

UMAYYAD AND ABBASID CALIPHATES COMPARED

Category	Umayyad Caliphate	Abbasid Caliphate
Origin	(657-750CE) Umayyad clan starts as a foe to Muhammad. They are defeated at Mecca by Muhammad's forces but are embraced by Muhammad and become a powerful Muslim clan that will lead the faith after Muhammad. After the first three caliphs, The followers of Ali will split away from the faith and form the Shiites (who think caliphs should be related to Muhammad) and the Umayyads will lead the remaining vast majority of Muslims (the Sunnis) who believe the caliphs should be chosen from among all Muslims. Umayyads will conquer much of North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and parts of Western Europe (Spain) very rapidly. They will be halted from taking more of western Europe at the Battle of Tours in France in 732CE.	(750-1258 CE) Umayyad troops, garrisoned on the frontier for years at a time, were becoming increasingly disgusted with the lavish lifestyle of the Umayyad caliphs. This led to more and more revolts. Abu-al-Abbas led a successful revolt starting around Merv (Marw in Arabic), on the frontier in Northern Iran (former Sassanian Empire) after he, a Sunni , allied himself with many of the Shiites in the northeast of the empire. After gaining power by <u>killing many Umayyad family members</u> (the survivors will flee to Spain) he betrays and persecutes his Shiite allies (since their core belief is a bloodline descent from Muhammad being required for all caliphs).
Political	While the Umayyads will win political victory militarily (by the sword) they will not generally force their conquered people to convert on pain of death. The Umayyad capital will be Damascus and they will govern as <u>ARAB ELITE</u> Muslims looking down upon non-Arab converts known as Mawali and using an ethnic Arab military and ethnic Arab bureaucracy. The caliphs will be resented by the soldiers on the frontier for leading non-Islamic lavish lifestyles. Umayyads will set up a theocracy where religious and political law is one and the same. Their inspiration for all law will be the Koran. These laws will be known as Sharia Law .	The Abbasids set up a bureaucracy of absolute authority under Sharia law. This absolute authority is symbolized by the ever present Royal Executioner at the side of each caliph. The empire was soon governed by mostly Persian bureaucrats in the Persian bureaucratic style with a Wazir (vizier in Egyptian) as the chief operating officer. Persian would soon largely take over control of the empire after the first century. The empire would also begin to break up into many smaller Muslim kingdoms still recognizing the religious authority of the Abbasid Caliph but not necessarily the Political authority. They moved the capital to Baghdad .
Economic	Umayyads will not aggressively seek to convert "people of the book" known as Dhimmis because these Jews, Christians, and later Zoroastrians and Hindus will pay a higher tax, making their status as non-Muslims very profitable for the Umayyads. Trade will be controlled by Muslims under standardized Sharia law making it flourish as never before. The central location of the Umayyad caliphate will link trading networks from around the old world on a continuous basis. Goods and ideas will be "globally" exchanged as never before.	The Abbasids would encourage conversion of the Dhimmis (people of the book) far more than the Umayyads and many Persians and others would convert to avoid the extra taxes forced on non-Muslims. These new converts (Mawalis) were treated much more equally than in the Umayyad caliphate. Trade exploded with a continuing growth of a new Muslim merchant (middle) class . Urbanization increased through trade and growing cities created large handy-craft industries (leather, rug, cloth, making). These were the first craft-guilds where the guild system controlled employment and prices. Farmland was soon controlled by a noble landed class and most peasants were tenant farmers. This would cause problems later. Slavery increased during the Abbasid Caliphate causing much hypocrisy when slaves converted to Islam.
Social	Women will have advantages and a higher status in the Umayyad Caliphate as compared to the Abbasid Caliphate. This higher status dates back to both the teachings of Muhammad and the nomadic Bedouin Arab traditions. Non-believers (Dhimmis) while certainly losing profitable jobs and trade routes and paying higher taxes to the Umayyad Arabs, and while being considered second class at best, will not be actively persecuted as some of them had been under the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires.	Due to urbanization, women lost status during the Abbasid Caliphate as the Islamic culture copied the traditional gender restrictions in their locally conquered areas. Cloistering , the Veil , and the Harem , would symbolize this loss of status. As in many cultures, poor women were the only ones allowed to go to the city or market unaccompanied by an adult male relative. Learning flowered at the Baghdad House of Wisdom (the first international center dedicated to learning for learning's sake)
Decline	The Lavish, wealthy lifestyles of the elite Umayyad Arabs was considered by many in the army to be outside the faith of Islam, given Muhammad's message about Social justice, equality, and helping the poor. Further, Many Arab soldiers were growing tired of being posted (garrisoned) on the frontier of the empire year after year. Revolts began. The final rebellion by soldiers in the northeast corner of the empire led to the overthrow and murder of most of the Umayyad clan by Abu al-Abbas (founder of the Abbasid Caliphate)	The decline of the Abbasid caliphate comes from both within and without. From within, Persian Bureaucrats became more and more influential in the first century of the Abbasid caliphate until they declare their independence as the Buyid Dynasty in 934CE . The Fatimids will break away from Abbasid rule in Egypt in 909 CE . Later, a slave class of Muslim soldiers who served the Abbasids will declare independence in Egypt in 1250 forming the Mamluk Sultanate . Seljuk Turks will take the Anatolian peninsula from the Abbasids by 1100CE. Finally, from without, the weakened Abbasid caliphate will be destroyed by the Mongols in 1258CE