

The Islamic Empire between 632-750 AD was full of internal conflict, and as a result separated into two different sects: the Sunn'i (Umayyad) and the Shi'ite (Abbasid). The Sunn'i continued to follow the teachings of the early caliphs (the Prophet Muhammad's successors); the Shi'ite followed Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali. The Umayyad Caliphs were responsible for several military conquests and thus converting the conquered to Islam. The Abbasids overthrew them in 749 and moved the capital to Baghdad. They were also responsible for splitting and sharing power between the Arabs' religious goals, the Persians' administrative authority, and the Turks' military might. In addition, there were advances in medicine, science, mathematics, and philosophy under the Abbasids.

The Abbasid Caliphate

- ruled from 750-1258 and then from 1261-1517. The brief interruption was due to the Mongol sack of their capital city of Baghdad.
- founded by the descendants of Muhammad's uncle.
- seized power by overthrowing the Umayyad empire.
- capital city was Baghdad for most of their rule.
- sought to accept non-Muslims into their societies. Accepted Persian support and influence into their court.
- stressed value of knowledge. Oversaw the golden age of Islamic culture in literature, art, architecture, technology and science.
- embraced Sunni Islamic practices.

The Umayyad Caliphate

- established after the death of Muhammad by a powerful family from Mecca. Ruled only from 661-750.
- capital city was Damascus
- had a social structure where Arab Muslims were at the top and everyone else was below. They tried to keep non-Arab Muslim influences out of their

court.

- stressed military conquest rather than acquisition of knowledge. Did oversee the building of many important buildings (the Dome of the Rock)

- Sunni Islam.

the Abbasid's were Shi'ite, which was true in the beginning, but after they consolidated power they switched to Sunni practices, which cost them supporters.

They were similar because: they were both expansive, and they were both Islamic empires. They were different because: The Umayyads were very aggressive isolationists, not wanting to interact with non-Arabs, whereas the Abbasids were more open.

During the 600-1400 time period, Islam emerged in the Umayyad Dynasty and expanded greatly into the Abbasid Dynasty. While the Umayyad Empire and Abbasid Empire have some similarities, such as their faith in Islam, they have many differences, for instance the treatment of mawali and the position of women. During Umayyad Dynasty women were treated with respect and not secluded like wives and concubines and slaves as was the case in the Abbasid Dynasty. Women did not wear veils, and their advice was considered important in Umayyad Dynasty, while their position in society degraded during the Abbasid Dynasty.

Islam materialized in the Umayyad Dynasty by the prophet, Muhammad. Muhammad was born into a prominent clan of the Quraysh tribe. Though economically well off and admired for his trading skills and trustworthiness, Muhammad grew dissatisfied with a life focused on material gain. While meditating in the hills surrounding Mecca, the holy city of Islam, he received revelations transmitted to him through the angel Gabriel, which were in turn made into the holy book, the Qur'an. Islam's five pillars provide the basis for an underlying religious unity. Unlike the Abbasid, the Umayyad did not consider the mawali, or non-Arab converts to Islam, full members of the umma. As a result, the number of conversions to Islam in the Umayyad era was low. However, the Abbasid period saw the full integration of new converts, both Arab and non-Arab, into the Islamic community. One possible

reason that the Abbasid Dynasty accepted the mawali and the Umayyad Dynasty did not is that with the rise of the mawali, the Abbasid Empire knew there would be growth in wealth and social status of the merchant and landlord classes of the empire.

Near the end of the Abbasid era, the position of women was steadily declining. The wives and the concubines of the Abbasid caliphs were restricted to the forbidden quarters of the imperial palace. Many of the concubines were slaves. Slave concubines and servants often had more personal liberty than freeborn wives. Caliphs and high officials often spent more time with their clever slaves than with their less well-educated wives. However, during the Umayyad time period, women were not secluded and did not wear veils.

The [Abbasids](#) were more open and integrating of non [Arab peoples](#), and were more aggressive in their conversion of conquered people to Islam. They appealed to non-Arab Muslims, known as mawali, who remained outside the kinship-based society of Arab culture and were perceived of as a lower class within the Umayyad empire.

Under the Umayyads, non-Arab people were ostracized from society, even if they were Muslim, and were prohibited from holding positions of influence. However, it was because of this ostracism that the Umayyads weren't as zealous in their conversions of conquered peoples.