independent from the Dutch and Malaysia got theirs from Britain. Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1963 to become an independent state.

Starting from the 1950s, many African countries with large Muslim populations such as Nigeria, Senegal and Tanzania started making moves to gain independence from their colonial masters and by 1960s most parts of the Islamic world had been formed into independent national states.

### **3.2. The Islamic Renaissance**

Aside gaining political independence, Muslim reformers also emerged as from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to reform the society by reasserting the pristine teachings of Islam to the people all aimed at re-establishing the Islamic religious and cultural identity. Prominent among these reformers was Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, who hailed from the Arabian Peninsula and died there in 1792. With necessary supports received from Muhammad ibn al-Sa'ud, the founder of the first Saudi state, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab was able to spread his teachings across and even beyond the borders of Arabia land. His influence is still noticeable in different parts of the Muslim world up till today.

The Islamic reform took effect in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of the Mahdi movement in Sudan and the Sanusiyyah movement in North Africa. These movements fought vigorously against colonialism in the region. They also campaigned for education reform in order to give room for educating the Muslims in Islamic way. Egypt thus became a great center of learning and it is the home of the famous Al-Azhar University which has also produced a great number of Islamic reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who hailed originally from Persia but settled in Cairo. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani was a vanguard for Pan-Islamism, a movement for the unification of Islamic world both religiously and politically.

Under his tutelage were Muhammad 'Abduh, one time rector of al-Azhar University who was also very influential in Islamic theology and thought, and Rashid Rida, a strong advocate of the Shari'ah. Also among the reformers was Muhammad Iqbal, the outstanding poet and philosopher who is considered as the father of Pakistan.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss on the state of post colonial period of Islam around the world.

### **3.3. Education and Science in the Islamic World**

Education is the key to development. Islam is very particular about giving education to people. Islam is not against seeking all kinds of education that promote development be it Islamic or Western, be it social, science and or technology.

In the 19th century, certain Muslim countries such as Egypt, Ottoman Turkey and Persia promoted education by establishing institutions of higher learning where the modern sciences and especially medicine were taught. Credence was given to teaching of science and technology based subjects in these institutions. Hence the Islamic world is now being known with production of notable scientists and technologists. Muslims now train in various fields in different parts of the world including the West. In various parts of the Islamic world there is, however, a sense that educational institutions must be expanded and also have their standards improved to the level of the best institutions in the world in various fields of learning especially science and technology. At the same time there is an awareness that the educational system must be based totally on Islamic principles and the influence of alien cultural and ethical values and norms, to the extent that they are negative, be diminished. To remedy this problem a number of international Islamic educational conferences have been held, the first one in Makkah in 1977, and the foremost thinkers of the Islamic world have been brought together to study and ponder over the question of the relation between Islam and modern science. This is an ongoing process which is at the center of attention in many parts of the Islamic world and which indicates the significance of educational questions in the Islamic world today.

### **3.4. Challenges to Islam in the contemporary period**

It is no more news that Islam is currently facing a hard time around the world as it is being looked upon by many as a religion of violence instead of being a religion of tolerance, compassion, peace and justice. This is premised upon some ugly developments in recent time in which some people carry out nefarious activities in the

name of fighting jihad. Terrorism is now a dreadful phenomenon around the world. Many innocent lives and property are lost to one terror act or the other almost on daily basis. The effect of this is so grave that every conscientious Muslim is looked at with suspicion by his or her non-Muslim neighbours most especially when such a Muslim grows beard or put on turban.

Another challenge is the underdeveloped nature of most of the Muslim countries around the world. They fall under the third world economy. A large population of Muslims around the world lack education required for living a prosperous life. Many Muslims are found around the world dependent on begging to sustain their living. Leaders of many countries are preoccupied with frivolities and hold-tight-to-power agenda rather than working for the betterment of their subjects. No wonder then that some Muslim nations are presently experiencing political turmoil which in effect is painting Islam black. Summarily, having realized that all these challenges remain working tools for the critiques of Islam, it is high time Muslims the world over stand up as one entity to find a lasting solution to all the problems so that the lost glory of Islam would be regained.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Islam is a religion whose relevance is being felt all over the world. It is a religion that promotes education and development. Although there is the presence of nationalism and various secular ideologies among the Muslims yet they still wish to move along with what goes on in the modern world but still retain their Islamic culture. Islam is peace though some undesirable elements do heinous things that are alien and detestable to the religion. A real Muslim is he who adheres strictly to the Islamic teaching of peaceful co-existence in the society. The civilization which Islam brought to the world is the one that promote development, love, unity and justice and not the one of violence, destruction and racial discrimination among men. To realize world peace therefore, the Islamic World and the West must work together with sincerity of purpose to establish social justice in the world.

## **5.0 Summary**

This unit discussed the state of Islam in the contemporary world. It considered the post colonial period of Islam around the world. Also considered is the renaissance of the religion and its efforts to resuscitate its educational and cultural identity. It concluded with some of the challenges facing the religion especially in relating to world security, economic and educational development.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

Discuss some of the challenges facing Islam in its effort to regain its lost glory around the world.

## **7.0 References and Further Readings**

Rahim A. (1981) *Islamic History* Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Hitti P. K. (1970) *History of the Arabs* London, The Macmillan Press LTD

Irvin T. B. (1979) *Islam Resurgent: The Islamic World Today* Lagos,  
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